TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF USING BRAINSTORMING ACTIVITIES IN ENGLISH CLASSES AT SOME PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN HUE CITY

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Abstract: This study explored teachers' perceptions of using brainstorming activities in English classes at some primary schools in Hue City, a city in Central Vietnam. The sample of the study consisted of fifty primary school English teachers. Data collected from the questionnaire and interview were analyzed, synthesized, and interpreted both quantitatively and qualitatively. The findings of the study reveal that most of the primary English teachers held positive perceptions of brainstorming activities. Some brainstorming activities such as listing, mind-mapping, and visual brainstorming were claimed to be regularly used in their teaching English to children at primary schools. Such difficulties as the lack of time, large classes, mixed levels of students, etc. were reported to prevent teachers from conducting brainstorming activities successfully. From the study's findings, some implications were made with the hope that the primary teachers will practice these activities in teaching English to young learners more effectively.

Keywords: Brainstorming, primary schools, teaching English, young learners

1. Introduction

In the era of globalization, English has determined as one of the universal languages that are used in every corner of the world. Many people hold the belief that being able to communicate in English is the key to the understanding and international integration. Thus, there is an unprecedented growth in the number of people who learn English as a second or foreign language. Furthermore, with the dominance and demand for English, the age span of language learners has been shortened. For instance, children in Vietnam can start learning English at primary schools or even at kindergartens. However, teaching English for young learners is quite challenging due to their characteristics and learning styles that affect their second language acquisition. At this age, they are not able to be aware of the reason why they are learning, what and how they are going to do in English lessons. As a result, it seems necessary for primary English teachers to build effective and interesting activities to ensure that learners fully participate in the lessons and gain certain achievements in the learning process.

One of the appropriate and comprehensive strategies for teaching English is brainstorming. The term was first coined by Osborn (1942) who described brainstorming as a technique of amassing or collecting ideas spontaneously in order to find solutions to a specific problem. Brainstorming plays an important part in language lessons where it is commonly used as a warm-up or pre-stage activity. According to Richard (1990), the great benefits of using brainstorming activities in teaching English are to activate students' thoughts to express their opinions, make students think quickly and logically, identify what they are going to learn,

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facilitate their learning, and increase their participation and interests in English lessons.

The effectiveness of brainstorming activities and how to use them as a useful tool to enhance the language teaching and learning has been explored in several empirical studies (e.g. Tin, 2016; Yen, 2017; Malkawi & Smadi, 2018; Rahmawati, 2019; Zarei & Feizollahi, 2019; Silalahi, 2020). It can be seen from the findings that brainstorming activities prove to be beneficial to enhance English learning of students at high schools or universities. However, there is a shortage of literature on the field of brainstorming activities related to young language learners who might possess differences in the characteristics and learning styles compared with older learners because they are still developing cognitively, linguistically, physically, and emotionally (Moon, 2005). Therefore, this study was conducted with a view to investigating English teachers' perceptions of using brainstorming activities in primary classes. To do that, the following questions need to be addressed:

i. What are EFL teachers' perceptions of brainstorming activities in teaching English to primary students?

ii. How are brainstorming activities used in primary English classes?

ii. What difficulties do teachers face when using brainstorming activities in primary English classes?

2. Literature review

2.1. Characteristics of young learners

Young learners known as those between the ages from three to twelve years old (Cameron, 2001; McKay, 2006; Nargis, 2017) possess characteristics that make them different from older learners. It is believed that young age is one of the factors that make children successful in their foreign language learning (Brumfit, 1994) because the brain at the early age is more adaptable before puberty than after, and children do not have more worries and responsibilities than other older learners. Despite the benefits of teaching language at young age, it is quite not easy for primary teachers who always need to be tolerant and creative to design interesting activities to stimulate students' interests and maintain their participation. In that case, it is advisable that teachers pay much attention to the characteristics of young learners in teaching. Furthermore, Scott and Ytreberg (2004) mentioned some typical features of young learners in their book entitled "Teaching English to children". Firstly, children's understanding comes through hands, eyes, and ears. They learn most effectively when experiencing themselves in the language. They also have short concentration span, so they quickly and easily get bored in the lesson. Additionally, children like to learn through playing because they still could not be aware of the learning process in which they are getting involved. One more interesting point is that children want to work in company with others to share their ideas as well as to learn from others. Finally, children hold a positive attitude and interest for learning if they are inspired from the beginning. Lightbrown and Spadd (2010) added that children tend to be eager and enthusiastic to participate in most activities in class. They want to share their ideas or suggest solutions, nevertheless, due to their low level of language proficiency, they could not express clearly what they want to share.

