

The Effects of Utilizing I-Think Mind Map in Teaching Short Stories

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Abstract: Utilization of effective methods of teaching short stories makes learning more lively and encouraging to pupils in secondary schools. The objective of this study is to investigate whether the use of i-Think mind maps in the ESL classroom enhances students' learning of characterization and moral values in short stories. In addition, this study also aims to investigate the overall understanding of short stories among the subjects in the Experimental Group (using the i-Think mind maps) and the Control Group (using the conventional method). This is a quantitative study utilizing the quasi-experimental design. The sample of this study consists of 60 Form Two students from Petaling Jaya, Selangor. The Experimental Group was taught the literature component of short story using i-Think mind maps and the Control Group was taught the same using the conventional method. The pre-test and post-test were used as instruments to collect the data for this study. The quantitative data from the tests were analyzed using the SPSS program for Windows version 26. The descriptive statistics (mean) and inferential statistics (t-test) were used in analyzing the data. The findings demonstrated that the Experimental Group performed significantly better in their mean scores for characterization, moral values and overall score for the short story compared with the Control Group. This study has crucial pedagogical implications because i-Think mind maps are effective in learning and benefit students in comprehending a short story, As such, teachers can use i-Think mind maps as an alternative method to teach short stories in the ESL classroom.

Keywords: i-Think mind maps, Form Two pupils, Short story, Characterization, Moral values, ESL classroom.

I. Introduction

1.1 Background of the study

In this 21st century, teaching and learning of short stories as a literature component in the ESL classroom has been debated for a long time in the context of the Malaysian Education syllabus. In the year 2000, the literature component was incorporated into the English syllabus in Malaysian secondary schools (Ghazali et al., 2009). Krishnasamy (2015) stressed that till today, this literature component program has attracted the attention of researchers, teachers, and policymakers. The teaching of the literature component in the Malaysian ESL classroom is incredibly challenging for teachers because students with low proficiency levels in English have to battle with their writing skills, especially when written answers are required for the short stories. A study conducted by Ganakumaran et al. (2003), indicated that the curriculum planners and teachers of literature at secondary school level face challenges in the development and teaching of the subject. Based on these premises, i-Think mind maps are seen to have positive effects on the teaching and learning of short stories under the literature component. Chin et al. (2011) also mentioned that mind mapping has been widely used in education in brainstorming ideas, training and development, organizing ideas and problem solving. Therefore, the key issue of teaching and learning approaches of the literature component need to be addressed by Malaysian educators in the near future.

1.2 Statement of Problem

A common issue of teaching short stories to students stems from the fact that they do not show any deep interest in studying literature. Sidhu (2003) advocated that among the challenges faced by literature students are namely literary texts that do not interest learners, linguistic difficulty and cultural alienation. In addition,

ineffective methods employed by teachers make students feel blur and disinterested in learning the literature component. The fact that teachers continually employ the same conventional method in teaching the literature component makes the learning experience less encouraging and ineffective to the students (Narasuman, 2006). This leads them to choose not to understand its structural complexity to process the learning and knowledge they need to acquire. Therefore, they are inclined to reject the learning of the literature component, especially the short story.

Moreover, there is also an issue among senior teachers, who apply the traditional method of memorizing and drilling in the classroom, leading students to lose focus and interest in the literature lesson. Findings by Zainal (2016) revealed that most teachers still rely heavily on conventional teaching approaches in the Malaysian learning environment. This traditional approach has been adopted by many teachers since the day they stepped into the world of teaching, which is the *chalk and talk* method. They believe that the techniques used by them are correct and appropriate in their context of teaching. According to Razak (2013) “ESL teachers who teach short story (literature component) do not adopt an approach that can attract students’ interest and facilitate learning”. This is because these teachers are not ready to accept changes and new approaches in today’s teaching and learning environment.

Besides, time constraint is another problem faced by teachers in teaching short stories. During English lessons teachers meet their students six times in three days. They need to cover the syllabus, which consists of four learning skills. This makes most of the teachers practice the ‘*touch and go*’ policy on teaching the short story. This indicated that “students were not given enough opportunities to contribute during literature lessons, perhaps due to time constraint” (Ghazali; Setia; Muthusamy & Jusoff 2009). It is also difficult to monitor students’ progress in online learning in Malaysia during this lock down period of pandemic Covid-19. It is quite difficult to monitor students’ progress through online learning. Some students and even teachers do not have the facilities in accessing internet from home. This has caused students to feel more stress in their learning because they are not used to online learning.

