

ENGLISH MAJORS' EVALUATION OF BRAINSTORMING TECHNIQUES TO ENHANCE TASK RESPONSE IN IELTS ACADEMIC WRITING TASK 2

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1. Introduction

In the context of rapid technological advancement, excessive dependence on AI tools may reduce students' opportunities to engage in critical thinking, develop ideas independently, and strengthen their analytical skills.

Students become less capable of independently analyzing questions, developing arguments, and evaluating the relevance of their ideas.

Such dependence may negatively affect their performance in Task Response, particularly in high-stakes examinations such as IELTS, in which the use of AI assistance is not permitted during the test.

It has been observed that a multitude of third-year English majors at Quang Nam University still struggle to meet the Task Response criterion, resulting in low scores in their IELTS Writing Task 2 essays.

This study aims to investigate the difficulties the third-year English majors face in meeting the requirements of the Task Response criterion in IELTS Academic writing Task 2, and to examine their evaluation of brainstorming in improving the Task Response criterion in IELTS Writing Task 2.

2. Literature Review

Rao (2007), Abd Karim et al. (2016), Abedianpour & Omidvari (2018), Rashtchi and Porkar (2020), Dhananjaya et al. (2024)

3. Research Methodology

Qualitative

quantitative

Questionnaires using Likert scales were applied to collect the data from 59 English majors at Quang Nam university.

Quantitative data were collected through closed-ended items employing 5-point Likert-type scales to evaluate the students' difficulties and their degree of agreement with statements concerning the perceived benefits of brainstorming techniques.

Qualitative data were obtained from three open-ended questions, which were designed to provide further insights into the challenges students considered most significant, the aspects of brainstorming they perceived as most helpful, and their suggestions for improving the application of brainstorming techniques in the classroom.

4.4. English majors' Perceptions of Brainstorming Effectiveness

Table 2. The Students' Perceptions of Brainstorming Effectiveness in IELTS Writing Task 2

The Students' Perceptions of Brainstorming Effectiveness	Rate: 1 = Strongly Disagree 5 = Strongly Agree				
	1	2	3	4	5
a. Brainstorming helps me better understand the requirements or task type of IELTS Writing Task 2 questions.	1	6	18	18	16
	2%	10%	30%	30%	28%
a. Brainstorming helps me address all parts of the IELTS Writing Task 2 question more adequately.	0	6	16	19	18
	0%	10%	28%	32%	30%
a. Brainstorming helps me generate sufficient relevant ideas within the given time limit.	1	3	20	16	19
	2%	4%	34%	28%	32%
a. Brainstorming helps me stay focused on the main topic throughout my essay.	0	6	9	24	20
	0%	10%	16%	40%	34%
a. Brainstorming helps me provide clear and relevant examples to support my main ideas.	1	4	16	22	16
	2%	6%	28%	36%	28%
a. Brainstorming helps me overcome difficulties in balancing different viewpoints in IELTS Writing Task 2 (e.g., advantages and disadvantages; discussion essays).	1	5	20	19	14
	2%	8%	34%	32%	24%
a. Brainstorming helps me explain and develop my ideas in greater depth.	0	4	18	22	15
	0%	6%	30%	38%	26%
a. Brainstorming helps me maintain a clear and consistent position throughout my essay.	0	6	16	26	11
	0%	10%	28%	44%	18%
a. Brainstorming helps me manage my time more effectively to complete and review my essay.	1	4	18	20	16
	2%	6%	30%	34%	28%

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1. English Majors' Experience with IELTS Writing Task 2



