

## **THE USE OF MIND MAPPING TECHNIQUE IN THE ESL CLASSROOM**

The 21<sup>st</sup> century is the time of streaming information. That's why we need some powerful method to organize and structure it in order to make this information valuable and useful.

Mind Mapping is a technique of note taking using colours, shapes, patterns, keywords and images so that the information is rendered holistically. According to NLP Mind Training, mind mapping uses the whole power of the brain and uses both sides of the brain to study subjects usually only studied with left brain.

A Mind Map is a tool giving us the opportunity:

- to structure and process the information effectively;
- to think using all one's creative and intellectual potential;

A Mind Map is a very nice tool for solving such tasks like giving presentations, decision making, planning one's own time, time management, remembering a lot of information, [brainstorming](#), self-examination, project development, self-education, lifelong learning etc. A Mind Map is a powerful graphic technique which provides a universal key to unlock the potential of the brain.

Originated in the late 1960s by Tony Buzan Mind Maps are now used by millions of people around the world – from the very young to the very old – whenever they wish to use their minds more effectively. Although the term "Mind Map" was first popularized by this British [psychology](#) author and television personality [Tony Buzan](#), the use of diagrams that visually "map" information using branching and [radial maps](#) traces back centuries.

Mind Maps are considered to be a type of [spider diagram](#). It can be applied to every aspect of life where improved learning and clearer thinking will enhance human performance.

Mind Maps can be drawn by hand, either as "rough notes" during a lecture, meeting or planning session, for example, or as higher quality pictures when more time is available.

To make a Mind Map, you start from the centre of a blank sheet of paper positioned horizontally and use words and images to visually display the subject you want to develop. The Mind Mapper starts with a central image that expresses the concept of happiness. This image needs to incorporate dimension and at least three colours [1, c. 77]. You work clockwise, and draw one or more branches to which you add sub-branches as necessary and on which you write key words accompanied by images or just images. The basic Ordering Ideas in any Mind Map are those words or images which are the simplest and most obvious ordering devices. The first ten words or images gained their importance simply by occurring first [1, c. 79]. The result is a complex web that represents the logical pathway through which the subject develops. The Mind Map is read clockwise starting from the first branch on the right.

Setting out the elements (keywords and images) in this radial format makes

it possible to visualize relationships that it would be very difficult to convey with linear and sequential writing. That is why Mind Maps foster the creative process which entails a switching between logical and analogical thinking in the search for an order that produces a new meaning.

Because Mind Maps are so easy to do and so natural, the ingredients for “Mind Map Recipe” are very few: blank unlined paper, coloured pens and pencils, your brain and imagination.

Steps to making a Mind Map:

1. Start in the centre of a blank page turned sideways. It gives the brain freedom to spread out in all directions and to express itself more freely and naturally.
2. Use an image or picture for the central idea. A central image is more interesting, keeps you focused, helps you concentrate, and gives your brain more of a buzz.
3. Use colours throughout. Colour adds extra vibrancy and life to a Mind Map, adds tremendous energy to Creative Thinking.
4. Connect main branches to the central image and connect second- and third-level branches to the first and second levels, etc. Human brain works by association. It likes to link two (or three, or four) things together. If you connect the branches, you will understand and remember a lot more easily.
5. Make your branches curved rather than straight-lined, because having nothing but straight line is boring to your brain.
6. Use one key word per line. Single key words give a Mind Map more power and flexibility.
7. Use images throughout, because each image, like the central image, is also worth a thousand words. So if you have only 10 images in your Mind Map, it's already the equal of 10,000 words of notes.

Mind Mapping can be used to improve knowledge of different language aspects. We have the opportunity to present several ideas how to take notes using mind maps and concept diagrams for teaching academic writing and reading comprehension.

### **Academic writing:**

The writing process is conventionally known to be composed of 5 stages: prewriting, writing, revising, editing, and publishing.

- During the prewriting stage you can start out with a simple writing assignment or bigger tasks like an essay, depending on the level and your class needs. Begin with a main topic in the middle and begin brainstorming. Once you have the central idea, you can list out keyword ideas on branches from the main idea. You can also add more detail to the supporting ideas by branching off the supporting ideas. Students can use different colors and shapes to signify main ideas, supporting ideas, and sub-topics.

