



## EXPLORING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF HAMBURGER AND MIND MAPPING GRAPHIC ORGANIZERS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION AT GULF COLLEGE, OMAN

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### **Abstract:**

Graphic organizers have become increasingly popular in tertiary education in the Sultanate of Oman in recent years, particularly in ESL and EFL reading-writing classes. These visually appealing tools are now widely recognized as an effective method for presenting knowledge, allowing learners to develop their understanding of the text with the guidance of the teacher. The incorporation of graphic organizers into English classes has been found to significantly improve students' reading and writing performance. The use of graphic organizers has transformed the learning experience, providing students with a structured and engaging platform to enhance their language abilities. Consequently, the use of graphic organizers as an instructional tool continues to flourish and have a positive impact on education in Oman, offering numerous opportunities for accelerated growth and enrichment in the field of language acquisition. Additionally, the implementation of graphic organizers has not only benefited students' linguistics skills but has also proved to be instrumental in developing critical thinking and problem-solving abilities. With their visually stimulating format, graphic organizers stimulate students' cognitive processes, prompting them to analyze and synthesize information more effectively. This not only improves their comprehension and retention but also equips them with valuable skills that are increasingly sought after in today's globalized and technologically driven society. Furthermore, the versatility of graphic organizers makes them adaptable to various subject areas and educational levels. Whether used in science, social studies, mathematics, or even creative writing courses, these tools have demonstrated their efficacy in facilitating knowledge acquisition and conceptual understanding. By visually organizing information, students are able to make connections between different concepts, identify key points, and extract crucial information in a more organized and systematic manner. The use of graphic organizers in tertiary education in Oman has revolutionized the way students learn and acquire knowledge. With their ability to enhance comprehension, foster critical thinking,

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promote collaboration, and adapt to various subject areas, these tools have proven to be an asset in empowering students and preparing them for success in higher education and beyond. The present study was conducted to recognize and determine the impact of hamburger and mind mapping graphic organizers utilization on undergraduates' English writing skills at Gulf College in Oman. It attempts to answer the following research questions: First, what are the effects of a hamburger graphic organizer used in paragraph writing? What are the effects of a mind-mapping graphic organizer used for the same purposes as a hamburger graphic organizer? To address this issue, a study has been conducted on the use of hamburgers and mind mapping organisers as tools for enhancing paragraph construction skills among undergraduate students at Gulf College. This study draws on a social constructionist theoretical framework and employs various research methods such as a systematic review of the literature, an in-depth semi-structured questionnaire to collect tutors' perceptions and practices in using such graphic organisers, and an analysis of writing assignments of some Gulf College students in the academic year 2023/2024. Through this study, teachers expressed their concerns, perceptions, and teaching practices in terms of applying the hamburger and the mind-mapping graphic organisers to paragraph writing. The current study showed that students achieved greater success in the writing class when they passed through hamburger and mind mapping graphic organizers as the pre-writing stage of writing. They tend to have clearly stated topic sentences, main ideas, and supporting ideas in more coherent paragraphs.

**Keywords:** graphic organizers, mind mapping, assignments, perceptions, practices

## 1. Introduction

Writing requires a certain level of proficiency, as emphasised by Boykin *et al.* (2019) and Ok and Rao (2019). According to Nunan (cited in Guo *et al.*, 2020), the act of writing is a cognitive process involving the generation of ideas, the contemplation of their articulation, and their coherent presentation in a manner comprehensible to the audience. Teachers' major concern is, and must be, learners' mastery of the basic skills of writing. Yet, as learners join the labour market, the recognition of the importance of written persuasion and the need to learn to compose clear written texts emerges clearly. Writing proficiency has become increasingly crucial every day in the increasingly electronic information universe. After graduating with professional tasks, young professionals may stumble at drafting a memorandum, an announcement, a persuasive message, or a short review of current mundane subjects if they have not been taught to develop critical thinking and effective writing.

