Mind Mapping as a Tool to Enhance English Literature Comprehension

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Abstract

Literature was infused within the English curriculum as a significant transformation in the English Teaching (ELT) and to boost students' language proficiency. The ineffectual teaching approaches implied by teachers in the classroom and students' inability to comprehend the stories are the main obstacle for them to show interest in learning literature. This paper examines the usefulness of using mind mapping method in teaching literature short stories. A total of 30 Form 4 students were chosen as the respondents for this study. A quasi-experiment was conducted to examine the students' effectiveness in comprehending and recalling the short story read. A pre-test and post-test were conducted on both the experimental and control group to evaluate the students' performance. The research finding signifies that mind mapping method does improve the students' comprehension and recalling ability. The skills of using Mind Map can be modified based on the students' proficiency level. Thus, teachers should use the mind mapping method, as it is very interesting, useful and an effective method.

Keywords : English As A Second Language (ESL), Literature in KBSM, Comprehend, Mind Map, Short Stories

Introduction

The mastery of English is crucial for pupils to achieve access to data and information obtainable in English. As quoted by Rosli Talif from NCTE (National Council of Teachers of English, 1976) over the years, the role of English throughout the world has significantly changed. The National Council of teachers of English (NCTE) within the United States signified that English study in the mid-1960s was largely seen as an educational discipline comprising language, literature and composition. Based on Rosli Talif (1995), the mounting activities within classrooms of English language are keys to the effectiveness of language learning. The language development which are becoming more clear and obvious, results specifically via the study of literature.

In the process of re-establishing English, the teaching and learning of literature has emerged again in Malaysia, after its value has been unearthed and impressed upon. The Ministry of Education proclaimed a major transformation into the policies of English Language Teaching (ELT) policy. It is the infusion of literature as a part of the English Language curriculum in secondary schools, as literature is to be inculcated as a part of English Language programme.

This means that the teaching stylistics in the classroom would undergo some modifications too. Literature was reintroduced to the Malaysian students in the year 2000 and the first batch to implement this component was the Form 1 and Form 4 students. It was then followed by the Form2 and Form 5 students in the year 2001 and finally in the year 2002 it was implemented to Form 3 students as well. This move makes the point that the study of literature benefits all learners of the language.

As stated by Raj & Hunt, (1990) in Gurnam Kaur Sidhu (2003), as a result of the implementation of literature, schools have become aware of the consequence in learning literature and are promoting effectual methods to develop the teaching and learning of literature. Literature consists of assorted parts like poems, plays, novels, short stories and different genres. These are the ingredients that make the teaching and learning of the second language more fun.

Literature also amplifies motivation to read among students; when they read a good story they enjoy reading it and want to know what happens next without worrying about the linguistic difficulties. If a student can be so engrossed in short stories just by reading it, teachers can maintain the interest and create awareness in students who find literature boring and burden to some.

Short stories are part of the literature component and are implemented now in Form 1, Form 2 and Form 4. 'Leaving' by M G Vassanji and 'Tanjong Rhu' by Minfong Ho are the two short stories to be covered as highlighted in the Form 4 English language syllabus.

However, according to Koon (2003), teachers were caught unaware as literature in English is totally a new thing to them. The situation occurs because there were no proper guidelines to assist them. They have to teach the literature component using their own pedagogical tools regardless of whether they were effective or not, for it is a compulsory

element to be taught. However, for the students to perform their best, teachers use the effective teaching techniques in the literature classroom. Listen in, read in and react to various texts, and express thoughts and feelings resourcefully in spoken and written form are the main objectives in the teaching and learning of short stories in the KBSM literature element.

Despite the above deliberations and the emphasis on the importance of learning short stories, the fact remains that there are still students who lack interest in this segment. In order to achieve the objectives and learning outcomes, the students must be able to understand and comprehend well the short stories read. The above elements can be achieved via the teachers' effort and effective teaching techniques. Teaching and learning process will be more successful, self-governing and enjoyable when the appropriate technique is used to heave the students' attention towards the lesson.

