

The Significance of Mind Mapping in English Teaching in Independent Colleges

Xiu-juan ZHENG

The College of Post and Telecommunication of WIT
Hubei, China

Chun-ying LI

The College of Post and Telecommunication of WIT
Hubei, China

Xiao-yan XIONG*

The College of Post and Telecommunication of WIT
Hubei, China

Abstract—This paper focuses on the application of mind mapping to English teaching in Independent Colleges, emphasizing the role of mind mapping in consolidating English word memory. With the aim to heighten awareness of the capabilities of the method, this article lays particular emphasis on how to help students form effective English learning strategies, cultivate students' independent learning ability and cooperative learning ability, and also improve the effectiveness of English classroom teaching and learning.

Keywords—*Mind mapping; Innovative thinking; Independent learning; Cooperative learning*

I. DEFINITION AND CHARACTERISTICS OF MIND MAPPING

Mind map, also known as brain map, is a tool of image-based thinking expresses what in mind. The formation and practice of this theory are constantly proving its scientific nature and effectiveness. In the early 1960s, the famous educator Tony Buzan proposed this theory, which he called "MindMap", or mind mapping.[3] (in Chinese)

The basic features of the "new" knowledge information sorting method of mind mapping are:

A. *Paying attention to the prominent focus and the central figure*

In mind mapping, there should be a lot of brain skills like color, shape, line, dimension, texture, visual rhythm, developing the brain potential, triggering rich association and imagination, stimulating creativity, which is the biggest advantage of mind mapping. Through a mind map, the main content and mutual relations of the whole book are vividly and concretely displayed in front of the reader, so that the reader can quickly grasp the whole book's vein and the author's writing idea.[1] (in Chinese)

B. *Clear center and priorities*

The theme is the center, and other information radiates from the central figure to the periphery as branches. The main trunk can be increased continuously, and each branch can be "grown" continuously. From the figure, we can know the open

structure of mind mapping, which is conducive to the system thinking about the connection between various elements.

C. *The clear theme, close connection and easy to memorize*

Branches in mind mapping are composed of a key figure or keyword, and less important topics are also shown in the form of branches, attached to the higher form; the key words on each branch line are like a rudder or a compass, so they are not easy to get lost in the ocean of the brain, and can be used to organize thoughts.

D. *Easy to associate and diverge, easy to grasp the mutual relationship*

Each branch forms a connected contact structure, which makes it easy to grasp connections and relationships. From the characteristics of mind mapping, this method can be used for learning and thinking activities both in work and life. For learning management, mind mapping helps make learning plans, research projects, communicating, organizing, analyzing and solving problems. While as a learner, it can also help memorize, take notes, write reports and papers, give speeches, review exams, and think systematically, and so on. But as a teacher, mind mapping does great help in teaching plans; discussion, training, evaluation and so on so forth, which has a wide range of usage and far-reaching influence. [5] (in Chinese)

II. APPLICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF MIND MAPPING IN ENGLISH TEACHING IN INDEPENDENT COLLEGES

An important process of language learning is to integrate new language knowledge into learners' original cognitive structure, establish new schema and form meaning construction. As a facilitator of meaning construction, teachers can use the scaffolding teaching of mind mapping to help improve learners' ability to transform knowledge into their own internal expression through the experience interpretation of language input. [2] (in Chinese) How to change students' learning autonomy seems very important. Therefore, the author has carried out the teaching experiment of using mind mapping to promote students to change their learning mode. Mainly in the form of group cooperative learning, through

group discussion, speech and other methods, with the help of mind mapping, mobilize students' learning enthusiasm, improve divergent thinking ability, teamwork ability, and strengthen students' analytical ability and English expression and communication ability.[3] (in Chinese)

While in English teaching:

- Teachers prepare lessons before class. Mind mapping is an effective tool for introducing knowledge framework before class. It can help teachers establish a complete lesson preparation system, and an overall plan for the content to be taught in class, which make the class more complete. Besides, teachers can make each knowledge point into a mind map according to their needs, which is helpful for students to understand related concepts and the relationship between concepts as a whole.[2] (in Chinese)
- Organize student class activities. In class, teachers can also use mind mapping to divide labor and cooperate with class members. On the one hand, it can effectively help group members divide labor and complete group discussion or homework. On the other hand, it is also helpful for teachers to understand the group members' sharing of group work and urge students to participate in group work seriously.
- Improve students' vocabulary memory. Vocabulary memory in English includes the sound, shape and meaning of words. The traditional method of memorizing words mainly focuses on identification and specific memory. In the specific memory of words, which are remembered according to phonetic symbols and forms are observed. Mind mapping can help students associate and review words and enlarge their vocabulary. At the same time, mind mapping can be used to review and consolidate words, meanwhile greatly improve the effect of students' vocabulary memory.
- Improve students' writing skills. Mind mapping is a thinking mode that records the thoughts generated in the brain with network graphics around a center. This method can effectively help students improve their writing skills and make their article structure more clear and reasonable.

To introduce mind mapping into English teaching in Independent College, the specific methods are as follows.

