

### **Improving writing through Mind Mapping strategy**

In this inquiry I will examine how Mind Mapping improves students' writing skill in a Jordanian public school in Zarqa. The subject will be twenty-six female students in tenth grade. The inquiry is going to measure their writing improvement within specific tasks based on mind mapping as a prewriting stage. I will use need analysis questionnaires and a diagnostic test to collect the data needed for the inquiry. Following by, observation, peer assessment, and giving feedback to assess students' writing after each task. Also, I will write a literature review, and discuss the ethical considerations that I faced.

Each English language skill has its own significance in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes. It is difficult to identify which skill is more important for the students who want to learn and practice the language, but when coming to the most challenging skill to be acquired, writing comes first. Since it challenges both the teacher and the students.

Writing isn't an easy task to be applied in the classroom. Especially, these days when our students become more visual and digital learners. They prefer to write their messages and emails using symbols and abbreviations. This actually produced a new type of communicative language that doesn't restrict to the language conventions and rules. Thus, teachers need to be more creative and innovative in choosing writing tasks and strategies that motivate their students, suit their interests, and engage them in a critical thinking process.

From my observation in the three SEPs, I noticed that most students don't possess necessity skills to communicate in a written way. They prefer speaking to express their ideas, because they feel free to say whatever they want to convey their thoughts, while writing seems much difficult, since it required mastery of different language aspects such as, the lexicon and the syntax rules, also using appropriate content, style and structure (Tangpermpoon3).

Searching for the different strategies that could be used to teach writing skill, I choose mind mapping strategy because at the beginning, it seems a simple and easy one, but after reading many resources, I found out that it has a great impact on students' writing skill, and that what I am questioning in my inquiry. I believe it will be a rich experience for me as a teacher, teaching the most challenging skill using one of the simplest strategies attract me a lot.

There are many researches and studies that have been conducted to examine the effectiveness of using mind mapping as a strategy to improve students' writing skill in EFL classes. Also, they discussed why it is importance, and how it could be used there.

Purnomo in his study stated that writing, compared to other language skills, is the most complicated skill to be acquired. It is a form of communication that lets students put their ideas, and feelings on papers, so they organize their knowledge. Writing always requires students involving in creative thinking skills, also mastering vocabularies and tenses is a key for good writing (250). Writing for me is the students' ability to write, and this ability is a key for their successful future when it's linked to their real life. Actually, all these important aspects encourage me to choose writing rather than any other skills. Especially, after observing my students in the three SEPs, I found out that writing is the most difficult skill for both the students and their teacher.

Searching for good strategies to improve writing skill, mind mapping is considered to be one of the best. Buzan developed this strategy to provide students with a powerful graphic technique that allows them to link and relate their ideas together. The human brain processes information through hearing, reading, and observation. Then organizes it by finding a link between the concept and the keyword (Purnomo248). Analyzing this, I think that mind mapping imitates our brain way of thinking, and processing, also reflects its reaction when moving ideas from our head to paper. This is strong evidence that support Mind Mapping effectiveness for students.

Other study by Pratama introduces Mind Mapping as a powerful strategy to solve writing difficulties. The researcher interviewed English teachers to discuss the main issues that may reduce students' writing abilities. He found that most students are incapable of discussing and expressing their thoughts and ideas well. They have problems in finding theme, choosing suitable vocabularies, and mastering the syntax rules. Pratama suggested mind mapping as a creative way to record students' ideas,

facilitate the addition of any information (8). Additionally, I think that mind mapping in Jordanian public schools could be the best choice, since it is applicable under any condition, and doesn't require costly resources.

Other researchers have claimed that most of the writing disabilities are because of very little time, which is given for the students to write (Defazio et al.35). From my observation, I notice that the curriculum has a lot of writing activities, but most of the teachers don't teach them effectively. They either skip writing or assign students to do it as homework, without getting back or assessing their writing. So it is both about the time, and the writing strategies that being used in the classroom.

A research that I am very curious to compare its result with my inquiry findings, since it has been conducted in a Jordanian public school, examined the effect of Mind Mapping on developing Jordanian students' writing performance. The researchers recommended to integrate Mind Mapping into EFL Jordanian curriculum, as it enhances students writing skills, and increases their performance, interest, and motivation to write more. Also, it helps students to express their thoughts appropriately when related them to images, keywords, symbols, and colors that suit each student level (Al- Zyoud et al.286).

