

**Towards a Proposal for Teaching the Activity of Listening Comprehension
and Oral Production According to the Mind Mapping Strategy**Souad Abbassi^{1,*}¹Scientific and Technical Research Center for the Development of Arabic Language

(Algeria)-Tlemcen Unit

souad.abassi13@gmail.com

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Abstract:

The educational system is undergoing qualitative transformations driven by cognitive linguistics, shifting attention toward investing mental capacities in uncovering the mechanisms underlying teaching and learning. This shift has created an urgent need to renew Arabic language curricula, improve teaching methods, and address pedagogical challenges in line with advances in applied linguistics and language didactics. Within this context, adopting modern strategies grounded in cognitive learning theories becomes essential to enhance academic achievement and foster learners' intellectual and creative abilities. Among the most effective tools are mind maps, which facilitate the organization and assimilation of knowledge while strengthening oral and written communicative competencies. Accordingly, this study highlights the impact of cognitive linguistic transformations on renewing Arabic curricula and teaching methods, emphasizing mind maps as a powerful pedagogical instrument and proposing an integrated framework to support linguistic and cognitive development.

Key words: Didactics, Listening comprehension and oral production, Written production, Mind map.

1. Introduction:

The field of language teaching has witnessed remarkable development in light of the new conceptions produced by cognitive linguistics regarding the nature of learning and its mechanisms. The educational process has come to rest on understanding the mental structures that guide the acquisition, organization, and retrieval of knowledge. Within this framework, interest has grown in seeking more effective teaching methods capable of developing learners' intellectual and communicative abilities and investing their cognitive potential efficiently.

In the context of teaching Arabic, many learners suffer from weakness in conveying their ideas and feelings in a correct and coherent language. This is attributed to the limited lexical repertoire, weak mastery of grammatical, morphological, and rhetorical rules, and the absence of tools for organized thinking. Such shortcomings necessitate the adoption of innovative pedagogical approaches that invest the learner's capacities and assist in constructing meaning and organizing knowledge.

* Corresponding author. Souad Abbassi

“Mind maps” are considered one of the educational tools derived from contemporary cognitive theories, which have proven effective in enhancing comprehension, developing self-learning skills, and facilitating the organization of ideas. They are a visual technique based on representing information in interconnected diagrams that help the learner grasp concepts and expand linguistic awareness. From this perspective, this study derives its legitimacy from its attempt to explore the effectiveness of employing mind maps in Arabic language didactics and their role in developing learners’ communicative competencies, both oral and written—especially since they have become among the most important cognitive mechanisms used by scholars of various linguistic and intellectual orientations. This has accelerated the emergence of numerous mind maps that contributed to the development of the educational process and the transition from traditional methods to modern approaches. To what extent, then, do mind maps contribute to supporting the teaching of Arabic language activities and to developing learners’ oral and written communicative competencies?

2- The Concept of Mind Maps:

Mind maps are among the modern educational tools that rely on representing ideas and knowledge in an organized visual form, simulating the way the human brain processes information. This technique has received increasing attention in the fields of teaching and learning due to the opportunities it provides for fostering creative thinking, enhancing comprehension, and organizing knowledge.

Tony Buzan, one of the pioneers of this concept, defines mind maps as “a natural function of the human mind, and a visual technique aimed at helping the learner see the thinking maps existing in his mind (Tony, 2005, p. 12-13).” He further explains that they are “colored visual forms for note-taking; they can be created by an individual or a group of people. At the heart of the figure lies a central idea or image, which is then explored through branches representing the main ideas, all connected to the central concept (Tony, 2009 p. 22).”

Similarly, ‘Obeidat and Abu Sameed define them as “a means employed by the brain to formulate and organize ideas in a way that accelerates the flow of information and activates what is known as radiant thinking (Thoukan & Abdelsamid, 2007 p. 142).”