2.2. Definitions of brainstorming

Originally, the term "brainstorming" was introduced by Alex Osborn (1953) as a way of collecting ideas, thinking up solutions or new concepts of the same topics. Then, the term "brainstorming" has got a big concern in the midst of fields which entails more specific definitions of brainstorming given by a fruitful number of dictionaries and researchers. For instance, Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary (2005) defines that brainstorming is a meeting where a group of people trying to solve the problems by generating as many ideas as possible. Meanwhile, several researchers have widened the concept of brainstorming by adding the point that brainstorming can also be carried out by individuals or groups to gather ideas with the aim to find solutions to a problem (Wilson, 2013). After its appearance, the term "brainstorming" has been widely used in all fields, particularly in language teaching. In language classrooms, brainstorming can be generally considered as a process in which a teacher or students set out a topic and then students come up with ideas associated with the topic while the teacher (or the students) jot down the ideas (Gebhard, 2000). It can be concluded that brainstorming is an activity that can be employed by individuals or groups to call out as many ideas as possible based on the existing knowledge related to the topic.

2.3. The roles of brainstorming activities in language teaching

Brainstorming has been applied in all aspects and particularly in language teaching. Levine, Alexander, Wright, and Higgins (2016) claim that brainstorming plays an essential role in encouraging the participants to generate as many ideas as possible within a specific time period. Furthermore, it is believed that students are able to activate their background knowledge to come up with possible ideas during brainstorming section (Nugraha & Indihadi, 2019). In other words, brainstorming helps students bridge the gaps between what they have already known and what they are going to learn.

Adding to the benefits of brainstorming activities, Buzan (2013) states that these kinds of idea generation activities can be adapted and implemented in various situations and topics. Additionally, brainstorming activities seem very advantageous since they can begin instantly, move quickly and need little preparation and practice but bring unexpected ideas or solutions. In the same vein, Crawford *et al.* (2005) emphasize that brainstorming could also help "open students' minds", consequently, they will be able to come up with the ideas that they do not expect as possible or successful solutions.

In terms of skill lessons, brainstorming activities prove to be useful tools to teach four language skills including listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Taking speaking skill lessons for instance, Unin and Bearing (2016) mention brainstorming as a technique in which students are oriented to the topic, motivated to fill the gaps in communication by creating a series of responses, and encouraged to interact with others. Therefore, the students' participation will be increased, and their communicative competence will be fostered. He also suggests brainstorming activities using word lists, word mapping, and pictures are commonly employed in speaking tasks. As regards writing skills, it could be drawn from the empirical studies that brainstorming is probably the most effective of all the writing techniques because it helps language students think through their topics without having them judge what they think (Claxon, 2008). With

brainstorming activities, students simply write items up, one after another, without worrying about putting them in any special order. Besides, Hashempour, Rostampour, and Behjat (2015) suggest the best examples of brainstorming such as question and answer, listing and outlining are often employed as parts of pre-writing strategy.

In a word, brainstorming activities play a significant role in promoting students' English learning due to the fact that these activities not only draw students' attention to the topic but also arouse their interests in the lesson in a fun-active and interactive way. Simultaneously, brainstorming technique could ensure students' content understanding, thematic integration with real life as well as build up their confidence, and communication skills.

2.4. Difficulties in using brainstorming activities

Brainstorming activities are considered to be an effective strategy to enhance students' learning process; however, to some extent, there are several challenges of using this type of activities needing considering. The most typical problem faced by students in brainstorming activities is the block of ideas (Wilson, 2013). It could be explained by the lack of students' communication skills. Some students who have a relatively low level of language knowledge are less confident or not equipped with necessary social skills such as expressing ideas, negotiation, and cooperation for instance. Other aspects related to waiting time (Roy *et al.*, 1996), and repeated ideas (Wilson, 2013) may potentially create the obstacles in brainstorming process. Apart from this, Mohammad and Hussein (2013) pointed out that the lack of students' concentration during brainstorming session may be the common negative of the idea generation process.

In general, brainstorming activities may pose some disadvantages when in use; however, the advantages of applying them still dominate. Whether they can be employed effectively in the classroom depends on the teachers and students who know how to make use of the strengths and overcome the weaknesses.

2.5. Previous studies

There have been a number of studies related to brainstorming in language learning that have been conducted in the world. For instance, Ghabanchi (2014) conducts a study entitled "The Impact of Brainstorming of Reading Comprehension and Critical Thinking Ability of EFL Learners". The researcher employs an experimental design with 29 participants in a control group and 25 participants in an experimental one. The results from pre-test and post-test demonstrate that both critical thinking a reading comprehension ability of the participants are significant promoted by brainstorming activities. Additionally, the study on the effectiveness of using brainstorming activities in teaching grammar by Malkawi and Smadi (2018) has shed a light on the literature of brainstorming related to teaching and learning language knowledge. She chooses randomly all sixth-grade students of both sexes in four public schools in Jordan, then categorizes them into two groups with one to receive the treatment which is a method of brainstorming. The findings indicate that the experimental group witness substantial differences at the level of achievement test in English grammar. Regarding teaching writing skills, Rahmawati (2019) explores the effects of brainstorming techniques on the students' writing performance by conducting a study on 33 first-grade students of a public high school in Indonesia. The instruments