Furthermore, Mind mapping boosts the confidence level of students to brainstorm and generate ideas in prewriting stage. This helps producing well-organized text. Students also feel free to start writing without being afraid of making any mistakes. They are encouraged to write and share their writing with others (Vijayavalsalan148). As a teacher, the psychological element should be one of my priorities, since I am dealing with humans in a very sensitive age. Students need relaxing and supporting class to be able to learn.

Machida and Dalsky investigated Mind Mapping from a different point of view. Considering students with writing anxiety whom are unwilling to write (28). Their study highlights some of the

limitations that Mind Mapping may face. In fact, students with high anxiety had difficulty, and seemed to be confused using this strategy. The last issue, which the study indicates is that students may be unable to create their own mind mapping due to the lack of vocabularies and phrases for certain topic(30). To avoid this in my classes, I will choose writing topics that suit them, besides introducing prompting language and phrases which they can use.

Previous studies provide me with a good vision about other teachers and researchers experiences. They help me to identify the keys, assessment strategies, and the process that I will engage in to answer my inquiry question "How does writing skill improve through mind mapping strategy for tenth grade students in a Jordanian public school?"

The process

To achieve the outcomes of my inquiry, I started by designing need analysis questionnaire to collect data about my students' needs, difficulties, and their attitudes towards English language skills and activities, also a questionnaire to find out their prior knowledge about mind mapping (Appendix 3 A). The questionnaires were distributed and collected without mentioning the full name of the students.

Then I gave them a diagnostic test, the test is any procedure for measuring ability, performance, or knowledge (Richard et al. 377). The subject took a writing pretest that required them to write three paragraphs. Each paragraph should consist of five to six lines, in thirty minutes. The topic was Tourism, which is part of the English curriculum. Their papers were collected and analyzed (Appendix 3 B), in order to investigate the problems and issues related to their writing.

After getting the data that I want. I introduced the mind mapping strategy for them, as also mentioned in the literature review, it is a powerful graphic technique that allows ideas to be linked together in a nonlinear way (Purnomo 248). I wrote two central ideas on the board, Climate changes, and my favorite place, we started together creating a mind map for the first topic. Then I asked them to draw their own mind map individually for the second topic to practice it.

The subject responded to the strategy quickly, this actually encouraged me to go on for the next step which is the writing lessons. I decided because of time, to teach four writing lessons one per week. In the national curriculum writing task comes at the end of the unit, since I didn't intend to affect my mentor lesson plans I restricted to the textbook's sequence. When I planned my lessons, I took in my account to make them effective, specific, and enjoyable at the same time.

In the first lesson I introduced the word power as a key to specify the writing stages. P for planning, O for organizing, W for writing, E for editing, and R for revising (Isaacson 16). I explained to them the importance of well planning and time management to write effectively. Also I highlight the

applying of mind mapping strategy in the two prewriting stages. Then peer assessment strategy in revising and editing stages. To benefit from others' writing through using specific rubric criteria that my students and I developed together (appendix3 E).

At the end of each class, students' writing pieces were collected to be analyzed and assessed through a checklist (appendix3 D) that I prepared to measure students' development after each lesson, then I compared the results of each lesson with the previous lessons, in terms of the content of their writing, the organization, discourse, and the mechanics that they used.

Finally, after finishing my inquiry lessons, the subject answered an open-ended questionnaire (appendix3 C), which aimed at finding out how the students felt about using mind mapping strategy, also whether they found it useful, and willing to use it in their coming lessons or not.

#### Ethical consideration

As a teacher and a researcher, ethical issues are at the top of my priorities. At my first day in SEP3, I informed both my mentor and the school principle of my inquiry. I agree on my inquiry's question with my mentor (appendix5), to make sure that she will follow and support me in each step. Also I talked to other teachers who teach my students different subjects to get the benefit from their experiences, and opinions to understand my students better.

