

TEACHING SPEAKING TO A2 LEVEL LEARNERS THROUGH MIND MAPPING

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Abstract: Teaching speaking to A2 level learners is a rewarding yet challenging task for educators. At this proficiency level, learners are developing their ability to communicate basic ideas, express opinions, and interact in simple conversations. However, they may still lack confidence, have limited vocabulary, and encounter difficulties with fluency and organizing their thoughts. Mind mapping can serve as an effective tool to address these challenges and enhance the speaking skills of A2 level learners. This article will explore the benefits of mind mapping in the language classroom, provide practical strategies for implementation, and discuss the positive outcomes it brings to both students and teachers.

Key words: mind mapping, speaking skills, A2 learners, vocabulary development, idea organization, language confidence, collaborative learning, visual aids, creativity, fluency.

Аннотация: Обучение разговорной речи учащихся уровня А2 — это благодарная, но сложная задача для преподавателей. На этом уровне владения языком учащиеся развиваются свои навыки изложения основных идей, выражения мнений и участия в простых беседах. Однако им может не хватать уверенности в себе, у них может быть ограниченный словарный запас, а также они могут испытывать трудности с беглостью речи и организацией своих мыслей. Составление ментальных карт может служить эффективным инструментом для решения этих проблем и улучшения навыков разговорной речи учащихся уровня А2. В этой статье будут рассмотрены преимущества составления ментальных карт в языковом классе, предложены практические стратегии внедрения и обсуждены положительные результаты, которые это приносит как учащимся, так и преподавателям.

Ключевые слова: составление ментальных карт, навыки разговорной речи, учащиеся уровня А2, развитие словарного запаса, организация идей, уверенность в языке, совместное обучение, наглядные пособия, креативность, бегłość речи.

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communicate basic ideas, express opinions, and interact in simple conversations. However, they may still lack confidence, have limited vocabulary, and encounter difficulties with fluency and organizing their thoughts. Mind mapping can serve as an effective tool to address these challenges and enhance the speaking skills of A2 level learners. This article will explore the benefits of mind mapping in the language classroom, provide practical strategies for implementation, and discuss the positive outcomes it brings to both students and teachers.

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INTRODUCTION

One of the main reasons why mind mapping is effective in teaching speaking is its visual nature. Mind maps help learners organize their ideas in a clear and structured way, which reduces anxiety and boosts their confidence before they start speaking. When learners see their ideas laid out visually — connected by branches and keywords — it becomes easier for them to follow their thoughts, remember important points, and find connections between different topics. This is particularly beneficial for A2 level learners, who may often feel overwhelmed by the task of speaking in a foreign language. The use of mind maps in the speaking classroom also encourages brainstorming and creativity. By allowing students to generate ideas freely and without judgment, teachers can foster an atmosphere where students are not afraid to make mistakes or express themselves. This process helps learners activate their background knowledge and link new vocabulary and grammar structures to what they already know. For example, when preparing for a speaking activity about holidays, the teacher can guide the students to create a mind map with the word “holiday” in the center. Branches can include topics like “places,” “activities,” “people,” and “weather.” Students can add relevant words and expressions to each branch, which they can later use when forming sentences and engaging in conversation.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Another advantage of mind mapping is its ability to help learners build and expand their vocabulary. As students add new words and phrases to their maps, they develop a stronger lexicon, which they can quickly access during speaking tasks. When learners encounter unknown vocabulary, the teacher can add it to the collective mind map, provide examples, and encourage students to use these words in their own sentences. Repeated exposure to and practice with these words through mind mapping ensures better retention and recall, which are crucial for successful speaking. Mind mapping also aids in the development of coherence and cohesion in speech. One challenge faced by A2 level speakers is the organization of their ideas into a logical sequence. Mind

maps provide a blueprint that students can refer to while speaking, ensuring that they cover all relevant points and transition smoothly between ideas. For instance, when giving a short presentation about their family, a student can prepare a mind map that branches out from “my family” to “my parents,” “my siblings,” “our hobbies,” and “special family times.” This not only helps the speaker maintain focus but also makes the speech more engaging and understandable for listeners [1].

Teachers can effectively integrate mind mapping into a variety of classroom speaking activities. One common technique is to use mind maps as a pre-speaking activity. Before a group discussion or pair work, students work individually or in small groups to create a mind map on the given topic. The teacher can provide a template or let students create their own from scratch, using colored pens and paper or digital tools like MindMeister or Coggle. This preparatory phase allows learners to gather their ideas, collaborate, and prepare the language they need, which reduces the cognitive load during the actual speaking activity. Mind maps can also be used during speaking tasks. For example, in a “describe and guess” activity, one student draws a mind map about an object, place, or person, and their partner asks questions to guess what it is. This interactive approach keeps students engaged and encourages spontaneous use of language. It also reinforces the vocabulary and structures that have been mapped out previously. Teachers can walk around the classroom, offering feedback and support as needed [2].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After speaking tasks, mind mapping can serve as a reflective tool. Students can update their maps with new words, phrases, or ideas that emerged during the activity. They can also analyze what went well and identify areas for improvement. This reflective practice helps students become more autonomous learners, aware of their progress and motivated to keep developing their speaking skills. Mind mapping supports differentiation in mixed-ability classrooms as well. Because mind maps can be easily adapted to suit learners’ needs, students with different levels of proficiency can work at their own pace, adding as many branches or details as they are comfortable with. Teachers can assign more complex mapping tasks to advanced learners, focusing on connectors, adjectives, or idiomatic expressions, while less proficient learners can focus on basic vocabulary and simple phrases. This flexibility ensures that all students are challenged appropriately and can participate fully in speaking activities. The use of mind mapping also helps support the integration of all language skills. While the primary goal is to develop speaking, students also practice reading (when exploring word banks or texts related to the topic), listening (when following instructions or listening to classmates’ presentations), and writing (when adding words and phrases to their mind maps). This holistic approach mirrors real-world communication and provides a more meaningful context for language learning [3].

