Semantic Mapping

This is *a generic term for* graphic representations of information (Grabe, 2009, p. 258).

How to use semantic mapping

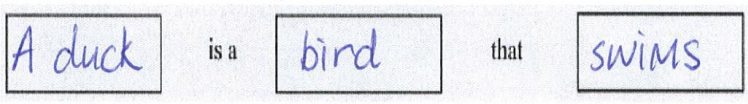
For Reading or Listening Comprehension (Grabe, 2009)

Semantic maps are visual organizers which help learners understand information that is usually from a reading or listening passage. The teacher usually uses them to measure student comprehension of a reading/listening passage by having students fill in a graphic or sometimes create their own. When the reading materials are complex, semantic mapping can be effective for learners to understand the outlines and details of the material. In this case, semantic mapping can provide some order to the immediate chaos from reading. This can be done individually or in groups, depending on the complexity of the passages. Various graphic organizers can be introduced to the students depending on the discourse structures.

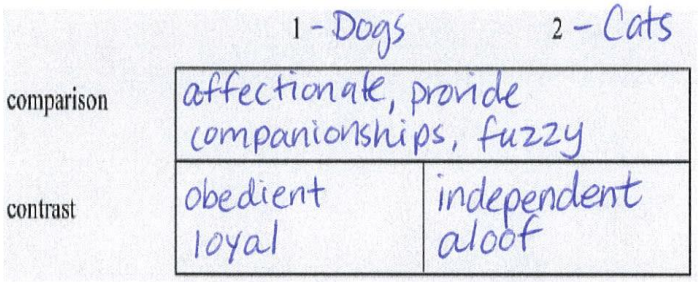
The teacher can also use semantic mapping for enhancing listening comprehension when the listening materials are complex and need some order for better understanding. One thing that has often been ignored is the fact that the students need time and repeated exposure to develop their abilities to recognize discourse structures, or pieces of language that show patterns of organization in a text. Students might need explicit instruction about how to do semantic mapping effectively. Once learners are well trained to understand discourse structures and details, it is highly possible that they will become better learners with self-efficacy and self- regulation (Chularut & DeBacker, 2004). Teachers should enhance learners' awareness about the discourse structures when they are reading and listening to strengthen learner comprehension. At the same time, using these organizers in class can result in better teaching and support of the materials.

Samples of Graphic Organizers for Reading and Listening Comprehension (Jiang & Grabe, 2007, pp. 44-46)

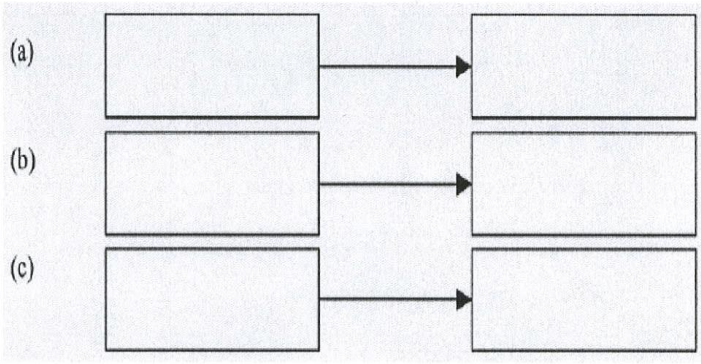
1. Definitions



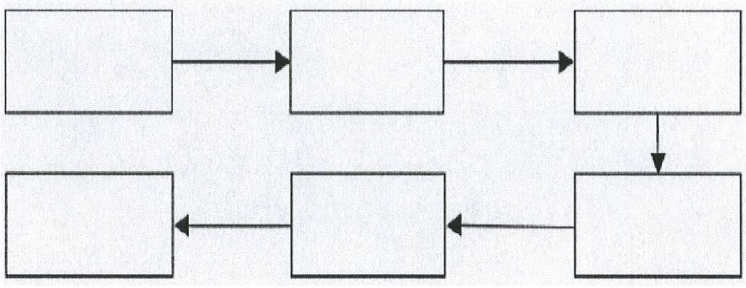
2. Comparison–contrast



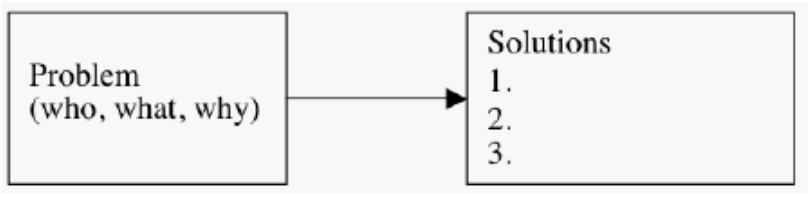
3. Cause–effect (in any number as is needed)



