Original Paper

Relevance of Digital Mind Mapping in an ELT (English Language Teaching) Classroom

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Abstract

The paper discusses the relevance of Mind mapping in an ELT Classroom. The paper begins with an introduction to Mind mapping- its relevance and effectiveness in understanding conceptual knowledge. The paper details certain software tools where mind mapping can be used as a technological aid in classrooms. The paper also states a few methods on how mind mapping can be used in language and literature classrooms and how it can function as an effective pedagogical tool in learning new concepts, learning vocabulary lists, and interlinking new knowledge with existing familiar concepts. The paper helps to understand how mind mapping helps learners to explore visual-spatial relationships and to group relationships among concepts using interactive images, visual effects, and colours.

Keywords

Conceptual, Pedagogical, Spatial, Interactive, Language, Mind Mapping, Visual

1. Introduction

Technology has aided pedagogical progress to unimaginable heights. Yet despite all technological advancements, there still exists a minority who still love the gentle flow of ink on a sheet of paper and a generation of the population who still learn concepts through images and fine sketching. Mind mapping is a brilliant method that has become a favourite among teachers across the globe, as it is a brilliant way of note-taking and note-making through images and the association of ideas.

Mind mapping as a visual thinking technique gained momentum when it was formulated by Tony Buzan in the 1960s. The method has gained attention and momentum in all domains of pedagogy, as it actively involves all forms of thinking- such as strategic, analytic, and the creative side of the brain. Mind mapping as a pedagogical tool helps teachers and students in note taking and note making, during revisions, problem-solving, and even in preparing content for class presentations. Mind Mapping is a

natural mirroring or reflection of the brain's internal processing and ways of associating ideas. Mind mapping as a method in English classrooms will be a breakthrough, as it will function as a teaching aid as well as an effective teaching strategy to increase understanding and comprehension.

Mind mapping is a method of summarising notes into a chronological sequence. The method helps to focus on relevant facts and arguments using proof and supporting statements to support a narrative. The method also helps to explore visual-spatial relationships from the periphery to connected branches and subbranches. The technique of Mind Mapping was initiated by the British psychologist Tony Buzan. He called the method of mind mapping the "Swiss army knife of the brain." It was used as a learning and memory training method rather than as a storing, organizing, and categorizing method. Buzan through his study and research found how mind mapping as a method helped to link specific memories to trigger new thoughts and ideas. The paper helps to understand the tools and software which interconnect pedagogy in an English language classroom with information technologies. Mind mapping helps to increase interest and motivation in subjects and decrease the amount of idle time leading to boredom.

The study aims to understand how mind mapping as a learning model improves learning productivity, analyzes complex issues with ease, and facilitates information structuring and retrieval. Mind mapping helps to conceptualize boring topics into colorful and impressive flowcharts. It helps in the arrangement and aggregation of ideas in a meaningful way as it enables learning through the association of ideas, thereby simplifying complex concepts and ideas.

In a language classroom, where the instructor is teaching the students how to write an essay. The teacher can jot down all the main points connecting to the essay and then help the students to connect the points to their existing information. Thus instead of demanding or dictating a learner in a primary class to write an essay on their own, the instructor can help to learn the concept through the association of ideas. This method is a proven method in developing active learning skills as it sharpens and develops cognitive skills such as brainstorming, analytic skills, imagination, categorization, and reflection with a focus on the content.

Mind Mapping helps to retrieve past knowledge and helps to link it to new learning. In a language classroom, for instance, when the instructor is trying to teach a word such as 'scintillating', the teacher can associate words such as 'sparkle', 'shine', and 'illumine' and thereby associate the word with an existing new word or aspect. Thus instead of a dull vocabulary session, the instructor can make the classroom interesting and interactive using mind mapping.

The method augments self-learning skills and enables active note-making and note-taking. Moreover, mind mapping enhances creativity and graphic presentation to reorganize complex thoughts and concepts. In a class where the instructor is teaching a drama with multiple characters, this method can be used by the teacher and students to associate the ideas or to understand one character's relation to another character.

Mind mapping can be developed in computers, mobiles, or any other mobile devices as well, which is enabled with the appropriate software. The tool helps to synthesize random thoughts and to structure them in a logical sequence. Moreover, this visual mode of presentation can reduce boredom with the help of VFX, SFX, interactive animation tools, and colorful images.

Some of the software programs which enable Digital Mind mapping is:

1. X Mind- The tool was developed in China, and it has both free and professional versions. It is used for brainstorming as well as in digital mapping platforms.