used were writing tests including pre-test to know the students' writing ability before being given the treatment and post-test to know the students' writing ability after treatment. The result of both tests revealed that after receiving a treatment, the students got higher achievements in writing skills. Turning to speaking skills, Ghaemi and Hassannejad (2015) investigate the relationship between brainstorming and role-play as the two common pre-speaking activities. The participants are 60 typical second-semester college students of a university in Iran divided into two class groups and given a treatment separately. The finding indicates that the students who implement brainstorming as their pre-speaking activity have a more outstanding performance in their speaking phrase than those who utilize role-play as their pre-speaking activity.

Vietnamese researchers are also eager to conduct studies to see how brainstorming activities impact on language teaching and learning in a particular context. For instance, Loi (2005) carries out a research on the sample of freshmen at a college in Vietnam to find out the impacts of brainstorming on improving the freshmen' performance in practicing English skills. The findings show the positive outlook towards brainstorming techniques. After that, Tin (2016) conducts an investigation into the use of brainstorming technique in teaching English in a lower secondary school in Vietnam. His study shares the same findings that brainstorming technique proves to be useful and favoured among teachers. Furthermore, Yen (2017) investigates the effects of brainstorming activities on teaching reading comprehension. The participants are students who were taking English courses at some language centres in Vietnam and are divided into a controlled group and an experimental group. The latter is designed to be trained brainstorming activities in reading lessons. The data analysis reveals that the experimental group outperforms the controlled group during the course. It is confirmed that brainstorming activities have positive influence on students' EFL reading comprehension.

In a word, brainstorming activities are examined to have positive impacts on enhancing English learning of students in high schools and higher education by plentiful studies both in Vietnam and in the world. However, it can be seen that there are quite few studies on related to using brainstorming activities in teaching English to young learners who might be quite different from older ones in terms of characteristics and learning styles. This reason motivates the researcher to conduct an investigation into how brainstorming activities and their practice are perceived by the English teachers at primary schools and what difficulties may come during brainstorming sessions in primary English classes in a city in Vietnam.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research sites and participants

The participants involved in the study were 50 English teachers from 10 primary schools in Hue City, a central city in Vietnam. The randomly selected teachers from these schools at least employed brainstorming activities once in their English classes, consequently, the factual and reliable sources of information could be provided. The students in these classes were from grades one to five (from 6 to 11 years old). The textbooks named *My phonics 1, My phonics 2, Tieng Anh 3, Tieng Anh 4 and Tieng Anh 5* published by the Ministry of Education and Training of Vietnam are being implemented in those classes. All of the students have been

learning English as a foreign language since grade one. Therefore, they may get familiar with activities in language lessons and be aware of their learning to some extent.

3.2. Data collection

With the aim at finding the answers to the two research questions, the research fully employed two instruments namely questionnaire and interview. The combination of these instruments was expected to generate valid and reliable data.

3.2.1. Questionnaire

In this research, 50 copies of the completed questionnaire were directly delivered to 50 English teachers at chosen primary schools to generally understand the teachers' perceptions and practice of brainstorming activities in teaching English at primary schools. The questionnaire includes 10 questions which were all in close-ended forms and employs the five-point scale options from 1 for strongly disagree to 5 for strongly agree so that the participants could indicate their choices easily. It was translated into Vietnamese in order that the participants could understand the questions thoroughly. The questionnaire consists of 54 items and was categorized into three clusters as follows:

Table 1. Categorization of the questions in the questionnaire

	Question	Content
Cluster 1	1, 7, 8	Primary English teachers' perceptions of brainstorming activities in teaching English
Cluster 2	2, 3, 4, 5, 6	Primary English teachers' perceptions of using brainstorming activities
Cluster 3	9, 10	Difficulties faced by primary English teachers when conducting brainstorming activities

After piloting the questionnaire with a group of five primary English teachers at a chosen primary school in Hue city, the researchers found that it was relatively clear, comprehensible, and easy for the participants to answer. Then, the questionnaire was delivered directly to 45 English teachers at the selected primary schools and all of the copies were collected. The teachers chosen to complete the questionnaires were asked for permission and well informed of the purpose of the study at the beginning.

3.2.2. Interview

After preliminary analysis of the questionnaires, 15 out of the English teachers who had completed the questionnaire were invited to participate in the interviews. The semi-structured interview following a format of eight written questions helps the researcher to gain more insight about the participants' practice of brainstorming activities to teach English at primary schools, and their suggested solutions to overcome difficulties that might appear. The language of the interviews is Vietnamese so that teachers could understand fully the questions and express their answers easily and exactly. Both tape-recording and note-taking were used to keep track of the data.