In the same vein, Manal Mahmoud Khairi views mind maps as “branched schematic diagrams that move from general concepts to sub-concepts, and constitute an effective means for constructing and organizing concepts, especially in economic and financial fields, while also helping to grasp the relationships among them (Mahmoud, 2010 p. 65).”

Kamal Zeitoun (1988) considers mind maps “an intermediate method between verbal and non-verbal approaches, distinguished by their ability to facilitate teaching and learning processes thanks to their reliance on images and symbolic representations (Kamal, 1988 p. 112).”

From these multiple definitions, we can conclude that the mind map is an educational technique that simulates the functioning of the nerve cell, contributing to brain activation and enabling it to operate at its highest and best capacities. It stimulates thinking, organizes information in an interactive visual form that includes images, colors, symbols, and branches, allowing ideas to flow from the center representing the main topic towards secondary branches and ideas. This helps the learner memorize, understand, and recall in an effective and innovative way, while also stimulating personal abilities and increasing self-confidence. It thus supports self-learning, opens the way for creative thinking, and is based on two fundamental principles: imagination and the association of ideas.

3- The Importance of Mind Maps:

Mind maps are among the modern pedagogical tools that have proven effective in enhancing comprehension and facilitating learning. They allow the learner to study in a stimulating and flexible educational environment based on enjoyment and discovery, while at the same time providing a comprehensive and integrated view of the subject under study. The adoption of this technique shows a clear impact on improving academic performance by facilitating the construction of knowledge and consolidating it in long-term memory.

Mind maps help learners organize information creatively by linking concepts through colors, symbols, shapes, and drawings, thereby simulating the functioning of neural cells in the brain. They rely on a central structure from which main branches extend, which in turn subdivide into more specialized sub-elements, forming a branching structure that enables the learner to grasp relationships among concepts (Tony, 2005 p. 43).

This technique also contributes to raising performance levels in oral and written communication skills, given the practical training it provides in organizing ideas and presenting them in a coherent and connected manner, which positively reflects on the quality of expression and logical thinking. According to Obeidat and Abu Sameed (2007), the use of mind maps constitutes an effective entry point for activating creative thinking by representing ideas in visual models that help embody abstract concepts (Thoukan & Abdelsamid, 2007 p. 144).

Other studies indicate that training learners to use this tool contributes to their transition from traditional learning patterns based on rote memorization to more active and interactive modes, grounded in self-reflection, exploration, and the reconstruction of concepts. This, in turn, enhances learner autonomy and increases motivation toward learning (Mahmoud, 2010 p. 68).

Accordingly, mind maps are considered an effective tool for developing cognitive and communicative abilities, by employing them to present ideas within organizational structures that facilitate comprehension, consolidate concepts in memory, and strengthen the learner's engagement in the context of active learning.

4- The Brain and Mind Maps:

When discussing the relationship between mind maps and the human brain, a central question arises: what is the connection between brain function and the role of mind maps? To answer this question, it is necessary to address the functions of the two hemispheres of the brain—the left and the right—and their role in the learning process.

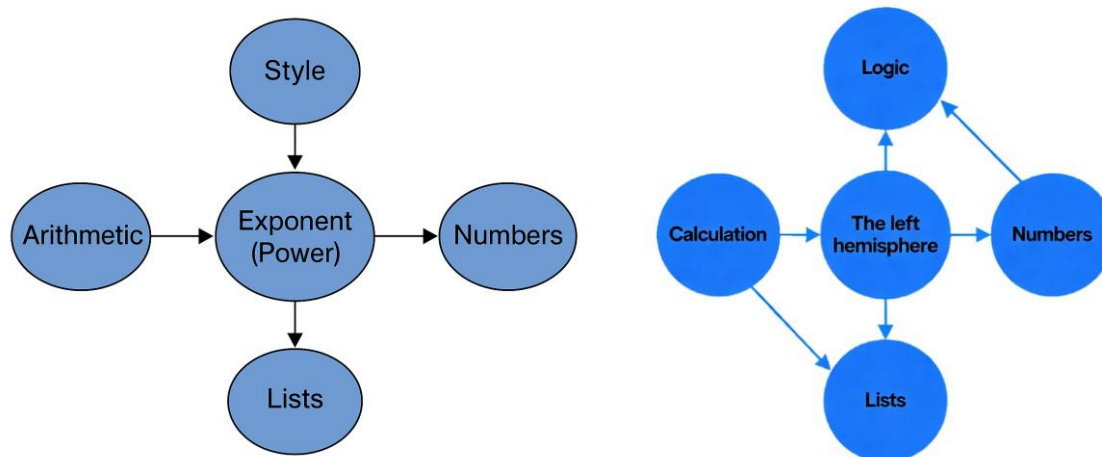
The left hemisphere of the brain performs analytical and logical functions, such as language use, calculation, analysis, sequencing, and critical thinking. In contrast, the right hemisphere is concerned with creative and holistic functions, such as visual perception, rhythm, colors, images, imagination, and innovation (Tony, 2005, p. 20).