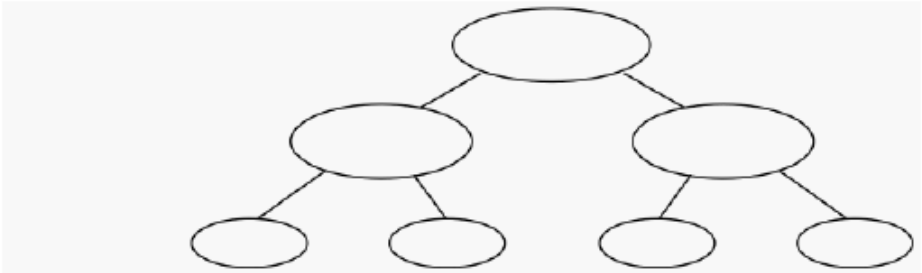
4. Process and sequence



5. Problem–solution (in any number as is needed)

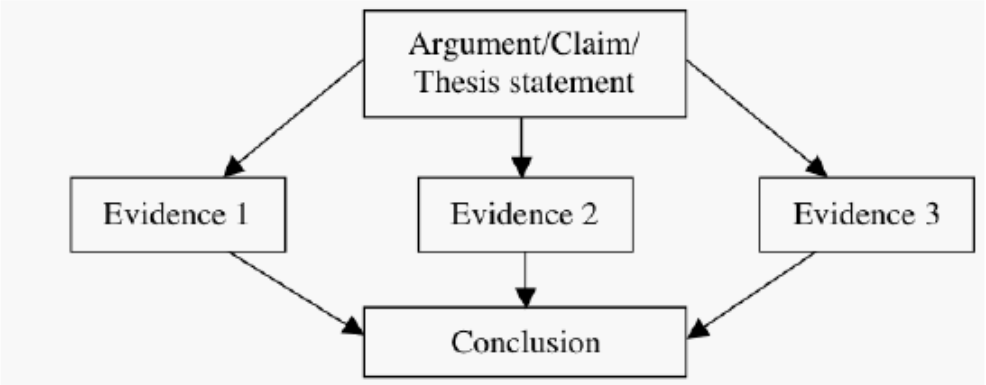


6. Description and classification



or

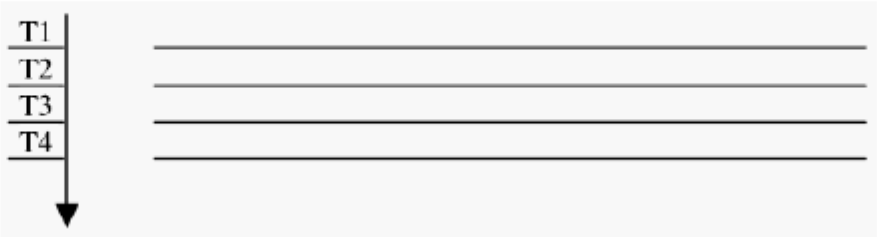
7. Argument



8. For–against (cf. comparison-contrast)

	For	Against
Position 1		
Position 2		

9. Timeline



For Vocabulary Learning

Semantic mapping can also be used in the beginning of class as in the video clip. In this clip, the teacher uses a semantic map to get learners to think about relevant words for the theme of the class. When the learners are beginners, this can be a good way to prepare the learners for the new theme by exposing them to related situations, and to consolidate the key expressions by providing enriched and sufficient input. The final goal is to make sure that key words are over-learned through repeated exposure, that enough related words are acquired, so that learners understand the power of words in communication (Grabe, 2009; Jiang, 2007). As shown in the video clip, the teacher can elicit the key expression for the next activity through this word brainstorming. In this case, semantic mapping for words can provide good scaffolding for the following activity.

Sample of Semantic Map as Brainstorming for Useful Words and Expressions

References

Chularut, P., & DeBacker, T. (2004) The influence of concept mapping on achievement, self-regulation, and self-efficacy in students of English as a second language. *Contemporary Educational Psychology, 29*, 248-263.

Grabe, W. (2009). *Reading in a second language: Moving from theory to practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Jiang, X. (2007). *The impact of graphic organizer instruction on College EFL Students' Reading Comprehension*, Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Northern Arizona University, Flagstaff, AZ.

Jiang, X., & Grabe, W. (2007). Graphic organizers in reading instruction: Research findings and issues. *Reading in a foreign language, 19*, 34-55.