

Mind Map: A Helpful Tool to Design the English Course in Primary School

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Abstract: *The English language skills of students in compulsory education mainly include listening, speaking, reading and writing skills and the comprehensive application of these skills. Developing students' language skills is not only one of the general objectives of English curriculum in the stage of compulsory education, but also the specific requirement of improving students' language ability in the core literacy of English discipline. As a teaching tool of knowledge visualization and thinking visualization, mind mapping has the characteristics of creativity, logicity and entertaining. In order to effectively improve the teaching of English language skills, teachers can comprehensively use the characteristics and advantages of the thinking map of hierarchical, graphic, chained, hub-and-spoke modes and so on to skillfully apply them to the teaching of students' listening, speaking, reading and writing skills.*

Key Words: *Mind map; Listening, speaking, reading and writing; Oxford English (Shanghai Edition); Teaching material.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

Mind map is a skill and way of taking notes or making notes created by Tony Buzan, a British expert in brain, learning and thinking skills. It expands outward from a core central theme and radiates several branches, including key words, symbols, codes, lines, images and various colors. Mind mapping is the expression of "divergent thinking, so it is also the natural function of human thinking. This is a very useful graphic technology, the master key to open the brain potential"^[1], and its essence is " a nonlinear note taking tool "^[2]. Compared with the traditional linear note taking, mind mapping has its unique advantages. First, mind mapping embodies creativity. "Mind mapping controls all cortical skills - vocabulary, graphics, numbers, logic, rhythm, color and sense of space in a unique and effective way."^[1] In the process of making mind mapping, the producer does not have fixed templates and answers, but gives play to imagination and freely combines various cortical skills according to actual needs, his own strengths and preferences, Whether from the form or content of mind map, it reflects the creativity of the producer. Secondly, mind mapping is logical. When making a mind map, the producer must clarify his ideas, reflect the hierarchy of things by highlighting keywords, and clearly show the links between things, so as to highlight the key points and clear levels, so that the user can see the relationship between things at a glance, so as to facilitate memory, which saves time both in taking notes and reviewing notes^[2]. At the same time, mind mapping also takes into account interest. Different from the traditional linear notes with a single form that makes people feel boring, mind mapping strengthens the expression effect by using a variety of elements such as rich colors, intuitive images, flexible lines and various codes, which has aesthetics and appeal.

The English Curriculum Standard for Compulsory Education (2011 Edition) points out that the general goal of English curriculum in the stage of compulsory education is to "enable students to form a preliminary comprehensive language application ability through English learning, promote mental development and improve comprehensive humanistic quality."^[3], in which the comprehensive language application ability mainly includes listening, speaking, reading, writing and other skills and their comprehensive application. English teaching is inseparable from the cultivation of listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. As a simple and effective "visual knowledge support with equal emphasis on graphics and text"^[4], mind mapping has many types, conforms to the cognitive characteristics of primary school students and is easy to be accepted by students. It can effectively help students develop balanced in listening, speaking, reading and writing and improve students' overall English quality. In primary school English teaching, there are four common structural types of mind maps: hierarchical, graphic, chained, hub-and-spoke modes^[5]. Teachers can skillfully use mind maps according to the characteristics and advantages of each mind map to help students improve their listening, speaking, reading and writing skills.

1.1. SKILLFULLY USING HIERARCHICAL MIND MAP TO HELP STUDENTS IMPROVE THEIR LISTENING SKILLS

Hierarchical mind mapping presents the hierarchical relationship of discourse or semantics in a hierarchical structure. Several topic or node words are led down from a central core word. Its biggest feature is "clear hierarchy and clear subordinate relationship between the upper and lower levels; Or dissect layer by layer, from the whole to the main

blocks, and then to the details "[6]. Therefore, the upper and lower subject words of hierarchical mind map have a strict and unchangeable upper and lower relationship, and their positions can not be changed, which is suitable for representing "knowledge points with strict upper and lower or subordinate relationship"[4].

