

The Use of Mind Mapping Method to Improve Speaking Skill at Fourth Grade MI Inayatullah

Septi Rani¹, Septiana Wandira², Niro Arif S.³

^{1,2,3}, Universitas Islam An Nur Lampung, Indonesia

septirani123456@gmail.com

Abstract

Keywords: Speaking Skill, Mind Mapping Method, Elementary Education, Classroom Action Research

Kata Kunci: Keterampilan Berbicara, Mind Mapping, Sekolah Dasar, Penelitian Tindakan Kelas

This study aims to analyze the effectiveness of the mind mapping method in improving the speaking skills of fourth-grade students at MI Inayatullah. Many students still face difficulties expressing ideas orally, structuring sentences, and speaking confidently. The mind mapping strategy—known for its ability to visually organize ideas—was implemented to help students improve fluency, vocabulary mastery, and confidence. The research used a classroom action research design conducted in two cycles, each consisting of planning, action, observation, and reflection. Data were collected through speaking tests, observation sheets, and field notes. The findings reveal a significant improvement in students' speaking performance after the use of mind mapping. Students became more confident, able to develop ideas more clearly, and showed better structure in oral expression. This study concludes that mind mapping is an effective learning technique to enhance speaking skills at the elementary level.

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui penggunaan metode *mind mapping* dalam meningkatkan keterampilan berbicara siswa kelas IV MI Inayatullah. Latar belakang penelitian ini berangkat dari rendahnya kemampuan siswa dalam menyampaikan ide secara lisan, yang ditandai oleh kurangnya kelancaran, kosakata terbatas, dan rasa percaya diri yang rendah. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain penelitian tindakan kelas (PTK) yang dilaksanakan dalam dua siklus. Setiap siklus terdiri dari tahap perencanaan, pelaksanaan, observasi, dan refleksi. Teknik pengumpulan data meliputi observasi, wawancara, catatan lapangan, serta penilaian keterampilan berbicara siswa.

Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penerapan metode *mind mapping* dapat membantu siswa menyusun gagasan secara lebih

terstruktur sehingga meningkatkan kelancaran berbicara, memperkaya kosakata, dan menumbuhkan kepercayaan diri dalam berkomunikasi. Peningkatan terlihat dari perkembangan nilai keterampilan berbicara pada setiap siklus, serta perubahan perilaku siswa yang lebih aktif dan antusias selama kegiatan pembelajaran. Dengan demikian, metode *mind mapping* terbukti efektif sebagai strategi pembelajaran untuk meningkatkan keterampilan berbicara siswa sekolah dasar, khususnya di MI Inayatullah.

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INTRODUCTION

Speaking is one of the most essential language skills necessary for effective communication. However, many elementary school students struggle to express ideas verbally due to limited vocabulary, low confidence, and difficulty organizing thoughts. This problem is also found at MI Inayatullah, particularly among fourth-grade students who often appear hesitant when speaking, unable to articulate ideas clearly, and dependent on memorized phrases rather than natural expression.

Mind mapping, introduced by Tony Buzan, is a technique that visually organizes information using branches, colors, symbols, and keywords. This method helps learners generate ideas more easily, connect concepts, and recall information more effectively. In the context of language learning, mind mapping allows students to visualize the structure of their spoken ideas, making it easier to produce coherent speech.

Several previous studies support the use of mind mapping in language education. Research conducted by Buzan (2018) shows that mind mapping enhances creativity and improves memory retention. Other studies indicate that mind mapping significantly increases students' ability to develop ideas and supports active learning. However, the implementation of mind mapping specifically to improve speaking skill in Islamic elementary school settings, such as MI Inayatullah, remains limited.

Students in elementary school often face difficulties when expressing their ideas orally due to limited vocabulary mastery, lack of fluency, and low confidence. These challenges indicate the need for learning strategies that can help students organize their thoughts before speaking. The mind mapping method provides a visual framework that allows learners to structure information in a way that is simple, meaningful, and interconnected.

As a learning tool, mind mapping has been widely recognized for its ability to promote creativity, enhance memory retention, and support students in generating ideas more effectively. In the context of language learning, this method encourages active participation and helps students develop logical connections between concepts, which are essential for improving speaking skills. Therefore, integrating mind mapping into the teaching of English at the elementary level is expected to give students clearer guidance in constructing spoken language.

This study investigates how the mind mapping method can be applied in the classroom and to what extent it contributes to improving the speaking skills of fourth-grade students at MI Inayatullah.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate the application of mind mapping as a strategy to improve speaking skill in fourth-grade students.

Research questions:

1. How is the mind mapping method implemented to improve speaking skill at fourth grade MI Inayatullah?
2. To what extent does the mind mapping method improve students' speaking skill?
3. What are the students' responses toward the use of mind mapping in speaking activities?