After that, I spoke with my students, and explained for them, the theme of my inquiry. Actually, my students are sixteen years old, which is a very sensitive age. They need to love and trust the person whom they deal with. Focusing on this point, I do my best to build a strong and healthy rapport with them, by showing respect, engaging myself in their activities, treating them equitably, listen to their ideas and opinions carefully, and don't share anything they told me with others. To be honest, being with them for both SEP2 and SEP3, helps me a lot in having this positive relationship. From the very beginning, I insisted that my students will be informed about their role in my inquiry. I introduced the topic, explain the procedure that I will follow, and told them that I may need to take photos and share their writing samples to achieve my inquiry goal, which is to improve their writing skill, and make it as meaningful and enjoyable as possible. I added that if they don't want to participate, it is their choice.

They accepted what I said, but few of them have some concerns about taking photos, and if their English lessons won't go as usual, or other classes may be affected by the inquiry process. I reassure them that their lessons will never be changed, on the contrary, their participation in the inquiry will go in line with the curriculum, since I have questioned an important skill in it, I added that I won't take any photo till I have their permission before. Other difficulties I also faced is that some of them are unwilling to share their own writing with others. To solve this problem, and enhance their confidence, I suggest that they can write anonymously, without mentioning their names, or maybe they can write nicknames to make it fun.



After discussing all these issues with them, it is now my role to ensure that nor them neither me will be harmed in any way. Honestly, the nature of my inquiry helps me a lot in this. Since all the activities that I use such as group work, drawing, are safe and don't require any danger movements or harmful materials, or even going outside the classroom. The last thing that I took in my consideration, is the genuineness of the data. I recorded and analyzed the data without changing anything, to make sure that my inquiry is a trustworthy one and reflects the reality.

## The Findings

The major objective of my inquiry is to examine the applying of mind mapping strategy to enhance students writing skill within a frame of time. So it is crucial to identify the main problems that affect students' writing first. The diagnostic test has been analyzed according to four components: the first is the content, focusing on the development of the ideas. Second, organization, their writing should have three paragraphs, introduction, body, and conclusion. Third, discourse, represented by the writing unity and fluency. Finally, the mechanics, this includes appearance, spelling, and punctuation.

The result showed that twenty students were unable to meet the desired length of the text in the given time, about 15 to 18 lines in 30 minutes. Sixteen students weren't produced well developed paragraphs, and their ideas lacked both coherence and cohesion. Ten students had significant grammar mistakes in tenses, and uncountable nouns. Four students only had significant spelling and punctuation mistakes.

In the light of this I found out that 77% of the students have a problem in writing fluency, 61% of them have problem in writing coherence and cohesion, while just 53% have grammar and spelling issues (appendix 2 A), so I decided, for the sake of time, to investigate the improvement of both writing fluency, the length of the writing, and the coherence and cohesion of the ideas to produce a well-structured paragraph through using mind mapping strategy, since they are the most significant problems that my students have.

Considering the need analysis results (appendix 2 B), students' responses and comments showed that 70% of the students want to improve their writing skill, 60% of them believe that they have problems when doing a writing tasks. Mind mapping evaluation questionnaire (appendix 2 C) revealed a positive attitudes towards using mind mapping strategy in the classroom, 60% of the students, who already practiced it, think it was easy to learn, found it fun and helpful in generating and organizing ideas. 30% of the students said that it reduces the working time, and enhances their self-confidence when doing a task,

while 10% only hadn't practiced it before. These results paved the way for me to start my inquiry, even most of my students were familiar with using mind mapping. I reintroduced it to make sure all of them understand its concept well, and encouraged them to create their own mind maps.

During the four writing lessons that I prepared (appendix1), the students were taught through mind mapping strategy in the prewriting stages. The students and I constructed three mind maps on each topic, for the introduction, the body, and the conclusion, then the students were asked to write for 30 minutes each time. The results were: in both the first and second lessons, most students wrote 15 lines. In the third lesson they wrote 20 lines, and finally in the fourth lesson they wrote 25 lines (appendix2 E). As could be seen, there is a good impact on the students' writing fluency through using mind mapping strategy in a given time.

To find out how mind mapping improves the coherence and cohesion of the students' writing, I make a checklist to assess the development of their writings (appendix2 F). The results showed that students became better in choosing a good topic, and thinking about what readers want to know. Also they learned to write down all their ideas on a thinking sheet, number them in logical order, and put familiar ideas together using suitable transitional words. As has been noted, mind mapping enhanced the quality of students' writing. They express their ideas appropriately when related them to images or pictures, and by numbering ideas, students avoid repetition or forgetting of any detail they want to add.