Furthermore, mastering and remembering the storyline is an issue in learning the short story. When this happens students tend to lose control when answering literature questions and find it difficult to acquire the story line. Govindarajoo and Vasugi (2014) opined that learning the literature component is still relatively new in ESL classrooms; popularity among young learner has not yet caught on with the selected reading material prescribed for students in national secondary schools. This is because learning to read and analyze the short story is something new when they move on to secondary schools. They become puzzled and their mind freezes when they fail to understand what the literature questions ask, and so they respond with any answer that comes to their mind.

On the other hand, teachers do not form questions which test Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) when teaching the short story. Osman (2014) states that the changes that come from the shift in using conventional methods to ones that introduce HOTS require high commitment and great challenges for teachers. Teachers do not always want to accept the changes in modern teaching methods that are effective and efficient for today’s generation. They are content in teaching the short story using Lower Order Thinking Skills (LOTS) rather than HOTS.

Akerlind (2008) advocated the student-centered approach as an effective method of teaching compared with the teacher-centered approach. Sidhu (2003) also stressed that ESL teachers should employ student-centered approaches in teaching the literature component as they create a conducive learning environments that can improve students’ achievement with positive learning outcomes. Thinking mind maps can be used as tools to enhance students’ learning and promote better student-centered learning. As such, the current study investigates the effectiveness of utilizing i-Think mind maps in teaching short stories under the literature component in Malaysian Secondary Schools.

1.3 Research Objectives

The research objectives are formulated as follows:

- i. To investigate whether there is a significant difference in the mean score for characterization between the Experimental Group (taught using i-Think mind maps) and the Control Group (taught using conventional method)

- ii. To investigate whether there is a significant difference in the mean score for moral values between the Experimental Group (taught using i-Think mind maps) and the Control Group (taught using conventional method)
- iii. To investigate whether there is a significant difference in the overall mean score of the Experimental Group (taught using i-Think mind maps) compared with the Control Group (taught using the conventional method).

1.4 Research Hypotheses

The hypotheses of the research are as follows:

- i. There is no significant difference in the mean score for characterization between the Experimental Group (taught using i-Think mind maps) and the Control Group (taught using the conventional method).
- ii. There is no significant difference in the mean score for moral values between the Experimental Group (taught using i-Think mind maps) and the Control Group (taught using the conventional method).
- iii. There is no significant difference in the overall mean score for short story of the Experimental Group (taught using i-Think mind maps) compared with the Control Group (taught using the conventional method).

II. Review Of Literature

Teaching the short story as a literature component in the ESL classroom allows students to develop listening, speaking, reading and writing skills (4s) at all levels of proficiency. This aids students to utilize their critical thinking skills in analyzing the short story and predicting what can happen in the next paragraph or chapter of the story. The short story selected should be appropriate for all students' levels of ability. Murdoch (2002) indicates that "short stories can, if selected and exploited appropriately, provide quality text content which will greatly enhance learners at intermediate levels of proficiency".

Thinking mind maps (i-Think mind maps) encourage aptitude and thinking strategies among students, to improve their learning strategies in analyzing short stories. Antonio, Clara and Fonseca (2004) stated that "mind map is a tool for meaningful learning". It allows ideas to spread out from a central focus while giving an overall image of the circumstances. "Mind maps are dynamic and exciting tools to help all thinking and planning become smarter and faster activities" (Buzan, 2006).

The benefit of i-Think mind map is that, when utilized in a proper and sorted-out way, is able to develop ideas in a learner at the cognitive level. It gives a positive effect to win students' hearts and as a powerful method for teachers in the teaching and learning of short stories. Hyerle (2000) believes that "thinking maps are visual teaching tools that provide students with the skills to be successful thinkers, problem solvers and decision makers". It is one of the innovative approaches that assist to boost a person's creativity, memory and recall information through internal thoughts.

I-Think mind maps are wonderful methods of exposing students to effective learning methods of comprehending short stories. It underlines the ability to store the new information in the long-term memory, which allows students to perform better in a meaningful way of learning short stories. To gain this, students' simply need to spill out their thoughts or ideas on a piece of paper, associating with the short story they read and finally decide the request for the thoughts they obtain. A study by Al-Jarf (2009) proved that "mind maps offer a powerful approach for improving students' ability to generate, visualize and organize ideas". This technique will slowly move learning into student centered forms and let the students explore the short stories by themselves.

