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(IJEPC)**www.ijeipc.com**THE USE OF P-E-E-L TECHNIQUE AS A BRAINSTORMING
TOOL FOR SPEAKING: IS IT EFFECTIVE?**

Nur Hani Laily Ramli¹, Faizah Baharudin^{2*}, Syahidatul Akmar Safian³, Imran Danial Krish Abdullah⁴

¹ Centre of Foundation Studies, Universiti Teknologi Mara, Cawangan Selangor, Kampus Dengkil, Dengkil, Selangor, Malaysia

Email: nurha056@uitm.edu.my

² Centre of Foundation Studies, Universiti Teknologi Mara, Cawangan Selangor, Kampus Dengkil, Dengkil, Selangor, Malaysia

Email: faizah7806@uitm.edu.my

³ Universiti Kuala Lumpur, Royal College of Medicine Perak, Ipoh, Perak, Malaysia.

Email: syahidatulakmar@unikl.edu.my

⁴ Centre of Foundation Studies, Universiti Teknologi Mara, Cawangan Selangor, Kampus Dengkil, Dengkil, Selangor, Malaysia.

Email: krishnam@uitm.edu.my

* Corresponding Author

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**Abstract:**

Speaking is widely recognised as one of the most challenging skills for second language learners (ESL). Research has consistently shown that most ESL students struggle with speaking tasks in the classroom and during assessments. One of the primary reasons is due to their difficulties in generating ideas. While various strategies exist to address this issue, the P-E-E-L (Point-Elaboration-Example-Link) technique has proven to be one of the effective ways of facilitating idea generation, particularly in writing. However, its potential application in speaking remains underexplored. Therefore, this preliminary study aims to investigate the effectiveness of the P-E-E-L technique as a brainstorming tool for speaking rather than writing. A quantitative approach was adopted, involving 42 ESL pre-university students who shared their experiences using P-E-E-L for speaking tasks. The findings indicate that the technique significantly enhances students' ability to systematically generate and organise ideas for their speaking activities and assessments. Furthermore, ESL pre-university students expressed a strong willingness to recommend the P-E-E-L technique to be used for speaking despite its traditional association with writing. These findings offer valuable insights for ESL educators since they highlight the potential of P-E-E-L as one of the effective strategies that can be utilised to enhance students' speaking skills and overcome idea-generation challenges in the ESL classroom.

Keywords:

P-E-E-L Technique, Brainstorming Ideas, ESL Pre-University Students, Speaking Difficulties.

Introduction

Speaking is frequently regarded as one of the most cumbersome and challenging skills for learners of a second language. Numerous studies have consistently indicated that English as a Second Language (ESL) pre-university students commonly encounter challenges with speaking tasks in both classroom settings and formal assessments. While ESL instructors have consistently hinged on traditional methods of teaching English language speaking skills (Vasquez and Alejandra, 2024), modern techniques and strategies have also evolved and are applied to students in the contemporary language classroom. More creative techniques have been used to increase student interest and approaches to effective communication. In speaking classrooms, most speaking tasks require ESL students to prepare and organise their content to deliver the message effectively. This entails systematic and clear cognitive skills employed by these students in generating their ideas for the content of their tasks.

Speaking tasks require adequate and well-organised thoughts to ensure that students can present strong arguments. Without proper brainstorming and planning of ideas, students tend to produce poorly constructed communication of ideas for their speaking tasks. This is one of the primary reasons that contributes to the ESL learners' ability to communicate clearly and effectively (Amoah & Yeboah, 2021). As for the ESL pre-university students, most of the speaking tasks assigned require them to construct and synthesise various sources of information into a coherent delivery of the content in their various speaking activities. Among the conventional speaking tasks are impromptu speeches, group discussions, oral presentations, and debates. These activities often require students to go through multiple processes before being able to perform the task. While preparing themselves for these tasks, many face difficulties and challenges, and one of them is generating ideas effectively.