The feeling that arises is that learners are largely left to themselves when it comes to understanding ways of getting their messages across to the readers of a written text. If the whole emphasis was on the content and form of writing, when can grammar and spelling be taught? The characteristics of written text comprehension, such as synonyms,

antonyms, grammatical structures, types of clauses, and knowledge of the writing process, must be taught explicitly and must involve brain sessions by learners.

### **1.1 Background of the Study**

Paragraph construction is a fundamental English writing skill that contributes to effective communication. Without well-constructed paragraphs, the ideas expressed in an essay or report may lack clarity and coherence (Frey, 2003). In general, students do not have a clear understanding of how to produce well-written paragraphs. Many students encounter challenges in generating English texts and paragraphs despite the requirements of competency-based curricula (Hikmah, 2020). Thus, it is important to gain insight into the mistakes students encounter when writing paragraphs. Such insights can also help teachers and researchers to develop effective methods to solve this problem. This fact is apparent in the substandard academic performance displayed in the learners' assessments, such as daily tests, midterms, and finals. Instructional strategies adopted by educators may contribute to this issue. Employing sophisticated tools for organisations such as graphic organisers can facilitate the creation of cohesive and integrated writing. The use of writing organisers is a valuable tool that can effectively address the problem. However, some instructors fail to utilise such visual communication tools, which employ visual symbols to effectively articulate ideas and concepts (Fan & Chen, 2021; Chung *et al.*, 2021). Research conducted by Hughes *et al.* (2019) illustrated that the use of graphic organisers represents an innovative technique capable of improving students' language proficiency. Thus, the utilisation of mind maps as a method for generating ideas can support learners in their initial stages of writing. Certain studies have also proposed that using visual aids, such as a hamburger image, can effectively improve the development of paragraphs.

Teaching academic writing is the main outcome of several modules in the Gulf, whether in the foundation department or any other department of the college. It is vital to equip students with the writing skills necessary to express themselves formally. Gulf College annually receives students with different English language levels who need considerable support to meet entry requirements for higher-level degree programs. Students studying other programs in business or computing need constant guidance as they struggle with writing tasks such as producing well-organised paragraphs. Many students continue to encounter challenges in the generation of written English compositions and passages, notwithstanding the requirements set forth by competency-focused educational programs (Hikmah, 2020). This fact becomes apparent in the unsatisfactory academic performance exhibited by students in their day-to-day, midterm, and final examinations. The underlying cause of this predicament may lie in the instructional approaches adopted by educators. Several instructors fail to implement strategies that genuinely stimulate and facilitate successful writing endeavours among students. Instead, there is a prevalent tendency among educators to rely on conventional teaching techniques that prioritise teacher-centred activities over student-centred ones. Consequently, students are not extensively involved in their teachers' writing processes.

As an English tutor at the Department of Business and Management Studies, I have noticed that students' assignments lack knowledge of basic paragraph components like the topic sentence, supporting sentences and the concluding sentence. The present study attempted to investigate the use of pre-writing hamburgers and mind-mapping graphic organisers to help students construct paragraphs correctly. The researcher will also highlight tutors' perceptions and practices in using such graphics to enhance paragraph writing in classroom contexts.

### **1.2 Research Aim and Objectives**

Given that the main aim of this research is to examine the utilisation of pre-writing hamburger organisers and mind mapping to assist students with the accurate construction of paragraphs, the researcher will also elucidate the perspectives and methodologies of educators in employing these visual aids to improve paragraph composition within educational settings. A questionnaire via Google Forms will be created to elicit the teacher's attitudes and practices.

The following specific objectives will be underpinned:

- Introducing young undergraduates to specific English language learning aids in the context of higher education.
- Determining effective teaching techniques to help students learn English for Specific Purposes.
- Allowing undergraduates to become more familiar with the common key points in the body of the paragraph, the main idea of the paragraph, the main idea of the topic sentence, and the concluding sentence of the paragraph.