In the context of constructing mind maps, it becomes evident that this technique stimulates both hemispheres of the brain in an integrated manner. It relies on the use of keywords and logic (activities of the left hemisphere), alongside colors, drawings, symbols, and visual connections (activities of the right hemisphere), thereby enhancing the harmonious interaction between the two hemispheres during the processes of comprehension and assimilation (Abdullah, 2014, p. 91).

According to Tony Buzan, mind maps “activate both hemispheres together to generate more coherent and comprehensive cognitive and creative production, which contributes to improving the ability to organize ideas, accelerating comprehension, and increasing the effectiveness of learning” (Tony, 2005, p. 22).

The integration of the functions of both hemispheres during the drawing of mind maps is one of the most important factors that make this technique a powerful educational tool. It is not limited to memorization alone but extends to include the development of creativity, the construction of knowledge, and the achievement of deep understanding of various educational concepts.

Functions of Brain Hemispheres: Right and Left



Which side of the brain does a person use when drawing mind maps?

Mind maps enhance the strength and efficiency of both the right and left hemispheres of the brain, particularly since they engage both simultaneously to support their shared creative output. This, in turn, increases the ability to interconnect ideas.

Studies show that the use of mind maps activates both hemispheres together: the left hemisphere processes logical, linguistic, and analytical tasks such as words, numbers, and sequencing, while the right hemisphere is concerned with visual and creative aspects such as colors, images, rhythm, and imagination (Tony, 2005, p. 13).

Mind maps rely on organizing information in a central image from which main and sub-ideas branch out, using multiple visual elements such as illustrations, symbols, colors, and lines. This helps the learner connect and consolidate ideas. The process leads to the simultaneous activation of both hemispheres, thereby enhancing comprehension efficiency and increasing the ability to think creatively and interrelate knowledge (Abdullah, 2014, p. 93).

Tony Buzan affirmed that mind maps “employ the full potential of the brain, as they are consistent with the natural way of human thinking, which radiates from a central point.” This makes them an effective educational tool for improving overall mental performance (Tony, 2005, p. 22).

This integration between the two hemispheres when drawing mind maps is one of the main factors that make them an effective educational strategy, as they lead to the interconnection of ideas, increased comprehension, consolidation of information in long-term memory, as well as the stimulation of active learning and the development of multiple cognitive abilities.

5- Applications of Mind Maps in the Field of Education:

5-1. For the Teacher:

The mind map is an effective tool that helps the teacher organize the course content and facilitate the teaching process, through the following:

