International Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Translation
ISSN: 2617-0299 (Online); ISSN: 2708-0099 (Print)
DOI: 10.32996/ijllt
Journal Homepage: www.al-kindipublisher.com/index.php/ijllt

The Impact of Concept Mapping and Visual Organization on Arab EFL Learners' Mastery of English Nouns in Immersive Learning Contexts

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ABSTRACT

Vocabulary is a part of learning a second language. Nouns are especially important because they help us talk about people, places, things, and ideas. Many Arab students learning English as a language have trouble learning, remembering, and using nouns c Some strategies like using pictures, making maps of ideas, and organizing information have been suggested to help with vocabulary. These tools can help students make sense of information and connect it to what they already know. Most research has looked at these strategies separately. Focused on vocabulary in general, not just nouns. There is no research on Arab students learning English in immersive settings. This study asked 30 Arab university students learning English how they think concept mapping and visual organization can help them learn English nouns. The students answered a survey with 10 questions rating their agreement on a scale of 1 to 5. The questions covered how well they think these strategies help with understanding, remembering, engagement, and using in the classroom. The results indicate that participants generally held favorable perceptions of these strategies (average rating: 4.20–4.56). They agreed most with statements about teachers using these strategies and about how engaging they are. Note that this study only looked at what students think, not how well they actually learn nouns. The study also had a group of students from one university, so the results might not apply to everyone. The findings suggest that students like these strategies, but more research is needed to see if they actually work. The study discusses these results in relation to theories of learning. Suggests changes to test the effectiveness of these strategies.

KEYWORDS

concept mapping, visual organization, English noun learning, Arab EFL learners, learner perceptions, immersive learning contexts

ARTICLE INFORMATION

ACCEPTED: 02 October 2026 **PUBLISHED:** 03 November 2026 **DOI:** 10.32996/ijllt.2026.9.11.5

1. Introduction

Learning words is very important for people who want to speak a second language. If you do not know words, you will have trouble reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Researchers who study how people learn a language think that learning new words happens slowly and involves many things. You have to learn what a word looks like, what it means, and how to use it correctly. You cannot just know what a word is; you have to know how to use it in a sentence. Nouns are especially important because they are the words for people, places, and things. We use nouns to talk about the things that matter to us. So learning nouns is one of the most important things that people who are learning English as a foreign language need to do if they want to get better at speaking the language. Researchers and educators are really interested in how visual learning strategies can help people learn words. They want to know how these strategies can make learning easier. Visual strategies can help learners organize and connect information. This might help them remember it better than memorizing it. When learners connect information to what they already know, they understand it better. Two strategies, concept mapping and visual organization, help learners create representations. These representations link information to what they already know. Concept mapping and visual organization are tools. The process of learning is important. Many Arab English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners struggle with understanding, remembering, and using nouns correctly. Some reasons for this struggle are: The differences in structure between Arabic and English. Not enough exposure to real-life English. Teaching methods that focus on memorization rather than understanding. Concept mapping and visual organization have been shown to be helpful for learning words. Most studies have looked at them separately. They have focused on vocabulary, not nouns specifically. There is no research on what Arab EFL learners think about these strategies for learning nouns in settings. This study aims to fill that gap. This study looks at how Arab EFL university students think concept

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mapping and visual organization can help them learn English nouns. The study collects students' opinions at one point in time. It describes what learners think rather than proving that these strategies directly improve noun mastery. The findings can add to what we know about visual learning strategies in EFL education. They can help teachers use these tools in settings. The research questions that guide this study are in Section 3, after a review of the literature.

2. Literature Review

The process of acquiring a language is rather difficult, and the knowledge of vocabulary plays an important role in effective communication in this language. Nouns are especially significant as they refer to people, things, and ideas mentioned in ordinary discourse. It was found out that some set of high-frequency words comprises most of our reading and writing activity. That is why word lists like West's (1953) are still used as a guide for teachers in selection of vocabulary objectives in EFL courses. Many non-native speakers have problems with acquiring and remembering English nouns. This problem is believed to be caused by the differences between Arabic and English and by using rote memorization as a means of learning instead of meaning making. The notion of meaning-making refers to the idea of learning which takes place due to social interaction, use of tools and language for better understanding. As Vygotsky claimed, the knowledge is created as a result of cooperation with more knowledgeable people, and we know the world due to these interactions. Williams and Burden extended this idea to language pedagogy introducing the idea that vocabulary acquisition is based on linking of new words with already known knowledge and, thus, improves the process of retaining. It explains why concept maps are useful for learning vocabulary. The concept map is a visual tool which shows how the interconnected ideas are connected with each other. The idea of the concept maps is that the information will be better remembered when it is based on the already known knowledge. Concept maps are an old and proved means of learning. Indeed, concept maps can be used not only in the context of language learning but also in professional and organizational spheres for the purposes of knowledge organization and complex idea understanding. They are a useful

