Influence of Mapping Strategy on Students' Speaking Skills from the English Language Teachers' Perspectives

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Abstract

A mind map is an effective and enjoyable way to teach, learn, and improve speaking skills in an effective and enjoyable environment for teachers and students. The present study aimed to explore the perspectives of EFL teachers towards utilizing a mapping strategy for developing students' speaking skills. The study adopted a full qualitative method using semi-structured interviews. The study sample consisted of 5 English language teachers from Palestine. The study results indicated that the mapping concept positively and significantly influences EFL learners' English-speaking performance. In addition to enhancing speaking skills, mapping contributed to the building of self-esteem in speaking English, strengthening cooperation among students, increasing speaking skills, gaining a deeper understanding of speaking skills, increasing engagement, and developing creativity. Additionally, mapping strategy enriches brainstorming of situations to practice English speaking, as well as organizing these situations thematically.

Keywords: *Mapping strategy, speaking skills*

Introduction

The significance of mind mapping strategies in enhancing students' speaking skills has garnered substantial attention in the field of English language teaching. This study aims to explore the importance of utilizing the mind mapping strategy to enhance students' speaking abilities, as perceived by English language teachers in Palestine. The study investigates teachers' perspectives regarding the influence of mind mapping on improving students' speaking skills within the Palestinian educational context. Previous studies carried out by Anil (2017) and Paragae (2023) emphasize the need for innovative pedagogical approaches to enhance language learning outcomes. Traditional methods often focus on grammar and vocabulary instruction, while neglecting the development of speaking proficiency. In contrast, mind mapping offers a learner-centred methodology that promotes active participation and facilitates effective communication. As articulated by Erdem (2017) and Hanif, Kalsoom, and Khanam (2020), mind mapping serves as a visual technique that helps individuals organize and connect their thoughts and concepts, providing a structured framework for refining and presenting speaking skills. Mind maps serve as visual representations of knowledge, aiding in idea organization and enhancing students' ability to express themselves fluently.

In the Palestinian context, students encounter challenges in improving their speaking skills due to limited exposure to English-speaking environments. Al-Sobhi & Preece (2018) note that the Palestinian students primarily prefer to communicate in Arabic, with English often taught as a foreign language. Insufficient exposure to English beyond the classroom setting can hinder the acquisition of authentic speaking abilities. Khlaif, Sanmugam, Joma, Odeh, and Barham (2023) emphasize the lack of contemporary teaching materials, up-to-date curricula, and access to multimedia resources in many schools, impeding engaging speaking practices. Furthermore, the ongoing political situation in Palestine can disrupt the education system and lead to socio-economic obstacles. These factors collectively create an environment where consistent and effective English language

instruction faces challenges (Razeq, 2022). Razeq (2022) further suggests that cultural norms and traditions in Palestine might discourage open communication, especially in a foreign language, resulting in a lack of confidence among students when practicing English speaking. Additionally, Palestinian English teachers might not consistently receive comprehensive training in modern English teaching methodologies which affects their effectiveness in teaching speaking skills to students (Dajani, 2015).

More importantly, the perspectives and attitudes of English language teachers towards the impact of mind mapping on students' speaking abilities in Palestine remain relatively unexplored. Thus, the current study aims to address this research gap by conducting a case study that investigates English language teachers' perspectives on the effects of mind mapping on students' speaking proficiency. Through an exploration of teachers' experiences and opinions, this research aims to shed some light on the influence of mind mapping as a pedagogical tool within the Palestinian context. The study examines how teachers perceive the influence of mind mapping on students' speaking skills, including their observations on student engagement, fluency, coherence, and confidence in oral communication.

The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on effective language teaching methodologies in Palestine. It is hoped that the findings may provide valuable insights into the perceptions of English language teachers regarding the impact of mind mapping on students' speaking skills. The outcomes of this research may inform English language teaching practices and curriculum development in Palestine, promoting the integration of innovative strategies to enhance students' speaking abilities. Through investigating teachers' perspectives, this research seeks to provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of mind mapping as a pedagogical tool, contributing to the improvement of English language teaching.