Furthermore, when examining students' writing pieces(appendix4), I found out that mind mapping helped students to focus more on the topic sentence, and the supporting details, by linking familiar ideas together and finding out the relations between these different ideas. These steps guided students to produce a well-structured, and more organized text.

Finally, the students answered an open ended-questionnaire that aimed at finding out how the students felt about using mind mapping strategy, whether they found it useful, and would apply it in their future's writing assignments or not. The students' responses to the questionnaire suggesting that they found mind mapping a powerful and helpful tool for generating and organizing their ideas, they considered it a good way of brainstorming, and for planning a paragraph. Also they could use it any time, as many as they needed.

To conclude, the findings of my inquiry are consistent with the findings of other studies conducted on the use of mind mapping. It improves writing fluency, helps students linking their ideas together to promote the coherence and cohesion of their writing. While grammar, spelling, and punctuation issues don't be improved.

### Reflective Discussion

I used to hear that teacher is the leader, the educator, the responsible of his students, but the teacher as a researcher, this is completely new for me. I never thought that I may involve in such a process of researching, and questioning to write my inquiry, like other experienced researchers. This step highly affected me, since it lets me examining and evaluating each strategy I will use in the classroom, to identify the results, the strengths, and limitations of using it, for both students themselves, and the skill that I will teach.

As a teacher, being critical and selective for each strategy, I intended to use, have changed my previous vision about learning and teaching process, developing my students' abilities and skills is now my first priority, other things come later. Actually, I am sure that four lessons were not enough to make a significant change in the students' level, but for me, they were a starter to think, and widen my horizons to go inside my students' thoughts, specifying their needs.

From the very beginning, I faced a lot of limitations and challenges, the title of my inquiry, improving writing skill through mind mapping, was the first one, I received many suggestions to change it, since writing skill requires too much time to be developed, and needs a lot of efforts to be measured. This might be right, but I insisted to go on, because I am highly convinced that the journey of thousand miles begins with a single step.

Other limitation was the time that the inquiry was conducted in, since it was at the end of the second semester, where both teachers and students were busy in finishing the textbook, and preparing for the final exams, writing lessons seems inappropriate. Honestly, what helped me to overcome this, is that I already have a good and strong rapport with students, so they wanted to participate and learn what I will teach them.

For this reason, I did my best to choose writing topics that reflect their attitudes, real life, and in the same time authentic, and enjoyable. This was a great challenge too, writing is considered to be an individual activity, where students sit and write. To change this, I looked for different warm up activities to stimulate them, besides mind mapping that required students' engagement to be created, they come up with amazing shapes, I haven't seen before!

At the end, I should mention the friendly environment when I dealing with other teachers, they helped me whether in preparing for my lessons, providing me with the needed resources, or any other information I have asked for.

Finally, challenges and limitations either stop us or push us forward, so this is our choice. This very short experience makes me think about what suits my students most, to take inquiry as a stance in the classroom (QRTA, M2). To evaluate every strategy and find out the most effective one, will be my big goal in the future.

## Work Cited

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doi:10.15804/tner.2016.45.3.11.



## Appendix 1

## Inquiry lesson plans



Topic	Question	Answer	Notes
1	What is the main theme of the novel?	The American Dream	...
2	What is the main character's name?	Jay Gatsby	...
3	What is the main character's goal?	To win back his love, Daisy	...
4	What is the main character's flaw?	He is obsessed with her	...
5	What is the main character's fate?	He dies	...



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Handwritten notes on a page titled "Handwritten notes" with a date "17/11/2020". The notes are organized into sections with headings like "Introduction", "Background", "Methodology", "Results", and "Conclusion". The text is written in a cursive script.