In the "Listen and say" column of Unit6 "PE songs" (Figure1.1) in the second volume of the *Sixth Grade Textbook of Oxford English (Shanghai Edition)*, the little author introduces the sports he and his friends Jill and Joe like or are good at in physical education class in a first person tone, mainly involving the expression of some sports in physical education class, such as races, jump, ball games, etc. The theme of this discourse is "activities in PE lessons". Its biggest feature is that it contains the most common kind of lexical semantic relationship - hyponymy. For example, races, jump and ball games are the hyponyms of activities, while long races and short races, long jump and high jump, football and volleyball, and basketball are the hyponyms of races, jump, ball games respectively, so this text is very suitable as listening material to be designed as hierarchical mind map to train students' listening skills.

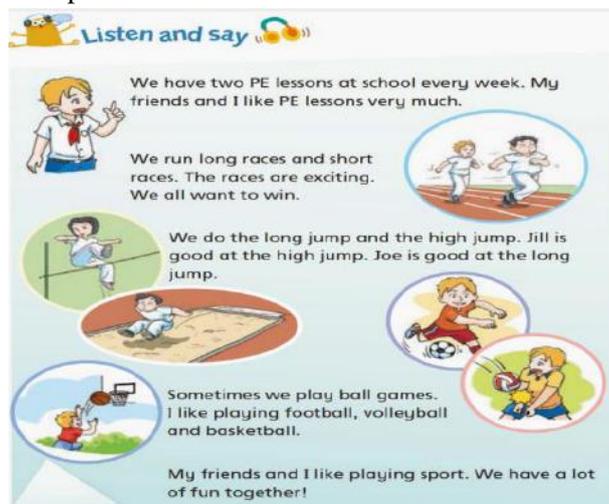


Figure 1.1

Although the sixth grade students' mental development tends to be mature and their learning ability is improved compared with before, in most English teaching processes, students have relatively weak foundation and little interest in listening.^[7] If the students listen to the listening materials directly and then answer the exercises in the text at one time, the students are likely to be confused and at a loss. According to the English Curriculum Standard for Compulsory Education, the second level listening standard that students should meet at the end of grade 6 is "be able to understand simple words or recording materials with the help of pictures, images and gestures"^[3]. Therefore, before playing the listening materials, teachers can present students with an incomplete hierarchical thinking map, tell the students that the listening requirement is to complete (1) (2) (3) blanks, and prompt the students that the three words are three different sports activities in P.E. class. After teacher's prompting, it is not difficult for the students to fill in the three blanks after listening to the materials one time; Before playing the materials for the second time, the teacher reminds students that ① and ②, ③ and ④, ⑤ and ⑥ and ⑦ are sports belonging to (1) (2) (3) respectively, and correspond to different characters at the same time. Although seven blanks from ① to ⑦ were completed at one time in the second time, according to the clear clues given by the teacher and the obvious relationship between context, students can also complete it easily and accurately. The final result is shown in Figure 1.2.

