

**SOCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL  
ENVIRONMENT**



# MIND MAP – A REVOLUTIONARY TOOL FOR TEACHING VOCABULARY TO TOURISM AND HOTEL MANAGEMENT STUDENTS

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***Abstract:** This paper aims to present a modern and more efficient way of vocabulary teaching. The paper focuses on the application of the mind mapping technique to tourism and hotel management students but may have a broader pragmatic use in other scientific fields.*

*Mind mapping is a wonderfully easy-to-learn, easy-to-use, and powerful way to engage students in the process of learning.*

*This paper does not just define and explain the mind mapping technique but it offers fresh ideas on how to motivate students to learn new words. Furthermore, it revolutionizes and modernizes vocabulary teaching to tourism and hotel management students.*

*Moreover, the paper considers the learning and remembering processes from the medical and psychological point of view. Apart from knowing how a word is learned, it is also important for professors to know how the word is remembered in order to devise better techniques to benefit vocabulary learning.*

***Key words:** mind maps, foreign language teaching, learning process, vocabulary*

## **1. Introduction**

There are many factors which cause difficulties in learning vocabulary. One of them is the method given by the professor. Teaching English as a foreign language requires the use of an effective learning method.

One of the major problems students face while learning English is poor mastery of vocabulary knowledge. The students who have little knowledge of vocabulary will face difficulties in understanding the written and the spoken language.

It is a well known fact that vocabulary knowledge is the essential part of the language learning process. Therefore, professors of any foreign language should have a technique that makes the students interested in learning vocabulary.

The studies have shown that memory plays a very important role in learning vocabulary. The students need a well balanced usage of the left and the right side of the brain. Right side of the brain is used for creativity and visualization, while the left side of the brain is used for logical and rational thinking. What is revolutionary about mind mapping is that it combines the use of both sides of the brain. It stimulates the brain by appealing to both the creative and logical side of it. The mind mapping technique allows the students to clarify their thoughts by categorizing and grouping them into related ideas. It starts with the students' main topic or the theme as the central idea and allows the main branches of the mind map to represent the main points of their thought (right side of the brain) then combined with interesting colours and images (left side of the brain) it stimulates the brain.

Thornbury (2002: 18) points out that learning vocabulary requires not only labeling, but also categorizing skills. He argues that using mind mapping as a technique will help the students memorize the words which will improve their vocabulary proficiency by memorizing more easily. Furthermore, Thornbury (2002: 144) considers that vocabulary cannot be taught; it can be presented, explained and experienced by associations.

Mind mapping is believed to be one of the best techniques in teaching and learning new vocabulary which encourages memorizing vocabulary more easily.

## **2. Vocabulary and How it is Remembered**

Knowing a word does not imply simply to know its equivalent in your mother tongue. What is important in learning vocabulary is not just knowing the word, but remembering it and using it properly.

The purpose of teaching vocabulary is providing learners with enough words so that they can communicate successfully. For foreign language professors it is of great importance to know how students learn vocabulary as well as how they remember new words.

It can be reasoned that the way a word is learned has a great influence on how it is remembered. For example, a good presentation of a word will help learners remember it more easily and use it more effectively. In other words, visual aids are a good means to teach vocabulary as they can help enhance students' ability of remembering words after lessons.

### **2.1. The Psychology of Learning and Remembering**

Relevant research in this field (Buzan 1993: 34) has shown that, during the learning process, the human brain primarily remembers the following:

- 1) Items from the beginning of the learning period
- 2) Items from the end of the learning period
- 3) Any items associated with things or patterns already stored or linked to other aspects of what is being learned
- 4) Any items which were emphasized
- 5) Any items which appeal particularly strongly to any of the five senses
- 6) Those items which are of particular interest to the learner

Memorizing new words is a very complex psychological process. Most learners simply list the items learnt in chronological order, indicating their meanings with the translation into their mother tongue. In order for the learning process to be more effective, professors must encourage learners to use other methods, such as diagrams, word trees and mind maps. The technique of making vocabulary easy to remember is by presenting it in a memorable way. This seems to be very challenging for foreign language professors. What “memorable ways” are there and how to create them are big questions for them. Scrivener (1994: 90) suggested that it is also possible to integrate the teaching and the storing of vocabulary in a more direct way which enables students to record not only the words but also the way they learned the word.