Figure 1. Students' Duration of IELTS Writing Task 2 Study

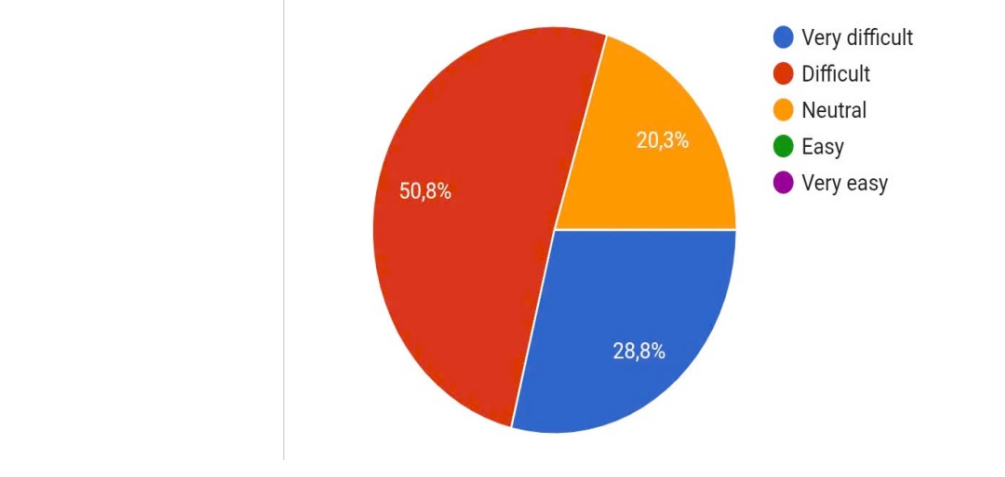


Figure 2. Students' Perceived Difficulty of IELTS Writing Task 2

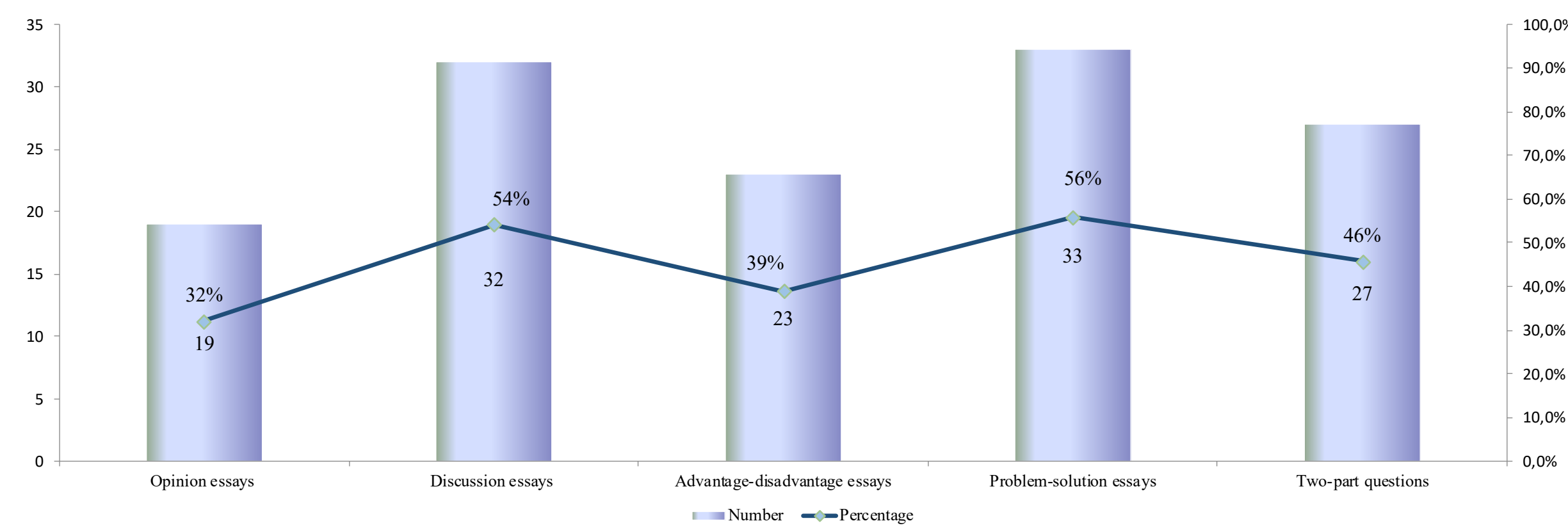


Figure 3. Essay Types Perceived Most Challenging by Students in IELTS

4.2. English Majors' Challenges in Meeting the Task Response Criterion

Table 1. Students' Difficulties in Meeting the Task Response Criterion in IELTS Writing Task 2