Therefore, i-Think mind maps guide learners with reasoning devices which can be effectively connected and comprehended across a wide range of subjects in the curriculum. By utilizing a completed i-Think mind map, the students will find it easier to relate the short story they learn. In reviewing and reconsidering the short story, it will not be a serious issue for students to have a better understanding of what the author is trying to convey. According to Hyerle and Yeager (2007), "the process of thinking and reasoning becomes a culture when the teachers and students practice the thinking skills and reasoning during the teaching and learning process".

The study by Ratnasari (2014) utilized a quasi-experimental method to find out if the use of mind mapping is effective in teaching the plot of a novel. This study was conducted on Form 5 students in a secondary school. The findings showed that the i-Think mind mapping method did improve the students' understanding by having them focus not only on the main ideas but also on the elaborations and examples that are stated in the novel. With that, students found it easier to comprehend the gist of events that took place in the novel. The researcher further reported that i-Think mind maps encourage a deeper level of processing information for better memory formation.

Yusop and Mahamod (2015) assessed the effectiveness of i-Think mind maps to improve students' performance in writing in the Malay Language. The study was carried out on Year 6 primary school students by utilizing data from a pre-test and post-test in a quasi-experimental method. The utilization of the i-Think mind map technique in teaching essay writing has been successful in improving mastery of the subject in writing skills. This study introduced the use of i-Think mind mapping as a new method that can stimulate students' higher order thinking skills in teaching writing skills in the Malay Language. To add on, the researchers reported that i-Think mind maps can boost students' interest in writing, and the learning process becomes more delightful as they progress.

In addition, Mirza (2016) performed a study on the use of mind mapping strategy to improve students' speaking skills. The purpose of the study was to find out whether or not mind mapping improves students' speaking skills. The researcher concluded that mind mapping strategy helped students to generate ideas in speaking. The findings showed that the mind mapping strategy also improved students' speaking skills because this strategy helped them to generate and organize ideas, enrich vocabulary and speak more fluently in English.

Omar and Albakri (2016) carried out a qualitative research to determine whether teachers' implementation of thinking maps promoted critical thinking skills during the teaching of the literature component in the ESL classroom. This case-study was conducted among Form One students in a secondary school in the teaching and learning of the English literature component. Data was collected through observations, interviews and field notes. The findings revealed that the teachers were able to engage students to think critically through the utilization of thinking maps during the literature lessons. The teachers also employed the Reader-Response strategies to complement the thinking maps in promoting critical thinking skills in the teaching of the literature component. The use of thinking mind maps in these literature lessons was beneficial and effective to the students learning the language. The findings also assisted students to gain positive attitudes and confidence in learning literature through i-Think mind maps.

A further study was conducted by Nik Harmi (2019) to investigate the effectiveness of i-Think mind maps in teaching higher level students to enhance their achievements. This study was carried out among Form Four students using the quantitative method in Experimental and Control groups. A quasi-experimental design was used to test the effectiveness of using i-Think mind maps in the teaching and learning of literature. This study indicated that the use of i-Think mind maps can improve students' achievement and attitude in learning the literature component in the Malay Language. The study also demonstrated that students' interest and understanding of literature increased tremendously when they were taught to utilize i-Think mind maps in the learning process.

Supporting the above results were the conclusion of a study conducted by Velayutham and Yunus (2019) to examine the usefulness of using mind mapping in teaching short stories under the literature component. The samples were Form 4 secondary school students, and they were given a pre-test and post-test. This study discovered that the i-Think mind mapping method does enhance students' comprehension and recalling abilities. The skills of utilizing i-Think mind maps can be modified based on the students' proficiency levels. They also suggested teachers use i-Think mind mapping, as it is remarkably interesting, useful and an effective method in learning literature.