One of the most impressive and successful ways to teach new vocabulary is by using mind maps.

### **3. What is a Mind Map?**

One of the more undiscovered or, in some cases, underutilized teaching methods is the use of mind maps.

Mind maps are used all around the world, in education and in business. In education, they serve three powerful functions:

- 1) As a student presentation tool (a welcome alternative to PowerPoint)
- 2) As a pre-writing tool
- 3) As a teaching tool (mind mapping makes the English language more accessible to non-native English speakers.) (Swan 2010: 1)

One of the modern proponents (some say the originator) of modern mind mapping is Sir Tony Buzan, knighted for his contributions to our understanding of how the brain functions. Buzan traces the development of mind mapping to research performed in the 1950s. That research found that one side of the brain, the left side, was the home of rational and linear thinking, of language and numbers. The right side was home to holistic, associative, artistic thinking - of pictures and music and colour. By

combining elements that appeal to each side of the brain, Buzan reasoned, mind maps would optimize the brain's ability to create, to learn, and to remember.

Buzan (1993: 1) defines mind maps as follows:

“A mind map is a powerful graphic technique which provides a universal key to unlock the potential of the brain. It harnesses the full range of cortical skills – word, image, number, logic, rhythm, colour and spatial awareness – in a single, uniquely powerful manner. In so doing, it gives you the freedom to roam the infinite expanses of your brain. The mind map can be applied to every aspect of life where improved learning and clearer thinking will enhance human performance.”

Mind mapping is a pattern which consists of pictures, symbols and colours. It is a concrete graphic illustration which indicates how a single concept is related to another concept in the same category.

Buzan (1993: 9) summarized the laws of mind mapping, including using emphasis and association, as well as being clear and developing a personal style. He also indicated the requirements in terms of paper, words, images, structures and lines.

Mind maps present non-linear outlines of ideas. To be more precise, instead of listing ideas vertically on one or more sheets of paper, you arrange your ideas in a web-like structure. It is important to use only one sheet as this forces you to be brief and keep all of the ideas structured around the main idea written in the center. This is a major advantage over using traditional writing which often makes it easy to lose focus of the main idea and get lost in interesting but distracting tangents. Effective mind maps only use one word or phrase for each topic or sub-topic. Choosing one vivid, concise keyword has many advantages:

- 1) It takes less time to find the information you are looking for
- 2) It takes less time to review the entire mind map
- 3) The keywords will instantly jolt your memory and draw up the desired fact or concept

In addition to keywords, a good mind map makes use of colour and images to help stimulate the brain and facilitate fast recall.

#### **4. Benefits of Vocabulary Teaching Using Mind Maps**

Mind maps are extremely useful in language learning for 3 main purposes:

- 1) Learning vocabulary
- 2) Building a clear context before, during and after the lesson
- 3) Organizing one's thoughts before writing

Research has shown that mind maps can be particularly useful when English is not the student's native tongue. Mind maps solve the language learning problems by using words and short phrases instead of sentences. Experiencing language as individual words and phrases, connected spatially, accompanied by images or icons, can be a lot easier than seeing those same words embedded in sentences and paragraphs.

Up till now, information is often recorded with letters, lines and numbers. With this way when simply writing down information, only a half of our brain, the left side, is used. There has been no technique involving the right side of the brain to process information. The use of the right side of the brain is important because it can help us process information associated with rhythm, colour, space and imagination.

#### **4.1. The Advantages of Using Mind Mapping Technique**

De Porter and Hernacki (2008: 172) point out the numerous advantages of using mind mapping technique. In their opinion mind maps are:

**Flexible** in the sense that learners can categorize the ideas based on their own opinion anywhere on the mind map.

**Concentrated on the topic.** In other words, all the subtopics focus on the main idea or key word, so learners can save time and stay focused.