A. Applying mind mapping to carry out words and phrases

The most basic elements of language learning should be application of mind map, strengthening students' memory for words and phrases and expanding vocabulary words, because of the English vocabulary has many characteristics, such as quantity and lack of regularity, it often caused great difficulties on how to memorize words and phrases more effectively, this is a very difficult problem of teaching. German Lerner J-Tries suggest that memorizing meaningful words is faster than memorizing words. The network diagram composed of a series of related words can help students to develop the association. In this way, the words learned are not

isolated but have certain internal connection, which undoubtedly plays a decisive role in the knowledge reconstruction, for students. [6] (in Chinese)

In the lead-in part of each unit of practical teaching, ask students in each group to make association around topic words or content, and draw mind maps themselves. With the same key words, different groups associate different words. For example, the mind map drawn by one group is shown in Fig. 1. This group used mind mapping to review and consolidate the vocabulary related to word "work", which were common words students use, but mostly new words learned in real time through knowledge sharing and using reference books.

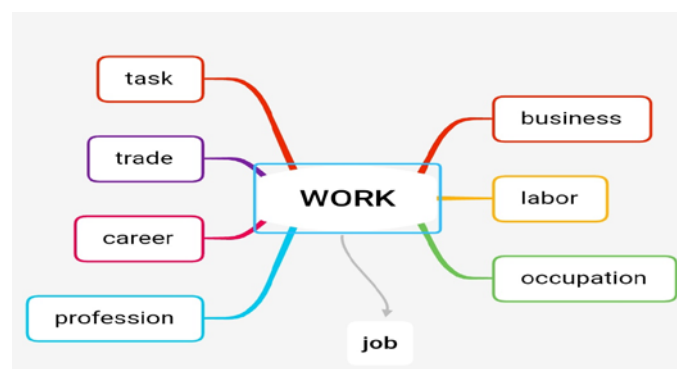


Fig. 1. The mind map of "work"

Therefore, through the way of brainstorm (brainstorming), drawing a mind map in the classroom helps the students find out the related words, and take the word group of graphics, which not only consolidate words and phrases learned before, but also activate their thinking way to learn new vocabulary, more comprehensively grasp the words, and get a clear and deep memory.

B. Applying mind mapping to carry out group task-driven learning activities

In learning and discussing some unit contents, the teacher designs some related topics for students to make demonstrations or debates in groups within a certain time. Team members jointly create a mind map, or students draw his or her data first and then each one mind map combined to discuss, and decide together what has relevance and which is more important, then add some other new ideas or thoughts, finally become a common restructuring mind map.

In teaching "My first job," the text study, in order to mobilize the enthusiasm of students, to guide students in each group through the brainstorming and role-play from discussing the authors experience freely, exchange views, and use the mind map to assist their divergent thinking, then together resort to all sorts of arguments and conception connected, then use the mind map to consolidate and expand. Finally, students are asked to output their group's conclusions through the language debate, while mind mapping makes their speech more logical and well organized. The following example is the mind map drawn by one group of students which is shown in Fig. 2.

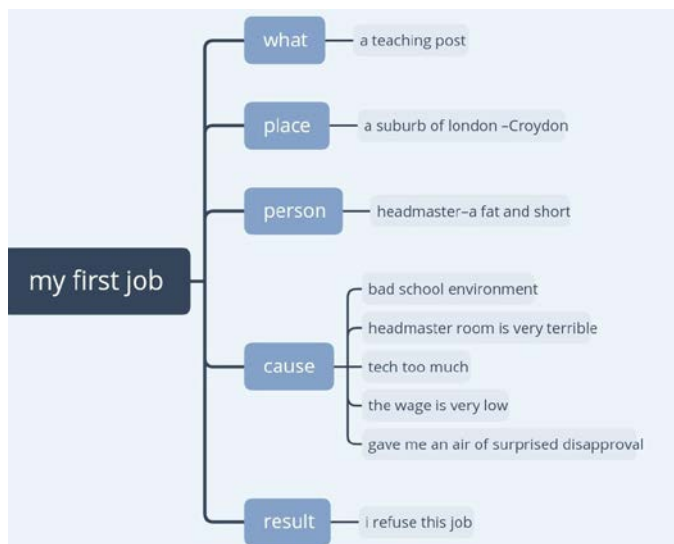


Fig. 2. "My first job" mind map

The author found that students were enthusiastic and active in preparation and discussion, and sketched their own ideas with colorful lines, which expanded their thinking.

C. Mind mapping helps improve students' writing ability

Among the four skills of English listening, speaking, reading and writing, English writing is the performance of comprehensive ability, which is also the most difficult skill for students to have. Both writing and speaking are output language communication activities, which require language to be accurate, standardized and effective in transmitting information. Writing also requires the logical organization of paragraphs to make the content much clear.