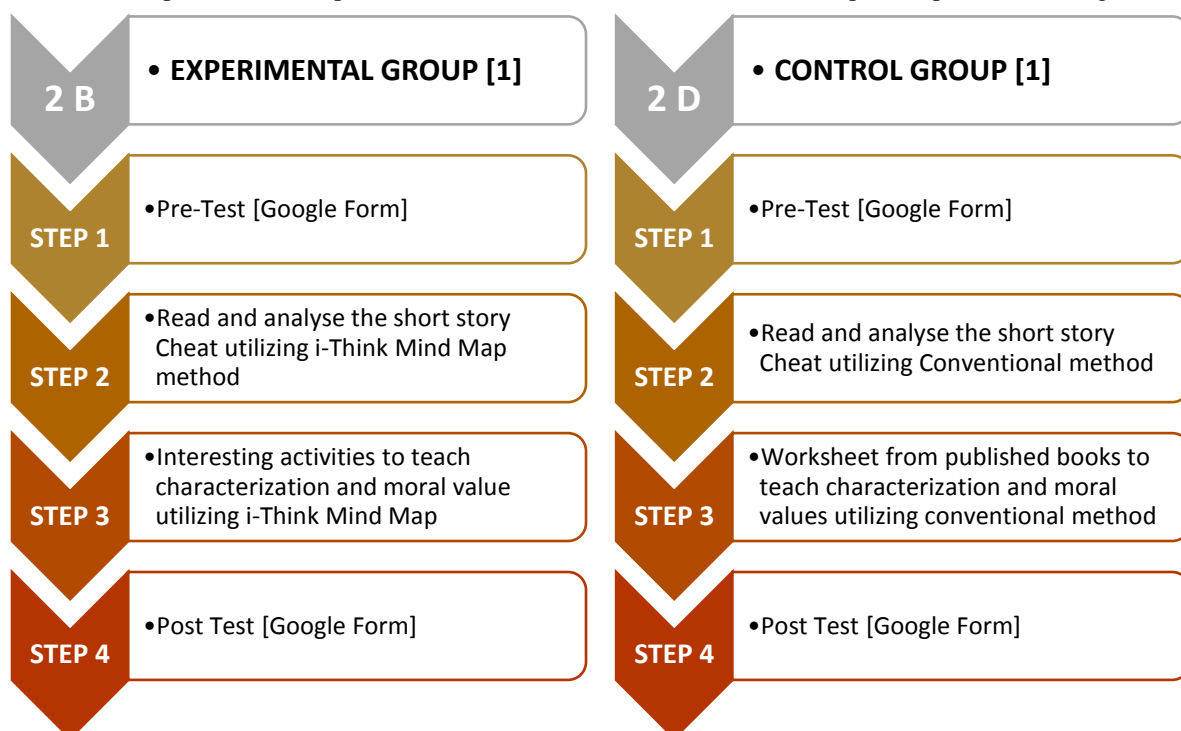
The thinking will turn into training when teachers and students crack higher level request-based inquiries through focus on the exercises by utilizing i-Think mind maps. By constructing and completing i-Think mind maps, students are able to comprehend, and alter them whenever they need. In this way, i-Think mind mapping will consistently be a helpful and effective modern tool for teaching and learning short stories. As such, in the current study the researcher examines the effectiveness of utilizing i-Think mind maps in teaching short stories.

III. Methodology

This study employed a quasi-experimental design (Creswell, 2012), to investigate whether utilizing i-Think mind maps is effective in teaching short stories among Form 2 students. The study was conducted by utilizing i-Think mind maps through online learning through Google Classroom (GC) and Google Meet. The samples were 60 Form Two students (30 in the Experimental Group and 30 in the Control Group) from a public school in Petaling Jaya District, Selangor, Malaysia. The Experimental Group was taught short stories using the i-Think mind maps and the Control Group was taught using the conventional method for four weeks, which was an hour per lesson in a week.

For the four weeks both the groups were taught a short story entitled ‘*Cheat*’ written by Allan Baillie (1995), based on the Form Two Malaysian English syllabus. The research procedure is further explained in the flow chart below:

The pre-test and the post-test were used as instruments to conduct a quasi-experimental design for this



study. The pre-test was conducted for both the groups (Experimental and Control) prior to the intervention. The pre-test consisted of 2 sections (Section A consisting of 10 multiple choice questions and Section B consisting of 8 subjective questions). The content of the questions was on characterization and moral values. The students were only allowed to answer the questions once in the Google Form, which was posted in their GC without referring back to the short story text. The total scores allocated for both the sections was 20 marks. The students had to answer the questions based on the short story ‘*Cheat*’ that they had read and analyzed.