For students who enjoy reading and comprehending stories just by reading it, literature is just another story for them. However, for students who could not comprehend the short story read, they struggle to perform their best and thus the objectives and learning outcomes could not be achieved. They fail to focus and get bored with the lesson when they could not comprehend the literary text. Students disliked literature because they find it a difficult subject. Dull and boring lessons in class probably are one of the major reasons why large number of students perceives literature as a boring, difficult and unexciting subject.

An appropriate teaching method, which will enable the students to comprehend and recall the short story better and faster without difficulty, is needed. Moreover, Madut & Yunus (2016), stated that using innovative material is an alternate and nontraditional ways of teaching which helps students to amass a good communicative competency within the target language. It will additionally bridge the gap between the classroom knowledge and students' participation within the classroom. In order to implement effective and suitable teaching techniques for most students, the researcher suggested the use of Mind Map in learning literature short stories.

A study on 'Literature through Mind Maps' has been done by Shameem Rafik-Galea and Jasvir Kaur Sidhu in a secondary school and they found the students showed

improvement by reading better and Mind Map independently to reflect their understanding. The aim of this study is to measure the effectiveness of using mind mapping in teaching literature short stories. The study is also set to analyze the English teachers' perception on this mind mapping method in the literature classroom.

Literature Review

Literature in KBSM / KSSM

The English Language syllabus is planned according to the goals of the KBSM which has its concept of lifelong education. As found in KBSM (2000), its aims are also geared towards the progress of an ethically erect person who is assimilated intellectually, spiritually, emotionally and physically. It is also aimed to equip students with proficiency in English Language in order for them to commune effectively. Literature component has been added to the curriculum in a small portion. This new move is believed to trigger students' interest in reading more enjoyable works and to use them as a vehicle to strengthen their English language.

The use of literature will help students to be imaginative and creative because they are exposed to different genres of literature thus able to see the different linguistic elements and styles of writing. Even though it has been almost six years after the implementation of literature in schools, there are still students facing difficulties with this component. This could result to the exam-oriented focus of the Malaysian education system leaves most teachers with very little alternative, however to religiously prepare students for the examinations (Mastan, Maarof, and Embi, 2017).

In order to motivate students towards literature, interesting, creative and innovative teaching methods or techniques need to be carried out so that students will be able to comprehend the literary text well. Students must be able to remember the important issues or matters of the stories they have read in order to justify that they have mug the story well without any problem. In order to achieve this notion, our teachers are trying their best to come out with an effective method to teach short stories, but we must always keep in mind that not all methods will show positive sign for every student is different. So, we have to make sure that teachers are creative in using suitable resources in planning their activity.

Comprehending Literary Texts

Comprehension elements address higher level thinking skills. It is referred to the structure and elements of text such as plot, characters, and themes which are the fundamentals in short stories. Comprehension skill also requires students to analyze, interpret, conclude, and draw inferences relating them to their own experience and knowledge. Without understanding the stories read, the students will not be able to continue with the tasks listed above.

The hitch of comprehending the stories read will lead to further problems such as students' inability to identify, understand and interpret information read. Furthermore, it is a must for the students to be able to read between the lines and analyze the stories critically. According to Mustapha (1998), a huge number of Malaysian students are passive learners. This is spot-on especially with those students from rural areas. With inadequate facilities and unconducive environment in the rural area, pupils are becoming increasingly dependent on their teachers (Lim, Yunus, & Embi, 2017). As a step to improve this status, an appropriate approach on how to comprehend the underlying meaning of the literary texts or short stories is crucial in teaching literature short stories.

Techniques like using the Mind Map in teaching and learning literature short stories is a good way of exposing students to effective method of comprehending the text or stories read. This chapter will further explain on the usage of Mind Map and its benefits.

Why We Should Use Mind Map?

Tony Buzan develops Mind Map as a way of helping students to make notes using keywords and images. They are a lot of faster to form, and far easier to recollect and review as a result of their visual quality and also the non-linear nature of Mind Map. Mind Map is also said to be a structured strategy of note-taking which shows the connection of ideas in which students produce notes randomly on paper.

Tony Buzan (2000), a popular psychology author describes Mind Map as a powerful graphic technique, which unlocks the ability of the brain using a general key. This method

can be used by anyone in each facet of life wherever enhanced learning and clearer thinking can magnify human performance.