- Once they have a lot of words on their Maps, they can start whittling down what they would like to include and what they would like to remove. They would want to choose one or two supporting topics and flesh those out. Students could do a second Mind Map once they have decided their supporting ideas.

- While thinking about the topic sentences for each supporting topics it's normal if they struggle for some specific vocabulary. Students may use dictionaries if it

is necessary but not to write the translation near these words in a Mind Map.

- During the writing stage. If students have several keywords surrounding a supporting idea, then they can take the same words and begin composing their topic sentences with supporting sentences. They could use much of the same language they have already written down. It makes the task of composition much more manageable and gives them a concrete tool to reference. Students generally move from the Mind Map activity into the writing process with more enthusiasm and more direction.

- A good paragraph has strong organization that makes sense to the reader. Each sentence should lead logically to the next, and should be connected through transition words or other connections. Besides a topic sentence and one main idea, an effective paragraph has coherence and development.

Coherence makes a paragraph understandable to a reader. You can help create coherence in your paragraphs by creating logical and verbal connections. Advise your students to make a list of: repetition of all the key words from each paragraph; synonyms for key words; pronouns to link sentences together and transition words.

Development refers to the support you have for your topic sentence. A well-developed paragraph should have an adequate number of sentences to support the main idea. That depends on the idea, and how much development it needs. Here are some ways you can make your paragraph developed with a usage of Mind Mapping:

- give some data (statistics, information and examples) to the supporting sentences;
- remember the famous people you can quote;
- compare or give contrast ideas;
- give the causes and effects;

### **Reading comprehension:**

Mind Mapping can be used to improve reading comprehension in both fiction and non-fiction texts, and across a variety of genres. Mind Maps work because they give the reader another (visual) way to process information. Because the concept of a story is depicted through images — and can show their graphic relationship to each other — the reader is given more information in which to aid his or her understanding. This strategy really works; there are many ways to implement Mind Mapping in the classroom:

- For non-fiction texts the Mind Map should contain the main idea in the center, branching out to supporting ideas or facts. Each of the supporting facts can also contain branches to further add information as it relates to the main idea. If using a Mind Map for a fiction text, students should be asked to use the center of the Mind Map for the title of the book or piece of text. The related concepts that connect to the title may include characters, setting, plot, events, etc. Each of these related concepts may also then branch out to other story details or student inferences.

- To introduce the concept to your students you may want to model creating a Mind Map during a read aloud. Students will be able to learn from your "think alouds" as an introduction to the strategy. As students become more familiar with the strategy you can extend the modeling to each student completing their own Mind Map on a shared text. Eventually, through gradual release of responsibility, students will be able to complete their own Mind Map while independently reading a text.

- As a way to support understanding and improve reading comprehension teachers may want to require students to complete a Mind Map as part of a review or culminating assignment. This is a strategy that is beneficial when used both in formative and summative tasks. A Mind Map can be a great way for students to display their thinking and what they learned from reading a text.

- To further aid your students' Mind Mapping, you may want to employ the use of technical applications for Mind Map creation. Text2MindMap and Bubbl are both free web-based Mind Map generators. There is also an app available for the iPod Touch and iPad, iMindMap Mobile Pro, which allows users to create their Mind Maps directly on the device, save and sync to a computer [2].

Mind Mapping is an exciting tool that can be helpful to everyone, no matter what their situation. Even though it does take a while to become comfortable using it, it is well worth the effort, because it can become a great time-saver in the long run. Its many advantages and uses are not limited – each person, using their creativity and imagination, can come up with new and interesting ways to apply it.

### **References**

1. Buzan, T&B. The Mind Map Book. - Educational Publishers LLP trading as BBC Active Edinburgh Gate, Harlow, Essex, CM20 2JE, England. - 2007.
2. Cadieux, C. (2011) Mind Mapping is a Creative Way to Improve Comprehension. Retrieved from <http://info.marygrove.edu/>