- **Planning:** Mind maps assist the teacher in setting a clear plan for lessons by identifying main and sub-themes and clarifying the relationships among concepts, thus providing a comprehensive view that facilitates the construction of a logical sequence of content.
- **Organization:** The mind map enables the teacher to organize ideas and concepts visually, allowing easy reference during explanation and helping to cover all aspects of the lesson without neglecting essential elements.
- **Time distribution of content:** Mind maps help the teacher distribute instructional time across lesson elements in a balanced way, ensuring control over class time and the achievement of intended educational objectives (Abdullah A.-K. H., 2016, p. 64).
- **Innovation and creativity in lesson delivery:** This technique offers the teacher the opportunity to employ colors, symbols, and images in presenting information in a stimulating manner, making the content more engaging and contributing to increased learner attention.
- **Identifying importance and priorities:** Mind maps help highlight the essential points of the lesson and determine the parts that require special focus, thereby directing learners toward what is most important.
- **Assessment:** Mind maps can be employed as a tool for assessing learners' understanding, whether individually or collectively, by asking them to produce maps that summarize what has been learned (Mahmoud A.-K. A., 2018, pp. 51-53).
- **Identifying individual differences:** By observing the nature of learners' production of their mind maps, the teacher can recognize their thinking patterns and varying levels, which helps in adapting pedagogical approaches according to each learner's needs.
- **Preparing study notes:** Mind maps are used as a means of preparing summaries and lesson notes, which facilitates the review process for learners and provides a supportive visual reference.



5-2. For the Learner:

The mind map is an effective tool that helps the learner develop cognitive and communicative abilities, enabling the organization of ideas and the construction of knowledge in an interactive visual manner. Its main applications can be summarized as follows:

- **Organizing and consolidating information:** The mind map helps the learner organize information into associative structures, which contributes to consolidating concepts in long-term memory through images, keywords, and visual connections.
- **Enhancing comprehension skills:** By transforming linear texts or explanations into visual diagrams, the learner gains a better ability to understand relationships among concepts and to connect new knowledge with prior contexts (Abdullah A. W., 2014, p. 103).

- **Stimulating creative thinking:** Mind maps activate both hemispheres of the brain, which helps the learner develop creative thinking and visual imagination skills, leading to more flexible and diverse knowledge production (Abdullah A.-K. H., 2016, p. 66).
- **Facilitating memorization and recall:** They are an effective means of facilitating memorization and retrieval of information, as the material is organized in a visual form that is easy to remember, especially when concepts are linked with images and colors.
- **Improving oral and written communication skills:** Mind maps assist learners in constructing organized discourse in oral or written expression, by training them to arrange ideas in a logical sequence supported by images and concepts (Mahmoud A.-K. A., 2018, p. 54).
- **Managing time and study tasks:** Learners can use mind maps as a tool to organize study schedules, identify required tasks, and prioritize learning objectives, thereby enhancing their time management skills effectively.
- **Fostering self-learning:** Mind maps enable learners to construct their own knowledge by summarizing lessons and re-producing content in a personal way, which strengthens their autonomy and motivation for learning (Thoukan & Abdelsamid, 2007, p. 146).

6- The Field of Listening Comprehension and Oral Production in the Arabic Language Curriculum:

The field of listening comprehension and oral production holds great importance in the Arabic language curriculum, as it reflects the learner's true linguistic competence. Oral expression is considered a fundamental activity in which the learner's ability to understand and produce linguistic messages correctly and effectively is manifested.

The Algerian curriculum (2003) gave attention to this field by linking it to the activity of reading, as the starting point for developing learners' oral expressive abilities (Education, 2003). However, the second-generation reforms (2016) reorganized this field, making the spoken text its starting point, and combining the skills of listening and comprehension on the one hand, and oral expression on the other, within a holistic approach that integrates reception and production, and is based on constructing meaning in real communicative contexts (Education, 2016, pp. 12-14).

Accordingly, the second-generation curriculum aims to achieve this field by focusing on the following axes:

- a) **Listening skill:** Listening is considered a fundamental entry point to understanding spoken language, and thus to developing the learner's linguistic faculty. Active listening provides fertile ground for building comprehension and enriching lexical and cognitive resources, while also contributing to consolidating the rules of linguistic interaction in communicative contexts (Thoukan O. , 2007, p. 89).
- b) **Comprehension skill:** The spoken text is viewed as a semantic carrier that contains linguistic, cultural, and value-based dimensions, which can only be grasped through conscious interaction with its components. Comprehension is a necessary condition for oral production, as it requires perceiving the semantic and pragmatic relationships among the units of the text, according to the context and communicative situation (Abdelhamid, 2019, p. 133).
- c) **Oral production skill:** After the stages of listening and comprehension comes the productive stage, which constitutes a manifestation of acquiring linguistic and communicative competence. The learner employs what has been listened to and understood in order to produce an organized oral discourse, enabling the teacher to assess the extent of comprehension and the ability to reconstruct meaning and interact effectively with the content.

