

# English Teachers' View on Mind Mapping on How to Teach Reading Comprehension

Dr. P. Arul Nehru

*Assistant Professor in Pedagogy of English  
Regional Institute of Education (NCERT), Mysuru*

## ABSTRACT

*This paper aimed to study the effect of mind mapping on reading comprehension of a text and teachers' view on mind map as a resource to teach learners how to read and comprehend a text in a better way. The research has met twenty-five teachers of English Language and conducted interview on reading comprehension, note-making, information organizers, mind mapping, concept mapping and any other strategy to enhance learners' reading comprehension. The interviews were analyzed and the results showed that constructing mind maps while reading helps the learners to comprehend the text better. The teachers expressed that the process of mind mapping helps to improve their lesson planning, giving instruction and teaching becomes more easier and motivating the learners to create mind maps with images and colours to represent the information visually which gets attention and attraction, and the text becomes more meaningful to the learners.*

**Keywords:** *Reading comprehension, Mind map, graphic organizer*

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## Introduction

Reading comprehension is very essential for success in academics and needed to be functional in the twenty first century. Reading is a complex cognitive process which takes place while reading a text like extracting and constructing information from the text (Snow, 2002). When the expository text is given to the learners, mind mapping would help to construct the information visually. Mind map is a graphic organizer, as a learning tool (Buzan, 2002). There were twenty-five English teachers participated in this study, from the Higher Secondary schools, and the teachers' questionnaire was administered in order to find their educational qualification, teaching experience, problems faced and so on. Findings from this were substantiated through informal interviews with these teachers. There were fourteen male and eleven female teachers, belonging to the age group of thirty to fifty-five. They were all B.T assistants, (Bachelor of Teaching, their designation), and held educational qualifications like MA., B.Ed., and M.Ed. All of them studied through Tamil Medium during school, and English medium at the college level. These teachers had an average of eighteen years of teaching experience, though feedback was collected only from English teachers, the researcher interacted with other teachers of other subjects like science and mathematics but who were also teaching English.

Two teachers had attended in-service programmes - British Council training and the other Enrichment training. The two teachers had not attended any in-service programmes. All them mentioned that they used both Tamil and English as the medium of instruction in their English classrooms. Thirteen teachers had been spending thirty-six hours, and another teacher had been spending twenty-four hours teaching per week. All the teachers responded that they emphasized on developing listening skill more, followed by speaking, reading and finally writing. When the learners were making notes, the teachers helped them and gave supporting ideas to underline the important words and to take notes on the content subjects.

## **Mind Map**

Six teachers were aware of mind maps they had attended government training programmes on mind mapping during which they were given the teachers' guide created by the Tamil Nadu Education Department that recommended the use of mind maps from sixth to eighth grades. However, they admitted that they did not use any resources in the language classroom, they used only blackboard to teach English language. Five teachers mentioned the computers given by the government to this school but also informed that there was no time and power to bring the computers to the classroom and conduct classes using them.

All the teachers agreed that they should be allowed to use mind maps to teach English and do their work freely without fear. They were even able to point out the benefits of using mind maps in all classes - that the learners would be able to read and comprehend and recall without having to memorize what they read. Mind maps could also promote the joy of learning since it uses graphic methods and colours in organizing ideas while taking notes. Another teacher further went on to extend his support to use mind maps for the process of evaluation.

Further discussions and informal interviews with the teacher revealed that teachers opted to use their mother tongue when they faced difficulties in teaching English to these learners. This they felt, promoted better understanding. However, few teachers advised the investigator to speak in English while teaching mind maps to the learners; she stressed on developing learners' creativity, thinking skills, writing skills, etc. this is an indication of what the teacher believes regarding the use of English for classroom instruction, in spite of they themselves not using the language. Other startling revelations were also made by the teachers: due to lack of time they focused on completing the syllabus rather than ensuring text comprehension. Another teacher pointed out that teachers should speak in English in the classrooms, in order to give the learners exposure to English language.