### **1.3 Significance of the Study**

The researcher gathered information about learners' writing production through classroom observation and following learners' written work and assignments. Moreover, the tutors' perceptions, and their experiences with writing instruction and composition strategies were gathered via Google Forms. From these outcomes, a new perspective for enhancing writing instructional practices for this particular group emerged, which is significant for enhancing writing progress and competencies. Therefore, efforts to diversify the teaching methodology need to be precisely established, as this supports the belief that writing differences exist and require different teaching practices. As no standardised method for teaching writing exists, people should be free to use methodologies that encourage individuality and distinct learning journeys.

The significance of the current study is the exploration of a different approach to writing instruction for EFL writers at Gulf College. Writing paragraphs using graphic organisers is included in the teaching plan for level three learners at the Department of Business and Management Studies at the Gulf College. Therefore, it is compulsory for all English tutors to teach it. The study found that many students benefitted from the visual presentation of the hamburger design and the idea-generation technique of mind mapping. Thus, educators should try to supplement cementing such writing tools in

learners' minds so that learners can eventually adopt them to accommodate their individual writing processes.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Methodology of Writing Applied in EFL Writing Tasks**

Writing involves arranging ideas and forming them into a coherent and cohesive framework in which every concept is connected and related to the main idea. Improving writing skills involves acquiring techniques for managing one's own thinking tasks and methods, which helps in understanding how thinking works in learning groups and the conditions that make these situations more suitable for teaching. (Jiang & Kalyuga, 2022). Moreover, learners who possess the skill of managing group writing strategies could potentially apply this knowledge to their independent writing tasks (Teng, 2020). Therefore, there is an essential need for an effective instrument for enhancing writing in education.

### **2.2 Utilizing a Mind Map to Improve Language Writing**

A mind map is recognised as an essential component in the process of exploring and comprehending meaning, functioning as a form of creative engagement that results in tangible output (Grant & Archer, 2019). In addition, it facilitates information retention. Mind maps facilitate the establishment of associations in a more innovative, analytical, and multifaceted manner in contrast to conventional note-taking approaches (Buzan, 2018). Educators and academics are commencing the use of software for mind mapping in diverse educational contexts. Furthermore, the principal applications of mind maps involve aiding in brainstorming sessions, crafting storyboard presentations, visualising concepts, and serving as a mechanism for structuring thoughts, all of which contribute to the enhancement of critical thinking skills and the development of oral, written, and reading proficiencies (Kireeva, 2019). Consequently, learners can utilise mind maps to visualise and analyse the interconnections among topics, grasp how ideas interrelate, comprehend the links between various concepts, and attain a deeper understanding of both these concepts and the subjects to which they pertain. Additionally, Choudhari *et al.* (2021) affirmed that a mind map serves as an instructional tool that provides a visual depiction of a topic. In conclusion, mind maps are deemed a valuable tool for students to foster the generation of ideas and the transformation of these ideas into written form through visualisation.

### **2.3 The Connection between a Hamburger and Mind Map Organisers and Language Writing**

Regina Richard initially introduced the concept of the "paragraph hamburger method" in 2008. This method serves as a structural tool for visually representing the key concepts within a paragraph. The fundamental elements of a well-structured paragraph include the topic sentence, supporting details, and concluding statement, each serving as an

integral component of the metaphorical "hamburger". As outlined by Michelle (2013), the Paragraph Hamburger Strategy is a user-friendly resource designed to assist students in crafting coherent paragraphs. It enables students to draft an initial version, utilise a visual aid for organisation, engage in the revision process, and analyse the differences between a basic paragraph (resembling a hamburger) and a more sophisticated composition. In essence, using the hamburger analogy in paragraph writing offers a compelling framework for enhancing students' writing skills.

Brainstorming plays a vital role in acquiring a second language because it enables individuals to create a brain map that aids in analysing, contrasting, categorising, sequencing ideas, and drawing conclusions. This process empowers learners to develop coherent, systematic, well-structured, and influential language composition. Moreover, according to Pradasari and Pratiwi (2018), utilising a brain map can boost students' writing proficiency in procedural texts by facilitating the organisation of their thoughts prior to writing. Furthermore, the use of mind maps supports learners in enriching their vocabulary by linking newly acquired and existing terms with visual representations that enhance their comprehension of concepts within a specific context (Khusniyah, 2019).