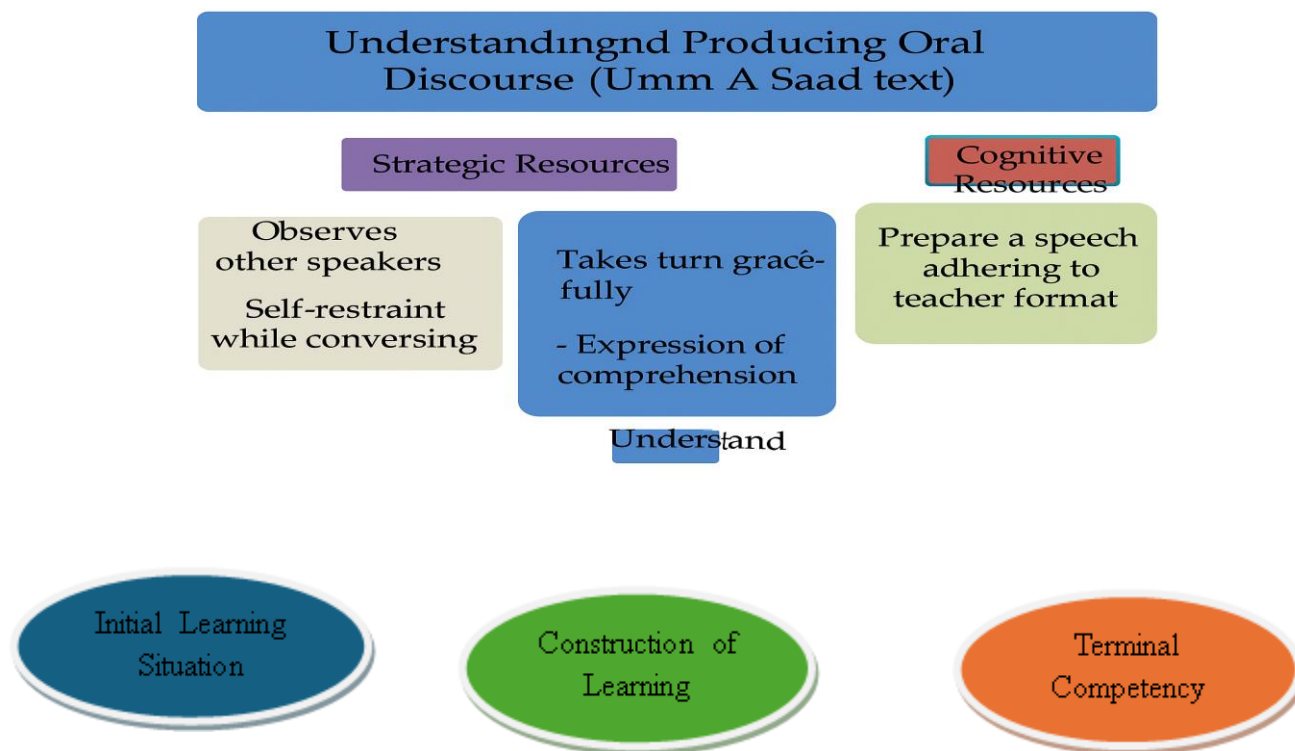


Diagram designed by the researcher based on the Supporting Document for the Arabic Language Curriculum – Third Year of Primary Education (Second Generation). Algiers: National Office for School Publications, 2016. Section on the field of “Listening Comprehension and Oral Production,” pp. 12–16.