2. Mindjet is a US-based software. It helps in mind modeling, and big data research and also enhances play dynamics.

3. Mindomo as a software employs high-density graphics, visuals, audio spell search, touch importation, and map importations.

4. Mindmup is a free open software in Javascript. It runs in HTML 5 browsers. The advantage of this software is that it facilitates the storage of unlimited maps which helps in learning literary texts such as Treasure Island and historical plays where the geographical stretch of the place can be well displayed for study.

5. Coggle is a real-time mind-mapping tool that enables rapid and effective note-making.

6. Cacoo and Drakonhub are online web digital platforms that help in creating quick flowcharts, checklists, mind maps, and mock-ups.

7. Mind Meister is a platform that helps in the communication and interpretation of ideas. This tool helps the learners to communicate and interact in real-time. The software helps language learners to communicate in real-time with native language speakers, as they can interact and share their ideas. The software facilitates active language learning through interactive learning modules to enable collaborative activity-based learning.

8. Padlet is an interactive platform for collaborating with learners. It helps in language learning programs and improves communication skills and enables the improvement of teamwork and interpersonal skills.

9. Bubbl.us is a collaborative platform for brainstorming. It helps in preparing and coordinating projects and assignments.

These models can be devised using specialized software packages such as I-Map, Inspiration 9, Microsoft word, and Microsoft PowerPoint. These tools are helpful to educators as well as students for teaching, learning as well as assessments at different levels of education. Tools such as Mind Meister, Padlet, and Bubbl.us helps in the active language learning process and in active interaction to build communication skills. It helps to associate ideas and sub-ideas.

In a language classroom, mind mapping also helps in understanding grammatical concepts and to interconnect new concepts with existing familiar concepts. Hence this also leads to reinforcing learning by building on the existing firm foundations of understanding. The method is a diversified teaching method, and it also helps to broaden the pedagogical approaches of teachers. Teachers who are familiar

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with this model of pedagogy can convert their learning modules within their familiar contexts to interactive learning materials. The use of VFX and interactive images with the method of mind mapping can help in reinforcing learning. Mind mapping as a method also encourages independent thinking and associative learning as it transforms the rather dull and prosaic classrooms into interactive learning sessions. Mind mapping as a proven method of pedagogy involves an active learning process, as it enhances creative problem-solving skills and brainstorming to generate and activate new ideas to generate and organize ideas.

The visual presentation above is a sample of a mind-mapping image where different colours and graphics are used to represent and associate ideas and concepts. In a language classroom, mind mapping helps understand grammatical items through connection and by interlinking them to familiar concepts. Concepts of familiar nature can be grouped using images and colours. Mind mapping thus helps to diversify the instructional process by inferring, analyzing, and systemizing information. Thus in a language classroom, mind mapping can be skilfully utilized to boost the language proficiency of the learners and to increase recalling and retention ability in the learners.

In a literature classroom, the instructor can divide the class into groups and subgroups and instruct the students to work on mind maps based on different topics, and then the instructor can connect them to one central idea or theme. For instance, the different scenes in a Shakespearean play can be mind mapped and then connected to understand different shades or facets of the same character or topic.

In a language classroom, while teaching a unit the instructor can bring in the central aspect of the main aspect discussed at the center of the paper and connect topics of secondary or tertiary importance and interconnect it to the main topic. In this compact way of teaching, the instructor can trigger the interest and curiosity of the learners using keywords and phrases. The cognitive ability of the learner would work through the images and the radiant associations created by the learner. Thus in this active process of learning, imagination and multiple sensory organs are involved and activated. This is how mind maps are generated.

Moreover, this method of learning is always considered a brilliant method to induce active learning and note-taking in classrooms. Thus the learners are also actively involved in the pedagogical process. The students will be creatively involved in the process of learning, as they see how the main topic occupies the center portion of the text and the subheading and the other ideas branch out creating interlinking associations and meaningful connections.

In a language classroom, the instructor has to give free rein to the imagination of the learner, as it would be fascinating to note how the students create amazing visual images using texts, short quotes, emoticons and even using caricatures. In such a fun and interactive mode of learning, prosaic and complex ideas become interesting and easy to understand. The learners use their visual kinetic skills in this process of learning, A language and literature classroom can become an active learning hub of infotainment.

Mind mapping as such remains an innovative model of pedagogy and is still a domain of ongoing research. There have been a lot of innovations in the methods of teaching, yet for the teacher, the best pedagogical tool would be one that enables the creation of meaningful and everlasting impressions in the minds of the learners.

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