

# The Effective Application of Mindmap in English Teaching for Middle School Students

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## Abstract

English as a language course requires more consideration in the teaching process and is directly related to secondary school students' language ability and cultural understanding. In this pluralistic internet age, English teachers need to modify their teaching methods and apply mind maps to their teaching to lead students to explore the connections between English knowledge, and learn from elementary to the profound, so as to improve their scores and speaking ability and arouse their interest in learning. This paper briefly introduces the connotation of mind mapping, analyses the problems of English teaching in junior high school, and discusses specific applications from several aspects.

## Keywords

Mind Map; Junior High School; English Teaching Activities; Vocabulary; Grammar; Reading; Writing.

## 1. Introduction

Mind maps have tabular features, consisting of linear, textual and symbolic elements, which facilitate the consolidation of memory and understanding of English knowledge. Currently, mind maps are gradually being used in junior high school English teaching to make classroom learning more active and students' thinking more flexible, which can help understand the connections between various types of vocabulary and syntax and enhance the effectiveness of English course learning. Both education departments and English teachers should clarify the connotation of mind maps and make flexible use of them in class to provide a relaxed English learning environment for students, make the content easier for them to understand, and achieve the desired teaching goals.

## 2. The Connotation of Mind Map

Although the content of English teaching in junior high school is relatively simple, it is still difficult for students to learn trivial English knowledge within the limited time in class. Mind maps can integrate graphics, text, lines, colors and other elements, so that trivial and scattered knowledge points are linked together in a systematic structure, constructing the inner connection of knowledge to help students understand, and in this way enhance their memory and cognitive ability. [1] Given the characteristics of the English curriculum, students are required to keep learning and accumulating in order to flexibly use the knowledge and effectively express their thoughts, so that their listening, speaking, reading and writing skills can be continuously improved. Mind maps make grammar and vocabulary systematic, which helps make teaching more organized, strengthen students' learning ability, and solidify their English foundation. [2]

### 3. English Teaching Problems in Junior High School

Although the development of the internet provides a broad platform for English teaching in junior high school, many problems still need to be addressed. Currently, the application of mind maps in English teaching is not common in Xitun Middle School, which in part hinders curriculum development and the improvement of teaching efficiency in class. In short, the current problems facing middle school English teaching contain the following aspects that need to be addressed to achieve a flexible and comprehensive application of mind maps.

#### 3.1. Poor Student Subjectivity

Some English teachers in Xitun Middle School still apply traditional indoctrination teaching methods, ignoring the subjectivity of students in class, so that the teaching activities are not productive. They have not yet recognized the importance of mind maps in teaching, and still ignore its application, which leads to scattered course knowledge and tedious teaching content. It will present a great hurdle for students to fully understand and master the knowledge and result in passive learning with little autonomy and enthusiasm.

#### 3.2. Simple Teaching Method

At present, many English teachers still refer to the curriculum and teach in a step-by-step manner, teaching students to recite words, grasp grammar knowledge, practice basic writing and so on. This kind of teaching method is simple and significantly neglects the practice of listening and speaking. [3] Since the teaching content and methods are both monotonous, it is difficult to stimulate students' interest in learning English, which diminishes the effectiveness of English teaching in class and obstructs the cultivation of comprehensive English skills.

#### 3.3. Weak Language Foundation

In the context of exam-oriented education, many English teachers carry out teaching according to the curriculum, not paying enough attention to classroom innovation, ignoring students' basic language skills development and skills training, which is not conducive to the cultivation of their thinking ability and is very detrimental to daily English learning. The majority of junior high school students do not have a solid foundation in English and have difficulty in applying their knowledge flexibly, which hugely affects their English learning and is destructive to the development of comprehensive language competence in the future.

## 4. The Application Value of Mind Map in Junior High School English Teaching

As a tool to boost thinking and understanding, mind mapping can visually represent knowledge structure by flexibly applying elements such as colors, codes, and drawings to help students remember. During teaching practice, teachers should identify teaching priorities, use mind maps to link related concepts and facts, and develop students' memory, comprehension and creativity, so as to continuously improve their efficiency of English learning. [4]

Applying mind maps to the middle school English teaching enables students to understand and remember in a short time. At a young age, junior high school students are limited in cognitive and learning ability, and their thoughts are easily restricted. Paying too much attention to word and grammar memorization while ignoring the overall structure of the subject is not conducive to fostering students' listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. English teachers should make good use of mind maps to improve the knowledge framework and create a concise and smooth classroom environment for junior high school students to promote their learning. At the same time, junior high school English textbooks contain mostly short sentences and short texts, which are not very difficult to teach. Mind maps are able to show the relationship between

individual concepts and points so that students can learn the relevance of the contents and have a more comprehensive and deep understanding of the knowledge, and eventually apply it to their daily lives.

## 5. Application of Mind Map in English Teaching in Junior High School

The application of mind mapping in junior high school English teaching involves the following aspects such as vocabulary, grammar, reading, and writing. Teachers should take into account the age and interests of students, the curriculum background and standards, and make flexible use of mind maps to minimize the difficulty of the course in order to help students understand and master the knowledge more solidly and comprehensively.