3.3. Data analysis

The data collected throughout the research process was analyzed both in quantitative and qualitative approaches. The data obtained from the questionnaire were calculated and analyzed with the help of SPSS Statistics 20.0 for data quantitative analysis. Then, the data were presented and discussed via charts. Meanwhile, the researchers transcribed the responses from the interviews and processed the phrases and sentences which expressed the participants' opinions and ideas relevant to the research questions. These phrases and sentences were coded in themes which include primary English teachers' perceptions of brainstorming activities, their use, and difficulties in implementing these activities. Afterwards, all the data collected from questionnaire and interview were compared, contrasted, and discussed together to answer the three research questions.

4. Findings

4.1. Teachers' perceptions of brainstorming activities in teaching English

The first cluster in the questionnaire was analyzed by the Descriptive Statistic Test with a view to investigating the primary English teachers' perceptions of the importance of brainstorming activities in teaching English. The result of the test revealed the mean score is more than 3.00 (M=3.42), which means that the primary English teachers agreed on the vital role of brainstorming activities in teaching English. The result is also in line with the findings of the previous studies conducted by Malkawi and Smadi (2018) and Silalahi (2020). To gain a deeper insight into how teachers and students can benefit from brainstorming activities, the data were accordingly categorized and demonstrated in the two following charts.
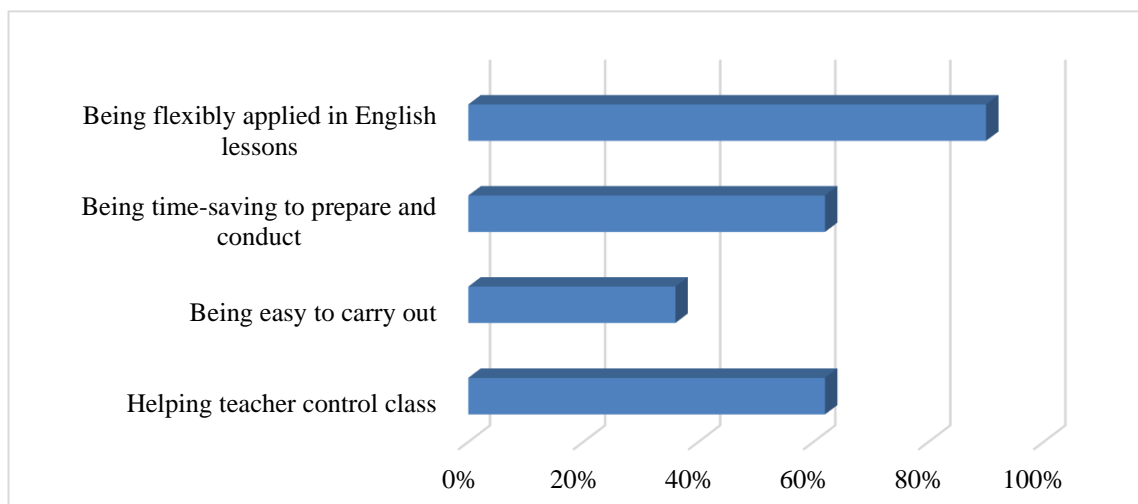

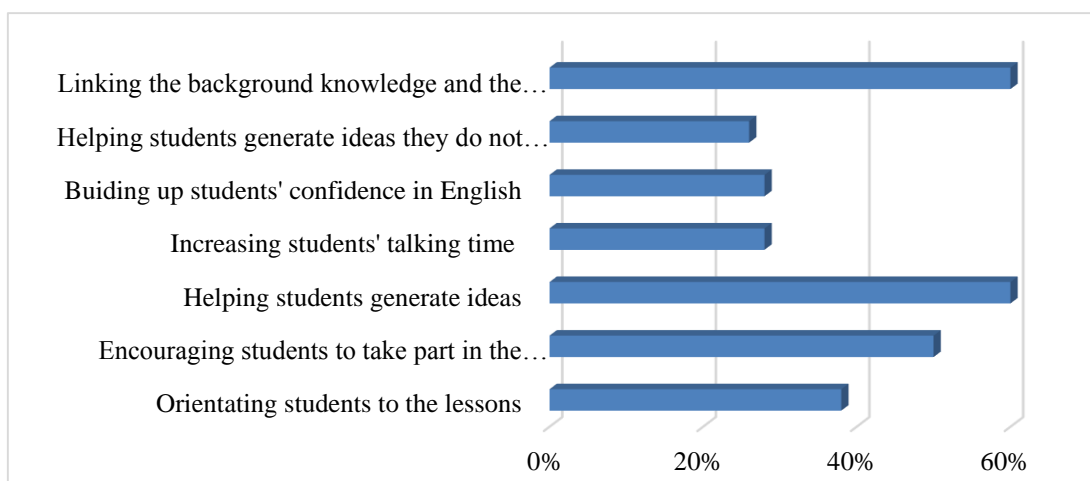Figure 1. Teachers' agreement with the benefits of brainstorming activities in English teaching