**Increasing comprehension.** Using a mind map can make it easy to understand the material as learners can work out the connections or relations among the elements of the mind map.

**Enjoyable** in the sense that imagination and creativity are unlimited in using mind mapping technique. Subsequently, the entire learning process can be more motivating for the students. Pictures and colours make the brain relaxed and excited to think.

Having in mind the above explanations, it can be pointed out that mind mapping has proven to bring numerous benefits to the memorizing ability and brain stimulation of foreign language learners.

#### **5. How to Create a Mind Map?**

Mind mapping is a creative teaching and learning method. With mind maps, it is easy to remember much more information (De Porter, et.al. 1999: 175). This technique was introduced in the late 1960s by Tony Buzan. He (Buzan 1993: 1) states that mind mapping is a powerful graphic

technique, which provides a universal key to unlock the potential of brain. According to Windura (2008: 77-86), each feature of mind mapping has its own benefits to the learners.

Mind maps usually consist of the following parts:

**Central image** which describes the main idea of a mind map. It is placed in the middle of the paper. It activates the right part of the brain and strengthens the memory. The fact that the starting point of the mind map is in the centre, gives the brain the freedom to spread out in all directions and to express itself more freely and naturally.

**Key word** is the central idea and the most important part of the mind map. Only one key word should be used per line since single key words give the mind map more power and flexibility.

**Basic ordering of ideas** are the branches which summarize information. They are all connected to the central topic. The basic ordering of ideas directs the students' mind, encourages creativity and helps them understand the material.

**Branches** should be curvy. This activates the right side of our brains. The main branches must be connected to the central image, and the second and third-level branches must be connected to the first and second levels, etc. Human brain works by *association*. It links two (or three, or four) things together. If the branches are connected, the learners will understand and remember more easily.

**Colour** stimulates memory and involves the right side of the brain as well. Colours encourage creativity and activate the long-term memory. Colours bring life into the mind map, which facilitates the comprehension, so the learners remember the words presented on it. Colours should be used throughout the mind map. The research has shown that colours excite the brain. They bring extra vibrancy and life to the mind map and also add tremendous energy to human creative thinking.

**Pictures** can change and strengthen a key word that has been written before. Furthermore, pictures attract learners and help them remember things easily and vividly. The mind mapper can use an image or picture for the central idea, because an image *is* worth a thousand words. It is a well known fact that pictures help people use their imagination. A central image is more interesting, keeps the learners focused and helps them concentrate. Likewise, images can be used throughout the mind map. So, even though a mind map has only 10 images, it is already the equal of 10,000 words of notes!

## **6. Examples of Mind Maps Used for Teaching Vocabulary to Tourism and Hotel Management Students**

The problem I encountered while teaching vocabulary to Tourism and Hotel Management students apart from their poor vocabulary knowledge was their unawareness of how to learn new words. They used to just write down the translation of the word in their mother tongue. This is a very passive way to learn not just new vocabulary, but basically any content. It is my opinion that they must make connections between the words they learn and a mind map is a good way to do that.