Mind Map is the most user-friendly creative thinking tool given by Tony Buzan. Its main objective is to tap the way brain actually works. Mind mapping allows ideas to spread out from a central focus while providing a holistic picture of the situation.

As had been mentioned earlier, Mind Map is an effective note-taking method which uses key words, lines, colours, images and other visual images as well. The most comprehensive note taking systems require attention on the students' part. The mind mapping method will be a useful and helpful method to the students not only in the sense of note-taking but it will also enable the students to comprehend and remember things faster and better. The benefits of Mind Map are plenty if it is used in a proper and an organized way and it certainly believed to win as an effective method especially in the teaching and learning of literature short stories.

Mind Map is chosen as an effective teaching, note-taking and brainstorming tool because it is better than planning in a linear way. A linear or in-a-line means that, writing the introduction followed by the first paragraph's topic sentence and then the sub-topics of the first sentence. It is then continued with other paragraphs and the conclusion. This linear method is not good for students as they cannot expand their ideas freely because the order is decided before writing. So, if students change their mind or need to do corrections or additions, they need to rewrite the whole text all over again. The situation differs if Mind Map is used instead of the linear method. The students' just need to pour out their ideas on a sheet of paper connecting to the main subject and finally decides the order of the ideas. It is easier to go back to a Mind Map and add in or update than we can on linear form notes. Place an image in the center of a page and draw connectors extending out in all directions from that image. Locate all those on the page in an associated network, and you've got a Mind Map.

In our focus which is literature short stories, how does a Mind Map helps in comprehending and remembering facts or important issues better and faster? Literature is something different than other subjects. In literature, there is no wrong or right answer. You cannot say that your idea or opinion is correct and others are wrong. You can only say

yours is better than others by providing relevant evidences. Students need to remember the evidences according to the situation required. However, even though critical and creative thinking skills is not something new, our system has fallen short in generating such students (Lim, Yunus, & Mohamad, 2016). Thus, how well can students do it without having a proper thinking skill and ways to express them? And why there are still students whom dislike literature?

Creative approaches to teaching literature do exist. It covers teachers' way of teaching creatively. If a teacher just teach his or her students in conventional ways, it is likely for students to just listen but not absorb the contents. One of the creative approaches introduced here is the Mind Map for it brings out the internal thoughts of a student. Besides, the method should be student centered and no longer teacher centered. Just let our students to explore literature by themselves. Teacher should facilitate the students after telling them what they should do.

Mind Map might seem to be childish to certain people for it is colourful, inserted with images, arrows and other attractive symbols, but that is how the brain works and Mind Map follows the way our mind thinks. Students will be amazed by the way Mind Map works for them.

Applying Mind Map in the Teaching of Literature

According to Kokila Amarnath in Reflections (September, 2003), methods used by the teachers must be creative, exiting and motivating because in today's scenario, teaches need to cater children who get bored easily with the routine and mundane work. The methods used must be able to break the monotony and motivate the students to participate actively in the lesson.

Literature lessons require the students to remember certain issues from the story. So, note-taking will be easy and quicker to make through Mind Map. Using a completed Mind Map, the students will find it easy to refer to the story. Recalling and revising the story too will not be the major problems for the students. This is because the notes that they make are easy to be understood and they can edit it anytime they want. So, mind mapping will always be a useful and effective tool for teaching literature.

Previous Research Done

Shameem Rafik-Galea and Jasvir Kaur had carried out a study on 'Teaching Literature through Mind Maps' on Form 3 students. Their main aim of the study is to illustrate the use of Mind Maps in the literature class. The students responded well to the technique and they were able to relate to the characters and their Mind Maps clearly reflected their understanding of what they have read. Having the study above as a reference, the researcher will be using this technique on 30 Form 4 students via the experimental method.

Methodology

This was a quasi-experimental research which was aimed to determine if the usage of Mind Map in teaching short stories enables the students to comprehend and recall the story faster and also to examine the teachers' perception concerning the use of Mind Map in teaching Literature short stories. This research was conducted on a group of Form 4 students from a sub-urban school in the Sepang district.