The Speaking skills

The speaking skills can be comprehensively understood from diverse viewpoints and sources. According to Ibrahim (2017), the speaking skills encompass the capacity to communicate information, thoughts, and viewpoints verbally clearly and proficiently. Rao (2019) elaborates that these skills involve not only organizing and structuring ideas logically and coherently but also adapting language and style to align with the intended audience and communication's purpose. Chou (2021) adds that the speaking skills entail employing suitable vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation to accurately convey meanings. Engaging with Ngah et al.'s perspective (2022), effective speaking skills extend to interactive and meaningful conversations, active listening, and appropriate responses. Ibrahim (2017) further emphasizes that speaking skills are important for establishing rapport, nurturing relationships, and expressing emotions and intentions, both in social and professional contexts.

Importance of the Speaking Skills

Effective communication relies significantly on proficient speaking skills, within personal and professional realms. The following key aspects underscore the significance of adept speaking abilities:

1. Expressing Ideas and Thoughts: Proficient speaking skills empower individuals to articulate their ideas, thoughts, and viewpoints with clarity and efficacy (Rao, 2019). This capability facilitates meaningful interactions and the exchange of information.

2. Skilful Communication: Proficiency in speaking encompasses the adept utilization of suitable vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation to convey meanings (Chou, 2021) accurately and lucidly. Skilful communication is pivotal for cultivating connections, establishing relationships, and effectively conveying emotions and intentions (Ibrahim, 2017).

3. Professional Advancement: Robust speaking skills are of paramount importance in the professional arena. They are indispensable for job interviews, presentations, negotiations, and networking. Competent verbal communication can elevate career prospects and contribute to professional triumph.

4. Boosting Confidence: Nurturing speaking skills aids individuals in cultivating self-assurance in self-expression. The capacity to communicate with clarity and poise amplifies self-worth and empowers individuals to actively engage in discussions and deliberations.

5. Cultivating Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving: Proficiency in speaking necessitates the organization and coherent structuring of ideas (Ashraf, Rubab, & Ajmal, 2020). This process augments critical thinking and problem-solving proficiencies, as individuals learn to articulate their thoughts and effectively analyse information.

6. Fostering Cultural Comprehension: Proficient speaking skills facilitate effective cross-cultural communication. By adapting language and style to suit diverse audiences, individuals can bridge cultural disparities and foster meaningful connections.

7. Academic Attainment: Speaking skills are pivotal for academic success, enabling students to actively participate in classroom discourse, present their notions, and engage in collaborative learning (Rao, 2019).

Definition of Mind Mapping

Mind mapping serves as a visual technique for organizing and structuring information effectively. This method involves crafting diagrams that illustrate the interconnections among concepts, ideas, or tasks centred around a core theme. By utilizing branches, keywords, images, and colours, it portrays relationships and hierarchies, thereby enhancing understanding, memory retention, and the generation of ideas (Arulselvi, 2017). Mind maps offer a comprehensive outlook on intricate subjects, fostering innovative thinking in the process.

Figure 1.1. The structure of Mind mapping (Salai, 2014).

Mind mapping stands as a potent technique, offering numerous advantages across various life domains. The following outlines key benefits associated with mind mapping:

1. Enhanced Creativity and Problem-Solving: Mind mapping sparks the brain's creative thinking process, fostering novel ideas and connections (Arulselvi, 2017). Moreover, it aids in problem-solving by visually structuring data and identifying potential solutions (Arulselvi, 2017).

2. Improved Learning and Retention: Mind maps proficiently organize and structure information visually and logically, bolstering comprehension and memory (Arulselvi, 2017; Erdem, 2017). Furthermore, they encourage active engagement with the material, resulting in heightened understanding and retention (Mohaidat, 2018).

3. Effective Planning and Organization: Mind maps offer lucid overviews of intricate subjects, simplifying the planning and organization of tasks, projects, and objectives (Arulselvi, 2017). They facilitate the visualization of interrelationships among various elements, aiding in prioritization and decision-making (Arulselvi, 2017).

4. Enhanced Notetaking and Information Management: Mind mapping can serve as an adept note-taking technique, capturing and organizing information from diverse sources (Arulselvi, 2017; Erdem, 2017). It allows the integration of text, images, and multimedia, resulting in more engaging and memorable notes (Debbag, Cukurbasi, & Fidan, 2021).