In writing, thinking about how to write is an important step and a process of using mind maps to conceive writing, and actually recording the thoughts generated in the brain or in a network graph around a central topic. Especially free writing, students around the theme, and according to their knowledge, write down all the thoughts and ideas, as well as some new contents, which should be in the form of a mind map, and then edit the outline of the article structure and the main content, and finally complete the rest of the article. For example, one of the writing exercises given is "*Telling about an unforgettable experience*" with mind mapping. Teaching can be divided into the following steps:

(1) Ask the students to think about the topic for one or two minutes, imagine freely around the topic, and write down the relevant points. Those who cannot write in English can look up the dictionary or use Chinese instead, and use adjectives and various phrases as much as possible.

(2) The teacher copies a student's work on the blackboard and asks other students to revise it further. In this way, students who do not understand the principle of mind mapping can get an intuitive learning opportunity.

(3) Students try to make linear coherent statements of mind maps and determine the best order of statements.

(4) Students revise their mind maps again to sort out various points that are most relevant and important to the article.

(5) Finally, start to write according to the mind map.

From the perspective of practical teaching effect, the method of mind mapping can effectively help students to spread their thinking, improve their enthusiasm and skills in writing, and enrich the content and structure of their articles.

So, it can be seen that mind mapping can organize students' various ideas and languages and express them with graphics and images, so that students can find connections and enrich their thoughts and the way of logic. Through mind mapping, students could greatly visualize their thinking, record and share knowledge, and achieve the purpose of mutual communication and learning. [6] (in Chinese)

III. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF USING MIND MAPPING IN ENGLISH TEACHING IN INDEPENDENT COLLEGES

How to take students as the main body, promote the change of students' learning method, make students change from accepting learning to discovering learning, which include independent learning, inquiry learning, cooperative learning and so on are the difficult problems in English teaching. The teaching practice shows that the application of mind mapping in English teaching is of positive significance.

A. Help cultivating students' independent learning ability

Autonomous learning is a learning mode and process in which students independently and autonomously learn, master the knowledge and acquires abilities, and makes good use of this knowledge and abilities under the guidance of teachers. As a learning strategy and ability, autonomous learning is not only conducive to encouraging students to express themselves and express themselves, but also conducive to cultivating students' good study habits.

The practice has proved that mind mapping is a very effective learning strategy in the process of vocabulary consolidation, reading and writing. Once students master the use of mind mapping, it can greatly improve the autonomy and efficiency of students' English learning.

B. Help training and improving students' innovative thinking ability and cooperative learning ability

From the perspective of teaching practice, the application of mind mapping can promote students to effectively expand their vocabulary, learn how to analyze the relationship between words, and help students improve their understanding and memory of words through word association. In writing, mind mapping can stimulate students' imagination, help the students think of various points in the image of the picture or table methods, and find out the correlation between the points or logic, help arrange related information and comb the text structure, but also make the content much rich, more orderly and reasonable. In addition, students' ability to adjust their own learning behaviors can be cultivated in the process of constantly revising and organizing the mind map drawn. It not only stimulates students' desire to do things and interest in

learning, but also encourages students to gradually learn how to think about problems from different angles or different aspects, and can put forward some new concepts or new insights to find different methods or solutions to solve problems, so that their creative ability can be fully cultivated.

C. Help Improving Students' Cooperative Learning Ability

"Group cooperative learning" is an effective method for students to perform in classroom activities, and also an important way to guide students to study actively. Different students have different learning abilities, learning methods and specialties, and there are inevitable differences in their views and views on things. Therefore, their mind maps must be different, which provides a necessity for students to communicate with each other and an effective way for students to independently develop their creativity. In order to improve the group mind map, students must express their own views, and in doing so, their thoughts and ideas should be specific and explicit, and they can communicate and supplement each other, so as to achieve knowledge sharing and mutual inspiration.[3](in Chinese) This is the process of cultivating students' cooperative learning ability. Various forms of mind mapping can be applied to all kinds of learning tasks. Students learn from each other through joint learning and cooperation, which is conducive to cultivating students' awareness of exploration and cooperative spirit, as well as the cultivation of oral English communication and problem-solving ability.

The application of mind mapping in English teaching is very extensive and significant. In the process of sorting out and reviewing mind mapping, we help teachers and students to strengthen their understanding of what they have learned and further deepen it by searching for key words and core contents, and use association and connection to help students organize and structure relevant knowledge, so as to make the acquisition, storage and extraction of knowledge more convenient and efficient. The significance of this visualization process is reflected in the teacher's teaching and students' learning. The application of mind mapping in English teaching is helpful to teachers' classroom design, to improve students' interest in learning, to facilitate teaching interaction, to

establish a good teacher-student relationship, to expand classroom capacity in review classes, and to improve learning efficiency. Mind mapping is undoubtedly a new thing, and its benefits in foreign language teaching in China are increasingly prominent, benefiting both teachers and students. As more and more people try and understand mind mapping, its application and development space in foreign language teaching and other fields will continue to expand.

IV. CONCLUSION

Mind mapping is a method that stimulates thinking and helps to integrate thoughts and information. It allows learners to freely stimulate divergent thinking, give full play to their associative ability, imagination, logical thinking ability and language organization ability, and organize all kinds of ideas in a hierarchical way, which can also increase students' interest in English learning and build confidence. Through many teaching practices, it is proved that mind mapping is effective in English teaching.

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