### 5.1. Vocabulary Teaching

In the practice of English teaching, vocabulary teaching is critical and indispensable. Flexibly mastering words and enriching vocabulary are very helpful for junior high school students in English learning. In teaching practice, English teachers can use mind maps to classify different vocabulary with the help of bubble icons to help students accurately understand the parts of speech and meanings of a large amount of words and master them in a short time, so as to solidify students' language foundation.[5] To take the lesson "Unit3 I'm more outgoing than my sister" in the first book of the eighth grade of the PEP edition as an example. Since words like smart, lovely, bored, kind and patient are connected directly to the central word "character", the teacher can draw a mind map to present the relationship, which will effectively enrich students' vocabulary and help them remember words more effortlessly. At the same time, English teachers can also apply mind maps to lead students to learn and memorize words through affixes, and to comprehend the combination of different affixes. For example, the noun optimistic is related to the adjective optimistical and the adverb optimistically. In this way, mind maps can help students master vocabulary morphological transformations and build a solid foundation in English.

### 5.2. Grammar Teaching

For junior high school students, grammar learning can be difficult and humdrum, which can even result in the loss of interest in English learning. In classroom teaching, with the help of mind maps, tree diagrams can be utilized to help students establish a grammar system, so that they can systematically understand, learn and master grammar.[6] For example, in the process of learning adjectives, with the help of tree diagrams, a branch structure is constructed, and the usage, classification, word order, and comparative adjectives are shown, so that the students are able to comprehend the whole knowledge structure. Taking adjectives ending in "ly" as an example, words such as "ugly" and "lovely" are introduced, so that students can deepen their understanding of parts of speech and memorize them while learning grammar. In this process, students' grammar learning will be further enhanced and their ability to apply English grammar will be improved through systematic and comprehensive learning of grammar. Another example is the learning of singular and plural nouns. With the help of a mind map, several common situations related to singular-plural conversion are sorted out separately: making countable nouns plural is to add the suffix "s" at the end; adding "es" to the end of nouns ending in "s," "z," "x," "ch," or "sh" to make them plural; nouns ending in a consonant letter plus "y" are made plural by changing "y" to "i" and then add "es"; nouns ending in "o" become plural by adding "es" directly except for foreign words or abbreviations. At the same time, common vocabulary can be listed through mind maps, which is convenient for students to understand and remember.

### 5.3. Reading Teaching

In the teaching practice of junior high school English courses, the importance of reading teaching is self-evident, and it facilitates language and cross-cultural learning for students. According to the characteristics of reading teaching, mind maps should be flexibly used to show students the development and causal connection of the story with flowcharts, so as to facilitate understanding of text topics, provide students with reading methods, and help students pass reading comprehension tests. [7] For example, when teaching "Birthday Food Around the World" in the article "Unit 10 I'd like some noodles" in the second book of the seventh grade of the PEP edition, flowcharts with clues like "Where," "What," "How," and "What" should be utilized in order to help students understand the cultures of different countries and compare Chinese and Western cultures, so as to clarify the topic of the article, clear the reading steps, stimulate students' thinking, and enhance English discourse analysis and comprehension abilities. In the English classroom, teachers can also use multimedia equipment to show students the latest news from foreign media and encourage them to make mind maps to sort out relevant events, people and time in the news, so as to cultivate their reading ability, enrich their knowledge base and reduce the difficulty of learning English.

### 5.4. Writing Teaching

Writing has been the weak link in the process of teaching English in junior high school, which refers to written English with a certain topic utilizing the learned knowledge. [8] Based on the teaching situation and students' characteristics, teachers can use mind maps with bracketed diagrams to teach students to break down the writing topics, thus making clearer their writing thoughts and enhancing the effectiveness of teaching English writing. For example, if the essay topic is about the expression and solution of a friend's problem, bracketed diagrams should be used to present the English language information to students for comprehension. First of all, the composition begins with "My friend also has two problems," then the problems should be described one by one and suggestions need to be given, for example, "One problem is that.../ I think he should...; The other problem is that .../ I think he should..." In this way, students are guided to describe the problem and propose feasible solutions to achieve the desired expression effect. Therefore, the English writing ability of the students can be continuously improved and the promotion of mind mapping in English writing teaching can be realized. English teachers should clarify the features and requirements of junior high school English composition teaching, and after giving the topic, guide students to clear the important points and draw a simple mind map as a basis for writing training, so as to lower the difficulty of teaching composition, develop students' writing ability and improve the overall writing competence. [9]

In summary, the application of mind maps in junior high school English teaching can not be accomplished overnight. English teachers in Xitun Middle School in Lingtai County need to clarify the problems and shortcomings base on the teaching activities. Subsequently, more attention should be paid to mind maps and their flexible application in class, which will inject dynamism for teaching English vocabulary, reading, grammar and writing, facilitate middle school students to master and apply the knowledge, lay the foundation for high school and even college English learning, and continuously promote their English ability.

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