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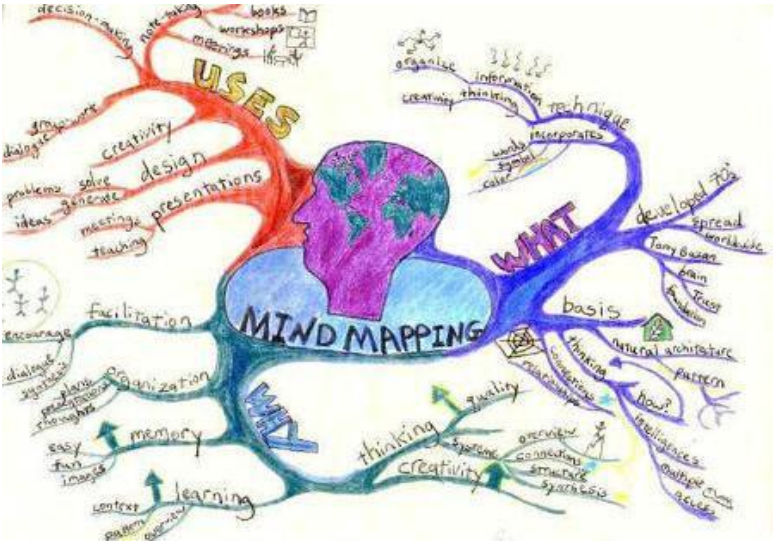
THE USE OF THE MIND MAPPING METHOD IN TEACHING GREEK GRAMMAR

"A picture is worth a thousand words"

Oriental saying

Mind Mapping is a popular brainstorming tool and learning technique of visually arranging ideas and their interconnections. It can be used to graphically arrange the linkage of some central concept or issue with other concepts or issues into memorable treelike diagrams. It allows you to create, capture, organize and communicate readily understood and highly interactive visual representations of complex ideas, information and data. Although used for centuries, Mind Maps were popularized by authors like Tony Buzan around 30 years ago, and are now widely used in business and education. Despite the huge size of the scientific literature dedicated to the study of Mind Mapping Method, nobody has tried to use it while teaching any of foreign languages, and Modern Greek in particular. The method is not yet thoroughly developed in this direction; and consequently, neither Greek nor foreign theoretical literature can offer a monograph that investigates the issue.

Essentially, a Mind Map is a diagram that helps to think. It displays ideas in a visual form, usually around a central word, phrase and image. It always starts from some problem or issue, which is positioned in the center. Typically it contains words, short phrases and pictures, which are connected to the central issue by lines. The major benefit of using a Mind Map rather than a list or an outline is that using both graphics and images involves both sides of your brain.



The picture is taken from the site
http://www.12manage.com/methods_mind_mapping.html

According to psychological researches, most people are visually oriented. Using structures, words, color, images, and hyperlinks to bring concepts of life, Mind Mapping links a central concept or issue with related concepts or issues. Unlike linear thinking modes (that each of us probably learned at school) it stimulates imagination and creativity, by connecting left and right brain thinking. Thus it is believed to harness the full range of your analytical and creative skills.[1]

Mind Maps can be used for a large range of activities, including such activities as brainstorming, improving creativity, capturing ideas, and making presentations, planning, analyzing and solving different problems. When you use a Mind Map, not only do you find it easier to remember information, but also it is easier to make connections between disparate ideas and develop fresh concepts. A Mind Map can be applied to every aspect of life where improved learning and clearer thinking will enhance human performance.

[1] Cees Van Hallen, What is Mind Mapping, Description, http://www.12manage.com/methods_mind_mapping.html.

And of course, it can be and should be used in teaching. Thus, in to my opinion, the method is very helpful and even essential in teaching.

Here is a brief review of the background of the Mind Mapping Method: admittedly, radial drawings have already been used for centuries to analyze all kinds of problems. An early example is the graphical representation of the *Categories* of Aristotle by Neo-Platonist thinker Porphyry of Tyros in the 3rd century. From his Commentaries and introductions to Aristotle only the influential *Isagoge* and the shorter commentary on the *Categories* survived. There are also fragments of a larger commentary on the *Categories.*[2] It means that people have been using image-centered radial graphic organization techniques referred variably as mental or generic mind maps for centuries in areas such as engineering, psychology and education, although the claim to the origin of the mind map has been made by a British popular psychology author, Tony Buzan. He was seeking a visual and faster way of outlining ideas on paper to support learning and memorizing. He made the modern Mind Map popular in the 60s.

