The Research of English Writing Teaching Based on Mind Mapping

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It is widely acknowledged that writing not only has a significant role to play in English teaching, but also is an effective way to reflect students' English comprehensive ability. In recent years, more and more scholars have been exploring various new teaching methods of writing. However, currently, there are still some problems existing in English writing teaching, and the teaching performance is not satisfactory. Therefore, it is urgent for teachers to find a new teaching method to improve this situation in the English writing teaching. In recent years, the studies on mind mapping have been conducted in many different areas. However, there are still few studies on mind mapping in English writing teaching. This study uses literature analysis, and comparative analysis to explore how to apply mind mapping to English writing teaching. The purpose of this study is to explore whether applying mind mapping to the English writing teaching is beneficial for improving students' English writing level, at the same time, to provide a feasible method to make the current situation of the English writing teaching improved and some useful suggestions for further teaching and research.

Keywords: mind mapping, English writing teaching

Introduction

The Definition of Mind Mapping

Mind mapping, also known as mind map or brain map, is a simple but effective tool for expressing people's divergent thinking, which comes into being abroad in the 1960s and is put forward by the British famous psychologist Tony Buzan. Mind mapping gives a full play of both sides of the brain, so as to make the logic thinking ability and radioactive ability of human beings enhanced. It combines pictures, colors, lines, symbols, words together to strengthen people's memory and understanding. It has a significant role to play in many aspects, such as, creative thinking, problem solving, note-taking, activity planning, decision making and so on.

Characteristics of Mind Mapping

The following are the main characteristics of mind mapping originally proposed by Tony Buzan. Firstly, the focus of the attention lies in the center of the whole structure. Secondly, other relevant information extends to all directions like branches around the focus. Thirdly, the branches are made up of key words written on relevant lines. And the less important topics are also presented as branches but they can be attached to the higher branches. Fourthly, each branch forms a nodal structure that connects each other.

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Classifications of Mind Mapping

There are various types of mind mappings, but the most commonly used mind mappings are the following eight kinds. Each of them can be extended unlimitedly, and can be combined with each other sometimes. They are circle map, bubble map, double bubble map, tree map, bridge map, brace map, flow map, and multi-flow map.

The Feasibility of Mind Mapping in English Writing Teaching

Factors in English Writing

- **The Demanding Lexical and Language Chunks**

Retrieving lexical chunks indeed is a process of stimulating students' earlier learned lexical knowledge. During this process, semantic, contextual and pragmatic factors should all be taken into consideration. Therefore, students who have a good master of lexical chunks are able to minimize their burden, and locate a structure for English writing quickly and easily. What is more, a good command of language chunks makes English learners retrieve corresponding language chunks as quickly as possible in the specific contexts.

However, those students who are short of vocabulary are unable to write a complete and excellent composition on their own. Fortunately, with the help of the mind mapping, students' divergent thinking can be exercised so that it is easier for those students to relate the specific information to the targeted topic. Thus, the application of mind mapping in English writing teaching is a good choice to improve students' writing ability and skills.

- **The Genres and Structures**

It is widely acknowledged that English writing has different genres and each genre has different structures. Therefore, before writing, students are supposed to make it clear what kind of genre of English writing he/ she is going to deal with. It will be much easier for students to start their writing in English if they have a systematic collection of the structure of English writing. With the help of mind mapping, they can use those structures in their writing directly, which provides them with a hierarchical and systematic thinking pattern.

- **The Appropriate Models**

As we all know, there are indeed some models which can be applied to all kinds of English writings. These models have fixed structures, which consist of some specific sentence patterns to be completed and many other conjoining words. What English learners have to do is to insert their opinions, reasons, and conclusions in the proper locations and make the passage logical and reasonable. To make this process more smooth, students would better accumulate more models of English writing. This process makes full use of the mind mapping to construct students' thinking and format.

- **The Grammatical Acceptability**

It is widely acknowledged that grammar has a significant role to play in English learning, not to mention in English writing. The scores of English writings in a large scale are influenced by the grammatical acceptability. By using mind mapping, it is easier for students to construct their grammatical structure and retrieve their grammatical knowledge. Therefore, they can have a better understanding of the grammar and they can organize their opinions reasonably. Besides, with the mind mapping, it is easier for students to check whether there are mistakes in their writings or not so as to make their compositions more logical, systematic, and correct.

