

University EFL Learners' Perceptions of Mind Mapping Application in the Pre-Speaking Stage

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ABSTRACT: Mind mapping has always been recognized as an effective tool for students to enhance their speaking skills by brainstorming their ideas beforehand, and the same approach has been applied on the process of forming ideas during the pre-speaking stage of students from Dong Nai Technology university. The purpose of this study is to point out the perceptions of those students towards this well-received technique as well as discussing the potential encounters arising from adopting a seemingly new technique during the preparation process of the pre-speaking stage. The data was collected through a questionnaire from 90 students of 3 different classes and interviews of 14 students.

Keywords: Mind mapping, EFL Learners' perception, Pre-Speaking Stage

I. INTRODUCTION

These days, English is considered as a key factor of whether students can land a decent job down the road since our country is undergoing a grand transformation, especially in trading with foreign countries. It is clear that those are proficient in English have a big advantage in terms of job recruitment when compare to their fellow job-seekers whose CVs do not include a specific level of English understanding. And to grasp a profound knowledge in English usage, speaking skill plays an important role as learners are required to perform fluently while showing off their understanding about the English culture by using common idioms and vocabularies. So how can they achieve that level of English usage? Like Fakeye (2010) once stated that the matter of learner's attitude is acknowledged as one of the most important factors that impact on learning a language, which makes no exception for learning English. The primary problem here is to find a suitable approach of learning for students, to be more specific, a method which is beneficial for their speaking journey. At first glance, this problem seemed to be obvious as it was the teacher's job to take the lead in creating activities in class, however, when it came to enhancing the confidence level which was essential in improving the students' speaking skill, many teachers have proved futile efforts since they could not find any method to promote students' volunteers when presenting their speaking in front of their classmates. And to gather students' attention, researchers introduced the mind map technique, which is well-known for its renowned achievements in terms of improving students' learning process. With this new approach, teachers successfully rose an exciting atmosphere in classes where students were eager to voice out their presentation confidently. The validity of the affect of mind map will be discussed in this study through a questionnaire and some interviews which were conducted on a total of 104 students.

II. Literature review

2.1 The speaking skill and the importance of warm-up activities

In today's society where speaking skill is regarded as one of the vital factor for a person to expand far on their career path. Plenty of research was carried out to suggest different ways that can improve people's speaking skills, one particular method in which has successfully reaped fruitful results was the study of Thuan (2003). By conducting a questionnaire from 150 chosen students of grade 12th at Nghi Loc high school, he demonstrated the effectiveness of attaching warm-up activities at the beginning of the speaking lessons in raising the quality of students' speech during

the learning hours. Another useful finding was the reduction of stress and uneasiness that many students often encountered due to lack of confidence. Céline Gaillard also shared a similar perspective though not on the whole viewpoint in the thesis of *The Effects of Pre-Speaking Planning on Students' Performance During Speaking Tasks*, he showed that planning has an impact on the fluency, complexity, and accuracy of the students but not on their anxiety level. Students' attitudes towards learning also matter as Gardner and Lambert (1972) concluded that students can master a second language that is not only related to mental or language skills, but also to the expression of their attitudes and perceptions of the language. At the same time, they support the attitude that can enhance and develop the ability to learn during that time, not only that, but also affect the behavior and religion of the students themselves in the language, culture and other communities, as well as help identify students' tendencies to master the second language.

2.2 Mind map application

Mind-map, invented and copyrighted by Tony Buzan, is a technique of representing information in a visual way by demonstrating the connections among key concepts and ideas (Buzan & Buzan, 1993, p. 93). Mapping can be a thing that makes a different understanding think about and the professors teach the course material. Mind Mapping is a diagram that can be used to outline visual information. You can think of a mind map as a large brainstorming web, where a central word or idea branches out into related subjects. When ideas are identified and linked together, you can see how concepts connect to one another in order to better understand what you are trying to study. Students can improve their ideas as mind maps work well as an effective visual design that enables students to clearly see the relationship between ideas, and consequently encourages them to group certain ideas together according to their similar characteristics as they proceed (Padang & Gurning, 2014). Through mind mapping, one can develop their ability in memorizing, brainstorming, learning, as well as creativity.