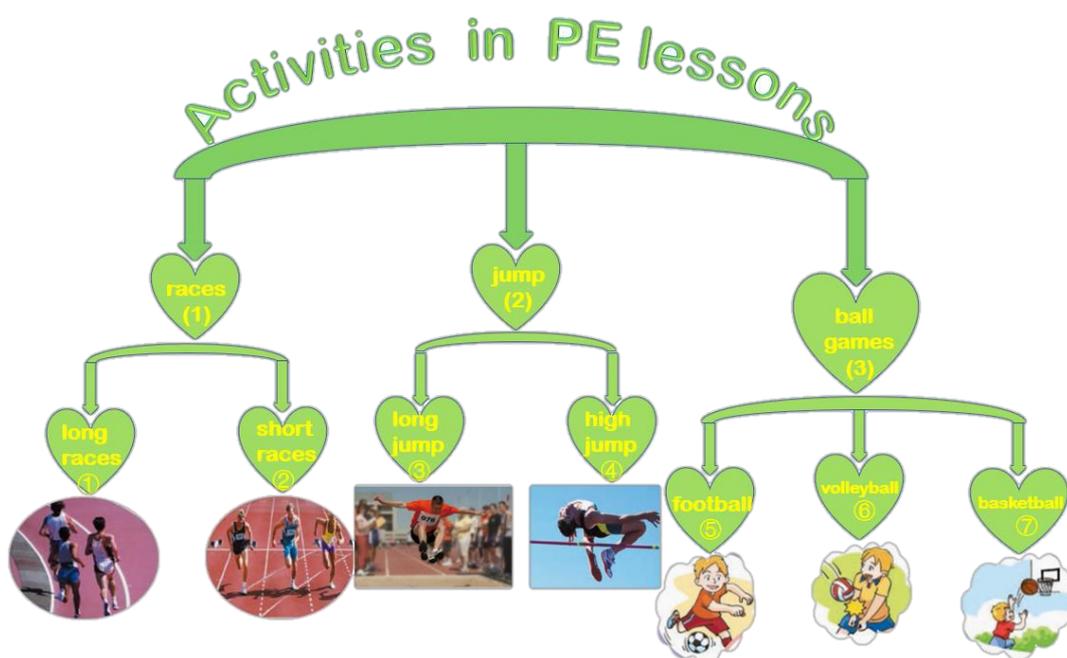


Figure 1.2

In the teaching design, firstly, by presenting such a hierarchical mind map, the teacher can let the students know the structure of the text at a glance, that is, to understand that the theme of the text is about "activities in PE lessons"; Secondly, teachers guide students to analyze sports activities layer by layer, which is conducive to students to grasp the subordinate relationship between various sports activities. After completing the whole thinking map, students can systematize scattered sports activities and build a knowledge network about sports activities; At the same time, the hierarchical mind map is designed into the form of listening to the tape and filling in the blanks, which is conducive to improving students' attention and targeted listening training, so as to improve their ability to extract effective information in the process of listening; In addition, different from the traditional form of pure text listening problems, relevant pictures are also added to the hierarchical mind map, which not only reduces the students' fear of listening caused by weak foundation, but also improves the students' interest and enthusiasm in listening.

1.2. SKILLFULLY USING GRAPHICAL MIND MAP TO HELP STUDENTS IMPROVE THEIR ORAL SKILLS

In schematic mind mapping, the producer will first select a picture or figure as the central theme, and then take different parts of the central theme as sub themes or secondary branches. Graphical mind mapping is applicable to the teaching of the relationship between the whole and the part. The word representing the whole, that is, the holonym, is the central theme of the mind mapping, and the word representing the part, that is, the constituent word, is the sub theme of the mind mapping, and so on^[8]. The biggest feature of the graphical mind map is that it contains both pictures and text, has clear logic, and can clearly show the relationship between the whole and each part through a picture.

Take Unit3 "our school in the future" in the second volume of *the Sixth Grade Textbook of Oxford English (Shanghai Edition)* as an example. The theme of this unit is the future school. In the "listen and say" column and Part 3 of project1, students are required to answer "what will your school be like in the future"^[9], that is, students are required to imagine and describe their future school. If the topic is directly thrown to the students, the students are likely to become speechless due to the limitations of vocabulary, sentence patterns and thinking, or because the scope of the school topic is too large, the students want to say a lot, but their ideas are not clear and their words are confused, so the teachers can design the topic into a graphical thinking map (Figure 2.1) to prompt the students.