Following that, the Experimental group was taught the short story utilizing the i-Think mind maps. Meanwhile, the Control group went through a normal teaching and learning process using the conventional method. At the end of the fourth week, a post-test was administered in Google Form for both the groups. The questions were similar in content as the pre-test questions given at the beginning. The quantitative data of the study was analyzed by using SPSS Program for Windows version 26. The descriptive statistics and inferential statistics (independent samples t-test) were used to analyze the data.

IV. Results And Discussion

The results and discussion are presented based on the following null hypotheses:

Ho1. There is no significant difference in the mean score for characterization in the Experimental Group (taught using i-Think mind maps) compared with the Control Group (taught using the conventional method).

Table 4.1

Students' mean scores for characterization in the pre-test

GROUP	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean Difference	t-value	df	p-value
Experimental	30	4.2667	.82768	.300	.997	58	.324
Control	30	3.9667	1.42595				

Level of significance is at $p < 0.05$

Table 4.1 indicates that the Experimental Group students have higher mean scores for characterization in the pre-test (N = 30, M = 4.27 and SD = .828) compared with the Control Group students (N = 30, M = 3.97 and SD = 1.43). Findings from the independent t-test indicated that there is no significant difference in the mean scores between the Experimental and Control Group students and their scores for characterization in the pre-test (MD = .300, df = 58, t-value = .997 and p-value = .324).

Table 4.2

Students' mean scores for characterization in the post-test

GROUP	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean Difference	t-value	df	p-value
Experimental	30	6.1333	.89955	1.63	6.50	58	.000
Control	30	4.5000	1.04221				

Level of significance is at $p < 0.05$

Table 4.2 shows that the Experimental Group students have higher mean scores for characterization in the post-test (N = 30, M = 6.13 and SD = .900) compared with the Control Group students (N = 30, M = 4.50 and SD = 1.04). Findings from the independent t-test indicated that there is a significant difference in the mean scores between the Experimental and Control Group students and their scores for characterization in the post-test (MD = 1.63, df = 58, t-value = 6.50 and p-value = .000). Therefore, these findings on characterization in the post-test reject Ho1. These results clearly support the findings by Omar and Albakri (2016) which showed that the utilization of i-Think mind maps significantly enhanced the mean scores in characterization of students in the Experimental Group compared with the Control Group. Similarly, a study conducted by Hasbaini and Manan (2017) also indicated that the use of i-Think mind maps proved to be an effective way of cultivating student skills to generate, imagine and establish ideas of characterization.

Ho2. There is no significant difference in the mean scores for moral values in the Experimental Group (taught using i-Think mind maps) compared with the Control Group (taught using the conventional method).

Table 4.3

Students' mean scores for moral values in the pre-test

GROUP	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean Difference	t-value	df	p-value
Experimental	30	1.3000	.46609	.033	.282	58	.779
Control	30	1.2667	.44978				

Level of significance is at $p < 0.05$

Table 4.3 indicates that the Experimental Group students have higher mean scores for moral values in the pre-test (N = 30, M = 1.30 and SD = .467) compared with the Control Group students (N = 30, M = 1.27 and SD = .450). Findings from the independent t-test indicated that there is no significant difference in the mean scores of

the Experimental and Control Group students and their scores for moral values in the pre-test (MD = .033, df = 58, t-value = .282 and p-value = .779).

Table 4.4

Students' mean scores for moral values in the post-test

GROUP	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean Difference	t-value	df	p-value
Experimental	30	2.8000	.40684	1.133	9.109	58	.000
Control	30	1.6667	.54667				

Level of significance is at p<0.05

Table 4.4 shows the Experimental Group students have higher mean scores for moral values in the post-test (N = 30, M = 2.80 and SD = .407) compared with the Control Group students (N = 30, M = 1.67 and SD = .547). Findings from the independent t-test indicate that there is a significant difference in the mean scores of the Experimental and Control Group students and their scores for moral values in the post-test (MD = 2.80, df = 58, t-value = 9.11 and p-value = .000). Therefore, these findings fail to accept Ho2. The current results are consistent with the findings by Ratnasari (2014) which showed that i-Think mind mapping methods improve students' understanding by having them focus not only on the main ideas but also on the elaborations and examples that are stated in the literature text. This finding is in line with Yunus & Chien (2016) whose study showed that the utilization of mind mapping helps students in planning their ideas and gain deeper understanding of the content. Besides, in the study conducted by Priantini, et al., (2013), the Experimental Group performed better in their mean scores for moral values because by using the mind mapping method they had better creative thinking skills and cultivated these skills to generate, imagine and establish ideas compared with their counterparts in the Control Group.