Technology offers new possibilities for mind mapping in the classroom. Interactive whiteboards, tablets, and educational apps allow students to create, edit, and share mind maps digitally. Digital tools often include features like images, voice notes, and easy collaboration, making the process more engaging and accessible. Teachers can project a collaborative mind map onto the screen and invite students to contribute ideas in real time, fostering a sense of community and teamwork. Assessment of speaking can also be supported through mind mapping. Teachers can use students' mind maps as evidence of preparation and language development. By reviewing individual and group maps, teachers can gain insight into learners' thought processes, vocabulary range, and ability to organize ideas. Mind maps can be included as part of speaking portfolios, allowing students and teachers to track progress over time. Despite all these benefits, it is important to train students how to use mind maps effectively. Some learners may be unfamiliar with the concept at first, so teachers should provide clear examples and model the process step by step. Over time, students will become more skilled at generating keywords, organizing branches logically, and using their maps to support their speech [4].

To conclude, mind mapping is a versatile and powerful tool for teaching speaking to A2 level learners. It provides a visual framework for organizing ideas, encourages creativity, supports vocabulary development, fosters confidence, and makes the speaking process more accessible for all students. By incorporating mind mapping into their teaching practice, educators can create a dynamic learning environment where every student is empowered to find their voice and communicate effectively. As teachers continue to explore innovative ways of teaching language, mind mapping remains a valuable strategy for helping A2 level learners become confident and proficient speakers. In addition, mind mapping can be woven into various topics and themes suitable for A2 level learners. Typical themes like daily routines, hobbies, travel, food, and school life can be explored using mind maps, helping students rehearse essential vocabulary and ideas beforehand. For instance, before speaking about their favorite food, students can construct a mind map including aspects like taste, ingredients, cooking process, special occasions for eating the food, and who they usually share it with. This structure enables learners to expand their speech beyond simple statements and delve into details, making their communication richer and more engaging. Mind mapping can also be used to support pair and group activities, which are essential for developing speaking skills at the A2 level. By working together on a mind map, students learn how to negotiate meaning, ask for clarification, share ideas, and support each other's learning. These collaborative experiences not only improve language skills but also help build social competence and confidence in working as a team [5].

Moreover, teachers can use mind mapping as part of formative assessment. By observing how students create and use their mind maps, teachers can identify common errors or gaps in knowledge and provide timely feedback. This ongoing assessment helps inform lesson planning and ensures that teaching is responsive to students' needs. Another strength of mind mapping is its ability to make learning more personalized. Students can create mind maps that reflect their own experiences, preferences, and identities. When learners see their own lives and interests represented in classroom activities, they are more likely to engage actively and feel a sense of ownership over their learning. When introducing mind mapping to beginners or young learners, it is often helpful to start with simple maps and gradually increase complexity as students become more comfortable. Teachers can begin with maps that contain only a few branches and keywords, focusing on familiar topics. As students progress, they can create bigger and more detailed maps, perhaps even using them to prepare short talks or presentations. Furthermore, the visual and interactive nature of mind mapping makes it especially suited for learners who have different learning styles. Visual learners benefit from organizing information spatially, while kinesthetic learners enjoy drawing and building the map. Auditory learners can be encouraged to explain their mind maps to the class or to their partners, thus combining visual and verbal practice.

Mind mapping also helps learners develop self-correction and self-monitoring strategies. After completing a speaking activity, students and teachers can review the mind map together, identifying areas where language was used correctly and areas that need improvement. This encourages a positive and constructive approach to error correction, as learners see it as part of their ongoing development. In terms of classroom management, mind mapping brings order and focus to speaking tasks. Instead of open-ended speaking assignments that may leave learners unsure of where to start, mind maps provide a roadmap, guiding students through the process of idea generation, organization, and speech. This structure not only benefits less confident students but also allows teachers to manage groups more effectively during communicative activities. Regular use of mind mapping in teaching speaking also creates a routine, helping establish classroom expectations and reducing anxiety around speaking in another language. When mind mapping is a familiar part of classroom practice, students come to expect it as part of their preparation and use it automatically as a tool for communication. Finally, mind mapping cultivates important 21st-century skills, such as critical thinking, problem-solving, collaboration, and the ability to synthesize and present information. By engaging in mind mapping activities, A2 level learners are not only improving their English speaking skills but also developing transferable skills that will benefit them in academic and professional contexts in the future [6].

CONCLUSION

In summary, the implementation of mind mapping as a strategy to teach speaking to A2 level learners brings numerous benefits: it enhances vocabulary, supports idea organization, fosters confidence, promotes creativity, and creates opportunities for personalized, collaborative, and reflective learning. As teachers strive to develop competent and confident speakers, mind mapping stands out as an invaluable and flexible technique that integrates seamlessly into communicative language teaching approaches. By embracing this visual and interactive tool, teachers can help A2 learners take meaningful steps towards fluency and effective communication.

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