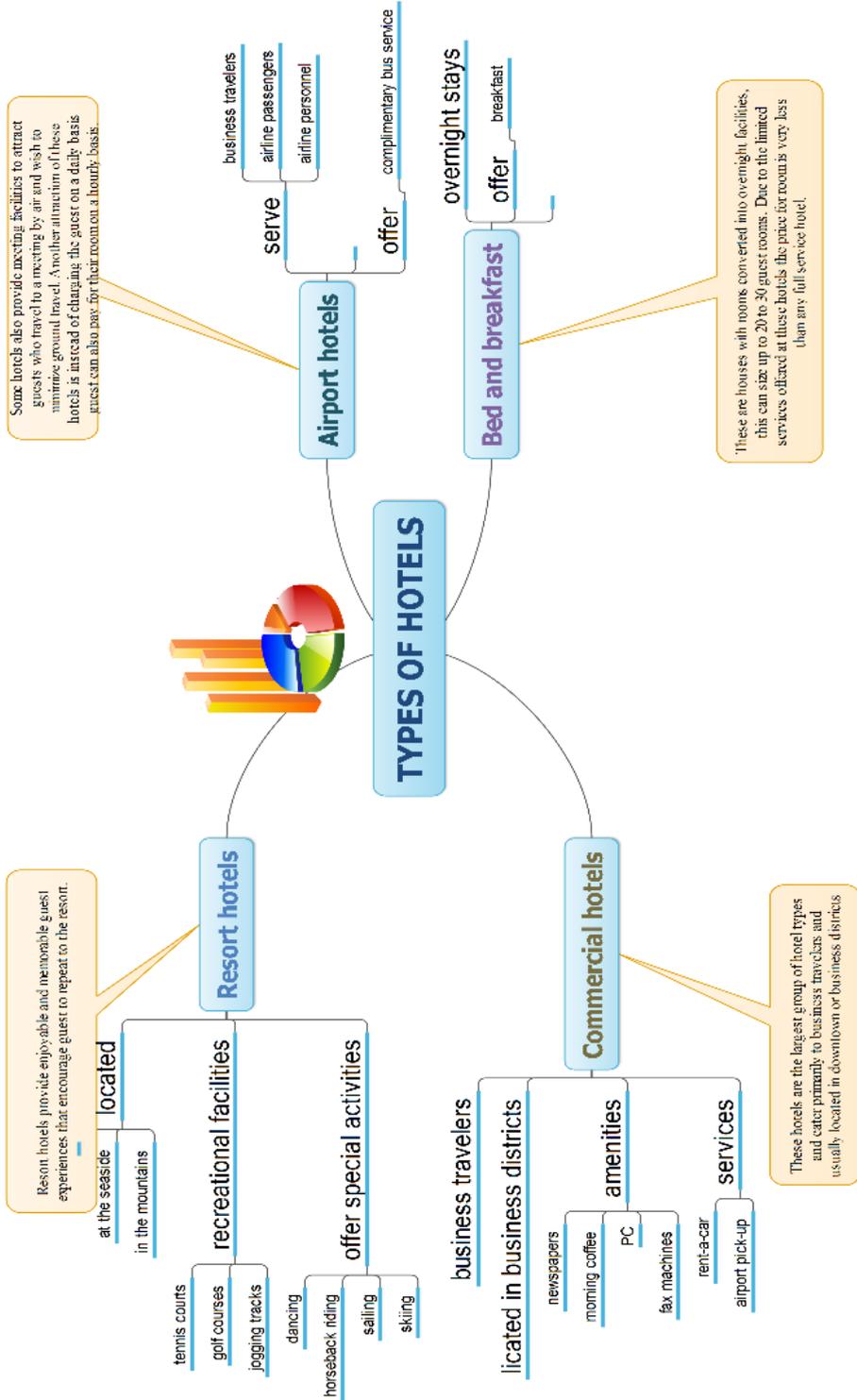
Bearing this in mind, I made a few mind maps to introduce new vocabulary in class. Since majority of the students have never seen a mind map, it was a novelty which increased their motivation for learning new words.