While various strategies exist to address issues in generating ideas, such as mind-mapping and brainstorming, the P-E-E-L, which stands for **point-evidence-explain-link**, a structured technique, has been proven to be one of the effective ways of facilitating idea generation, particularly in writing. In writing, the P-E-EL technique is often used by language educators to brainstorm ideas to produce a well-reasoned and easy-to-follow paragraph (Bramcote College, n.d). In a study conducted by McKnight (2019), the P-E-E-L technique can support students' ability to express themselves in a more structured way when learning language. Hence, this recent study seeks to determine whether the P-E-E-L technique can pose similar effects on students, particularly for speaking. Al-Samarraie and Hurmuzan (2023) mentioned that a well-reasoned point is crucial in speaking tasks as students are to respond to oral situations or topics in a structured and organised manner. Hence, to do so, P-E-E-L is deemed as one of the promising techniques to be utilised by students to generate ideas and present their ideas in a more organised and structured manner during speaking activities.

Effective idea generation is one of the speaking challenges that requires attention among researchers in language learning, as it can ensure success and increase motivation among

university students in oral assessments, group discussion, presentations, and other speaking activities.

Problem Statement

Speaking tasks demand adequate organisation of thoughts and effective idea generation to enable ESL students to communicate their content confidently and coherently. However, many ESL university students struggle with generating ideas, which often leads to poor communication performance. A finding from a study conducted by Abdullah, Netra, and Hassan (2024) revealed that undergraduate university students in Malaysia faced difficulty generating ideas during speaking activities, which resulted in students having a high level of anxiety during speaking activities. Not only that, but the observations among language educators at one of the foundation centres in Malaysia revealed a similar finding that most ESL pre-university students were struggling to generate ideas during a speaking assessment. Although these ESL pre-university students are exposed to strategies that can be considered helpful in assisting them to generate ideas, many are still struggling to generate and organise their ideas for the speaking assessment. Since the P-E-E-L technique is proven to be effective for brainstorming and organising ideas in writing, the results might be similar if the technique is used for speaking.

However, the study on the effectiveness of this technique for speaking is still relatively limited. Hence, this recent study, therefore, aims to investigate the perceptions of ESL pre-university students regarding the use of the P-E-E-L technique as a tool for brainstorming ideas in speaking activities and to determine the effectiveness of P-E-E-L techniques in generating ideas for speaking.

Literature Review

Challenges in Speaking

Speaking is often perceived as one of the most challenging skills for ESL students due to the need for real-time processing, immediate responses, and effective communication (Rios et al., 2024). As a result, this complexity can lead to reluctance in speaking, which may result in ineffective teaching and learning (Norseha Unin & Polin Bearing, 2016). According to Rios et al. (2024), real-time speaking requires learners to quickly generate and organise thoughts, select appropriate words, and adjust messages based on listener feedback, which is difficult for most ESL students. In addition, Faizah et al. (2023) state that anxiety about real-time speaking could hinder speaking among learners. This is due to the difficulties in speaking among students and the need to conquer both critical thinking and emotional intelligence to achieve fluency in speaking (Wang et al., 2024). Consequently, as stated by Rios et al. (2024), to generate quick responses, learners also faced difficulties managing vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and meaning simultaneously. Hence, addressing these difficulties is vital for supporting ESL learners' speaking skills. Wang et al. (2024) suggest strategies like brainstorming and mind-mapping activities to assist students with their speaking tasks. This is because, some researchers believe that by integrating brainstorming in ESL classrooms, it could enhance the language proficiency among students (Wang et al., 2024; Norseha Unin & Polin Bearing, 2016) especially students with low proficiency level.

Strategies for Improving Idea Generation

Speaking tasks such as impromptu speeches, discussions, and debates require students to go through multiple cognitive processes, often resulting in anxiety and poor performance (Wang et al., 2024; Norseha Unin & Polin Bearing, 2016). Cognitive load theory suggests that limited working memory capacity can impede students' ability to process and formulate responses under pressure (Al-Samarraie & Hurmuzan, 2018). Hence as suggested by Wang et al. (2024) and supported by Norseha Unin and Polin Bearing (2016); Al-Samarraie and Hurmuzan (2018), to improve idea generation, techniques like brainstorming and Think-Pair-Share could be integrated in language classroom to promote collaborative thinking as well as reduce anxiety among students. Brainstorming allows students to enhance speaking participation, confidence, and fluency by organising thoughts and promoting creative thinking (Al-Samarraie & Hurmuzan, 2018; Norseha Unin & Polin Bearing, 2016).