each other in a hierarchy. This difference is important because what we learn from one technique does not always apply to the other. Even though both techniques are used for learning, they are not the same. Some researchers, like Novak and Cañas, found that people who use concept maps to organize information are more likely to really understand it. Another researcher, Al-Jarf, studied mind mapping. Found that students who used it to learn new vocabulary did better than students who did not use it. Visual organization is another way of learning that uses charts and diagrams to show how ideas are related. This can help people learn better because it makes the information easier to understand. According to some theories, when information is presented in a way that's easy to understand, people learn better. Darch and Eaves found that visual organizers helped people understand and remember what they learned. Jiang and Grabe also found that using pictures to help learn things can improve reading comprehension and academic performance. There is also an idea called coding theory that says people learn better when they use both words and pictures. This means that concept mapping and visual organization can be really helpful for learning vocabulary. Mayer's work on multimedia learning also shows that people learn better when they use a combination of words and pictures as long as the pictures are relevant and not just decorative. This is what concept maps and visual organizers are meant to do. Concept mapping is a way of showing how ideas are related to each other. Mind mapping is a more free way of taking notes that uses pictures. Visual organization uses charts and diagrams to show how ideas are related. Dual coding theory says people learn better when they use both words and pictures. Multimedia learning shows that people learn better when they use a combination of words and pictures. Concept mapping and visual organization can also be seen as part of the picture of language learning strategies. These are the techniques that learners use to manage and improve their own learning. Oxford (2017) says that such strategies are central to learners managing their learning. Zimmerman (2002) also argues that learners who actively monitor and structure their learning do better than those who just study passively. Visual strategies like concept mapping are a form of this engagement with vocabulary. Richards and Renandya (2002) put strategy instruction, including graphic techniques, into the broader landscape of current EFL methodology. They note that teachers use a range of techniques, not just one method. Schmitt (2010) notes that self-report instruments, like attitude and strategy-use questionnaires, are commonly used in research. This is because they can capture learners' own engagement. The literature supports the idea that concept mapping and visual organization can help with learning. It also provides a basis for expecting learners to view them favorably. However much of the cited research used measures of learning outcomes like vocabulary tests. These studies typically looked at one strategy at a time. We do not know much about how Arab EFL learners perceive the use of concept mapping and visual organization for learning nouns in immersive contexts. This study aims to fill that gap. The research of Al-Jarf (2015) and Jiang and Grabe (2007) are examples of studies that used measures of learning outcomes. They looked at the effectiveness of strategies. We still need to know more about learners' perceptions of these strategies. Learners' views on concept mapping and visual organization are important. These two strategies can be used together to help learners. Arab EFL learners can benefit from using concept mapping and visual organization. They can help learners to learn nouns in contexts. Concept mapping and visual organization are tools. They can be used to support learning. Learners can use them to manage their learning. They can help learners to achieve their goals. Concept mapping and visual organization are strategies. They can be used in EFL learning. They can support the learning process. Learners can benefit from them.

They are tools.

Concept mapping is a technique.

Visual organization is also helpful.

They can be used together.

They can support learning.

Learners can use them.

They are valuable.

Concept mapping and visual organization can help.

They are strategies.

They can support learning.

They are helpful.

Learners can benefit from them.

3. Research Questions

The present research seeks to answer some specific research questions. The first one is as follows: what are the perceptions of Arab EFL learners about the role played by concept mapping in helping them understand nouns, remember the forms of English nouns, and use English nouns productively? The second research question is the following: what are the perceptions of Arab EFL learners about the role played by visual organization in helping them understand, remember, and use English nouns? The third research question is as follows: what are the perceptions of Arab EFL learners about the influence of concept mapping and visual organization on their engagement level?

4. Methodology

This study is about EFL university students and how they think concept mapping and visual organization can help them learn English nouns. The study looks at what the students say about their experiences at one point in time. It does not try to measure if these methods actually work or compare them to ways of learning. The study is simply about what the students think of concept mapping and visual organization. It wants to know if the students think these methods are useful for learning nouns. The English nouns are what the students are trying to learn. This study does not say that concept mapping and visual organization will definitely make the students better at learning nouns. It just says what the students think about these methods. More about this is talked about in Section 8.