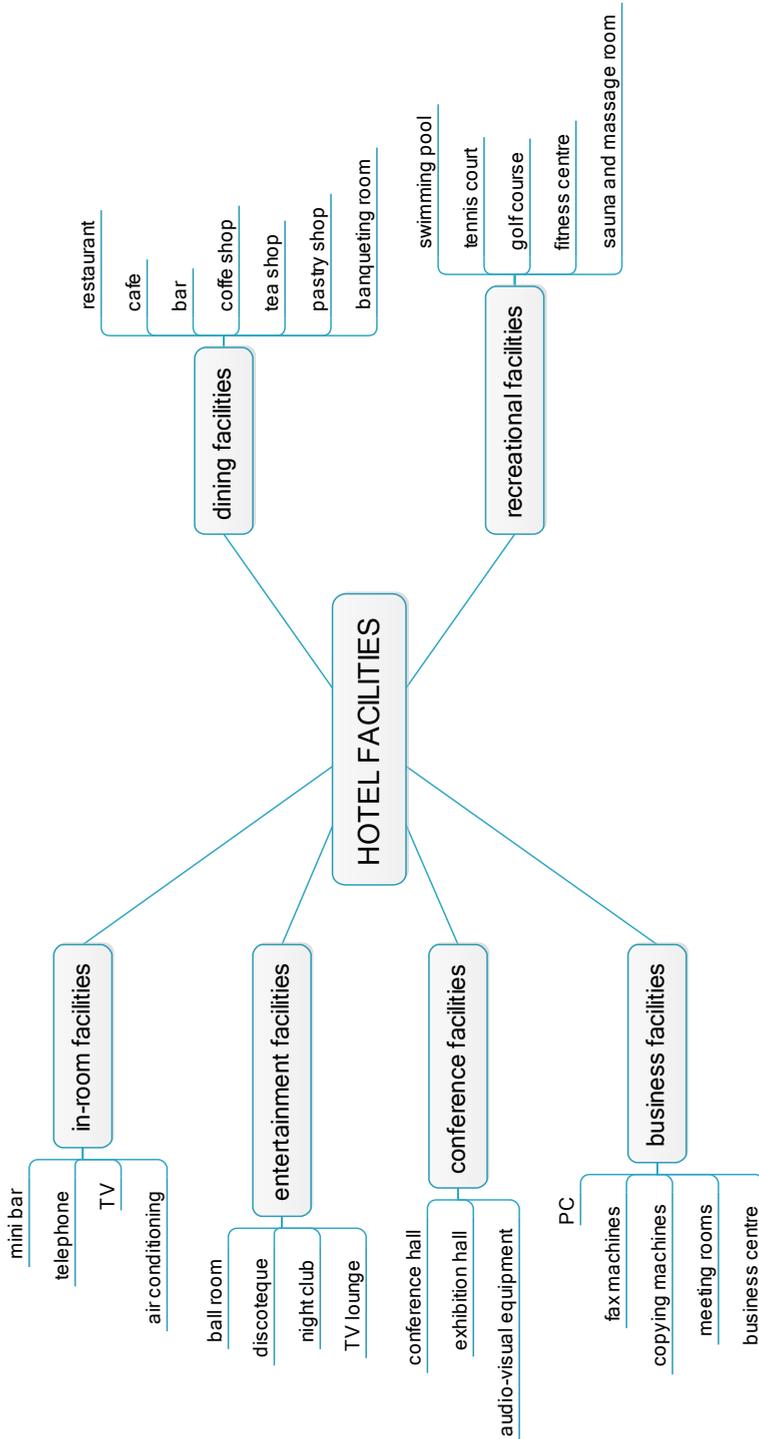
I put the mind map on the over head projector and kept it there the whole class, so the students could see the connection and the meaning of new vocabulary at any time during the lesson. I noticed that they used the new words correctly and more effectively. Consequently, they remembered the new words easily and without too much effort. The key words and pictures helped the students to remember the new vocabulary quicker and revise the words much faster. The process of learning new vocabulary came naturally.