The Field of Written Production (Written Expression):

The field of written expression constitutes one of the core components of the Arabic language curriculum, as it is regarded as an integrative activity in which the learner mobilizes both prior and subsequent acquisitions—whether linguistic or cognitive—in order to produce a text that is coherent in both form and content. Its teaching currently relies on the textual approach, which is considered one of the modern educational methodologies. This approach places the learner in a problem-solving situation that stimulates thinking, analysis, and planning, enabling the mobilization of various linguistic and intellectual resources for the construction of meaningful texts with communicative functions.

This approach aims to enable the learner to acquire competence in producing written discourse within communicative situations of a social dimension, by linking the formal structure of the text with the meanings it conveys, while taking into account the specific features of each textual genre. This orientation is an extension of the conceptions of integration pedagogy, which views written expression as a field for synthesizing multiple skills and abilities within purposeful communicative contexts (Nasser, 2015).

In this framework, written expression is not regarded as a separate skill, but rather as a complex process in which grammatical, lexical, and stylistic resources, in addition to encyclopedic knowledge, are employed to achieve a specific communicative purpose within a given context.

Objectives of Teaching the Activity of Written Production:

The teaching of written expression in the Arabic language curriculum seeks to achieve a set of educational and linguistic objectives that contribute to shaping the learner's personality and developing communicative competence. Among the most prominent objectives are the following:

- a) **Developing the ability to present ideas with depth and coherence**, in line with the learner's cognitive and intellectual level, while training them to recognize and correct their own errors in a way that fosters autonomy and critical thinking (Mohamed, 2019, p. 83).
- b) **Cultivating linguistic and stylistic taste** by training learners to select structures and expressions appropriate to the context and genre of the text, thereby enhancing their aesthetic and expressive sensibility.
- c) **Stimulating creative writing** by providing sufficient pedagogical time for practicing writing and editing skills, and avoiding superficial or hasty treatment of the writing process, thus allowing learners to gradually produce integrated and purposeful texts.
- d) **Training learners in organized thinking and correct writing**, enabling them to construct coherent discourse and to invest their abilities in detecting and correcting linguistic and grammatical errors independently, thereby strengthening their self-monitoring competence (Fatima, 2018, p. 85).
- e) **Developing clear and focused writing skills** by supporting learners in controlling the flow of their thinking, sequencing their ideas, and ensuring internal coherence, which reflects a deep understanding of the topic and effective use of expressive tools.
- f) **Reinforcing the correct use of linguistic rules in expressive contexts**, while encouraging learners to draw inspiration from cultural heritage, such as quoting Qur'anic verses or employing the aesthetic richness of Arabic proverbial wisdom, which contributes to deepening the cultural and symbolic dimension of the written text.
- g) Producing texts predominantly of descriptive and narrative types, in correct language, while employing the prescribed grammatical phenomena.

7. Conclusion:

It can be said that the mind map strategy is among the most effective educational tools, given its ability to facilitate the processes of storage and recall, in addition to its role in diagnosing learners' prior knowledge and supporting the acquisition of new concepts. The mind map is also used as an efficient tool for lesson planning, summarization, and learner assessment at the end of each instructional session.

The use of this strategy contributes effectively to the development of educational models and the achievement of knowledge acquisition across different educational stages, while also reinforcing active learning practices based on interaction and visual thinking.

From this perspective, we recommend the following:

- Continuous engagement with educational innovations, particularly those related to modern teaching tools and strategies.
- Encouraging learners to read through motivational projects such as "One Minute of Reading," given its role in enriching linguistic and cognitive resources.
- Incorporating mind maps into the content of school textbooks, especially in language activities, as a tool that aids comprehension, recall, and the development of expression.
- Employing mind maps across various school subjects, whether literary or scientific, as they constitute a cross-disciplinary technique.
- Organizing training workshops for teachers to introduce modern teaching strategies—foremost among them mind maps—and to train them in how to employ these effectively in the classroom.

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