Questionnaire was also utilized to gather the English teachers' perception towards the usage of mind mapping method in the literature classroom.

This research was entirely based on the students' performance.

Research Design

30 Form 4 students have participated in this research and all the students were represented from one class. A test was given to all the students and they were separated into control and experimental group according to the result of the test. This shows that there were 15 students in both the experimental and control group. The researcher selected the students from one class as the subjects in order to make the data collection easier and also enable the teacher to compare the result of the students individually without much hassle.

The method chosen for this study is a pre-test and post-test which was conducted on the selected subjects. Pre-test was given to both the experimental and control group before the treatment in order to measure the students' understanding and recalling ability

on the latest short story learnt. As for the rest of the research, only the experimental group students were exposed to the mind mapping method and in usage whilst the control group was required to continue their literature lessons as usual which was conducted by their English teacher. The reason is to see if there were any progresses due to the treatment conducted towards the experimental group as well as to compare the findings with the control group.

Once the entire teaching process came to an end for that particular short story, a post-test was given to the students of both the experimental and control group. Questionnaires were also given to all the English Language teachers. The research design for the research is shown as follow :
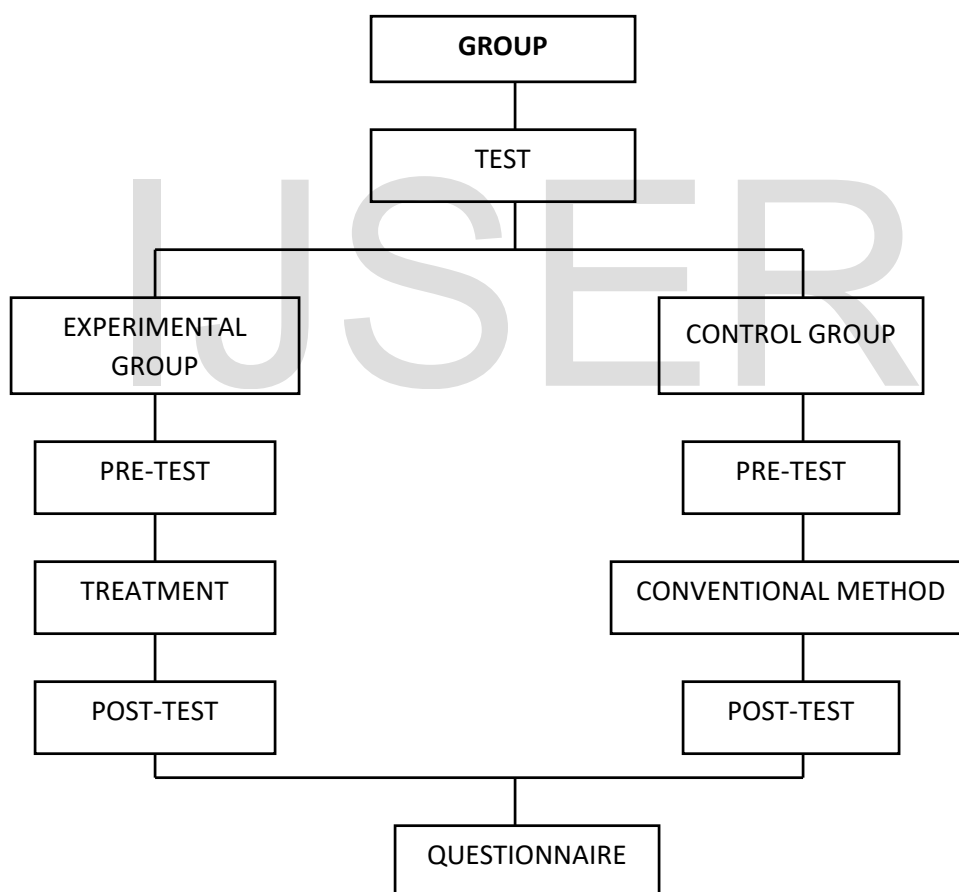

Figure 1: Research Design

Figure 1 shows that the chosen class was given a test before they were disseminated into experimental and control group. The test was to make sure that each group contains students of every level and thus it will provide the researcher a fair and reliable end result.