Furthermore, the implementation of mind maps can motivate students to generate original content. By not only stimulating students' ideation processes but also assuming the task of outlining their writing, students are more inclined to remain focused, and exhibit increased commitment towards completing their assignments (Hasanah & Ali, 2020). Additionally, a mind map serves as a mechanism for students to ignite their creativity, especially in second-language writing, where students who are motivated are more likely to express themselves in the target language due to the subject's appeal (Sabarun, El-Muslimah, & Muhanif, 2021). Consequently, as highlighted by Luangkrajang (2022), incorporating mind maps into English language lessons enables students to actively participate in their learning journey by independently acquiring knowledge, structuring information, and enhancing comprehension.

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spelling be taught? Characteristics of written text comprehension, such as synonyms, antonyms, grammatical structures, types of clauses, and knowledge about the writing process, must be taught explicitly and must involve brain sessions by learners.

### **3. Methodology**

This study was conducted to explore the utilization of graphic organizers in writing by the Tutors at different departments at Gulf College in Oman. The data and findings were collected through an online survey using Google Forms, which included both multiple-choice and essay questions. Based on that, some conclusions and recommendations were withdrawn and discussed.

#### **3.1 Research Approach / Strategy**

Kombo (2006) categorises research methods into two primary categories: quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative method employs numerical data, which have been quantified, whereas the qualitative method utilises data that lack numerical values. Researchers have applied these methods to data that are not standardised, focusing on interpreting meaning through descriptive language. When it comes to analysing the data gathered, researchers tend to favour the qualitative method because it allows for a more nuanced understanding. This is because some aspects of the data require a personal evaluation of the information received from the participants regarding their experiences and viewpoints, which cannot be captured through numerical data. Primary data for this study were collected from the Gulf College, where instructors answered the distributed questions.