Brainstorming is a valuable strategy that not only supports quick thinking, fluency, and helps students organise their ideas but also serves as a medium to overcome speaking anxiety. It is one of the important processes involved in writing, as this technique helps with students' cognitive development (Flower & Hayes, 2014). Due to its ability to assist idea generation, brainstorming has recently played a significant role in enhancing other skills, too, such as speaking. Octarina et al. (2021) reported that brainstorming effectively aids students in developing their speaking abilities, encouraging language educators to incorporate it into their teaching practices. Similarly, Sripradith (2019) found that brainstorming improved ESL students' pronunciation, grammatical accuracy, and overall fluency, while also helping them generate and discuss ideas related to assigned speaking topics. These findings suggest that brainstorming is a beneficial tool for promoting oral communication and should be widely adopted in language classrooms.

However, Oyelade et al. (2025) argue that the limitations of traditional techniques such as brainstorming often arise from ineffective implementation, which may lead to the generation of weak or underdeveloped ideas by students. Higher order thinking often contributes to better speech production and fluency in speaking (Wang et al, 2024). Since brainstorming is the first step to assist students in generating ideas for language activities, it might not enhance students' ability in critical thinking since students might not be able to evaluate and analyse the ideas critically (Hudson, 2012). However, Wang et al. (2024) suggested that with careful planning and effective planning of implementing brainstorming strategies in speaking classrooms, it can foster positive learning outcomes. Language educators should consider combining other methods or techniques, such as P-E-E-L, with brainstorming so that it can still be a great tool to foster creativity and critical thinking in idea generation (Chang & Li, 2025).

The P-E-E-L Technique for Brainstorming Activity

P-E-E-L is an acronym that stands for **Point, Evidence, Explanation, and Link**. This acronym is a structure that helps guide effective paragraph writing. The PEEL technique was initially developed to assist writing skills. In language learning, recently this technique has been adapted for speaking tasks, particularly where structure and clarity are essential, such as debates, discussions, and presentations.

According to Gerald and Joseph (2024), in writing, the P-E-E-L technique provides a framework to assist writers to brainstorm their ideas according to the four elements mentioned above. By following these elements, it helps writers to maintain their focus and guarantee that

every paragraph serves a distinct purpose within the paper's overall context. In language learning, the P-E-E-L technique is perceived as helpful in academic settings since it is well-structured and explains crucial elements in writing arguments (Murray & Moore, 2006, as cited in Gerald & Joseph, 2024). Due to its effectiveness, hence P-E-E-L technique is popular across disciplines because of its clear structure in organising arguments that helps students to brainstorm better (Savina & Djajanegara, 2022, as cited in Gerald & Joseph, 2024). Clear guidelines are also crucial as it can reduce anxiety in learning a language (Ramli et al., 2024). Below is a clear basic outline of P-E-E-L used for writing a paragraph:-

- **Point** – Start by clearly stating the main idea or argument
- **Evidence** – Provide examples of proof to support the main idea, ideally from reliable academic sources like textbooks, journals, or industry-specific materials.
- **Explanation** – Discuss how the evidence supports the point by analysing the implications.
- **Link** – Connect the point either to the main argument or smoothly transition to the next paragraph.

Due to its effectiveness and well-organised structure, in speaking, even though the study is still limited, some research indicates that by using P-E-E-L, speakers can maintain focus and prevent their arguments from becoming disorganised. Studies suggest that having a clear, assertive point allows for logical thought processes, which is crucial in timed or high-pressure speaking contexts (Bryan, 2016). According to Sripradith (2019), the technique offers flexibility and a comforting method for students to ease their anxiety when speaking. This technique enables students to break down complex ideas into manageable components, improving the logical flow of speech. As stated by Wang et al. (2024), there is significant correlation between Emotional Intelligence and fluency. As students gain more control of their speaking by using this technique, it is evident that breakdown of speech into clear point reduces hesitation in speaking (Wang et al., 2024) and enhances the smooth progression of ideas during speaking tasks (Rios et al., 2024; Norseha Unin & Polin Bearing, 2016). Additionally, according to the University of Staffordshire (2025), this technique fosters coherence by helping students effectively link their ideas with evidence and explanations, ensuring that their arguments remain clear and on-topic.