In order to verify the effectiveness of mind map, in Vietnam, Phuong (2014) carried out a study named "using a mind map to improve 10th graders' presentation skill in speaking class" which based on 135 tenth graders and five randomly selected English teachers currently teaching grade 10 at the Nghe An High School, Can Loc district at that time. The purpose of the research was to investigate the difficulties that teachers and those students were facing within the learning process, as well as looking at their attitudes toward the usage of mind map. The result showed that by applying mind map, they saw a substantial increase of interaction between students and teachers during lessons. Furthermore, students even felt more motivated and relieved to participate in presentations. In other word, mind map greatly contributed to a successful lesson as it eased students' anxiety. Mind map's benefits have been tested multiple times for its validity, some it of it can be listed like improving students' memories of new vocabularies by attaching key words with supporting ideas and the flow of their presentation by drawing pictures, which ultimately resulted in confidence increase.

III. Methodology

3.1 Research questions

The study is to answer the following research questions:

1. What are DNTU students' perceptions of using mind mapping in the pre-speaking stage?
2. How can mind map create a positive influence towards those students?

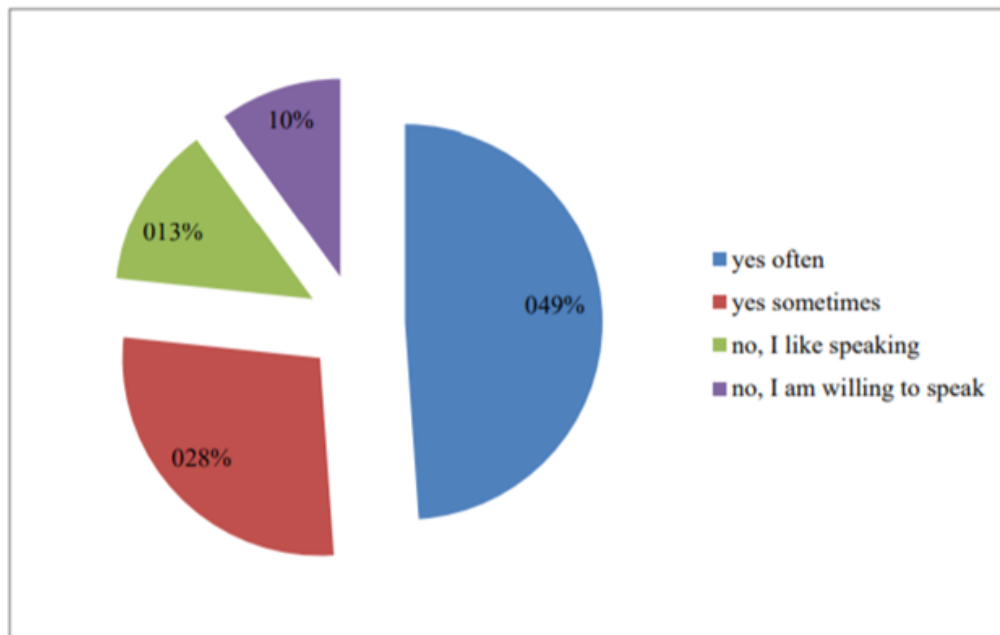
3.2 Participants

This study was carried out successfully thanks to the participation of 90 students from 3 classes of General English 3 which were randomly selected in Dong Nai Technology University, and 14 of them volunteered to take part in the interview session afterwards.