Tony Buzan is not only the originator of Mind Mapping, but also the creator of the concepts of Radiant Thinking and Mental Literacy. His mission is to unlock the power of our brains, and show how to tap and use our creative genius with ease.[3] He tries to raise public awareness about the potential of the human brain – writing, lecturing and teaching individuals how to improve their memory, creativity and problem solving ability. He has created his own cottage industry, demonstrating what is possible if you only *Use Your Head* – the title of one of his best-selling books.

However, some researchers suggest that his works are just marketing hype based on misconceptions about the brain and the cerebral hemispheres. Hemispheric specialization theory has been identified as pseudoscientific, when applied to mind mapping. Somehow or other the mind mapping method has a significant impact on recall in learners, and especially in students.

Most of Tony Buzan's teaching generally divides up into: general awareness of the extensive capabilities and capacities of the brain and its functions, memory skills, reading skills, mind map note-taking, creativity, and how brain function can be improved over time into old age.

Buzan developed Mind Mapping whilst at University, out of the frustration that traditional notes took up so much time to create and review. Research indicated that the brain responds best to key words, images, colours, and direct association. Buzan refined these ideas into a simple set of rules that

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[2] The Oxford Classical Dictionary, Third edition, revised. Edited by S. Hornblower and A. Spawforth, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2003, 1226.

[3] http://www.buzanworld.com/biography.html

can be followed to create Mind Maps, which are an efficient way to take notes from lectures or books.

Tony Buzan suggests only the following foundation structures for Mind Mapping:

1. Start in the centre with an image of the topic using at least three colors.
2. Use images, symbols, codes and dimensions throughout your Mind Map.
3. Select key words and print using upper or lower case letters.
4. Each word/image must be alone and sitting on its own line.
5. The lines must be connected, starting from the central image.
6. Make the lines the same length as the word/image.
7. Use colors throughout the Mind Map.
8. Develop your own personal style of Mind Mapping.
9. Use emphasis and show associations in your Mind Map.
10. Keep the Mind Map clear by using radial hierarchy, numerical order or outlines to embrace your branches.[4]

Students certainly are able to recall better what they are taught by using of Mind Mapping Method, and thus lectures become more creative. Admittedly, in the learning period there are four main points to recall, and these are that the human brain recalls most:

- at the beginning of a learning period;
- at the end of a learning period;
- those things which are in some way outstanding;
- those things which are in some way associated/linked.[5]

The primary way we remember is by imagination and association because the way we think is the same – in those images and their associations. All the great ancient memory systems were based on this imagistic view. The Greek system of mnemonics, for one, had this concept at its core.[6]

If you want to remember a page of notes, for example, words will help to some extent, of course, but more important for fixing them in your memory will be images, pictures, symbols, codes, colors, associations and connections. And the best way to connect images on a page is by using arrows, spacing, size, dimension or whatever symbols work for you. So, for your notes to

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[4] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mind_mapping

[5] Бьюзен Т., Бьюзен Б., Супермышление, перевод с Английского Е. А. Самсонова, Поппури, Минск 2003, 34.

[6] Бьюзен Т., Как безошибочно запомнить до 10 тысяч наименований, Усовершенствуйте свою память, 19, http://www.yugzone.ru/lib.htm.

be memorable, they need to be an image-rich network, and that's the essence of a Mind Map.

Most people are trained to think in a linear way, thinking of one thing, then the next thing, and then the next, in a series of singular associations in one direction. The way our minds really work is in multiple thoughts and multiple directions at the same time. The way the brain fundamentally thinks is radiant, meaning that it thinks primarily from image centers, and then radiates out.