Before students start talking, teachers can provide students with a graphical mind map of school facilities, as shown in Figure 2.1. From a macro perspective, the school includes various material facilities and places with clear functions, such as library, restaurant, classroom, playground and so on. In this situation, school is the holonym, and the words in specific places such as libraries and restaurants are constituent words or sub themes. At the same time, the teacher can give students some sentence patterns under the mind map, such as the sentence pattern "in the future, there will be... In our school. Student will..." required to be mastered by students in the textbook. And students can describe the future changes of these fields in turn according to the hints of sub themes and sentence patterns in the mind map. Students can say, "In the future, there will be a gym in our school. Students will have a swimming pool." "In the future, the library will have more magazines." "Our school will have a lot of trees and flowers around the playground."... So the topic has changed from abstract schools to concrete places, Students can speak freely about one of the specific places. At the same time, teachers can also prompt students to select a sub theme as the central theme, take this sub theme as the whole word, excavate each part and dissect it layer by layer, which can also expand the oral skills of children with strong ability. Take the classroom as an example. Compared with the school, the classroom is one part, but compared with the desks, blackboards and books in the classroom, the classroom has become a whole. Then students can say, "Students will carry no books and they will use a small computer on the desk."



Figure 2.1

Graphical mind mapping first presents the topic with rich pictures, because "students are much more interested in images than words only"^[10], so graphical mind mapping can attract students' attention, activate the classroom atmosphere and make the oral class no longer dry and boring; Secondly, by presenting a complete picture of the school and each field in the school, it is helpful for students to grasp the relationship between the whole and the part as a whole, express the whole by describing the details of the part, and obtain the thinking mode and language expression skills of "seeing the big from the small"; Thirdly, *the English Curriculum Standard for Compulsory Education* requires students to complete oral English at the end of grade 6. The second goal is to "describe or tell simple stories with the help of

teachers and the hint of pictures" [3]. Teachers can let students give full play to their imagination by guiding students to decompose the school into several parts and express the pictures in language and dare to speak English, so as to improve the language carrying capacity of the topic of school, expand language output, and finally enhance students' language organization, expression ability and comprehensive application ability.

1.3. SKILLFULLY USING CHAINED MIND MAP TO HELP STUDENTS DEVELOP THEIR READING SKILLS

Chained mind map, as its name suggests, is like a chain. It connects knowledge points according to a certain sequential structure or progressive relationship, such as temporal order, spatial order, causality, etc. Therefore, chained mind map is very suitable for discourse with obvious sequential structure [11]. Its biggest feature is that it can simply and directly display the key details of the development context or steps of the event through keywords and pictures.

Take the text (Figure 3.1) in the "Look and read" column of "Reusing things" in Unit9, which is in the second volume of the *Sixth Grade Textbook of Oxford English (Shanghai Edition)*, as an example. The theme of the text is "the journey of a plastic bottle". The full text has four paragraphs and 11 lines. Firstly, it is easy for students to be afraid of the length, especially for students with weak foundation; Secondly, the text involves multiple characters and places. If read without clear clues, it is easy for students to look at the back, forget the front and confuse the order. The biggest feature of this article is the clear sequence structure, clear character sequence and spatial sequence, which mainly focuses on the sequence in which a bottle is brought to different places by different people and turned into different objects. Therefore, teachers can design this article as a chained thinking map as a discourse material to cultivate students' reading skills.



Figure 3.1

Before allowing students to read formally, teachers can first present students with a chained mind map with only pictures, so that students can have a preliminary perception of the text through pictures; The first reading task is skimming. Let the students find out the three clues of the article, namely, character line, location line and status line, and complete three blanks A, B and C; The second reading task is skip reading. Let the students find out who the bottle has contacted and where the bottle has been taken by these characters according to the tips of the mind map, and complete a total of 10 blanks from ① to ⑩. The third reading task is to read carefully. The teacher can remind the students that there is a hidden clue about the state of the bottle in this article, so that the students can sort out the state of the bottle when it is taken to different places by different people, that is, what the bottle is or what it has become. They can summarize it according to their own understanding, not stick to the words given in the original text, and complete a total of 4 blanks from ⑪ to ⑭. The final completed mind map is shown in Figure 3.2.

