

USING MIND-MAP TO IMPROVE WRITING SKILL FOR 11TH GRADERS AT THAI NGUYEN HIGH SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT

In the current global society, learning English is very important and essential both in our life and at school. English has been taught as a compulsory subject at most of schools in Vietnam. The objective of teaching English is helping students to find out information, knowledge and facts through using language skills. A number of Vietnamese people; however, have some difficulties when using English and they cannot use English language skills properly. Especially, many Vietnamese high school students often feel unsatisfied with their writing skills since they are lacked of appropriate approaches or techniques. So, the aim of this study is to find out the result of using the mind-map method to help students improve their writing skills. The participants of this study are 11th graders at Thai Nguyen High School. Through the application of the student's analytical approach, the study found out the current state of using mind maps in learning writing, the effectiveness of using mind-map technique to enhance students' writing skill at Thai Nguyen High School. Two different instruments were used in the research, such as questionnaire, writing analysis with the purpose of achieving more reliable and valid data for the study. The findings of the study will be useful for Thai Nguyen High School in particular as well as all of high schools in Thai Nguyen province in general.

Key words: *mind-map; writing; writing skill; students; Thai Nguyen High School.*

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SỬ DỤNG SƠ ĐỒ TƯ DUY NHẪM NÂNG CAO KỸ NĂNG VIẾT CHO HỌC SINH LỚP 11 TẠI TRƯỜNG TRUNG HỌC PHỔ THÔNG THÁI NGUYÊN

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TÓM TẮT

Trong xã hội toàn cầu hiện nay, học tiếng Anh là rất quan trọng và cần thiết cả trong cuộc sống và ở trường. Tiếng Anh được dạy như một môn học bắt buộc tại hầu hết các trường học ở Việt Nam. Mục tiêu của việc dạy tiếng Anh là giúp học sinh, sinh viên tìm hiểu thông tin, kiến thức và sự kiện thông qua việc sử dụng các kỹ năng ngôn ngữ. Tuy nhiên, một số người Việt Nam gặp khó khăn khi sử dụng tiếng Anh và không thể sử dụng các kỹ năng tiếng Anh đúng cách. Đặc biệt, nhiều học sinh trung học phổ thông tại Việt Nam thường cảm thấy không hài lòng với kỹ năng viết của mình vì họ thiếu phương pháp phù hợp. Vì vậy, mục đích của nghiên cứu này là tìm ra kết quả của việc sử dụng phương pháp sơ đồ tư duy để giúp học sinh cải thiện kỹ năng viết. Những người tham gia nghiên cứu này là học sinh lớp 11 tại trường trung học phổ thông Thái Nguyên. Thông qua việc áp dụng phương pháp phân tích bài viết của học sinh, nghiên cứu đã phát hiện ra thực trạng sử dụng bản đồ tư duy trong học viết, hiệu quả của việc sử dụng sơ đồ tư duy để nâng cao kỹ năng viết của học sinh tại trường trung học phổ thông Thái Nguyên. Hai công cụ khác nhau đã được sử dụng trong nghiên cứu là bảng câu hỏi, phân tích bài viết với mục đích đạt được dữ liệu đáng tin cậy và hợp lệ hơn cho nghiên cứu. Những phát hiện của nghiên cứu hi vọng sẽ hữu ích cho trường trung học phổ thông Thái Nguyên nói riêng cũng như tất cả các trường trung học phổ thông ở tỉnh Thái Nguyên nói chung.

Từ khóa: *sơ đồ tư duy; bài viết; kỹ năng viết; học sinh; trường Trung học Phổ thông Thái Nguyên.*

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1. Introduction

Today, English takes an important role in our life and it is considered as a universal language. It is assumed that around 90% of the people use English as a lingua franca. Therefore, English is one of the important subjects that are included in the curriculum. It has been taught from primary up to university level of education. As a result, teaching English has been the main concern of many educators as well as teachers around the world in general, particularly in many cities in Viet Nam and Thai Nguyen is no exception.

Being one of high schools in Thai Nguyen city, Thai Nguyen High school has required a reputation for its educational quality. Nevertheless, the number of students using English fluently is low. In order that the students are able to pass the English tests, they have to learn four skills, including listening, speaking, reading and writing well. Among those four skills, many students show that writing is the most difficult one. Many of them reported that they could not find the suitable way to learn writing skill effectively. Therefore, we need to find the memory strategies to help students improve their writing skill. Fully aware of the situation, the research decided to carry out an investigation to use mind-map technique in learning writing skill to students at grade 11 and help students write more effectively. By using mind maps, learners can learn writing with their own imagination. Besides, they can use mind maps to clarify their thoughts by grouping related ideas and creating their visual images to remember supporting sentences easily.

2. Literature review

2.1 The concepts of writing

Nunan (2003, p. 88) [1] states that writing is an intellectual activity of finding the ideas and thinking about the way to express and arrange them into a statement and paragraph that is clear to be understood by the people. It

indicates that the writers are demanded to show the thoughts and organize writer's concept in understanding an issue which is shown to the public. It requires the integration of idea systematically written. Writing is considered as an active creation of text involves on the one hand lower-order transcription skills such as handwriting, punctuation and spelling, and on the other hand, higher-order self-regulated thinking processes such as planning, sequencing and expressing the content [2]. It requires the writer to express the content of writing into a good composition by considering the aspects of writing to be understood by the readers. Harmer (2004, p. 31-33) [3] states that there is some the importance of learning writing. Those can be seen the following points:

- Writing encourage students to focus on accurate language use because they think as they write. It may provoke well development as they resolve problems which writing puts in their mind,
- Writing has always been used as a means of reinforcing language that has been taught. Teachers use writing skill to make a note about recent learnt grammar in the learning process.
- Writing is frequently useful as preparation for some other activities, in particular when students write sentences. The students are given the time to think the ideas and asked to write sentences
- Writing can also be as an integral part of a larger activity where the focus in on something else, such as language practice, acting out or speaking. The teacher asks students to write short dialogues which they will act out.