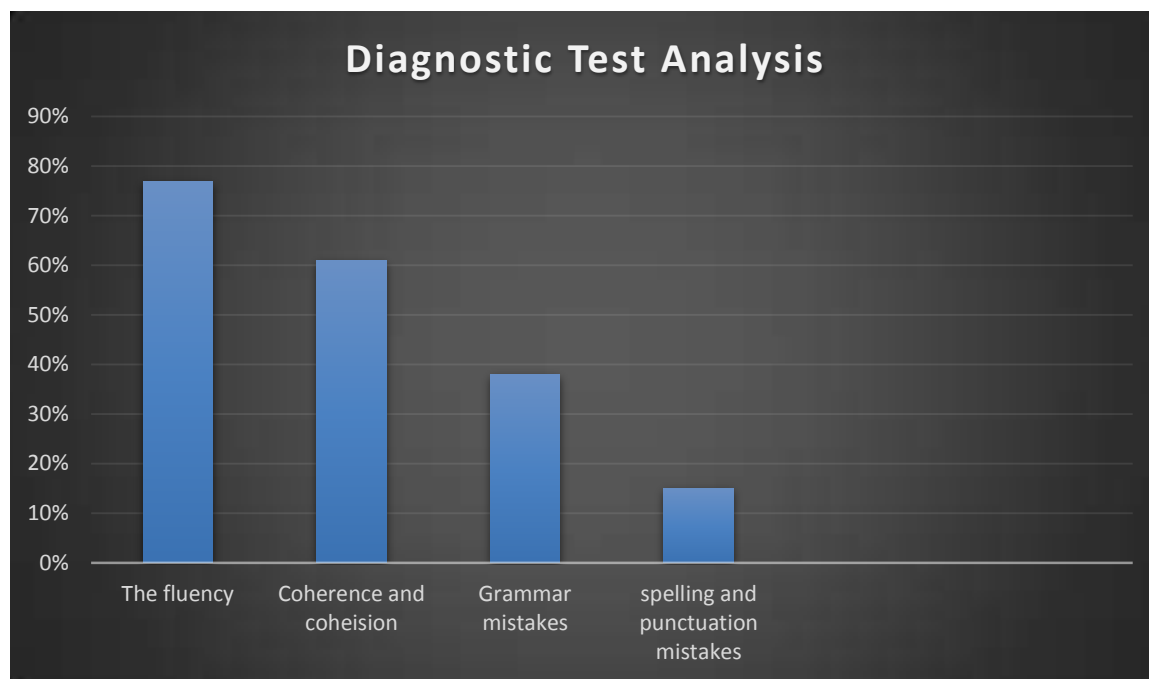
Year	Month	Activity/Event	Location	Remarks
2019	Jan	First day of school	Home	First day of school
2019	Feb	First day of school	Home	First day of school
2019	Mar	First day of school	Home	First day of school
2019	Apr	First day of school	Home	First day of school
2019	May	First day of school	Home	First day of school
2019	Jun	First day of school	Home	First day of school
2019	Jul	First day of school	Home	First day of school
2019	Aug	First day of school	Home	First day of school
2019	Sep	First day of school	Home	First day of school
2019	Oct	First day of school	Home	First day of school
2019	Nov	First day of school	Home	First day of school
2019	Dec	First day of school	Home	First day of school

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2019	May	First day of school	Home	First day of school
2019	Jun	First day of school	Home	First day of school
2019	Jul	First day of school	Home	First day of school
2019	Aug	First day of school	Home	First day of school
2019	Sep	First day of school	Home	First day of school
2019	Oct	First day of school	Home	First day of school
2019	Nov	First day of school	Home	First day of school
2019	Dec	First day of school	Home	First day of school