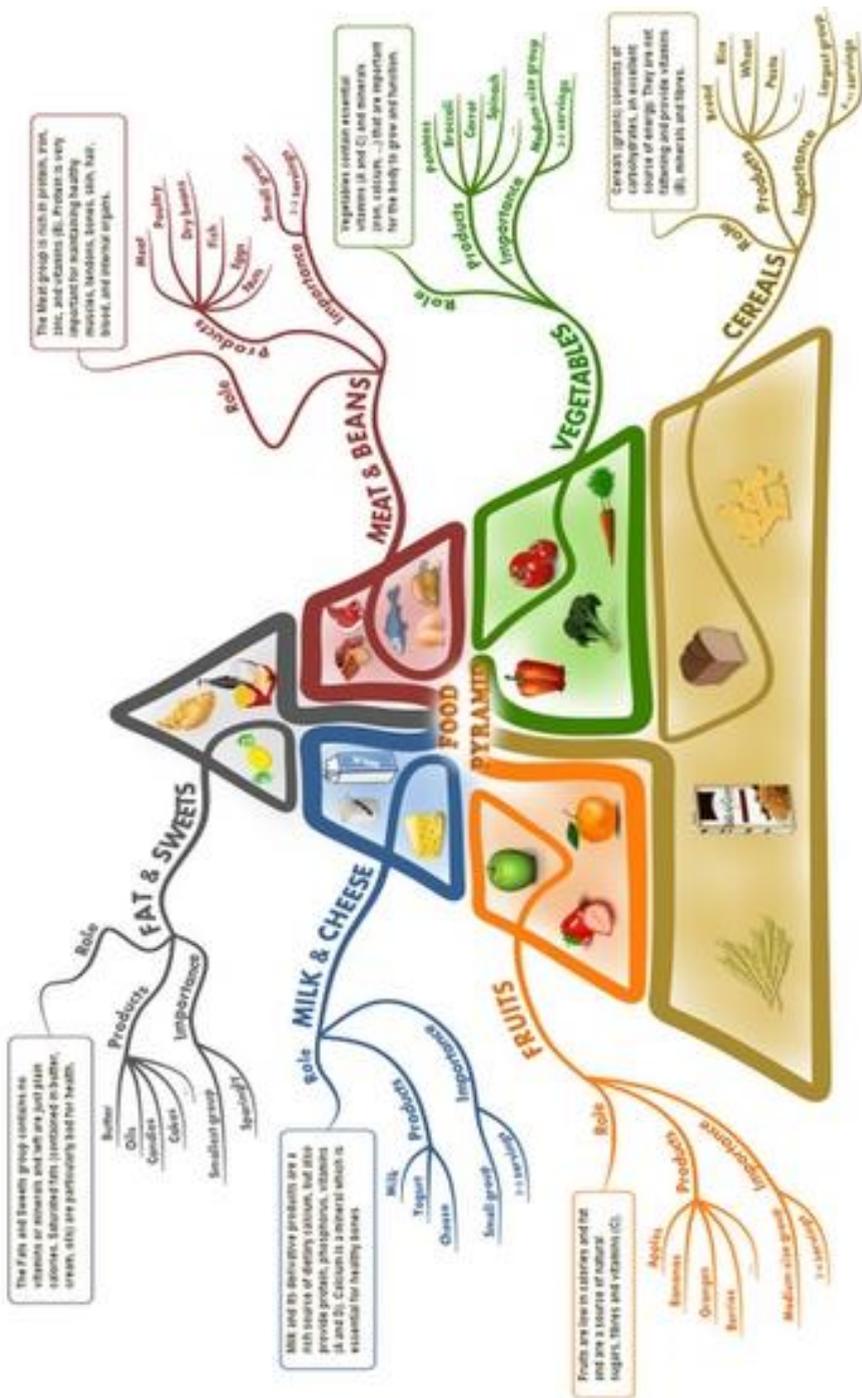
Some of the mind maps I used in class are presented in the following section.

The first mind map presents types of hotels and the second presents the division of hotel facilities. These two topics are among the first lessons in the first year of studies when the students are faced with professional vocabulary for the first time.

The mind maps are very effective and useful because they show the hotel types and the division of hotel facilities in a clear and simple way.