Therefore, based on these positive findings from previous studies, the P-E-E-L technique has demonstrated significant potential for enhancing fluency, coherence, and critical thinking for both writing and speaking ability. When implementing this technique in speaking tasks, especially to brainstorm ideas, it provides speakers with a clear framework for organising and presenting their ideas, which can lead to more coherent and persuasive speech. Ergo, it is worth conducting further research on the effectiveness of the P-E-E-L technique to determine its effectiveness in generating ideas for speaking.

Methodology

This preliminary study was conducted to determine the perceptions of the ESL pre-university students of the P-E-E-L technique to brainstorm ideas for speaking activities in language classrooms. A quantitative study was employed since it is believed to be more efficient and enables the researchers to gather data faster than other research methods (Rudestam & Newton, 2014).

The respondents for this preliminary study were 42 ESL pre-university students at one of the centers of foundation studies in Selangor, non-randomly selected for this study. The researchers determined the participants' selection criteria, which are: 1) they were second-semester students and enrolled in an English course offered by the center, and 2) they had been exposed to the PEEL technique to brainstorm ideas during speaking activities.

An adapted questionnaire from Gutierrez (2014) was used to evaluate the students' view of the PEEL technique as a brainstorming tool. This adapted questionnaire was also used in a study conducted by Singh et al. (2021) to evaluate the effectiveness of a card game as a teaching tool in mathematics lessons in Malaysia. To fit the purpose of the study, several modifications were made, which involved:

- 1) a demographic profile section was added to the questionnaire to get general information about the respondents.
- 2) the use of only three out of five criteria from the questionnaire, which are: 1) Goals and Objectives; b) Components; and c) Usefulness.

The other two criteria of the questionnaire, namely: Design and Playability and playfulness, are considered as irrelevant since this study is focusing on ESL pre-university learners' perceptions of the P-E-E-L technique as a learning tool rather than to evaluate the game as a learning tool. For Goals and Objectives, this section consists of four items, whereas for Components and Usefulness, they consist of three and four items, respectively. Altogether, there are 11 items for the ESL pre-university learners to respond to.

The Cronbach Alpha test was conducted once the data gathered to measure the internal consistency for each item of the adapted questionnaire. The overall value of the Cronbach's alpha is 0.96, which suggests that the items in each questionnaire construct have a high degree of reliability.

A preliminary study was conducted to determine its reliability before conducting the actual study. Online Google forms were used to distribute the questionnaire, and the researchers verbally explained the confidentiality of the responses, and information about the respondents was not disclosed to any third parties or during the data analysis process before the respondents began to answer the questionnaire. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 29 was used to analyse the data collected from the questionnaire. The descriptive analysis was utilised to obtain each research question's frequency as well as mean score. A 5-point Likert scale was used to indicate the ESL foundation learners' perceptions of the P-E-E-L technique into high, moderate, and low categories. The data rated as "1=Strongly Disagree and 2=Disagree" with mean scores of 1.00 to 2.33, were considered a low rate of the ESL foundation students' perceptions of the P-E-E-L technique used as a brainstorming tool for speaking. The data rated "3=neutral, and 4=agree," with the mean scores of 2.34 to 3.66, were considered moderate. Finally, data rated as "5=strongly agree" with mean scores of 3.67 to 5.00 were categorised as a high rate.

Results and Discussion

This study aims to determine the ESL pre-university students' perceptions of the use of the P-E-E-L technique for brainstorming ideas for speaking activities. The following sections report and discuss the findings from the questionnaire.