5. Improved Communication and Collaboration: Mind maps function as visual tools for presenting ideas and concepts, augmenting the effectiveness and engagement of communication (Arulselvi, 2017). Furthermore, they foster collaboration by enabling teams to brainstorm, exchange ideas, and collaboratively work toward shared objectives (Polat, Sezer, & Atış-Akyol, 2022).

Therefore, mind mapping is a versatile technique with far-reaching benefits. It stimulates creativity, aids problem-solving, improves learning and retention, enhances planning and organization, elevates notetaking and information management, and strengthens communication and collaboration (Arulselvi, 2017; Erdem, 2017; Mohaidat, 2018; Debbag, Cukurbasi, & Fidan, 2021; Polat, Sezer, & Atış-Akyol, 2022).

Components of Mind Mapping

Mind mapping stands as a versatile technique encompassing the utilization of visual diagrams for the depiction of ideas and concepts. Although slight variations might exist in the specific constituents of a mind map, certain elements are widely acknowledged and supported by reputable sources.

1. Central Topic or Theme: Positioned at the heart of a mind map, the central topic or theme serves as the focal point around which the entire concept revolves (Arulselvi, 2017).

2. Branches: Extending from the central topic, branches radiate outward to encapsulate subtopics or interconnected notions. These branches establish a hierarchical framework, acting as primary categories or sections within the mind map (Arulselvi, 2017).

3. Keywords or Key Phrases: Employing succinct keywords or key phrases, rather than lengthy sentences, is a hallmark of mind maps. These succinct expressions encapsulate the core of the information (Arulselvi, 2017; Erdem, 2017).

4. Images or Symbols: Mind maps often incorporate imagery or symbols to visually represent ideas or concepts. These visual elements foster creativity, aid in retention, and heighten engagement with the mind map (Arulselvi, 2017).

5. Colour and Formatting: The strategic application of colours and formatting enhances mind maps by distinguishing various branches, highlighting key points, and contributing to visual appeal. Colours also assist in information categorization and organization (Arulselvi, 2017).

6. Connections and Relationships: Illustrating the interlinkages between ideas or concepts, mind maps utilize lines, arrows, and other visual cues to depict connections. These connections elucidate the relationships among elements, facilitating a comprehensive grasp of information structure and flow (Ligita et al., 2022).

The Procedure of Making a Mind Mapping Strategy

To construct an efficient mind map, you can adhere to a systematic process outlined by Arulselvi (2017). This guide offers a step-by-step approach to developing a mind mapping strategy:

1. Define the Central Theme: Commence by pinpointing the central topic or core theme that demands your focus. This central notion should succinctly encapsulate the primary idea or concept inherent in mind mapping.

2. Establish Principal Branches: Originating from the central theme, generate main branches that epitomize the essential subtopics or categories associated with the central concept. These primary branches function as the chief sections of your mind map and should radiate outward from the nucleus.

3. Incorporate Sub-branches: Extend each primary branch by integrating sub-branches that delineate more intricate notions or ideas linked to each primary category. These sub-branches should extend from their corresponding primary branches.

4. Utilize Keywords or Key Phrases: Instead of composing extensive sentences or paragraphs, employ keywords or key phrases to epitomize each notion or concept. These succinct depictions encapsulate the core of the information and contribute to the visual allure of the mind map.

5. Integrate Visuals or Symbols: Elevate your mind map by including pertinent visuals or symbols that visually epitomize ideas or concepts. Visual elements possess the capacity to spur creativity, enhance memory retention, and render the mind map more captivating.

6. Apply Colours and Formatting Techniques: Implement colours and formatting methods to differentiate between branches, underscore pivotal points, and establish a visual hierarchy. Colours also facilitate the organization and classification of information within the mind map.

7. Establish Associations: Establish connections among interrelated ideas or concepts by employing lines, arrows, or other visual constituents. These connections mirror the correlations between diverse elements and foster comprehension of the overall framework and information flow.

8. Refine and Review: Refine your mind map by making any necessary adjustments or enhancements. Ascertain that the structure follows a coherent sequence, the content is lucid, and the visual components cohesively mesh.

By adhering to this systematic approach, you can craft a meticulously organized and visually captivating mind map that effectively conveys your notions and concepts.