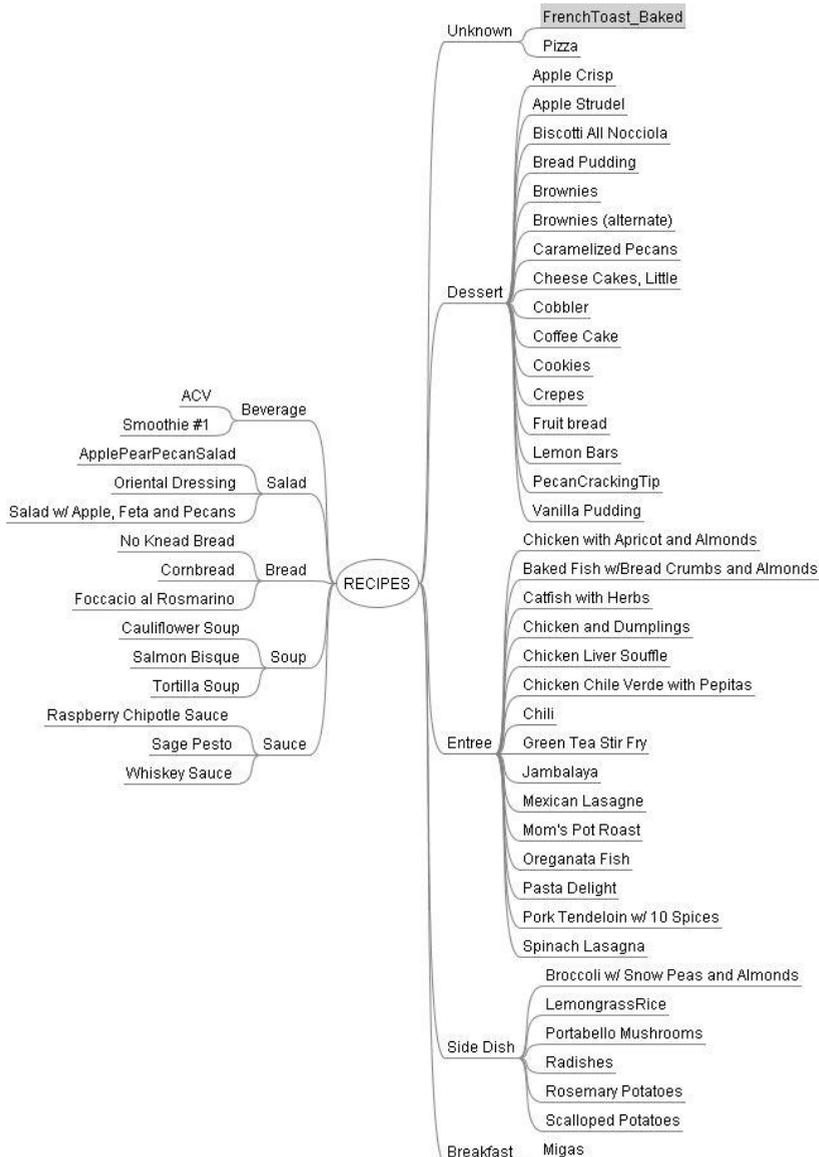




Apart from Hotel Management, I teach other fields such as Restaurant management and Gastronomy Management. Learning vocabulary connected to these fields is also very difficult to students. Here are a few mind maps which I used to help them learn new words more quickly and efficiently.

The first mind map represents the well known food pyramid in a new-fangled and motivating way.

The next mind map offers many different recipes. It is interactive in the sense that it has a hyperlink connected to the actual recipe. Once the hyperlink is pressed the recipe appears on the screen.



And last but not least, the following mind map describes the job of a restaurant headwaiter, his duties and responsibilities, appearance, necessary skills and potential career advancement. This mind map shows how efficient the use of photographs may benefit the students' learning process.



The students found the mind maps very interesting and useful in the language learning process.

### 7. Conclusion

Mind maps are now used by many people around the world – from the very young to the very old – whenever they wish to use their minds more effectively.

Mind maps represent a new way to connect a larger amount of information on one sheet of paper. It is a good way to organize notes and thoughts. As seen from the examples above, even entire vocabulary lectures can be summarized by use of this technique. It makes it easy for students to remember key elements of a lecture which is the essence and the point of mind maps. The studies have proven that human brain usually remembers

the key ideas and key words. Mind maps are designed to define the key terminology, separating the important ideas from the less important, helping the students to learn faster and more effectively. This is why mind maps consist of associations which are connected to the central idea.

The use of mind mapping as a technique in vocabulary teaching has shown that the students of Tourism and Hotel Management used the new words correctly and more efficiently. As a result, they memorized the new words easily and without too much effort. The process of learning new vocabulary came naturally.

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