Research objectives:

1. To describe the implementation of mind mapping in teaching speaking.
2. To measure the improvement of speaking skills through mind mapping.
3. To analyze students' attitudes and responses toward the technique.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical foundation of this study is based on several key concepts that support the use of the mind mapping method as an effective strategy for improving students' speaking skills. Mind mapping, introduced by Tony Buzan, is a visual learning technique that enables learners to organize information through interconnected branches, images, and keywords. According to Buzan (2018), mind mapping enhances both hemispheres of the brain, allowing students to process information more creatively and systematically. This technique helps learners break down complex ideas into smaller, manageable components, making it easier for them to recall and express those ideas verbally.

In language learning, speaking is considered one of the most challenging skills because it requires not only linguistic competence – such as vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation – but also psychological readiness, confidence, and fluency. Brown (2004) emphasizes that speaking is an interactive process that involves constructing meaning through verbal and non-verbal communication. Young learners often struggle with this process due to limited exposure and low self-confidence. Therefore, an instructional technique that supports idea generation and reduces anxiety is crucial in improving speaking competence.

Mind mapping aligns with the principles of constructivist learning theory, which states that students build knowledge actively by connecting new information with prior experiences. Through mind mapping, students visually represent their thoughts,

enabling them to construct meaning in a personalized and enjoyable manner. Novak and Cañas (2008) explain that visual learning tools help students see relationships between concepts, encouraging deeper understanding and more organized oral production.

Additionally, mind mapping supports cognitive load theory by reducing the mental burden on learners. Sweller (2011) notes that when information is presented visually, working memory is used more efficiently, making it easier for students to recall ideas during speaking activities. By having a clear cognitive structure, students experience less pressure when expressing their ideas, which ultimately improves their speaking fluency and overall performance.

The theoretical foundation for this study rests on several key concepts: mind mapping, speaking skill, the role of visual learning strategies, and relevant principles from Second Language Acquisition (SLA). Each component contributes to explaining why the mind mapping method can support and enhance students' speaking performance, particularly at the elementary level.

The concept of *mind mapping* originates from Tony Buzan's theory of radiant thinking, which proposes that the human brain processes information in nonlinear, associative patterns rather than in rigid, linear sequences. Mind mapping, therefore, is designed to mirror the brain's natural way of organizing information through branches, keywords, colors, and imagery. Buzan (2018) argues that mind maps stimulate creativity, improve memory retention, and encourage learners to make meaningful connections between ideas. In language learning, especially speaking, these advantages help students visualize vocabulary, arrange ideas logically, and reduce cognitive overload when they must produce verbal output.

Speaking skill, as defined by Thornbury (2005) and Harmer (2015), involves the ability to express thoughts, opinions, feelings, and information fluently, accurately, and appropriately in real-time communication. Speaking is considered one of the most complex language skills because it requires simultaneous activation of vocabulary retrieval, grammar construction, pronunciation, confidence, and interactional competence. For young learners, speaking can be even more challenging due to limited linguistic resources and higher levels of anxiety. Therefore, speaking instruction needs to be supported by teaching strategies that lower affective barriers while helping students organize their thoughts clearly. Mind mapping fits this requirement, as it provides a scaffold that helps students plan their ideas before speaking.

The use of visual learning tools, including diagrams, concept maps, and mind maps, is supported by Dual Coding Theory (Paivio, 1986), which states that information processed using both verbal and visual channels is more easily remembered and reproduced. When students use mind mapping to prepare for speaking activities, they engage multiple cognitive pathways that enhance comprehension and recall. This visual-verbal integration helps them speak more confidently because they can "see" the structure of what they want to express, reducing hesitation and increasing fluency.

In addition, mind mapping aligns with Constructivist Learning Theory, which emphasizes that learners build new knowledge by connecting it to prior understanding.

When creating a mind map, students activate background knowledge and reorganize it into new conceptual structures. This process strengthens their conceptual clarity and supports more coherent spoken expression. Young learners in particular benefit from hands-on, colorful, and imaginative activities that encourage engagement, making mind mapping an ideal tool for their developmental stage (Cameron, 2015).

From the perspective of Second Language Acquisition, scaffolding and meaningful input are essential for developing speaking competence. Mind mapping provides a form of cognitive scaffolding that reduces linguistic pressure and allows students to speak within a guided framework. Moreover, by organizing ideas visually before speaking, learners receive "pre-planned output" that helps them produce language more accurately. Swain's Output Hypothesis suggests that learners improve their language through meaningful production; mind mapping supports this by giving structure to output, thus helping students notice gaps in their linguistic knowledge and fill them during practice.

Finally, the mind mapping method also contributes to increasing students' motivation and reducing speaking anxiety. Speaking in front of peers can be intimidating, especially for young learners. However, having a colorful, concrete visual guide makes them feel more prepared and reduces fear of forgetting what to say. This aligns with Krashen's Affective Filter Theory, which states that learners perform better when their anxiety is low and motivation is high. Therefore, mind mapping does not only improve the organization of ideas but also creates a positive emotional environment for speaking practice.