Difficulties in Meeting the Task Response Criterion	Rate: 1 = Strongly Disagree 5 = Strongly Agree				
	1	2	3	4	5
a. I find it difficult to fully understand the requirements or task type of IELTS Writing Task 2 questions.	1	8	25	15	10
	1.7%	13.6%	42.4%	25.4%	16.9%
a. I find it difficult to address all parts of the IELTS Writing Task 2 question adequately.	0	4	23	19	13
	0%	6.8%	39%	32.2%	22%
a. I find it difficult to generate sufficient relevant ideas within the given time limit.	0	4	23	19	13
	0%	6.8%	39%	32.2%	22%
a. I find it difficult to keep my ideas focused on the main topic throughout the essay.	0	8	26	17	8
	0%	13.6%	44.1%	28.8%	13.6%
a. I find it difficult to support my main ideas with clear and relevant examples.	2	6	18	21	12
	3.4%	10.2%	30.5%	35.6%	20.3%
a. I find it challenging to balance different viewpoints in IELTS Writing Task 2 (e.g., advantages and disadvantages; discussion essays)	0	6	23	20	10
	0%	10.2%	39%	33.9%	16.9%
a. I find it difficult to explain and develop my ideas in sufficient depth.	0	5	18	23	13
	0%	8.5%	30.5%	39%	22%
a. I find it difficult to maintain a clear and consistent position throughout the essay.	1	5	23	15	15
	1.7%	8.5%	39%	25.4%	25.4%
a. I find it difficult to manage your time effectively to complete and review my essay.	0	3	16	23	17
	0%	5.1%	27.1%	39%	28.8%