## Appendix 2

A

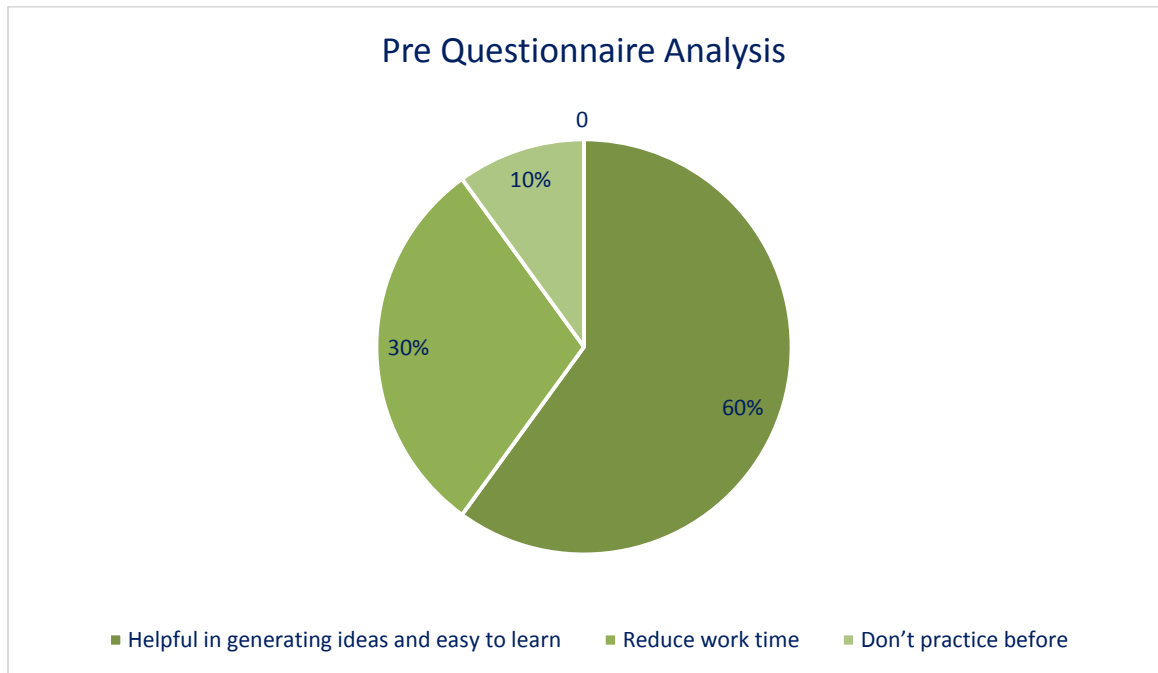


B

Need analysis questionnaire results:

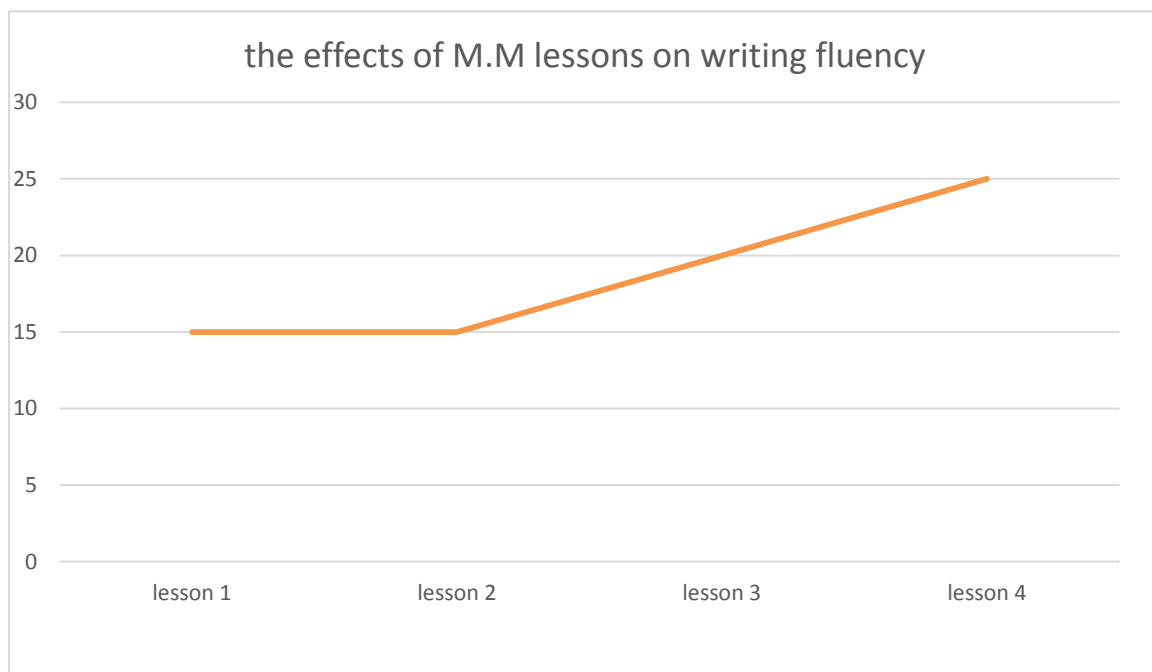
The question	1	2	3	4
1 They need to improve	20% speaking	10% reading	70% writing	10% listening
2 Feel confidence when	30% express themselves	15% write an email	15% reflect on a book	40% listen to songs
3 Hot topic	25% shopping	30% tourism	10% nature	35% health
4 Have problem in	60% writing	20% grammar	15% reading comprehension	5% pronunciation
5 Favorite class activity	10% conversation	35% pair/ group work	40% Songs	15% create class magazine