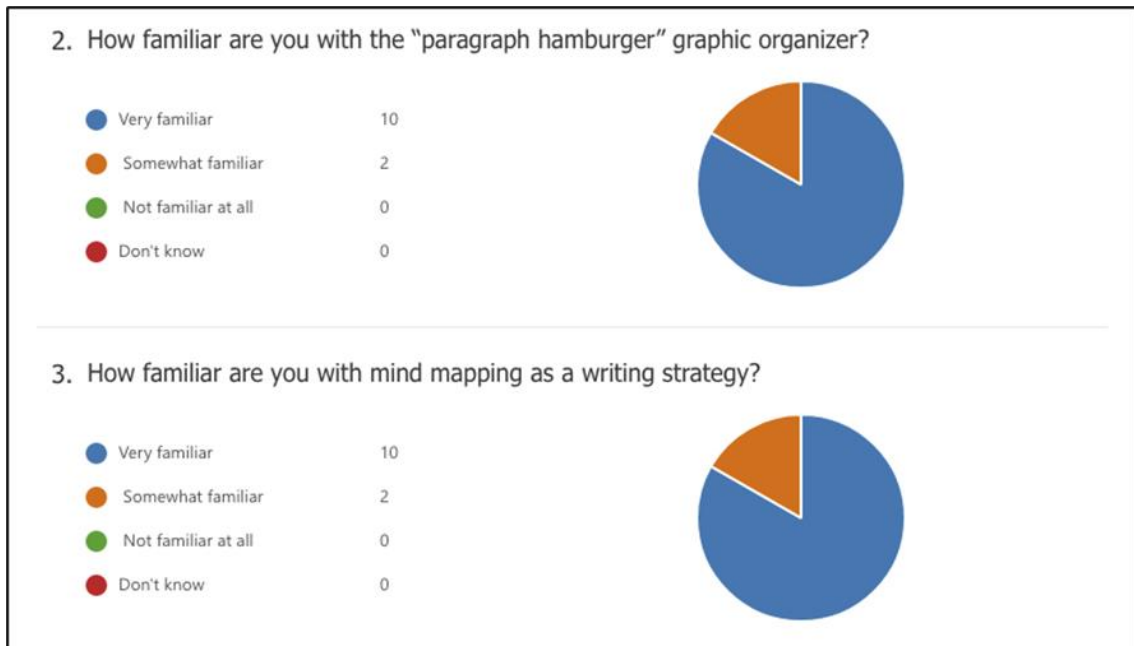
#### **3.2 Data Collection**

In this study, surveys and personal discussions were used to gather data. A questionnaire is a broad term encompassing various methods of collecting data in which every individual responds to a predetermined set of questions in a specific sequence. As cited by Saunders *et al.* (2006), questionnaires were used specifically for undergraduate teaching, depending on the study's characteristics. This will assist in achieving a thorough understanding of the actual level of success of the prepaid metering system in generating data.

### **4. Results**

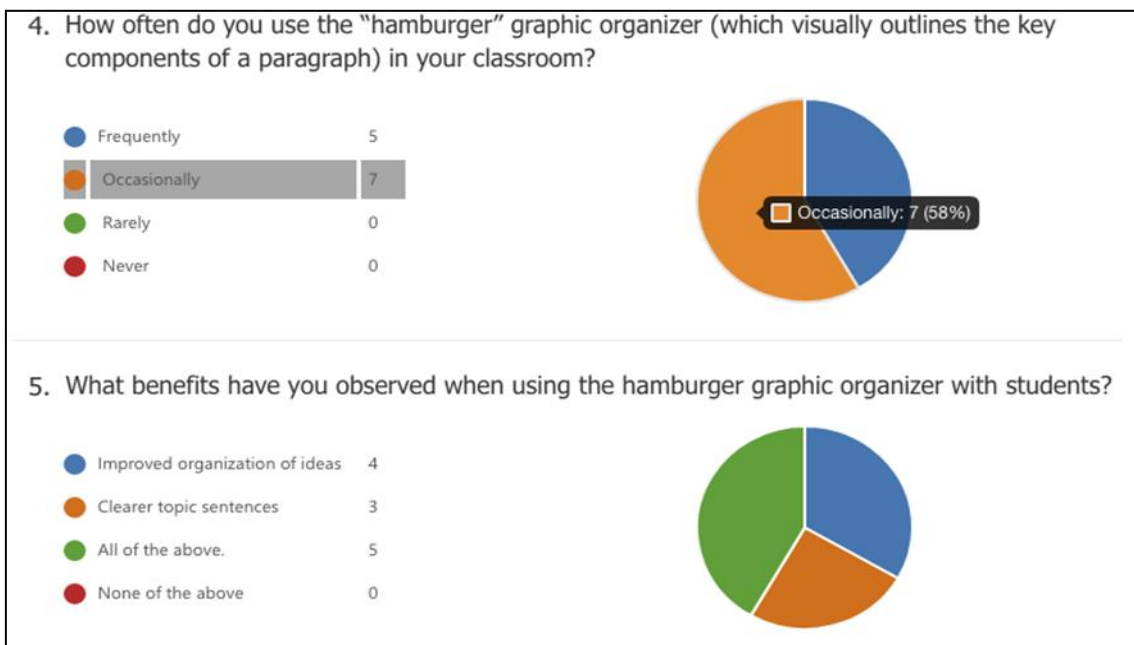
Upon gathering the necessary data through the submission of a teacher referendum, the study managed to gather two sets of data that are instrumental in either developing or altering the writing and updating the existing approach with a more efficient and effective approach, as the referendum was filled with multiple-choice questions and a way to share opinions through Google Forms. This study tackled the subject "Exploring the Effectiveness of Hamburger and Mind Mapping Graphic Organizers in English

Language Instruction at Gulf College”. The results are presented with illustrative figures and opinions gathered as follows.



**Figure 1:** Familiarity of the graphics in writing skill

The charts in Figure 1 clearly demonstrate that most teachers, with more than 80%, possess the fundamental writing abilities required for academic studies. This understanding is further supported by the noticeable awareness among the significant majority regarding the concept of the paragraph Hamburger graphic, which is similar to that of mind mapping.