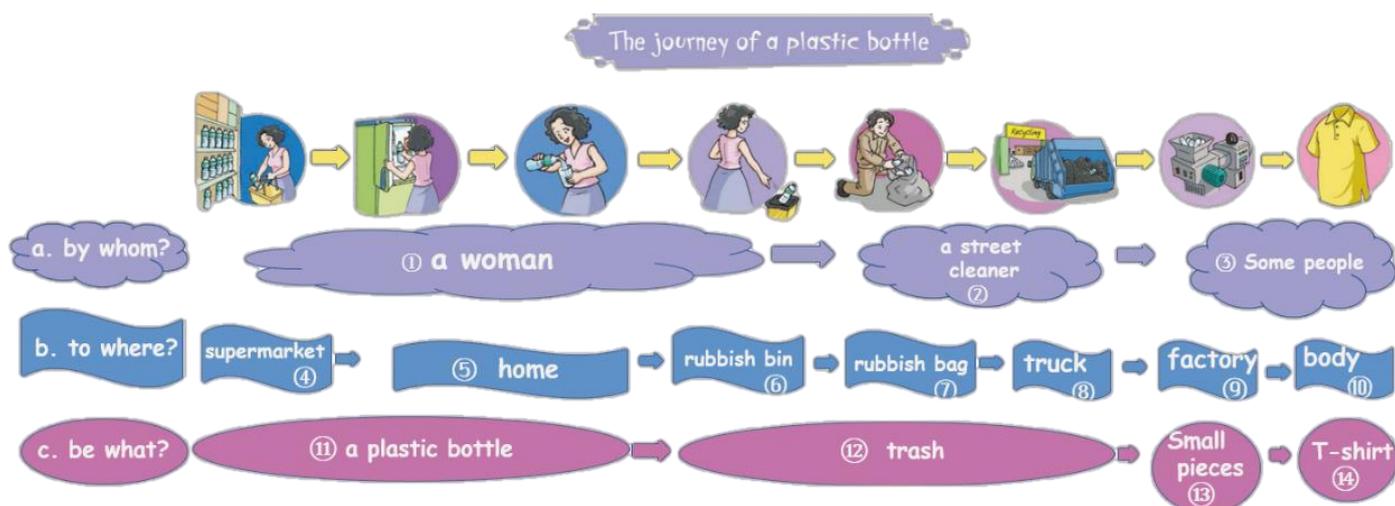


Figure 3.2

First of all, teachers present students with a chained mind map with pictures and texts instead of letting students directly read the pure text in the traditional way, which can stimulate students' reading desire. At the same time, teachers let students predict the text content through mind map, which is helpful to help students find the characteristics of text structure and interpret the text more vividly and intuitively, so as to reduce the difficulty of reading comprehension;

Secondly, let students skim, skip and read carefully in turn. The problem of mind mapping goes from easy to difficult, from simple to deep, and goes deep step by step. This purposeful reading can improve students' "discourse perception ability"^[12], not only avoid students' reading pressure caused by paying too much attention to length and vocabulary, but also cultivate students' skimming, skip reading and close reading, as well as "the ability to construct discourse"^[13]; Thirdly, the so-called "one picture is worth a thousand words", the chained mind map not only completely shows the journey of the bottle, improves students' ability to grasp the whole, but also shows some details, which makes students pay attention to some key specific information, "can clearly present key detailed information while helping students clarify their text thinking"^[4], It not only helps students to establish the overall view in reading, but also helps to cultivate the view of detail; Finally, let students summarize the state of the bottle by themselves, which is conducive to cultivating students' language generalization ability and improving students' reading comprehension ability.