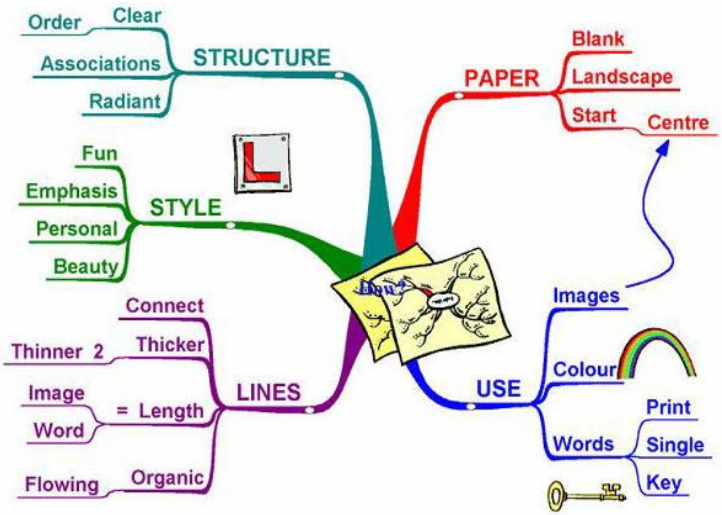
We have been trained in two primary intelligences – verbal and numerical, which are wonderful. However, we have not been trained as much in the creative and innovative. To maximize function, the verbal, numerical, creative, and innovative skills must go together. If they don't, each one suffers. The Mind Map allows you to use your verbal and numerical, plus adding the explosive power of your creative intelligence. People need to realize that, regardless of how they have been taught to think, inside their brains they have been training since birth to create Mind Maps!

By encouraging our Radiant Thinking and expressing it through Mind Maps, we can make maximum use of our creative abilities in a way that is both easy and natural, and which has great benefits for business and any other endeavor. Radiant Thinking and Mind Mapping actually give the greatest support possible to education, because the educational system is trying to produce innovative and creative leaders.

If you have millions of young brains in your charge, and you want them to be creative, the way to do it is to have them use thinking tools which match the way their brains work. If you don't, it is like putting heavy boots on a young child and allowing it to walk only in one direction.

Obviously, the educational system must teach the vitally important subjects of reading, writing, arithmetic, science, religion, and physical education. Radiant Thinking and Mind Mapping are tools that can help children think well in general, learn faster and remember more appropriately, which is "good housekeeping" for the brain.

To mirror the way the brain thinks internally, you place an image in the center of a page (because that gives you freedom to expand your ideas in any direction) and draw connectors extending out in all directions from that image. You use both sides of your brain, tapping the right side of the brain for images, dimension, size, and color, and the left side for words, numbers, analysis, and logic. Put all those on the page in an associated network, and you have got a Mind Map.



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At first glance, a Mind Map does not look logical to the untrained eye. However, it is pure logic, because logic is not sequence and order, logic is correct connection.

When you have all the images and you make the links between them, what you are creating is like a reflection of your own internal web site. And, the web site inside your brain makes the World Wide Web look like a pea compared to a planet.[7]

Mind Maps have become popular because they help us to organize the data that overwhelm us each day and turn that data into actionable knowledge. Keen Mind Mappers are everywhere: you will find students Mind Mapping their notes, business people mind mapping projects and meetings and Web developers mind mapping development projects and web-sites.

There are nowadays dozen computer programs that help us to mind map on computer. When you mind map on a computer you can change your Mind Map at will, can print out dozens of copies, and can also use them for the

[7] Buzan T., What has the Brain Got to Do with Business?, http://www.managementconsultingnews.com

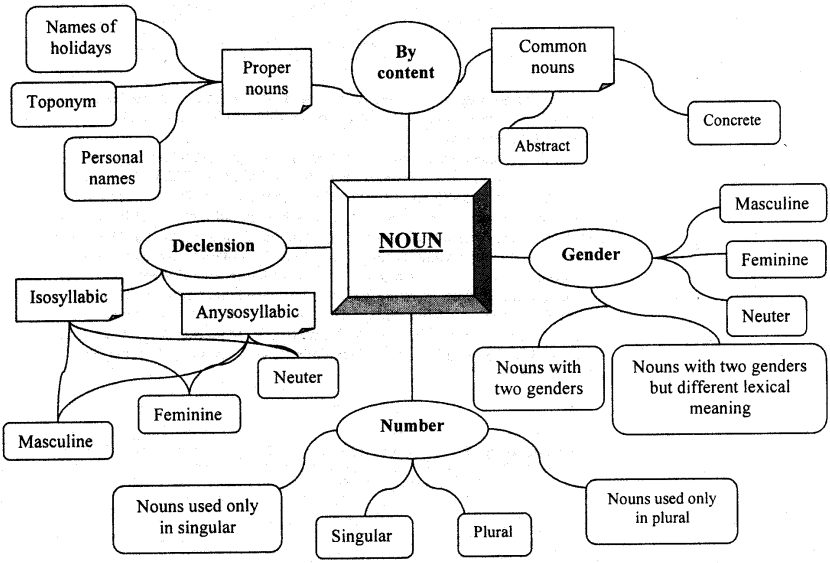
purposes like creating presentations, developing web-sites and demonstrating your ideas.[8]