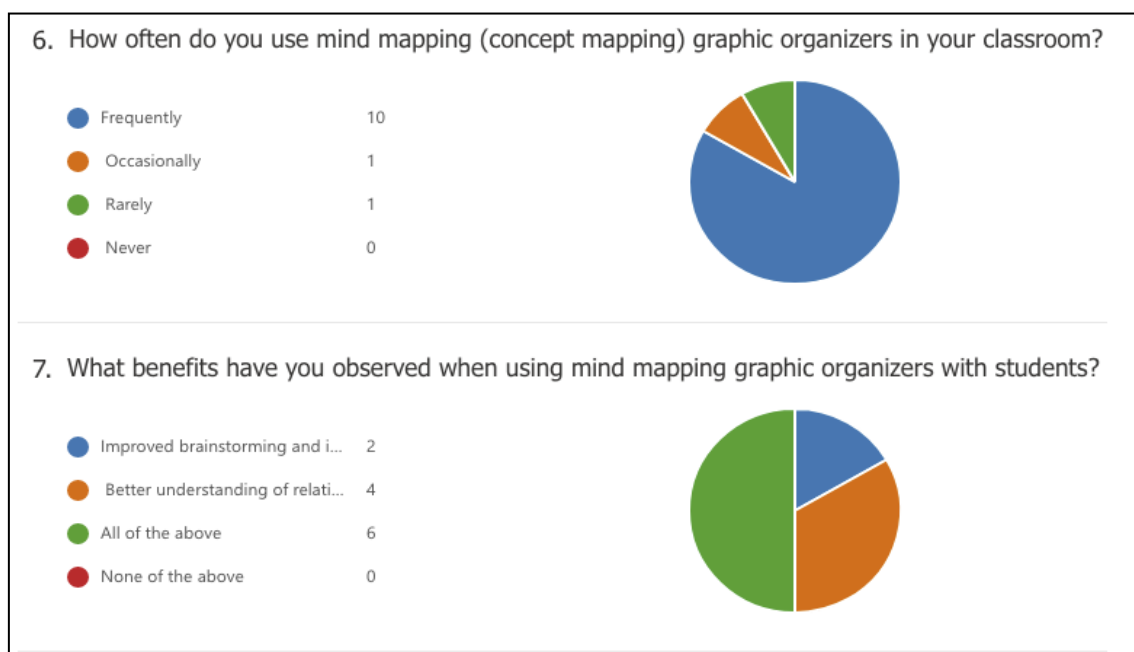


**Figure 2:** Frequency of use and benefits of the hamburger organizer



Referring to the first organizer as shown in Figure 2, it became evident that teachers occasionally employ this method as a graphic organiser (which visually displays the main parts of a paragraph) in their classroom, and almost half of the lecturers claimed that the hamburger strategy contributes greatly to their educational activity, as they confirmed that the hamburger graphic organiser improved the organisation of ideas in addition to clarifying the topic sentences. On the other hand, moving to the other strategy, we find that in Figure 3, 95% of Gulf college instructors frequently use mind mapping (concept mapping) graphic organisers in the classroom.

Referring to this, they observed many benefits when using mind-mapping graphic organisers with students. Perfectly half, 50% of them, confirmed that they improved brainstorming and idea generation and that the students got a better understanding of the relationships between concepts.



**Figure 3:** Frequency of use and benefits of the mind map organizer

Turning to the essay questions, varied responses were found among lecturers. Just as there was a difference, there was also an interconnection and similarity in ideas, as shown in Figure 4 with 12 responses of using both tools in writing. Item 9 revealed that most teachers prefer optimizing technology to enhance the use of graphics while teaching.