4.3. English Majors' Use of Brainstorming Techniques

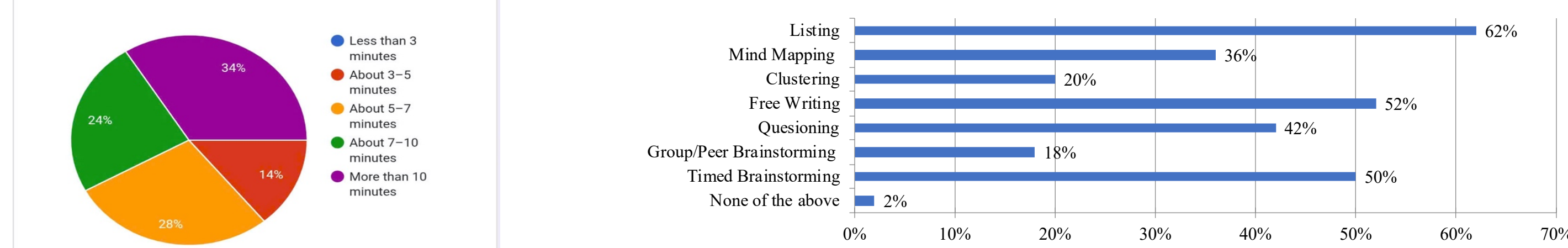


Figure 4. Students' Time Allocation for Pre-Writing Brainstorming

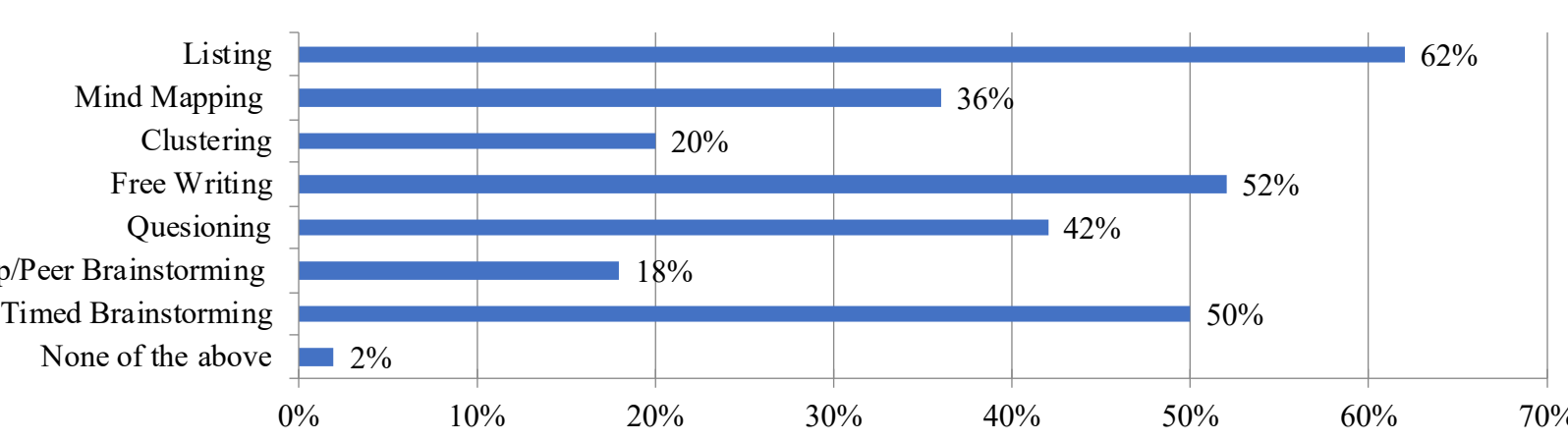


Figure 5. Students' Familiarity with and Utilization of Brainstorming Techniques

4.5. English Majors' Difficulties in Using Brainstorming Techniques in IELTS Writing Task

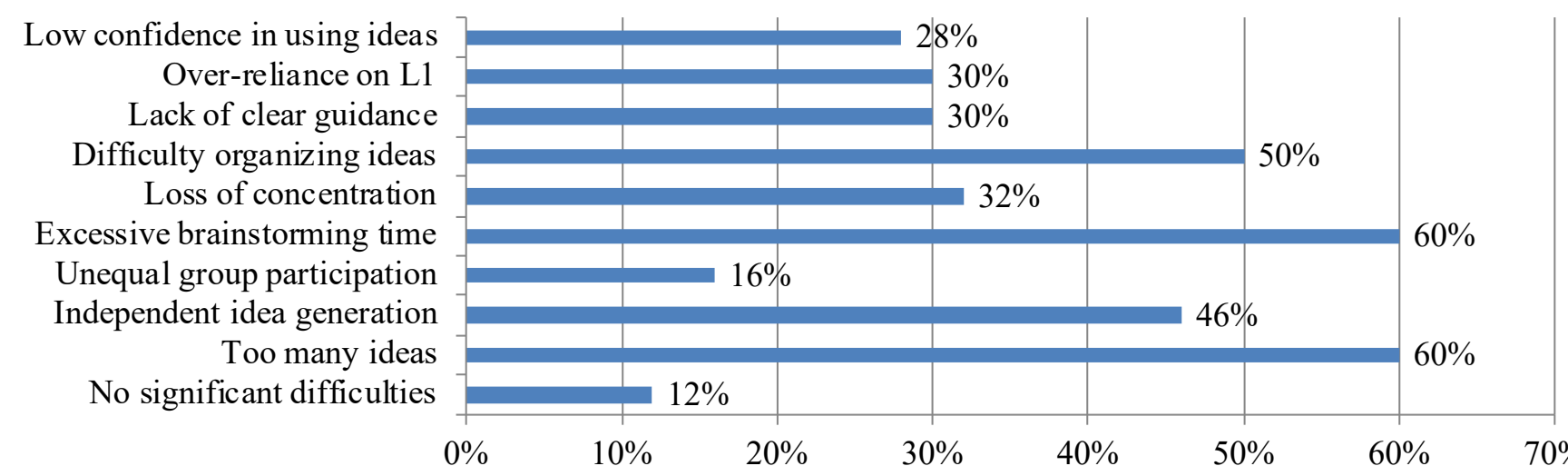


Figure 6. Students' Difficulties in Utilizing Brainstorming Techniques in IELTS Writing Task 2

4.6. English Majors' Attitudes and Suggestions

5. Conclusion

Many students still encounter considerable difficulties in achieving a high Task Response score.

The most common problems include generating ideas under time pressure, developing ideas in depth, supporting arguments with relevant examples, balancing viewpoints, and managing time effectively during the writing process.

A large majority of participants reported using brainstorming before writing, especially techniques such as listing, free writing, and timed brainstorming.

Students believed that brainstorming helped them understand task requirements more clearly, stay focused on the topic, generate ideas more quickly, organize arguments logically, and manage time more effectively.

However, the study also reveals several limitations in students' application of brainstorming techniques.

Some students lacked sufficient guidance on how to apply brainstorming effectively, while others spent excessive time on brainstorming or experienced difficulties organizing ideas into a coherent essay structure.

The heavy reliance on AI tools such as ChatGPT suggests that although technology can support idea generation, it may also reduce students' independent thinking and critical reasoning skills if overused.

➤ The findings highlight the importance of providing students with systematic instruction, structured practice, and appropriate guidance in applying brainstorming techniques under timed conditions.

REFERENCES