C

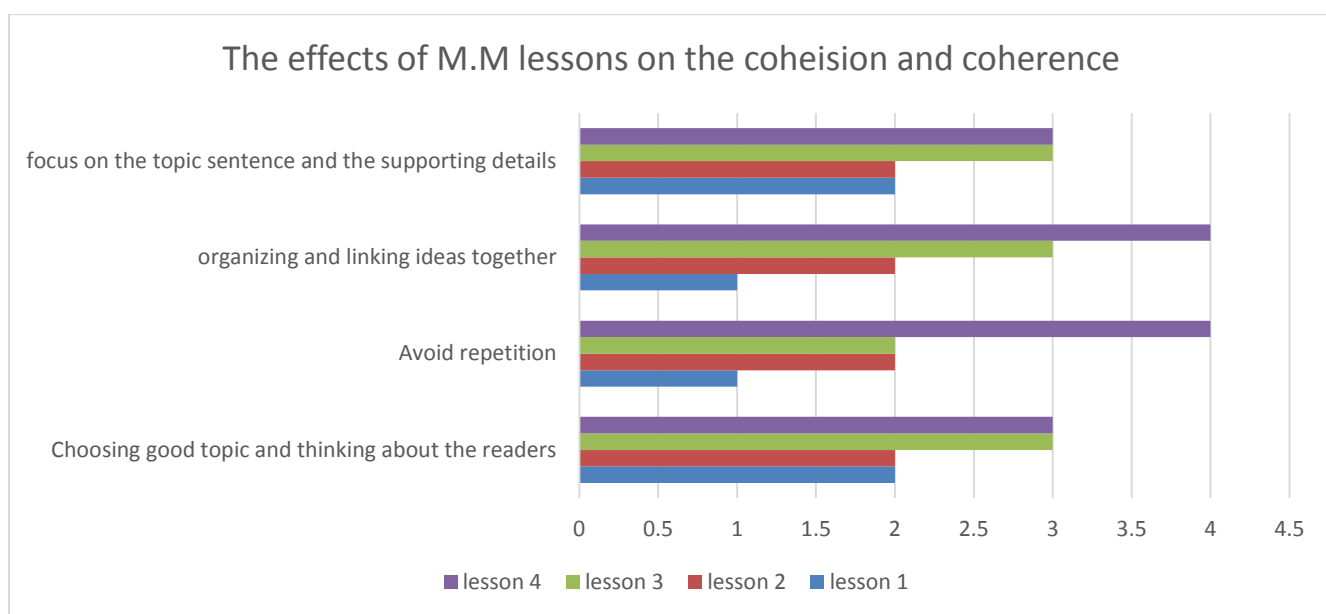


The results after teaching four lessons to students

E



F



## Appendix 3

A

Shadon

Need analysis questionnaire

Circle the best answer for you

1-The English skill that you want to improve is  
Speaking Reading writing listening

2-You feel confidence in using English for:  
Expressing yourself writing an email reflecting on a book you read

3-The hot topics that I liked to discuss:  
Shopping tourism nature health choose other one

4-I have problem with:  
Writing grammar reading comprehension pronunciation

5-The most helpful learning activities for you is  
Conversation Pair/group work songs create class magazine

Shadon

Mind Mapping Student Evaluation Questionnaire

Answer each question by placing a check mark in the appropriate box. Thank you for your participation!

Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree
1. Mind mapping was easy to learn.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
2. Mind mapping is useful to follow the ideas of any topic.		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
3. Mind mapping assisted to communicate my ideas with other students.		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
4. Mind mapping provided me with a wider perspective of what I am going to write.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
5. Mind mapping helped me put my ideas in some type of order.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
6. Mind mapping enhanced my creativity.		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
7. Mind mapping is a useful learning strategy.		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
8. Mind mapping reduces my working time in doing writing task.		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
9. When using mind mapping I related my ideas to my prior knowledge, and come up with new ones.		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
10. Mind mapping enhances my self confidence when writing.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			

B

Diagnostic Test Result

Student: <u>Shadan</u>	Teacher:
<b>Fluency</b>	
Number of lines	<u>18 Lines</u>
Approximate Time	<u>30 minutes</u>
<b>Content</b>	
Structure (Introduction, body, conclusion)	<u>three paragraphs</u>
Cohesion (Sequence of the ideas, use of key words)	<u>use transition words and repeating key words</u>
<b>Conventions</b>	
Correct Word Sentences	<u>accurate and clear word sentences</u>
Spelling Problems, punctuation or capitalization errors, grammar, other	<u>no spelling and capitalization mistakes few grammar mistakes</u>

C

Shadan Questionnaire

1-What did you like about Mind Mapping strategy?