2.2 Mind-map

According to Tony Buzan & Barry Buzan (1996) [4], Mind Mapping, which “provides a

universal key to unlocking the potential of the brain”, is the creative technique to take note the information. He stated that mind maps make full use of our mind in an effective way since they have the structures and features designed to be suitable with the function of our brain – in a radiant rather than linear manner. Besides, he pointed out that “a Radiant Thinking brain should express itself in a radiant form which reflects the pattern of its own thought processes [...] the Mind Map is that form.”

2.3 Advantages of using mind maps

In “Mind Mapping Evidence Report”, the author summarized from many scientific researches about mind maps and pointed out that mind map technique is actually an effective learning method. He indicated some following advantages of using mind maps in learning:

- Boost memory
- Foster creativity
- Promote active learning
- Encourage critical thinking

3. Methodology

The study utilized writing analysis to find authentic information. The participants of this study are 11th graders at Thai Nguyen High School. The total number of participants are 10. The researcher divided all of them into two groups, each group has 5 members: the experimental group and the control group. The experimental group has learnt how to build a mind map and advantages of the mind map technique. They listed as many topic sentences and supporting sentences relating to the essay possible in a mind-map. Then, they wrote an essay using these all the ideas given in the mind map and gave to the research. The control group practices writing as they are learning in their curriculum. The research collected 20 essays which were written by the experimental group and 20 essays by the

control group in 4 weeks. The purpose of collecting articles of both groups to see the effectiveness of using mind maps to write essays through the compare the writings of the experimental group with the ones of the control group.

4. Findings and discussions

For more accurate information to test the results when applying mind map method to improve students’ writing skill, the researcher chose 10 students out of total all of students in grade 11 at Thai Nguyen High school. The researcher divided 10 students into 2 groups: 5 students in an experimental group and 5 students in a control group. The study was held for 4 weeks, on Mondays and Fridays every week. Every week, students wrote two essays about 350 words in 60 minutes. In week 1, the researcher collected 20 essays from 10 students and from this pointed out that all of them lacking some vital supporting sentences that of the topic sentences.

From week 2 and week 4, 10 students continued to write essays, but all of students on the experimental group built a mind map before writing an essay, the control group did not. After 60 minutes, the researcher collected 10 essays. After 4 weeks applying this method, the researcher had the following results: From the result of the study in 4 weeks, the researcher can make the following conclusion. Obviously, when there is not mind map method, students have missed out some supporting sentences in the article. On the contrary, when applying this method and giving the students the right way once they have indicated their mistakes, they no longer make mistakes. Specially, a student on the experimental group had the first and the second essays with lack of supporting ideas. During the study, 5 students on a control group constantly missed out supporting sentences. Based on the results of the study after 4 weeks, it is possible to see mind map

method is a specific feasible and suitable method to help students improve their writing skill.

5. Conclusion

Using mind map method is not new in Vietnam as well as around the world. However, organizing this method of how to bring it best effect is very important. The study of this paper again reaffirms the effectiveness of this approach to improve grammar skills for students in writing. Students can work in pairs or groups, they can compare and discuss their ideas, perhaps adding to their mind maps as they go. This stage also provides the opportunity for peer teaching, as other may be available to provide the English word for the idea that was noted down. Teachers can walk around, examine students' practice and assist where there are any questions. This technique brings us various benefits. It can make the atmosphere in the class became free and comfortable. In addition, using mind maps to plan and outline your essay will not only make your writing process a lot of easier, it will also enable you to work through sources more efficiently and help you find information more quickly. However, during the teaching process, teachers face many difficulties in organizing this method. Teachers can hardly control the activity of all students in a class because the number of students in a college classroom is usually quite large, ranging from 50 to 70 students. In addition, students who do not have high professional qualifications, as well as negative attitudes towards English, also reduce the efficiency of this process. Therefore, the teachers with the expertise, attention to students also cannot make the school more effective, as well as this method, is desired.

In summary, after analyzing the experimental results as well as observing the attitudes of students participating in this method, it can be said that this method is a perfectly suitable method in the seminar class at Thai Nguyen High school. This research comes from many paragraphs as well as essays of 11th graders at Thai Nguyen High School which still lack of supporting ideas. Besides, students are not actively working in groups, most of them also study alone, so they cannot have more ideas for their essays. This study was conducted at Thai Nguyen High School, but it is hoped that it will be useful for other schools in Vietnam.

Based on the results of this study, it is hoped that the mind map method will be used more frequently during writing hours. In addition, this method can also be used to improve the remaining 3 skills, especially the reading skills of the students. This method improves students' writing skill with the hope of improving exam results, especially the IELTS exam. This research also wants to provide some effective suggestions for organizing this method during the writing lesson to help students have a good essay. It is hoped that this study could be useful for students and teachers to limit the problems in scholarly writing as well as other forms of writing.

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