3.3 Results

Data analysis from the questionnaire, it is clear that most students often find the beginning of their speaking class

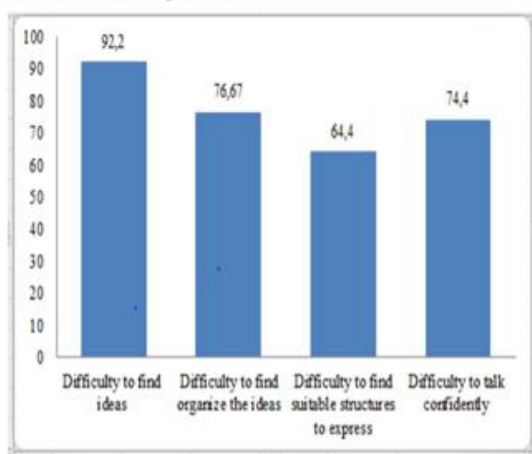
difficult, which accounts for roughly 50%. The same circumstance sometimes happens to more than a quarter of the students, while 13% and 10% of the participants are eager to speak.



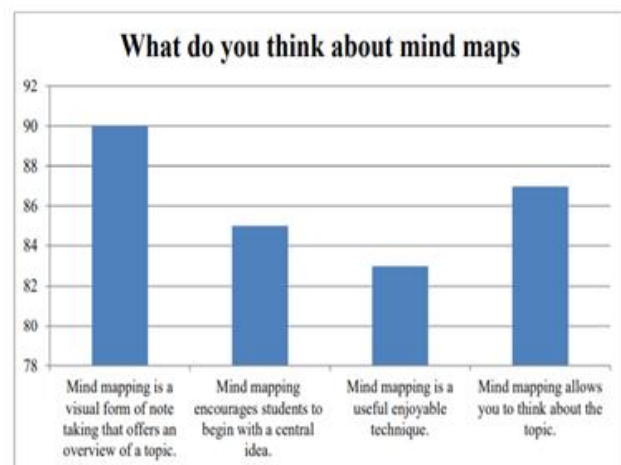
Question 2: Is pre-speaking stage difficult to you.

Move on to the struggles that students often encounter during the pre-speaking stage, it seems that the majority of them (92%) troubling with finding the ideas related to the topic, and two similar fractions of 76,67% and 74,4% are unable to comfortably take part in their speaking lessons due to the struggles of organizing ideas and express their confidence. 64,4% students can not present fluently because of limited time to find the suitable expressions and structures for their speech.

The data is shown in the figures below:



Graph 3: Factors influence students' attitudes related to the starting of speaking lessons before using mindmap technique.



Graph 4: Students' perceptions of mind mapping technique.

Since the whole questionnaire consists of 10 questions, 2 of them are selected to show as examples. In short, based on the feedbacks from the questionnaire, it seems that most students all agree on the same statement that English is an essential tool for their future, and by using mind map in their speaking classes, they clearly saw a substantial improvement in memorizing key words and ideas for the speaking topic.

The same results can be seen in the interviews which emphasize on potential difficulties of the mind map application. Although a large fraction of students finds themselves struggle to grab the usage of mind map effectively, they eventually know how to utilize its full potential.

In terms of data collection from the class observation, it reveals that teachers have successfully carried out the mind map technique into their classes by organizing activities such as group work which allows students to cooperate with each other to create a detailed mind map, as well as encouraging them to use color pencils to add in visual features. With the instructions of the teachers by drawing a sample mind map on the black board with the main topic in the center and many branches extend from the center, students could smoothly follow the lesson and ultimately ended with their mind map which covered up pretty much of lesson's contents. It was reported that many students were impressed by the usage of colors and visuals in drawing mind maps.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

It was clear that the participants were eager to apply mindmap at the beginning of the speaking lesson. Not only mind mapping could help them memorize primary information by keywords, but also created a link between events and visual ideas by adding branches surrounding the subject. Therefore, they would be able to remember the flow of their presentation, which ultimately boosted their self-confidence, a vital element in the fluency of their speaking performance, thus teachers are recommended to manipulate this benefit of mind map technique to promote students' courage during their learning hours.

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