Figure 2. Teachers' agreement of the benefits of brainstorming activities in English learning

As shown in Figure 1, the largest proportion of respondents (90%) assessed that brainstorming activities were adaptable in a wide range of English lessons. Furthermore, 62% of the respondents agreed with the view that the teachers could save a lot of time to prepare and conduct brainstorming activities in comparison with other activities. Meanwhile, the same percentage of teachers (62%) agreed and strongly agreed that these activities facilitated teachers to control the class. Some of the teachers (30%) pointed out the easy application of brainstorming activities in teaching English. This finding was in line with Buzan's (2013) study, which found that brainstorming activities can be applied in any level of education and under any circumstance.

As illustrated in Figure 2, a remarkable proportion of surveyed participants (60%) strongly agreed and agreed that brainstorming activities encouraged students to come up with as many ideas as possible in a certain period of time. It is consistent with the claim by Claxon (2008) that brainstorming activities were useful at aiming to generate a long list of various responses without judging individual ideas. Similarly, 60% of the participants are in favour of brainstorming activities since these activities could connect what students have already known with what they are going to learn. In the same vein, an interviewed teacher claimed:

"As far as I'm concerned, brainstorming activities are important for teaching English. These activities provide learners with opportunities activate their knowledge and review what they have already learned." (Interviewee 06)

Additionally, the teachers expressed the idea that brainstorming activities could orientate students to the lesson topic. Apart from this, the same percentage of the participants (28%) were interested in employing brainstorming activities due to the fact that these activities could provide students with opportunities to practice speaking English and contribute to their confidence in communication in English. Also, 26% of the teachers suggested that students get involved in English lessons and be able to come up with out-of-box ideas – the ideas they have never thought

of before thanks to brainstorming activities. It can be inferred that brainstorming activities are not only beneficial to teachers but also to students in English classrooms.

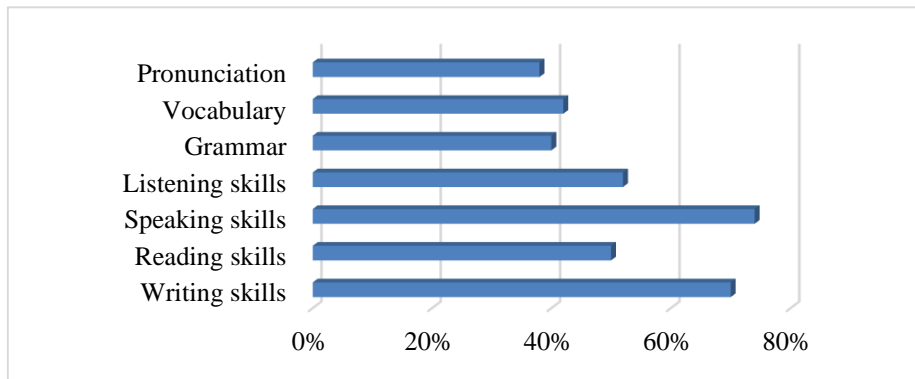### 4.2. Primary English teachers' use of brainstorming activities in teaching English

Figure 3. Agreement of teachers' perception of using brainstorming activities in teaching English knowledge and skills

As shown in Figure 3, brainstorming activities could be applied in all kinds of English lessons. The majority of the teachers (74% and 70%) favored employing brainstorming activities in speaking and writing skill lessons. Listening and reading skills, vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation were thought to be less popular among the teachers, which accounted for 52%, 50%, 42%, 40%, and 38% respectively. During brainstorming section, students are encouraged to generate ideas, fill in the information gaps in communication by creating a series of responses and interact with their peers; as a result, their communicative competence could be fruitfully enhanced. As for writing, most of the interviewed teachers expressed the idea that they often used brainstorming as a warm-up or pre-stage activity to teach writing to young learners.