Ho3. There is no significant difference in the overall mean scores for short stories in the Experimental Group (taught using the i-Think mind map) compared with the Control Group (taught using the conventional method).

Table 4.5

Students' overall mean scores for short stories in the pre-test

GROUP	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean Difference	t-value	df	p-value
Experimental	30	7.6667	1.47001	.300	.816	58	.418
Control	30	7.3667	1.37674				

Level of significance is at p<0.05

Table 4.5 indicates that the Experimental Group students have higher overall mean scores in the pre-test (N = 30, M = 7.67 and SD = 1.47) compared with the Control Group students (N = 30, M = 7.37 and SD = 1.38). Findings from the independent t-test indicate that there is no significant difference in the mean scores of the Experimental and Control Group students and their scores for overall means in the pre-test (MD = .300, df = 58, t-value = .997 and p value = .324).

Table 4.6

Students' overall mean scores for short stories in the post-test

GROUP	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean Difference	t-value	Df	p-value
Experimental	30	14.5333	1.75643	6.33	15.77	58	.000
Control	30	8.2000	1.32353				

Level of significance is at p<0.05

Table 4.6 indicates that the Experimental Group students outperformed their counterparts in the Control Group, as the mean for overall scores in the post-test (N = 30, M = 14.53 and SD = 1.76) indicates an improvement compared to the Control Group students (N = 30, M = 8.20 and SD = 1.32). Findings from the independent t-test indicate that there is a significant difference in the mean scores of the Experimental and Control Group students and their scores for overall means in the post-test (MD = 6.33, df = 58, t-value = 15.77

and p-value = .000). Therefore, these findings in overall mean scores for short story in the post-test reject Ho3. These findings are parallel to the findings by Velayutham and Yunus (2019) which claimed that the i-Think mind mapping method does improve students' comprehension and recalling abilities. The skills of using i-Think mind maps can be modified based on the students' proficiency levels. They also suggested teachers use i-Think mind mapping as it is a remarkably interesting, useful and effective method. In addition, a study by Yusop and Mahmood (2015) also proved that the use of i-Think mind maps can stimulate and raise students' critical thinking skills to the next level and that makes teaching and learning of literature inspiring. A further support is Nik Harmi's (2019) study which demonstrated that students' interest and understanding of literature increases when they are taught to utilize i-Think mind maps.

V. CONCLUSION

The use of i-Think mind maps can upgrade students' comprehension of literary texts as they wrestle with thoughts and associations in creating i-Think mind maps. As an educational tool, the visual effects of i-Think mind maps propose a powerful approach as a teaching alternative towards better performance in learning the short story. In practice, students get the hang of utilizing i-Think maps by gathering information and creating charts to aid in their learning.

There are some recommendations for teachers, students, curriculum developers and book writers. Teachers can be creative in their teaching of short stories and make learning more interesting, enjoyable and effective through the utilization of i-Think mind maps. Teachers can plan their teaching of the short story to be more engaging and organized by using i-Think maps. Students will be interested to learn and apply critical thinking skills to nurture interest in learning the short story by using i-Think mind maps. Through this, they can learn the short story in more productive, meaningful and exciting ways. It will stimulate students' to be independent in managing their content in a coherent way of learning the short story, using i-Think mind maps. This method can be used across the curriculum..

In addition, publishers play an important role by having independent exercises using i-Think maps in their books to help students to be close to reading comprehension. By understanding the teachers and students needs, they can publish suitable modules, notes and worksheets according to the different abilities of students in the use of i-Think maps. In conclusion curriculum developers and textbook writers can transform teaching short story methods by using i-Think mind maps as a leading learning tool for students.

In a nutshell, i-Think mind map programs should be introduced in schools to inculcate and promote HOTS among students. This study shows that using i-Think mind maps can improve a student's achievement in learning a short story. Students can improve their understanding of the short story through knowledge gained from meaningful learning to solve problems more positively and confidently through the use of i-Think mind maps. Teachers can plan and support interesting activities that are applicable in the teaching and learning of short stories. Teachers can be creative and innovative in carrying out their responsibilities in keeping up with the era of teaching short stories utilizing i-Think mind maps.

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