- **The Famous Proverbs and Sayings**

In English writing, it is a good option to use some appropriate and profound proverbs or sayings, which have a great role to play to make their writings more shining and vivid. At the same time, using appropriate proverbs or sayings serves as a sound way to reflect the deeper understanding and command of the gist on behalf of students. Therefore, it is advisable that learners form a habit to read as many as passages in English as possible, and accumulate as many as profound proverbs or sayings, phrases, expressions, and sentence patterns as possible. All of these are beneficial to make a passage more elegant and profound. However, there is one thing to mention, when conceiving a passage, students should pay more attention to the appropriateness of the proverbs or sayings, instead of not thinking the specific topics and contexts.

The Reasonability

To write a satisfactory composition, students need sufficient vocabulary and comprehensive knowledge system, which requires students to summarize and accumulate as many as words and phrases in their English learning process. However, with the traditional English teaching method, it is difficult for students to practice their thinking, memorizing, summarizing, and organizing ability, thus making the improvement of their English writing ability difficult and slow. The writing teaching is a comprehensive practice, and also a weak link in English teaching. As for those students who fail to construct a complete network of knowledge and fail to fully understand the connection between knowledge points will never conceive a sound composition. In terms of this issue, some scholars hold the view that the score-oriented education hampers the improvement of students' English writing, at the same time, making it impossible for students to fully exert their potential. At the same time, some other scholars hold the view firmly that this phenomenon is the result of the superficial researches towards the writing teaching of teachers and their obscure, ambiguous explanations to their students. However, most scholars are convinced that the most important reason lies in the neglect of students' autonomous learning ability and students' cognitive process, and their over-emphasis on teacher-oriented teaching, thus making students' learning requirements neglected.

Considering this situation, it is necessary and demanding for teachers to search for a feasible and effective way to teach English writing in order to improve the English writing ability and skills of contemporary students. Reaching a sound combination between English writing teaching and mind mapping is feasible in terms of attributes and functions of mind mapping and the current conditions of English writing.

The Necessity

From the perspective of teachers, on the one hand, the application of mind mapping to English writing teaching does good to acquainting students with the related topic, to make their classes active and vivid by use of pictures and different colors. Besides, applying mind mapping to English writing teaching is also helpful for stimulating students' imaginative abilities and arousing their interest as well as enthusiasm in English writing. On the other hand, the application of mind mapping English writing teaching can also serve as a way to impart knowledge, to search teaching materials, to make teaching plans, and to summarize the whole class, analyzing the structures of English passages better, and making the explanations of English writing skills clearly. Applying mind mapping to English writing classes can relate writing activities to thinking activities effectively, so as to

make the effects of English writing teaching enhanced and finally students' writing ability and performance improved.

From the perspective of students, the application of mind mapping to English writing teaching is beneficial for enhancing their logical and organizational ability, making them grasp the key points better, enriching their compositions, so as to make their compositions systematic and hierarchical. With the help of mind mapping, in the process of English writing, it is easy for students to be visually surprised through the combination of graphics and colors. English writing framework, structure, and key points can be displayed by different symbols and colors. With this new teaching method, the English writing class will be enriched and become more vivid, thus students will be more interested in this class. Apart from saving time, the application of mind mapping in the process of English writing also makes students' writing ability and performance improved, and stimulates their enthusiasm for English writing fully. Besides, applying mind mapping to English writing is a feasible method for students to make their thinking, memorizing, summarizing, and organizing ability practiced.

Conclusion

At first, from the perspective of students, the process of English writing is difficult and time-consuming for most of them. Therefore, the application of mind mapping in English writing is necessary and urgent, which is helpful for students to grasp English writing skills quickly and to improve their writing ability. Mind mapping is an effective tool of learning and a sound way to thinking. In the process of English writing, with the help of mind mapping, it is easier for students to make an outline, to list the key points, to organize their sentences, to extend relevant details, and eventually to make their English writing level enhanced. In addition, mind mapping is also an effective method for students to enhance their logical and divergent thinking ability as well as their associative ability.

Secondly, from the aspect of teachers, in the process of teaching English writing, mind mapping has a significant role to play in improving students' English writing ability and skills. It is easier for teachers to relate the unfamiliar topic to some earlier known information, thus making students' thinking more active and providing more opportunities for them to review their earlier known knowledge. Therefore, in the process of English writing teaching, mind mapping should be used effectively as well as appropriately, which is able to make a difficult and complex English writing teaching process smooth and systematic, helping students to understand what they have learned more deeply, remembering what they have learned more easily, and providing a good way for them to practice their divergent thinking. Besides, the application of mind mapping to the teaching of English writing is beneficial for stimulating students' enthusiasm in writing by using different colors, images, symbols, lines and so on, thus improving teachers' teaching effects and upgrading their teaching methods.

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