## **The Findings**

The present study may open up newer directions for enhancing or bettering reading comprehension of learners using mind maps. In this study, mind maps were used as supportive tools for the learners to improve their reading skills in English. In the present education system, the teacher's role is increasingly seen as that of an observer and facilitator as opposed to the more authoritative roles played by teachers in the conventional classes. Students, in the newer education scenario ought to be given opportunities to engage in self-motivated and self-regulated learning activities and mind maps have very effectively proved to be a successful tool for this. Teachers are expected to be sensitive to the needs of the learners and aware of their individual learning styles and interests. The teacher needs to be adaptive and flexible, constantly evolving and devising steps whereby learners could be helped to develop their reading skills. Mind maps seem to succeed in these too.

## **Implications for the English Teachers**

Based on the evidence available from the study, some good classroom practices are listed below:

Teachers ought to encourage students to make notes using mind maps during reading.

Teachers should be made aware of the fact that learners forget quickly what they read and they tend to pay better attention when they are allowed to refer to mind map notes.

Mind maps constructed by individuals can be shared in the class among peers for assessing the level of comprehension achieved.

The teachers could create lesson plans using mind maps by outlining the lessons, their topics, links among topics and the various aids they will be using.

Teachers can make notes based on individual lesson/unit using mind maps and give them to the learners as a visual guide and the summary of teaching.

Teachers need to ask students different types of questions to search for specific information in the text. These questions should also help the learners to identify the main ideas, infer meaning using contextual clues and connect the ideas with their personal knowledge.

Teachers should train students to write summaries with the help of mind maps.

Teachers should encourage interaction between teachers and students and also among students to construct group mind maps.

An example mind map on 'lesson planner' is given below for the teachers:

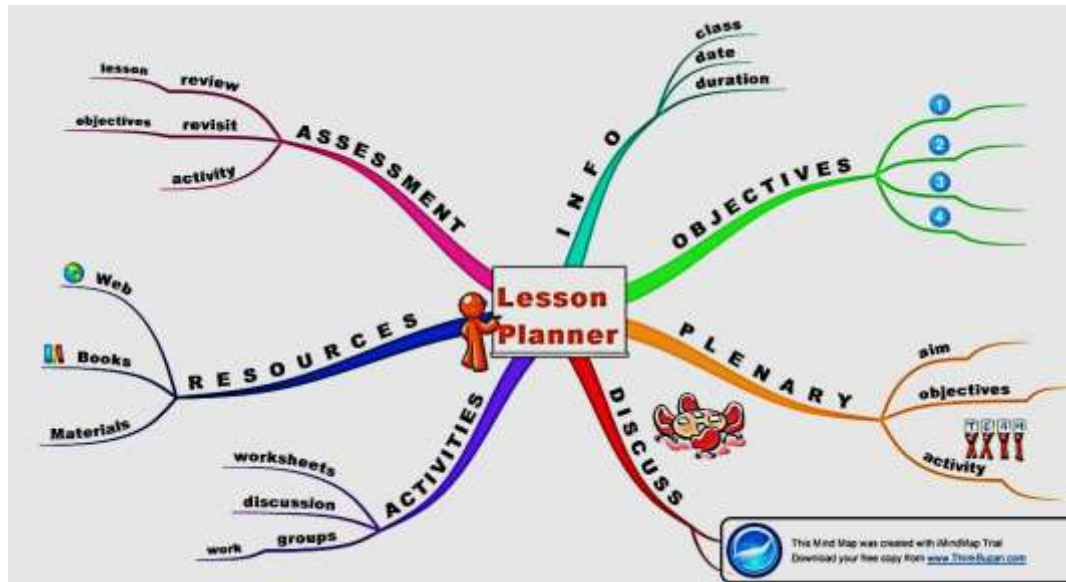


Image 1 Mind Map (Lesson Planner)

Teachers shared that group mind mapping was found to be beneficial when students worked in small heterogeneous groups. There was a positive transfer of learning since learners were taught to use mind map while reading and were also told the usefulness of mind maps in learning. Learners in this study were motivated to use mind maps in other subjects too (though many reported that it was mainly for better scores in the examinations). In this context, it would be relevant to extend the implementation of mind maps to higher secondary level also. However, teachers should not stick to the use of mind maps alone for teaching reading, because there is no method which will succeed always. It would be best if teachers evaluate their classrooms and learners constantly and then try out new and creative methods to enhance reading skills of the learners.

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