Teaching Speaking through Mind Mapping

The use of mind mapping as an instructional method for enhancing speaking abilities proves to be efficacious. Pribadi (2020) asserted that mind mapping serves as a valuable approach, aiding learners in orchestrating their thoughts while refining their oral communication skills. Pribadi defines mind mapping as a visual tool facilitating the structured and interconnected arrangement of information. This technique entails the utilization of keywords, images, and branching to depict concepts and their interlinkages (2020).

Benefits of Mind Mapping in Teaching Speaking

Pribadi (2020) discussed various benefits of mind mapping as follows:

1-Enhances comprehension: Mind maps help learners to understand and remember information more effectively.

2-Promotes critical thinking: Organizing thoughts in a visual manner encourages learners to think critically and analyse relationships between ideas.

3-Facilitates brainstorming: Mind mapping enables learners to generate and organize ideas before speaking.

4-Improves speaking fluency: By having a clear structure, learners can express their thoughts more coherently, leading to improved fluency.

Strategies for Teaching Speaking through Mind Mapping Based on (Syauki, wardana, & Maulina, 2021)

1. Pre-speaking phase: Encourage learners to brainstorm and create mind maps to generate ideas and organize their thoughts before speaking.
2. While speaking phase: Learners can use mind maps as a visual aid during their presentations or discussions, helping them stay organized and focused.
3. Post-speaking phase: Reflect on the mind maps created during the pre-speaking phase to evaluate content, coherence, and organization.

Methodology

To achieve the study objectives, the researcher used a qualitative approach to comprehensively analyse how mapping strategies impact students' speaking skills, as perceived by English language teachers in Palestine. The main objective is to attain a thorough comprehension of mind mapping in English speaking skills lessons. As Mehrad and Zangeneh (2019) suggest, qualitative methods such as interviews and open-ended surveys facilitate the collection and analysis of in-depth data, thereby enabling a profound exploration of the impact of mapping strategies on students' speaking skills. The selected participant for this study is an English class teacher, chosen to represent the perspective of educators. This ensures a focused and context-rich investigation (Creswell, 2014).

Data Collection

The data collection process involves utilizing semi-structured questions to gather teacher's perspectives regarding the impact of mapping strategies on students' speaking skills. These questions are designed to elicit detailed and nuanced responses, providing valuable insights into the subject matter. The chosen methodology enables the exploration of the complexities and subtleties of the phenomenon under investigation (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 2006; Yin, 2014; Ellinger et al., 2016).

Data Analysis

Thematic data analysis, assisted by NVivo software, was employed to analyse the collected data by holistic analysis. This systematic approach allows for the identification of recurring themes, patterns, and significant insights within the teachers' responses. By organizing the data into themes, a coherent and structured representation of the teachers' perceptions is achieved, enhancing the overall validity and reliability of the study's findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Stahl & King, 2014).

Findings

This section presents the data interpretation collected from the interview conducted with five English language teachers. The interpretation was based the influence of mapping strategy on students' speaking skills from the English language teachers' perceptions in Palestine. The research methodology followed an analytical approach called holistic analysis to analysis the data collected.

1. How do you use mind mapping in teaching the speaking skills?

The interviews with the purposeful sample of English language teachers concerning the use of mind mapping to teach speaking skills in English language and method of implementation revealed that, the participants used mind mapping in many situations while teaching English language especially when teaching the speaking skills.

"Well, I used the mind mapping a lot in teaching English language especially the speaking skills" (T1).

T1 also added that the reason why she adopted mind mapping come from the fact that students are mostly weak in speaking English even though they can read and write, however students find it difficult to express themselves.

"Our students tend to be weak in speaking skills, although they can write English, listen, and read but they can't express themselves in English" (T2).

2. What are the benefits of the mind mapping in teaching speaking skills?

The participant stated that mind mapping enhances teaching speaking skills in various ways such as helps students think more creatively and communicate more effectively and students are more comfortable to speak English.

"First of all, mind mapping helps students think more creatively and communicate more effectively. Furthermore, they overcome the problem of speaking in public and the loss of confidence in speaking English" (T3).

She also added that mind mapping also increases motivation to learn the language, inspires interest as a result, the student becomes more receptive and cooperative an educational environment which results to better grades in exams.