The Demographic Profile of the Respondents

This preliminary study has a sample size of 42 participants, and 69% (n=29) of them are male, while females make up 31% (n=13) of the sample. All of them are ESL pre-university students who are in the second semester studying Engineering, and all of them utilise the P-E-E-L technique during speaking activities. Subsequently, 42.86%, precisely 18 participants, have been utilising the technique for speaking since they were in their first semester.

ESL Pre-University Students' Perceptions of the Goals and Objectives of the P-E-E-L Technique

Section B of the questionnaire was used to investigate the ESL pre-university students' perspectives of the goals and objectives of the P-E-E-L technique to brainstorm their ideas for speaking activities.

Table 1: The Goals and Objectives of P-E-E-L Technique

No.	Items	N	Mean
1.	The purpose and rationale of the P-E-E-L technique are clear to help brainstorming for ideas.	42	4.5
2.	The goals and objectives of the P-E-E-L technique are clear as a guide to brainstorming ideas.	42	4.55
3.	The P-E-E-L technique enhanced my skills in brainstorming ideas for speaking.	42	4.31
4.	The P-E-E-L technique helps me to recall and apply my skills to brainstorm ideas for speaking.	42	4.40
Total			4.44

Based on Table 1, the analysis of respondents' responses reveals a strong positive perception of the goals and objectives of the P-E-E-L technique. The highest mean score (M=4.55) indicates that respondents found the goals and objectives of the P-E-E-L technique clear and effective as a guide during the brainstorming process. Additionally, the purpose and rationale behind the technique were also perceived as clear (M=4.5), reinforcing its role in supporting idea generation. The technique was also credited with enhancing brainstorming skills for speaking (M=4.31) and aiding in the recall and application of skills related to brainstorming for speaking ideas (M=4.40). Overall, a total mean score of 4.44 reflects a moderate level of agreement for the P-E-E-L technique's goals and objectives in the context of brainstorming for speaking tasks.

ESL Pre-University Students' Perceptions of the Components of the P-E-E-L Technique

Section C of the questionnaire was used to investigate the ESL pre-university students' perspectives on the appropriateness of components of the P-E-E-L components to be used for brainstorming ideas for speaking activities.

Table 2: The Components of the P-E-E-L Technique

No.	Items	N	Mean
5.	The components of P-E-E-L are clear, concise, and easily understood.	42	4.5
2.	The P-E-E-L technique emphasised important elements when brainstorming ideas for speaking.	42	4.52
3.	The elements of P-E-E-L are appropriate and sufficient for speaking	42	4.48
Total		42	4.5

Table 2 shows a moderate level of the components of the P-E-E-L technique among the respondents. The overall mean score of 4.5 reflects strong agreement on the clarity, relevance, and effectiveness of the P-E-E-L components. Specifically, respondents agreed that the components of the technique are clear, concise, and easily understood (M=4.5). Furthermore, the technique was noted to emphasise the essential elements to use when brainstorming ideas for speaking (M=4.52), and the elements were viewed as appropriate and sufficient for this purpose (M=4.48).

ESL Pre-University Students' Perceptions of the Usefulness of the P-E-E-L Technique for Brainstorming Ideas

Section D of the questionnaire was used to understand the ESL pre-university students' perspectives on the usefulness of the P-E-E-L technique to brainstorm ideas for speaking activities.

Table 3: The Usefulness of the P-E-E-L Technique for Brainstorming Ideas

No.	Items	N	Mean
8.	The P-E-E-L technique is effective in guiding me to brainstorm ideas for speaking	42	4.33
9.	The P-E-E-L technique encouraged me to think critically in brainstorming ideas for speaking.	42	4.26
10.	Using the P-E-E-L technique helps me to improve my speaking ability during speaking assessment.	42	4.21
11.	I would recommend this P-E-E-L technique to be used in speaking classrooms as a guideline to brainstorm for ideas.	42	4.48
Total		42	4.32

Table 3 illustrates that the P-E-E-L technique is perceived as moderately useful for brainstorming ideas in speaking activities. With a total mean score of 4.32, respondents generally agreed on the effectiveness of the P-E-E-L technique to generate ideas. The technique was seen as effective in guiding idea generation (M=4.33) and in encouraging critical thinking during the brainstorming process (M=4.26). Additionally, respondents acknowledged that the

use of the P-E-E-L technique contributed to the improvement of their speaking performance during assessments ($M=4.21$). Meanwhile, a high mean score of 4.48 for item 11 indicates strong support to recommend the technique to be used in speaking classrooms. These findings suggest that the P-E-E-L technique plays a valuable role in enhancing students' ability to brainstorm their ideas for speaking activities.