"I think brainstorming is a very important step for students be for they start to write. As you know, students at primary schools are quite young, and are not fully aware of what they should write about. Thank to brainstorming activities, students can come up with the ideas, make the outline, and avoid getting off the point while writing." (Interviewee 11)

This finding reiterated those achieved by the studies of Unin and Bearing (2016) and Hashempour, Rostampour & Behjat (2015). They confirmed that brainstorming section helps students to come up with ideas and organize their existing knowledge; therefore, they become oriented to the topic and well prepared for the next stages of speaking and writing lessons.
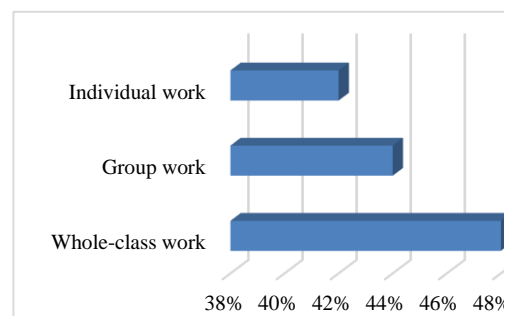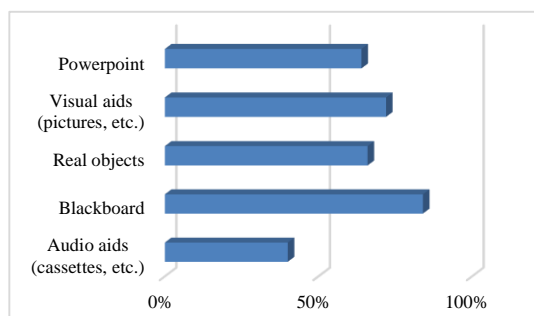
Figure 4. Teachers' agreement about the teaching aids used in brainstorming activities

Figure 5. Teachers' agreement about the forms of classroom management used in brainstorming activities

As described in Figure 4, blackboard is considered to be the most common tool that the teachers use to carry out brainstorming activities (accounting for 84%). The interview findings are similar to the results of the questionnaire in that most teachers were in favour of blackboard in brainstorming sessions as it is always available in class, convenient, and time-saving for teachers to prepare and apply flexibly in some brainstorming activities. Nevertheless, it seems to be a very traditional and familiar teaching tool to students. To get away from standing at the board waiting for students to come up with ideas, the teachers agreed that visual aids such as pictures, posters or flashcards (72%), real objects (66%) and powerpoint (64%) could also be used to conduct brainstorming activities. Some interviewed teachers explained:

"I usually use pictures to elicit my students about the topic and then ask them to generate ideas from the topic, or sometimes I give them sets of pictures for them to arrange to create the possible situation, or come up with the solutions or suggestions to the situation or problem. Thanks to the colorful, attractive and illustrative images, students can imagine and understand the topic or content easily; as a result, they can get involved in brainstorming sessions effectively." (Interviewee 06)

"For some lessons, I can make use of anything around my classroom. For example, when teaching the lesson about school things, I often point at the real objects, or even let students touch or experience with those objects to help them easily think of the things and generate ideas about the topic. However, it's not always easy to bring the real objects to my class. In that case, I often use pictures or powerpoint to facilitate my students' brainstorming session." (Interviewee 09)

It can be seen that it seems easier and more interesting for children to think of the topics by looking at the pictures or posters, experiencing with the real objects or playing colorful and lively games designed on powerpoint. The use of such activities is also approved by Imaniah and Nargis (2017) as young learners are keen on activities which include visual aids, and engage their senses. Thus, there is a demand for teachers to make use of objects, visuals, and pictures, and to create opportunities for students to use all of the school's surroundings.

As for classroom management, the whole class brainstorming occupied the highest rate (48%) compared with group brainstorming (44%). Apart from that, individual accounts for the least percentage (42%). In the interviews, most of the teachers admitted that they often let the whole class do brainstorming because of time pressure. Additionally, due to the students' incomplete development of knowledge and skills to work on their own to generate ideas, they tend to find it easy to do brainstorming in groups or in the whole class, and they could learners from others. The current finding is in line with the suggestion made by Jain (2010) that brainstorming in groups or in the whole class can be very useful as it creates opportunities for students to help those getting stuck and to make their contribution to the final solutions.
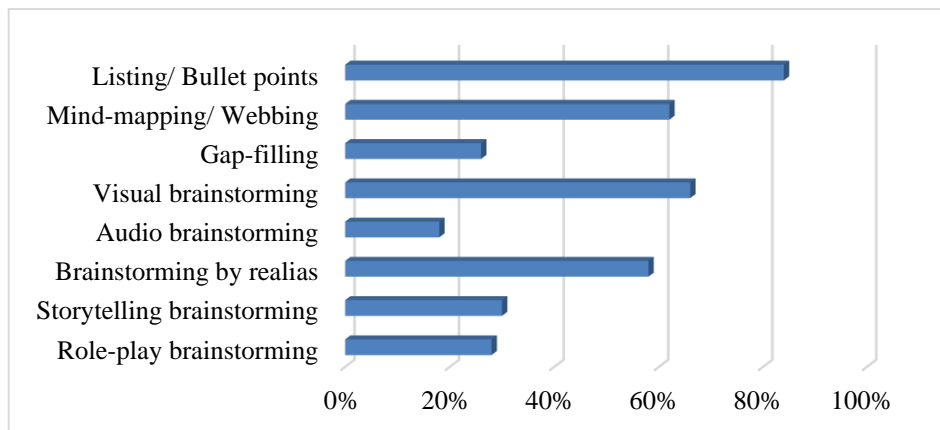
Figure 5. Teachers' agreement of some common brainstorming activities used in English lessons