Once the students were separated according to their test result, a pre-test was given to both the experimental and control group. This pre-test examined the students' recalling ability as well as the comprehension on a particular short story which they have already learnt in their previous lessons. Next, the treatment on the use of Mind Maps in learning literature short stories was given to the experimental group. Meanwhile the control group carried on their lessons with their normal schedule and learning method. Once the entire treatment ended, a post-test was conducted to both the experimental and control group were evaluated to gain the outcome.

The research was done with the help of the students' English teacher during the experiment. The researcher produced the activities to be given to the students throughout the treatment period as well as the test, pre-test and post-test.

Findings and Discussion

The scores obtained in the pre-test and the post-test for both the experimental and control group were presented in the form of line chart. The purpose of using line chart is to show clearly the comparison of results between the two tests for each student.

The scores obtained from the tests given were interpreted in order to find out whether the students' understanding and recalling ability had improved after the treatment. The pre-test scores were compared with the post-test in order to find out if the students achieved a better result after the treatment.

Pre-Test and Post-Test Results of the Experimental Group

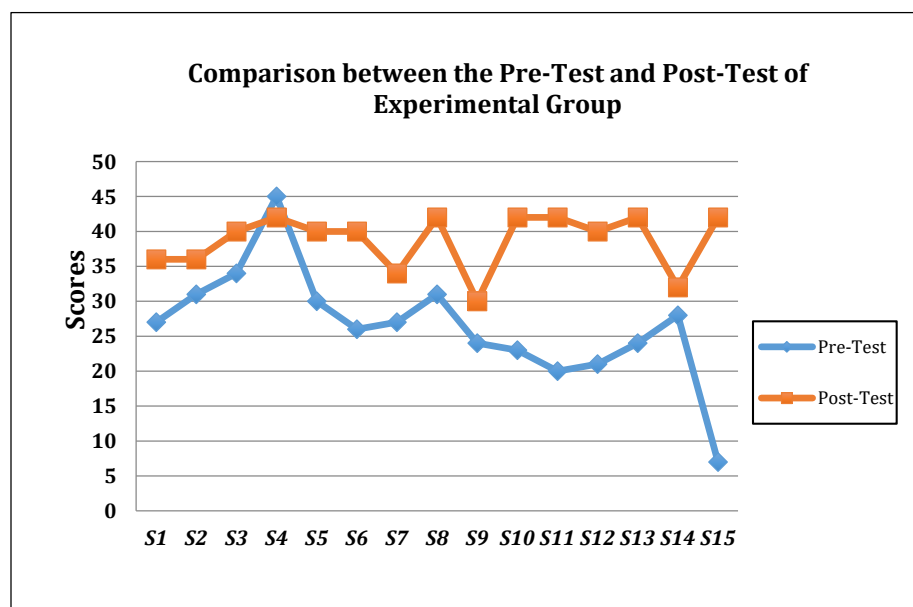Comparison between the Pre-Test and Post-Test of Experimental Group

Figure 1.1 : Comparison between the Pre-Test and Post-Test of the Experimental Group

Figure 1.1 shows the results obtained by the students from the experimental group for the pre-test and the post-test. Fourteen out of fifteen students showed an increase in their post-test performance. Mind mapping method really worked well on majority of the students for it is a fun-filled way of learning literature where the students create their own short notes based on the mind mapping rules. Similarly in Yunus (2016), by using the mind mapping strategy, the students' have improved significantly in their ability to transfer meaning to write summaries; they were able to write more complete and well-organised summaries.

Rather than reading and understanding someone else's notes, students learned more effectively by using their own notes which were creatively done with pictures, colours to differentiate main ideas, lines to radiate their ideas out and so on.