Particularly, Mind Map is like a picture of your thoughts. A lot of lecturers use visual methods during teaching, because it is more effective, it would be better to teach by using Mind Maps, for our brain works this way. Of course creating Mind Maps is an individual process. All students are using their own personalized approach, but the technique that everyone uses is the same. It is always an image that is linked to something else.

As for teaching Foreign Language Grammar, here as nowhere else is important to memorize and recall a lot of rules. Previously there was used widespread method of creating situational grammars with images. As we know visual methods of teaching a foreign language produce better results than those, which depend exclusively upon language. The images can be used while introducing new material to elucidate a piece of grammar which is being explained, so abstract grammar rules are impressed in the learner's mind in concrete, visible, and emotional form. Thus a grammar rule is better learned by students and more firmly retained in their minds.[9] Nowadays this process can be improved by using the worldwide method of Mind Mapping.

Although the Mind Mapping method is very popular, it is not yet used in teaching foreign languages, and regrettably, nobody has so far taken interest in using the method in teaching Modern Greek Linguistics. In this paper I'd like to illustrate its use in teaching Modern Greek grammar theories. The graphic below presents the map of noun as a part of speech and its categories.

[8] Urban P., Mind Mapping Made Easy, Essential Mind Mapping, 2006, 6.
[9] Dubrovin M., Situational Grammar, Part I, Moscow, Prosveshenie 1973, 6-8.



This Mind Map is designed on the basis of grammar rules suggested by well-known Greek Linguist Manolis Triandafilidis in his book *Modern Greek (Dimotiki's) Grammar.*[10]

In this connection, I have to mention one of the most interesting issues – the classification of the declension system of Modern Greek noun, which nowadays is especially relevant. Since there are a lot of classifications of the declension system, it is essential that a teacher should mention at least some of them. The widespread system of Manolis Triandafilidis based on the mnemotechnical principle is regarded by many scholars as outdated. In their opinion, it does not correspond to the structure of Modern Greek. In contemporary studies, there are a lot of alternative classifications, but none of them is widely accepted today. Out of them, the classifications to be mentioned are by: M. Filintas, A. Mirambel, P. Mackridge, G. Zoukis, A. Tsopanakis, Kh. Kleris and G. Babiniotis, R.Gordeziani, I. Darchia and S. Shamanidi.

[10] Τριανταφυλλίδης Μ., Νεοελληνική Γραμματική της Δημοτικής, Ανατύπωση της έκδοσης του ΟΕΣΒ (1941) με διορθώσεις, Αριστοτέλειο Πανεπιστήμιο Θεσσαλονίκης, Ινστιτούτο Νεοελληνικών Σπουδών, Θεσσαλονίκη 2002.

The main principles of these classifications are different: M. Filintas' and A. Tsopanakis' (1995) classifications are based on the opposition of equal and unequal number of syllables; A. Mirambel, A. Tsopanakis (1956), Kh. Kleris and G. Babiniotis proposed classifications that focus on the number of case endings; while R. Gordeziani, I. Darchia and S. Shamanidi[11] believe that the classification of Modern Greek declension requires the use of the linguistic principle. G. Zoukis' classification is not quite acceptable as it has no common principle and is based on the outdated patterns of noun declension.

Another noteworthy classification is the one proposed by Peter Mackridge. It is presented in the grammar book "Modern Greek" ("Νεοελληνική γλώσσα").[12] In my opinion, apart from linguistic principles, it is important to pay attention to the practical purpose of the declension types. So, the classification that will facilitate understanding and learning of Modern Greek declension system should be considered the best one. Among such classifications is the system suggested by Peter Mackridge. It is acceptable because of its practical value and use. The division of the second type of the declension system into three subcategories – nouns with ending -ος, -ο and -ι – is in fact one of its positive properties. However, the classification has a weak point as well: it is based on three different principles (the number of cases, the ending of the Genitive and the gender category) instead of a single one, which is rather inconvenient.