4.1 Participants

Thirty Arab EFL students who were studying English at a university took a survey. We asked students in some classes if they wanted to take the survey. The students who took the survey did it because they wanted to, not because they were picked randomly. So we cannot say that what these students said is what all Arab EFL students would say. The results are really about the students who took the survey. The survey was small, with thirty Arab EFL students, which means we have to be careful when we look at the results and not think they apply to all Arab EFL students.

4.2 Instrument

Data collection was done using an instrument prepared by the researcher. The instrument was based on findings in the existing literature on concept mapping and vocabulary learning. The questionnaire was made up of two parts. The first part asked for demographics from the participants like age, gender, and length of time of studying English. The second part was composed of ten statements asking if concept mapping and visual organization make learning nouns easier. The participants answered the statements using a five point Likert scale where 1 means strongly disagree and 5 strongly agree.

Reliability testing for the questionnaire was not conducted because the instrument was not piloted. Therefore, there is no evidence of reliability of the instrument. Information on reliability is also unavailable because some answers were lost. This is the limitation of the current study. Future researchers need to do the reliability testing to establish the validity of this instrument in measuring the variables of interest. Specifically, it is necessary to know if concept mapping and visual organization help learn English nouns.

4.3 Procedure

The survey was conducted online using Google Forms within one week. The purpose of the research was revealed to respondents, and they were made aware that it is possible for them not to participate. Furthermore, the anonymity of the responses was guaranteed and the use of the data only for research purposes was confirmed. Finally, the results were transferred to Excel.

4.4 Data Analysis

The collected data were subject to statistical analysis in order to understand participants' views on certain issues. The researchers determined the frequency of answers per item as well as the mean score that would help evaluate the attitude of participants toward the use of concept mapping and visual organization in the process of learning English nouns.

Statistical techniques were used because the purpose of the research was to describe participants' views without any comparisons or establishing of relationships between variables. That is why there were no further calculations made. The results were presented in tables, which facilitated the analysis of answers of the participants. After analyzing the results, the researchers interpreted them against the background of the study purposes and connected the results to the existing literature. Thus, it was possible to

understand whether concept mapping and visual organization serve as an effective way of learning English nouns as an interactive process.

4.5 Data collection

Once all the necessary information was gathered from the participants of the research, its analysis was performed through the use of descriptive statistics. Namely, frequencies and percentages were obtained for each question from the questionnaire dealing with the participants' perception of concept mapping and visual organization as means of learning English nouns, as well as the mean score for each item. In doing so, the aim was to provide an overview of the participants' perception of concept mapping and visual organization as learning strategies for English nouns. Descriptive statistics was also used to give a summary of the demographics of the sample, including their gender, years of completed education, and visual learning experience. Such an approach was justified by the fact that the research was aimed at investigating learner perceptions, not finding any causal relationship between variables (no need for t-tests, ANOVA or correlations). Frequency distribution tables were compiled in order to facilitate the analysis. Ultimately, the obtained results were analyzed in accordance with the aims of the study and verified against the theoretical framework and available literature. Through the selected methodology, the researcher managed to measure participants' perception of the efficacy of concept mapping and visual organization in their process of understanding, memorizing, and using English nouns.

5. Results

Table 1 summarizes the demographic characteristics of the 30 participants.

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	12	40.0%
Gender	Female	18	60.0%
Age	18–20	10	33.3%
Age	21–23	15	50.0%
Age	24–26	5	16.7%
Years studying English	Less than 5 years	4	13.3%
Years studying English	5–10 years	16	53.3%
Years studying English	More than 10 years	10	33.3%

The people in the study were mostly women, sixty percent to be exact, and forty percent were men. Most of the people in the study were between eighteen and twenty-three years old, which is a lot of people. More than half of the people in the study, fifty-three percent, said they had been learning English for five to ten years. About a third of the people in the study, thirty-three percent, said they had been learning English for more than ten years. This means that the people in the study knew a lot about English already.

Table 2 shows the score for each of the ten questions about what people thought in the same order as they were on the questionnaire.