Pre-Test and Post-Test Results of the Control Group

Figure 4.2 below shows us the result of the control group students whom were not exposed to the mind mapping method as the experimental group.
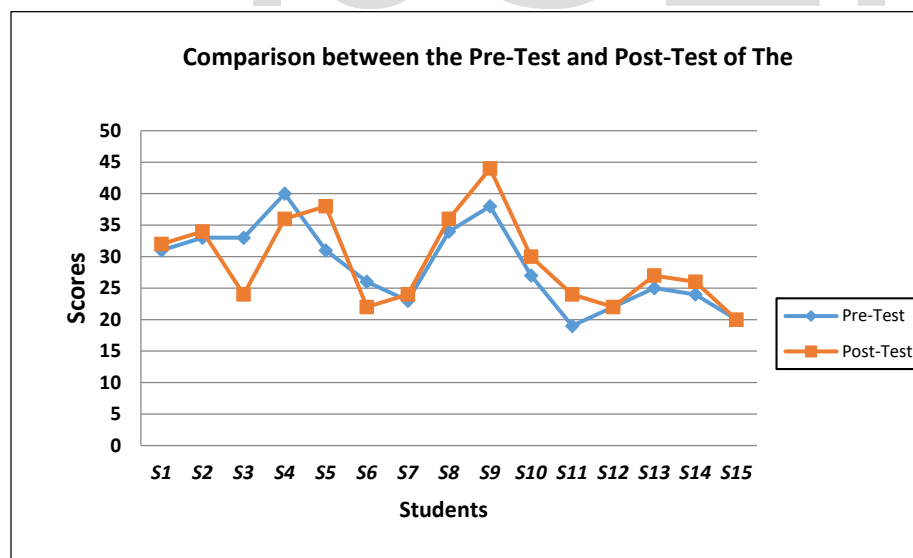

Figure 1.2 : Comparison between the Pre-Test and Post-Test of the Control Group

Based on the result gathered, a total of 10 students increased in their score but with very few points. The mild increase exposed in the table above shows that the conventional

method did work well on the students as their score did not show any drastic decrease from the pre-test result. Even though the students' improvement was not marvelous, the mild improvement cannot be denied.

As shown in figure 1.2, most students scored better in the post-test compared to the pre-test. This shows that the control group students know how to skim and scan the story but they have not improved well compared to the experimental group.

The control group students also have improved but the progress is not as great as the experimental group students. The improvement in the control group shows that the traditional methods used by the teachers did work well on them but not as well as how the mind mapping method did wonders to the experimental group.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire was used to gather information in order to answer the second research question. The questionnaire was divided into three sections; Section A: Demographic Information, Section B: Teachers knowledge on Mind Map and Section C: Teachers' Perception on the Usage of Mind Map in Teaching Short Stories.

A total of 5 English teachers from SMK Sungai Rawang answered the questionnaire. All of them are TESL graduates and cooperated well in answering the questionnaire.

Based on the findings from Section B, all the teachers have basic knowledge on Mind Map but they seldom practice it in their lessons. Majority of the teachers have the expectation that students know how to create a mind map on their own so they do not have to expose them to a sample mind map or teach them how to do a mind map. However, the teachers also admit that the students should be taught on how to create a mind map for they will not be confused with what they create in future.

All the teachers agreed that mind map enables one to exploit the text read in depth. They also agreed that mind map will enable the students to have a clearer view on the content of the story and that they can understand the story or the content better. Also, if the students follow the techniques or guides provided on how to create a mind map, they will end up with a perfect mind map and which will help them to comprehend and recall the story better and faster.

The findings gained from Section C resulted in positive perception from the teachers. It illustrates that the teachers have a good perception on the usage of mind map in teaching literature short stories. This also shows that they know the benefits of using mind map in teaching short stories. The teachers agreed that students tend to be creative and critical when using the mind mapping method through which they could comprehend better and faster. The students will be able to remember what they have read or presented in mind map without difficulty. Thus this depicts that all the teachers find the mind mapping method as an effective one.

Conclusion

The effectiveness of the mind-mapping method was shown in the results obtained by the students in their post-test. This signifies that the method works to enhance students' understanding and recalling ability. The mind mapping method is apt to assist students in preparing their writing as the technique enriches students to gain some profound understanding of the writing topics.

Future researchers are recommended to conduct similar study in a greater scope within a longer period of time. The reason is, it will provide a more valid and reliable outcome. In addition, the treatment should also cover more short stories compared to only one done by researcher. This is to measure the students' performance more accurately.

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