In terms of brainstorming activities, it is apparently shown that the dominant percentage of teachers set a high valuation of listing that they often used in their English lessons (84%). As mentioned by the interviewed teachers, listing not only creates the atmosphere, orients students to the lesson but also prepares them for the later stages of the lesson. Also, teachers seem not spend too much time preparing as well as instructing students to do listing since it is quite familiar and becomes a routine among students.

Furthermore, more than half of the participants agreed that visual brainstorming, mind-mapping, and brainstorming through real objects were popular in teaching English at the primary level, which accounted for 66%, 62%, and 58% respectively. This result is in accordance with that achieved by Unin and Bearing (2016) who indicated these brainstorming tended to be simple to prepare, easy and time-saving to be carried out, and flexible to be applied in any English lessons of young learners. Besides, some teachers explained that thanks to the colorful, attractive, and illustrative images and shapes, students can imagine the topic or content. Therefore, they can easily get involved in brainstorming section. Interestingly, 30% and 28% of the teachers favored storytelling and role play in brainstorming section. Although storytelling can be seen as a brainstorming activity which encourages students to make up their own ideas and bring their own experiences to the story, some interviewed teachers admitted that they did not conduct this activity regularly because of the students' low language proficiency and of the limited time. The least popular brainstorming activities are gap-filling and audio brainstorming with the figures of 26% and 18% respectively.

To sum up, there is a wide range of brainstorming activities that the teachers could use in teaching English to primary students. Nevertheless, to make a decision on what brainstorming activities to use and how to employ them effectively to enhance students' learning, every teacher is required to consider many factors such as the level of students, their needs, as well as their characteristics.

4.3. Difficulties faced by primary English teachers when using brainstorming activities

Most of the teachers in this study agreed on the concern that the time limitation prevented them from conducting brainstorming activities successfully. Seven out of ten interviewed teachers shared that it took them a huge amount of time to prepare the new, creative brainstorming activities and then implement them successfully in English classrooms. Specifically, a teacher asserted:

"Some lessons require many activities and I have to give clear instructions, model the activities, check students' understanding or give extra support if my students get stuck. Within a period of 35 minutes, I am not be able to run thoroughly brainstorming which are new to students, and time-consuming to prepare and conduct." (Interviewee 01)

In addition to the lack of time, more than half of the teachers claimed that some English classes are at mixed levels which results in the obstacles in using brainstorming activities. Not all classes at primary schools are categorized in separated levels, therefore, there are always students at different levels in one class which makes the brainstorming not implemented effectively. The current finding might be consistent with the study by Wilson (2013) who explained that some students often waste their time writing up words that are familiar to them or others shout out the words which are too high level to be explained to the rest of the class. In the interview, a teacher shared:

"My biggest problem when applying brainstorming activities to my English teaching is the multilevel of the class. In such class, some students catch up the ideas and participate actively in some brainstorming activities while others do not understand the instructions, or are not able to think up the ideas or express them clearly in English. Therefore, it's quite hard for the teachers to design and implement the brainstorming activities that can engage all students in." (Interviewee 14)

Another difficulty faced by the teachers is the size of class. Half of the interviewees shared the opinion that the big size of the classes which often consisted of 40-45 pupils put pressure on the teachers to manage the students' participation and ensure the opportunity for them to share their ideas or catch up with their partners. Some good students took the opportunities to share their answers in group brainstorming, but others did not. The fact that there were many small groups during the brainstorming sessions makes the teacher not pay attention to and facilitate every student who gets stuck or is not willing to participate in the activities.

5. Conclusion and implications

This study was conducted with the aim to investigate the teachers' perceptions of using brainstorming activities in teaching English to primary students. The combination of questionnaire and interview was fully employed to collect the needed data for the research. All of the quantitative and qualitative data were accordingly discussed with reference to the literature to find the answers to the research questions.

As for the research question 1, most of the teachers recognized the important role of brainstorming activities in teaching English to young learners. Specifically, those activities were

thought to help students generate ideas, activate their background knowledge, increase their participation in the lesson as well as build up their confidence and communication skills.