"Mind mapping also increases motivation to learn the language. Additionally, mind mapping is a visual representation of words, ideas, tasks, or other items connected to and arranged. By radially surrounding a central keyword or idea, it inspires interest as a result, the student becomes more receptive and cooperative an educational environment. Furthermore, students tend to get better

grades in exams. Additionally, they are more creative and remember things better" (T4).

3. What experiences have you had in practicing mind mapping in the classroom with your students?

The participant had good understanding of the use of mind map by implementing a speaking skill map to aid her teaching which she considered fun, enjoyable, and it was evident that it busted the confidence of the students.

"I have many experiences practicing mind mapping in the classroom with my students and there were amazing, enjoyable and there is a lot of fun. For example, when teach them about how to talk about themselves, I draw a big circle in the middle on the board then many other circles in each one a question and start to answer the questions, they have fun and speak English in a simple way without shying" (T5).

4. How often do you use mind mapping in your classrooms with your students?

The used of mind mapping in classroom activities were only during English language lesson and during speaking skills activities, according to the participant.

"I use it a lot with my students to encourage them to practice the English language and to speak English" (T3).

5. what are the challenges in using mind mapping?

According to the participant, there are many challenges in adopting the mind mapping such as limited time, lack of confidence to speak before peers, fear of mistakes, and limited experience in implementing mind mapping among English teachers.

"There are many challenges in adopting the mind mapping such as the time the students' needs time to respond especially the students who are weak in their achievements in the English language and some students are very shy to speak the language Infront their class mates because they afraid of making mistakes, also we as teachers we need to take workshops about mind mapping strategy in ministry of education in Palestine" (T1).

Discussion

Findings on the influence of mapping strategy on students' speaking skills revealed that, the Palestine English teachers' uses of mind mapping to teach speaking skills in English language and general English language. This finding supports Rao (2019) that states that mind mapping promotes speaking skills empower individuals to articulate their ideas, thoughts, and viewpoints with clarity, efficacy, and confidence. This study also revealed that Mind mapping was implemented to assist students who weak in speaking English and are difficult to express themselves which was supported by Razeq (2022) study that identified cultural norms and traditions in Palestine discourages open communication, especially in a foreign language, resulting in a lack of confidence among students when practicing English speaking.

Figure 2.2 shows the Emerging Theme from the Research Findings

Subsequently the findings revealed that the implementation of mind mapping enhanced speaking skills among students in Palestine and enhanced creative communication and students were able to speak English comfortably. Ibrahim (2017), Rao (2019), and Chou (2021) attested to this fact that mind mapping promotes English proficiency and skilful communication among students. Mind mapping increases the motivation to learn English language and improve speaking skills, enabling students to actively participate in classroom discourse, present their notions, and engage in collaborative learning which resulted in better grades in exams (Rao, 2019). Finally, these studies revealed some limitations which were identified by that participant as limited time to implement mind mapping, mind mapping was limited to English language alone, lack of confidence to speak before peers, fear of mistakes, and limited experience in implementing mind mapping among English teachers in Palestine. This finding was similar to Marunevich, Shefieva, and Bessarabova (2021) study which identified that the use of mind mapping technique is unfamiliar to most English language teachers and students feel uncomfortable and find it difficult to draw even a plain mind map when first using mind-mapping at class.

Conclusion

The research findings demonstrate the significant influence of mapping strategy on students' speaking skills in Palestine. The utilization of mind mapping as a teaching tool for English language and general speaking skills is supported by several scholars, including Rao (2019), who highlighted how mind mapping empowers individuals to express their ideas with clarity and confidence. Moreover, the study reveals that mind mapping is particularly beneficial for students struggling with English speaking due to cultural barriers, as identified by Razeq (2022). The implementation of mind mapping not only enhances speaking skills but also encourages creative communication, as substantiated by Ibrahim (2017), Rao (2019), and Chou (2021). The technique also boosts motivation, active classroom participation, and collaborative learning, leading to improved exam performance (Rao, 2019). However, the findings also identified some limitations such as time constraints, limited focus on English language, lack of confidence, fear of errors, and teacher inexperience in using mind mapping in Palestine schools. This mirrors the observations of Marunevich, Shefieva, and Bessarabova (2021), who found that both teachers and students initially struggle with the unfamiliarity of the mind mapping technique.

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