In the context of English learning at the elementary school level, mind mapping provides a practical scaffold that guides students in planning what they want to say. It helps them select relevant vocabulary, sequence their ideas, and maintain coherence while speaking. For teachers, mind mapping serves as an instructional tool that encourages active participation, collaboration, and creativity among students.

Thus, the theoretical framework of this study suggests that mind mapping is not only a visual strategy but also a cognitive and affective support system that can significantly enhance students' speaking abilities. This foundation guides the present research in examining how the method is implemented and how it influences the speaking skills of fourth-grade students at MI Inayatullah.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design following the model of Kemmis and McTaggart, which consists of four main stages: planning, action, observation, and reflection. The research was conducted in two cycles to ensure improvement and refinement of the teaching strategy.

The subjects of the research were 20 fourth-grade students at MI Inayatullah during the 2025/2026 academic year. Data were collected using speaking tests, observation checklists, and field notes. The speaking test measured fluency, vocabulary,

pronunciation, and coherence. Observation sheets were used to document students' participation, confidence level, and engagement during activities. Field notes recorded teachers' reflections and unexpected findings.

In Cycle I, students were introduced to the concept of mind mapping and guided to create simple maps related to familiar topics. They then used the maps as a basis for short speaking activities. In Cycle II, students created more detailed mind maps independently and were encouraged to expand their oral descriptions with more vocabulary and structured sentences.

Data were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. Quantitative data from speaking tests were presented in the form of score averages, while qualitative data from observation and field notes were analyzed to describe behavioral changes and students' responses.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

a. RESULTS

The findings of this study indicate that the use of the mind mapping method significantly improved the speaking skills of fourth-grade students at MI Inayatullah. The improvement can be seen through both quantitative scores and qualitative observations during the learning process.

Before the implementation of the mind mapping technique, most students showed limited vocabulary mastery, difficulty organizing ideas, and hesitation when speaking in English. The average pre-test score was 63.2, falling below the school's minimum competency standard. Students also tended to rely on memorization and often paused due to confusion or lack of confidence.

During the first cycle of implementation, students began to engage with mind mapping by creating simple visual maps consisting of key vocabulary, basic sentence structures, and thematic images. Although their speaking skills showed initial progress, many students still struggled with fluency. The average score in Cycle I increased to 72.4, indicating a moderate improvement. Observations revealed that students were increasingly willing to participate, yet needed further guidance in elaborating their ideas.

In Cycle II, the use of mind mapping became more effective as students gained familiarity with the technique. Their mind maps grew more detailed, incorporating descriptive words, connectors, and visual cues that supported smoother verbal expression. Students demonstrated greater confidence, improved pronunciation, and clearer organization of ideas. The average score rose to 82.7, surpassing the minimum standard and showing a substantial improvement from the pre-test.

Overall, the results show that mind mapping not only enhanced students' speaking scores but also increased their engagement, creativity, and motivation during English learning activities. These improvements validate the effectiveness of mind mapping as a supportive and learner-centered instructional tool.

b. Discussion

The results of this study align with previous theories suggesting that mind mapping facilitates the development of cognitive and linguistic abilities necessary for effective speaking. As mind mapping allows students to visualize ideas and connect concepts meaningfully, the students in this research were better able to structure their thoughts before speaking. This finding supports Buzan's (2018) argument that mind mapping improves the brain's ability to encode and retrieve information, which directly influences language production.

The progressive improvement from the pre-test to Cycle II indicates that speaking skills develop more effectively when students are provided with visual scaffolding. The structured visual layout of mind maps helped reduce students' cognitive load, enabling them to focus more on fluency and clarity. This supports Sweller's cognitive load theory, which states that visual representation helps learners manage information more efficiently.

Furthermore, the technique encouraged students to participate more actively in class. The increased engagement observed in this study demonstrates that mind mapping not only serves as an academic tool but also enhances learners' confidence and reduces speaking anxiety. This aligns with Brown's (2004) view that speaking competence requires psychological readiness, not just linguistic knowledge.

The students' ability to generate more vocabulary and speak with greater coherence in Cycle II also indicates the constructivist benefits of mind mapping. According to Novak and Cañas (2008), learners construct meaning through connections, and mind mapping allowed students to build these connections naturally. The visual aid functioned as a guide during speaking tasks, helping them stay on topic, elaborate ideas, and transition between concepts more smoothly.

In the context of elementary English education, the findings highlight that mind mapping is especially suitable for young learners who rely heavily on imagery and structured guidance. The technique turns a cognitively demanding skill – speaking – into an enjoyable and manageable activity. This makes mind mapping an effective pedagogical strategy for improving speaking skills in early language education settings.

Overall, the discussion confirms that mind mapping positively impacts students' speaking ability through cognitive support, emotional comfort, and increased motivation. The findings of this study reinforce the importance of incorporating visual and student-centered methods into English language instruction.

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Volume 2, Nomor 3 2026

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