I think it is a very useful strategy. It helps me to brainstorm my ideas, generate and link them together. Also I like when making it. I used different colors and images.

2-What did you don't like about Mind Mapping?

I think it needs a lot of time for me to do it. I should practice it more and more, to be able to do it very fast.

3-Did your writing skill improves as a result of using Mind Mapping strategy?

Yes it improved. I am now can write more longer and organised topic.

4-What problems or difficulties did you face?

when doing peer assessment. I don't like the way some students do it.

5-Would you use it again in future for writing assignment? Why? Why not?

Of course I will, it is very useful and helpful. I didn't forget any of my ideas or repeat any of them.

5/4

D

## Writing checklist

POWER Looking at How I Write		
My Comments <u>Shadan</u>		
<b>Plan</b>		
I chose a good topic	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes	<input type="radio"/> No
I thought about what the readers will want to know	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No
I wrote down all my ideas on a "think sheet"	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No
<b>Organize</b>		
I put similar ideas together	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes	<input type="radio"/> No
I chose the best ideas for my composition	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes	<input type="radio"/> No
I numbered my ideas in logical order	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No
<b>Write</b>		
I wrote down my ideas in sentences	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes	<input type="radio"/> No
When I needed help I...		
___ did the best I could		<input checked="" type="radio"/>
___ looked in a book		<input checked="" type="radio"/>
___ asked my partner	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	
___ asked the teacher	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	
<b>Edit</b>		
I read my first draft to myself	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes	<input type="radio"/> No
I read my first draft to my partner	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No
I listened to my partner's suggestions	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes	<input type="radio"/> No
<b>Rewrite</b>		
I made changes to my writing	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes	<input type="radio"/> No
I edited for correctness	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="radio"/> No
I wrote the final draft in my best writing	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes	<input type="radio"/> No



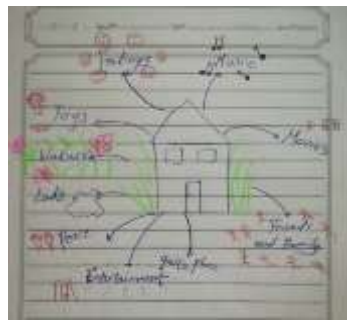
**E**

## Peer Assessment Rubric

The criteria	3	2	1
Fluency: the length of the writing in specific time.	Student wrote more than 15 lines in given time.	Student wrote 15 lines in given time.	Students wrote less than 15 lines in given time.
Well-structured paragraphs	Student wrote three paragraphs, introduction, body, and conclusion, the ideas are clear and linking together.	Student wrote three paragraphs, introduction, body, and conclusion, the ideas are somewhat clear and linking together.	Student didn't write three paragraphs, introduction, body, and conclusion, the ideas are not clear and don't link together.
Word choice	Student used accurate and various words	Student used some accurate and various words	Student used few accurate and various words
Spelling and grammar	Student made no or few spelling and grammar mistakes	Student made some grammar mistakes	Student made many spelling and grammar mistakes.



# Student's mind map samples



## Appendix 5

## Inquiry Agreement

To whom it may concern,

Would ask for your permission to allow the student teacher in QRTA, Miss Amal Qtairi, to make her Inquiry Research that aims to improve and enhance students' pedagogical content knowledge.

The students will be informed about this inquiry, I would like to draw your attention that the student teacher may need to take some photos for the lesson, and interview some of the students when needed.

Thanks a lot

Agreement on my inquiry question

AQ

Amal Qtairi

Reply

Thu 4/12, 8:45 AM

blueplink@hotmail.com

Sent Items

Dear Miss Hadeel,

I'd like for your permission to make my inquiry research which is about Improving Writing through using mind mapping strategy for tenth grade students....

Thank you so much

Amal