8. Which graphic organizer (hamburger or mind mapping) do you find more effective for enhancing paragraph writing? Why?

12  
Responses

Latest Responses

*"Both, because it improves students' understanding"*

*"Both as they help improving organization and Linking ideas. "*

*"Mind mapping is more effective as the 1st one can be utilized to in..."*

9. How can the use of graphic organizers be further optimized to enhance paragraph writing in your classroom?

11  
Responses

Latest Responses

*"Integrate technology tools "*

*"Can be implemented through technology "*

## 5. Discussions / Concluding Remarks

Regarding the strategies involved in writing and based on the insights and beliefs of instructors, mind maps are believed to enhance the writing process for EFL writers by fostering their ability to develop ideas, think creatively, and critical analyses. Additionally, mind maps have been found to improve the focus, involvement, structure, understanding, and concentration of EFL students while writing. Obviously, mind mapping can help EFL learners organise their thoughts and generate content before the actual writing process. Therefore, mind maps are considered a valuable tool for aiding students in planning their writing by promoting a more thorough comprehension of the subjects they are writing about. As such, mind mapping seems to be an efficient educational method for teaching descriptive writing, significantly impacting the growth of students' critical thinking abilities, especially in the process of linking new information to existing knowledge.

On the other hand, the hamburger Strategy stands out as an appealing approach that not only makes learning reading comprehension of recount texts enjoyable for students but also enhances their memory for understanding and recalling texts. This helps students retain information from texts more effectively, ensuring that they remember the details long-term.

This research examined the advantages of employing Mind Mapping and Paragraph Hamburger graphic organisers to improve undergraduates' writing skills at Gulf College, including enhancing their writing capabilities, fostering a positive outlook on writing, simplifying the writing process, and increasing their pleasure in utilising mind maps. Participating in discussions about mind maps among peers can help EFL writers enhance their ability to describe them. Furthermore, incorporating mind maps with coherent visual themes for writing can assist EFL students in adopting more

effective writing techniques. Given that the majority of EFL students possess limited English skills, employing visualisation or imagery in mind maps can assist them in beginning their writing journey. In addition, using mind maps with essential themes, associated images, and key terms related to the topic can simplify the task of creating descriptive paragraphs. In conclusion, teaching students to compose paragraphs in English via mind maps can boost EFL students' engagement and enjoyment in English writing tasks that feature vivid images and well-structured mind maps.

## **6. Suggestions**

For teaching to be successful, it is not only about having well-planned lesson strategies. It is equally important for teachers to make learning fun and engaging by using different tactics. Therefore, the author offers the following suggestions.

- For teachers: It is crucial to use visual graphics when teaching EFL learners, particularly in pre-writing. These aids include the Hamburger and Mind Mapping organizers, which have been thoroughly examined in scientific research. Educators must provide numerous opportunities for students to refine their writing skills in the classroom, enabling them to become more assured and competent in English language learning.
- For students: Learners can utilise the Hamburger and Mind Mapping techniques to simplify the process of remembering key information and compose different writings in any subject not only English.

## **Conflict of Interest Statement**

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

## **About the Author**

Ms. Samya Al-Shidi is a distinguished academic professional who has 26 years of experience at the Ministry of Education and many years as a part-time tutor at the International Maritime College of Oman, Suhar University and A'sharqia University. She has one year of experience as a full-time tutor at Gulf College. She holds an MA degree in English Language Teaching and Methodology from Sultan Qaboos University. She also has a BA in Education with an English specialization from the same university. She is the first batch of the Expert Supervision Course held at the Ministry of Education with a diploma degree in Professional Development Practices. Ms Samya Al-Shidi has extensive language training and supervision experience, including setting CPD plans, and training teachers and senior teachers in teaching and supervising the English language. Her extensive experience has also speeded her attendance and participation in different educational conferences and forums inside and outside Oman. She has been instrumental in developing and teaching a wide range of courses, and her pedagogical expertise is complemented by her role as an expert English Language supervisor and external reviewer of quality and accreditation, reflecting her deep commitment to

advancing research and education in her field. Her research interests lie in teaching methodologies, exam writing and professional training. Ms Samya Al-Shidi has published her MA research thesis on the self-efficacy beliefs and abilities of first-year students at Sultan Qaboos University, Google Scholar. In addition to her research and teaching responsibilities, Samya Al-Shidi is actively involved in academic and professional communities. Recently, she has been a member of constructing the Framework of Teaching and Learning at the GC. She is an external examiner at the OAAAQA in Oman Association for Quality, where she contributes to advancing quality standards in Education.

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