Besides, the teachers' perceptions of using brainstorming activities to teach English at some primary schools was investigated to answer research question 2. The data analysis from the questionnaire and interview reported that brainstorming activities could be flexibly applied in any English lesson at any stage, especially, they proved to be more common and effective when being implemented at the pre-stage of speaking and writing lessons. Additionally, the majority of the teachers who participated in the questionnaire and the interview admitted that they often made use of the blackboard, powerpoint, visual aids, and other things around the school to facilitate the brainstorming activities. With regards to classroom management, the whole class and group brainstorming was favored among teachers due to the time pressure and the teachers' ability to manage the class easily during brainstorming sections. Additionally, listing, mind-mapping, visual brainstorming, and brainstorming with realia proved to be the most preferred brainstorming activities due to their simple preparation, time-saving procedure, and flexibility in any English lessons of young learners. Also, a few surveyed teachers agreed that brainstorming through storytelling is one of the effective brainstorming activities that could increase students' talking time, and break the routine in the class. Nonetheless, some interviewed teachers claimed that such activities seem suitable for older students, in grade 4 or 5 for instance as their background knowledge, their language proficiency and skills, to some extent, have been developed to make up a story rather than younger students.

Regarding research question 3, most interviewed teachers shared that the big size of class, mixed level of students and time pressure are common barriers that prevent teachers from implementing brainstorming activities successfully in their class. In other words, it is quite challenging for teachers to design and carry out appropriate brainstorming activities for up to 35 or 40 students at different levels and manage them effectively within 35-minute periods.

On the basis of the research findings, some pedagogical implications are recommended for applying brainstorming activities to English classes for young learners more efficiently. First, it can be seen that the teachers at primary schools hold posititive perceptions of brainstorming activities, and understand the benefits these activities could bring. Thus, the teachers are encouraged to make use of these activities as a warm-up or pre-stage activity to let students generate ideas, lead them to the topic, arouse their interests and engage their participation. Second, from the findings, blackboard, pictures, and powerpoint could be the most favoured aids to facilitate brainstorming activities, however, they sometimes cause boredom among students. As a result, it recommended that the teachers should design more creative and interesting brainstorming activities using these aids, and learn how to use other forms of teaching aids effectively to facilitate and refresh the brainstorming sessions. Third, listing, mind-mapping, visual brainstorming, and brainstorming with realia are thought to be popular among the teachers, so it always requires the teacher to employ and innovate these activities so as to encourage students to share ideas, and break the routine in class. The teachers are also advised to broaden their horizon about other types of brainstorming activities which are suitable for students' levels and characteristics and using them efficiently. Teachers could enhance their knowledge and improve their skills by reading more materials and updating the latest journals related to

brainstorming activities. Moreover, they can participate in workshops, seminars, and conferences focusing on brainstorming activities where teachers can exchange their teaching experiences and learn from experts and colleagues. Last, to overcome the difficulties in using brainstorming such as large multilevel classes and limited time, the teacher ought to design brainstorming activities which are time-saving, easy and convenient to carry out, but bring benefits to students. Besides, teachers can categorize students who are in the same level in one group so that everyone could work equally, feel less stressed, and be engaged in the activities. Teachers could also monitor students' participation easily and give help if the students get stuck.

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NHẬN THỨC CỦA GIÁO VIÊN VỀ VIỆC SỬ DỤNG CÁC HOẠT ĐỘNG ĐỘNG NÃO TRONG LỚP HỌC TIẾNG ANH TẠI MỘT SỐ TRƯỜNG TIỂU HỌC Ở THÀNH PHỐ HUẾ

Tóm tắt: Nghiên cứu này điều tra nhận thức và việc sử dụng các hoạt động động não trong lớp học tiếng Anh tại một số trường tiểu học ở thành phố Huế. Đối tượng nghiên cứu bao gồm 50 giáo viên tiếng Anh bậc tiểu học. Dữ liệu được thu thập từ bảng hỏi, phỏng vấn và quan sát lớp học đều được tổng hợp, phân tích và diễn giải về mặt định tính và định lượng. Kết quả nghiên cứu cho thấy hầu hết giáo viên tiếng Anh tiểu học có nhận thức tích cực đối với các hoạt động động não. Họ cho rằng một số hoạt động động não như liệt kê, sơ đồ tư duy và động não trực quan là những hoạt động thường được sử dụng trong việc giảng dạy tiếng Anh cho trẻ em ở các trường tiểu học. Bên cạnh đó, những khó khăn như thiếu thời gian, lớp học đông, trình độ học sinh chênh lệch, v.v… khiến giáo viên không thể tiến hành các hoạt động động não thành công. Từ kết quả của nghiên cứu, một số đề xuất được đưa ra với hy vọng giáo viên tiểu học sẽ sử dụng các hoạt động này trong việc dạy tiếng Anh cho trẻ em hiệu quả hơn.

Từ khoá: Hoạt động động não, trường tiểu học, giảng dạy tiếng Anh, trẻ em