1.4. SKILLFULLY USING THE HUB-AND-SPOKE MIND MAP TO HELP STUDENTS CULTIVATE THEIR WRITING SKILLS

The hub-and-spoke mind map is a kind of mind map that "radiates from the central theme to the surrounding into many themes"^[3]. The biggest feature of this type of mind mapping is that the central theme can lead to several sub themes in turn. For example, the central theme leads to the secondary theme, the secondary theme leads to the tertiary theme... And so on. In other words, as long as the thinking is divergent enough, the central theme can radiate enough sub themes. Therefore, this type of mind mapping is very suitable for the use of stimulating thinking method, "brainstorming".

Taking Unit11 "Western festivals", in the second volume of *the Sixth Grade Textbook of Oxford English (Shanghai Edition)*, as an example, this unit mainly introduces some western festivals. After learning the contents of this unit, teachers can ask students to introduce one of their favorite western festivals as the theme of writing practice. At the same time, they also determine the central theme of this central radial mind map, "Western Festivals". Before students formally write, teachers can ask students to say what western festivals they know. Students may say "Easter", "Halloween", "Thanksgiving", "Christmas", "Mother's Day", "Father's Day", etc. these western festivals mentioned by students have become secondary themes, which teachers summarize in the secondary branch of mind map. Next, teachers continue to ask students what they know about these festivals, stimulate students' divergent thinking, encourage students to mobilize their knowledge reserves and express what they know. Students may say "Mother's day is for all the mothers", "At East, children usually eat chocolate eggs", "Halloween is on 31st October", "Children knock on doors and say 'trick or treat' on Halloween", "we can make a card as a gift for dad"... Students are talking about specific festival details. At this time, teachers can guide students to summarize what they are talking about. For example, "Mother's Day is for all the mothers" can be summarized as "for whom", "Halloween is on 31st October" is "date" and "Children knock on doors and say 'trick or treat' on Halloween" is about "activity" and "greeting". According to other answers of students, teachers and students can also come up with general words such as "reason", "food", "symbols" and "gifts". These words can be used as the most extension of the three-level theme in the central radiation.



Figure 4.1

And then, a hub-and-spoke mind map is completed, as shown in Figure 4.1. Now, the teacher asks the students to introduce their favorite western festival according to the tips of this mind map, and the students will finish this writing task efficiently.

First of all, in this teaching design, the central radial thinking map plays the role of "support". The thinking map is like human bones, words are like flesh and blood, and writing ideas are like human thinking. When the three are combined, they become vivid articles. ^[14]; Secondly, students can fully mobilize their knowledge reserves around the secondary theme, fully associate, integrate the specific information related to the secondary theme, and then get the tertiary theme. Therefore, they can obtain multiple perspectives of writing, which is equivalent to having a framework first and then filling in the content. Writing becomes comprehensive and organized, as Tony Bozan said, "Mind mapping has two advantages when preparing to write an article: writers are constantly stimulated by the branches of the tree of thought and can accept newer and bolder ideas; At the same time, keywords and images can ensure that the words used in writing will not be missed. ^[2]; Thirdly, in terms of students' psychology, the central and radial thinking map can

assist students to carry out associative and divergent thinking, and reduce the pressure caused by students' lack of ideas or confusion, one-sided thinking, empty content and so on. In short, the central and radial mind map can help students build a writing framework, provide students with opportunities for orderly writing and language output, and improve students' writing ability.^[15]

2. CONCLUSION:

Alvin Toffler said in his book *Power Shift*: "Illiteracy in the future no longer refers to those who are illiterate, but to those who do not know how to learn."^[1] As a teaching tool and learning strategy of knowledge visualization and thinking visualization, mind mapping provides a support for teachers to help students develop their listening, speaking, reading and writing skills, and helps to improve students' ability to understand and obtain information, oral expression, understand language materials and express their ideas through writing. In the teaching process, teachers should skillfully use and make flexible use of all kinds of thinking maps, teach students according to their aptitude and innovate constantly, so as to achieve the best teaching effect, and make the thinking map really become a booster for students to understand, dare to speak, be able to read and be good at writing.

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