The classification proposed by Kh. Kleris and G. Babiniotis[13] can be regarded as a logical system which takes into account all factors for identifying declension types – namely, the number of case endings, isosyllabism and anisosyllabism of nouns, the category of grammatical gender. From the linguistic point of view this classification is absolutely accurate and it would be rather difficult to present a better one. But, although this system is very accurate and logical, it sometimes fails in practice as students and foreigners find it confusing and difficult to understand.

Teaching Greek Declension System to foreign students using different classification systems revealed that among the most acceptable classifications is the one suggested by R. Gordeziani, I. Darchia and S. Shamanidi because it is based on the linguistic principle, i. e. on the stem ending – some forms of Modern Greek language are explained with the help of Ancient Greek, which

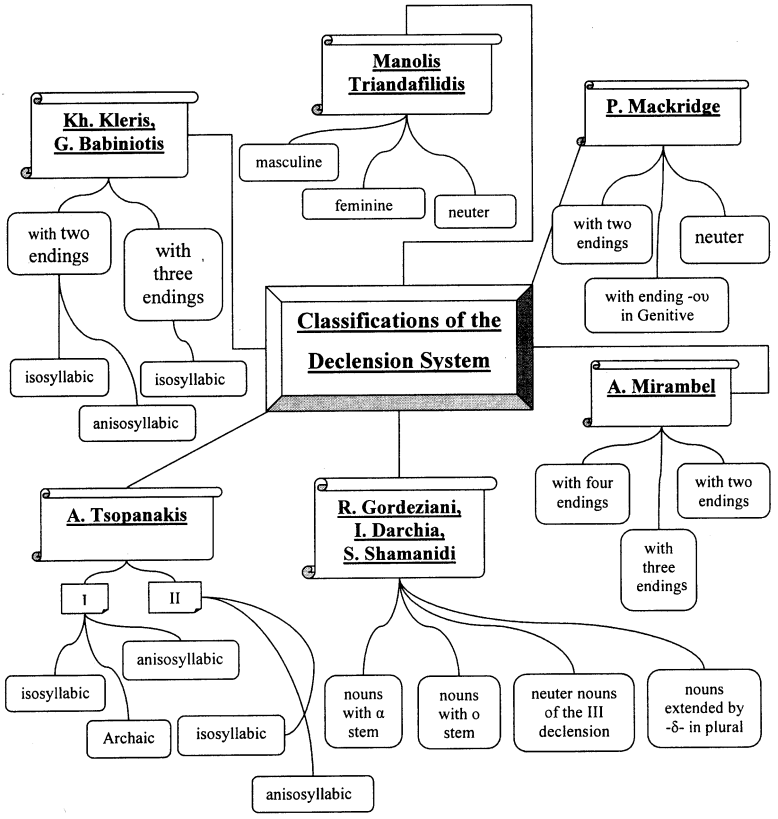
[11] Gordeziani R., Darchia I., Shamanidi S., Ancient and Modern Greek, Comparative Grammar, Logos, Tbilisi 2002 (in Georgian).

[12] Mackridge P., Η Νεοελληνική γλώσσα, Περιγραφική ανάλυση της νεοελληνικής κοινής, μετάφραση: Πετρόπουλος Κ. Ν., Εκδόσεις Πατάκη, Αθήνα 1990, 215-219.

[13] Κλαίρης Χ., Μπαμπινιώτης Γεώργιος, Γραμματική της Νέας Ελληνικής δομολειτουργική – επικοινωνιακή, Ι, Το Όνομα, αναφορά στον κόσμο της πραγματικότητας, Ελληνικά Γράμματα, Αθήνα 1998.

makes it easier to understand and learn. It distinguishes the so-called mixed declension that includes nouns extending with -δ- suffix.

As students normally find it rather difficult to remember all the above-mentioned classifications, I decided to offer them through the Mind Map Method.



So, I believe it is more effective to teach grammar rules and diverse opinions on grammatical phenomena with the help of the Mind Mapping Method. According to researches, about 250 million people around the world are now using Mind Maps for different purposes including teaching. Therefore, the universal use and popularity of the method is just a matter of time as any concept is much easier to understand through illustration rather than explanation.