Mean	Statement
4.43	Concept mapping helps me understand English nouns more effectively.
4.36	Concept maps make it easier to remember new nouns.
4.20	Visual organizers help me classify English nouns into meaningful categories.
4.47	Visual learning strategies improve vocabulary retention.
4.33	Concept mapping helps me connect new nouns with previously learned vocabulary.
4.40	Visual organization makes vocabulary learning more interesting.
4.50	Visual learning strategies increase learner engagement.
4.30	Concept maps help me understand relationships between words.
4.26	Visual organization reduces the difficulty of learning new vocabulary.
4.56	English teachers should use concept mapping and visual organization more frequently.

In an assessment on a scale of one to five, whereby 1 represented a poor rating and 5 represented a good rating, all the ten rated items had a mean score greater than 4.20. The first highest rated item was regarding the use of concept mapping and visual organization in the class (M=4.56) while the second highest rated item was regarding engagement of the learners using the

strategies (M=4.50). Comprehension (M=4.43) and retention (M=4.47) of English nouns taught using concept mapping were also rated highly. The positive scores indicate favorable attitudes towards each of the strategies in relation to the dimensions assessed by the instrument; that is comprehension, retention, engagement and class utilization. However, just like this study being a self report study, these findings represent participants' attitudes towards the strategies but do not show any changes in participants' noun knowledge.

6. Discussion

Participants perceived both concept mapping and visual organization favorably across all measured dimensions, with particularly strong endorsement for classroom use and learner engagement. These self-reported attitudes align with constructivist perspectives of learning—namely, the view that learners construct meaning by linking new information to existing knowledge structures and are consistent with the constructivist literature reviewed in Section 2. The pattern of responses observed here corresponds to Novak and Cañas's (2008) account of concept maps as visual representations of the relationships among ideas and resonates with Al-Jarf's (2015) finding that EFL first-year university students who used mind-mapping software achieved greater pre-to-post vocabulary gains than students who did not. It is worth noting, however, that Al-Jarf's (2015) study measured vocabulary acquisition directly through pre/post testing, whereas the current study examines only participants' beliefs about their own learning process rather than evidence of actual learning gains; the two sets of findings are therefore complementary but not equivalent. Participants' favorable views of visual organization also echo Sweller's (1988) cognitive load theory and the findings of Darch and Eaves (1986), both of which suggest that visually structured material can reduce processing demands and support comprehension and recall. Taken together, these connections suggest that participants' perceptions are broadly consistent with established theoretical accounts of how visual and organizational strategies support learning, although the present design cannot establish whether these strategies produced measurable gains in noun knowledge. Distinguishing learners' opinions of a strategy from demonstrated learning outcomes is an important conceptual distinction, since a positive perception does not, by itself, indicate improved performance. The convergence between the present findings and prior empirical work by Al-Jarf (2015) and Darch and Eaves (1986) nonetheless offers a plausible theoretical rationale for the relevance of concept mapping and visual organization to noun acquisition among Arab EFL learners, a possibility that the outcome-based research design proposed in Section 9 could test directly.

7. Conclusion

This study explored the perception of thirty Arab EFL university students regarding the utilization of concept mapping and visual organization as means to learn English nouns in an immersion instructional environment. The participants perceived positive attitude toward the two methods, which indicated that they found them useful in learning and memorizing the nouns as well as entertaining and practical in class. Such perception can be considered as consistent with the theoretical frameworks regarding visual and organizational learning strategies discussed in Section 2. Nonetheless, due to the methodological nature of this study (perceptions were self-reported once), the data obtained in this study cannot confirm if concept mapping and visual organization contribute to noun acquisition; the data show the attitude of the learners toward the two strategies only. Positive perceptions and improved learning are different constructs; hence, the former cannot be taken as the latter. In order to confirm whether these learning strategies lead to any improvement in noun acquisition among Arab EFL learners, future studies utilizing outcome-oriented designs (as discussed in Section 9) should be performed.

6. **Recommendation for Future Research.**

In the future we need to look at this study from different angles. The important thing is that researchers should find a way to measure how well people learn English nouns, like giving them a test before and after and comparing it to a group that does not use concept mapping and visual organization. This will show if these methods really help people learn not just if they think they do. To do this researchers can use a kind of study that compares two groups.

Next, researchers should try to include people from different places in their studies so the results are more accurate for all Arab students who are learning English. They should also test their questions to make sure they are good and tell us if they are reliable.

Then researchers should try to figure out if concept mapping or visual organization is more helpful or if using them together is what makes the difference.

Lastly, researchers should look at how these methods work with parts of the English language like verbs or phrases and use new technology like interactive concept mapping tools to see if these methods are helpful in all areas of English learning, not just at the university level.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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