Discussion

The findings of this preliminary study revealed that the ESL pre-university students' overall level of perception of the use of the P-E-E-L technique to brainstorm ideas for speaking was moderate in assisting them with their speaking activities. For the first element investigated in this study regarding the goals and objectives of the P-E-E-L technique in general (Section B), the highest response was recorded for item two, "The goals and objectives of the P-E-E-L technique are clear as a guide to brainstorming ideas" ($M=4.55$). This demonstrates that the majority of ESL pre-university students found the technique to be a clear and helpful guide for generating ideas during brainstorming.

Botirali Kizi and Miralimovna (2024) similarly noted that the P-E-E-L technique supports students in focusing their thoughts, enabling them to organise ideas more coherently and effectively. Similar opinion provided by Bryan (2016) that P-E-E-L's clear structure allows students to have a clear and assertive point, which allows students to logically process their ideas, especially in timed or high-pressure speaking contexts.

However, even though the ESL pre-university students agreed that the goals and objectives of the generic scoring rubric are clear, the item "The P-E-E-L technique enhanced my skills in brainstorming ideas for speaking" recorded the lowest mean ($M=4.31$) for Section B. This finding holds some truth, as the P-E-E-L technique primarily functions as a structural guide for organising ideas during brainstorming, rather than enhancing students' ability to expand their ideas in speaking tasks. Gibbons (2018) supports this view, noting that the overuse of P-E-E-L may limit students' voice and personal expression during the speaking activities.

Therefore, students with limited vocabulary and students who are struggling with generating ideas (Norseha Unin & Polin Bearing, 2016; Kormos, 2006), the findings concurred that the P-E-E-L technique can be used as a valuable tool for guiding them in preparing ideas for speaking activities. However, for advanced-level students, language educators should consider integrating alternative or complementary strategies alongside the P-E-E-L to further support the development of idea expansion during speaking activities.

Section C of the questionnaire, for the components of the P-E-E-L technique, revealed that the item "The P-E-E-L technique emphasised important elements when brainstorming ideas for speaking" recorded the highest mean ($M=4.52$). This shows that ESL pre-university learners moderately agreed that point, elaboration, example, and link are important elements when brainstorming ideas for speaking. This could be because they (42.86%) are well exposed to the elements and structure of speaking during speaking lessons, and how to use the technique effectively. This finding is supported by research by Gerald and Mukuka Joseph (2024) that P-E-E-L is helpful, as it structures the important elements to support and explain arguments, whether verbally or in written form, in an academic setting. A similar opinion provided by Sripradith (2019) is that P-E-E-L is a technique that can ease students' anxiety in speaking, as it has the essential elements to focus on when brainstorming ideas for speaking.

Although for item “The elements of P-E-E-L are appropriate and sufficient for brainstorming ideas for speaking” (M=4.48) indicated that ESL pre-university students moderately believed that the elements are appropriate and sufficient, language educators are encouraged to evaluate the applicability of the P-E-E-L technique concerning the specific objectives and goals of their lessons. Careful consideration should be given to the intended learning outcomes and expectations of the activity when incorporating the P-E-E-L technique, particularly in brainstorming tasks for speaking activities (Gerald & Mukuka Joseph, 2024). To further enhance speaking skills among ESL students, ESL educators should consistently guide and encourage students to synthesise their points after the brainstorming session using the P-E-E-L structure, as they may otherwise struggle with articulating their ideas effectively during verbal delivery. As Chang and Li (2025) proposed, when used effectively, brainstorming can enhance creativity and critical thinking in idea generation, even though Oyelade et al. (2025) described this technique as somewhat outdated.

For the final section of the questionnaire which is Section D on the usefulness of the P-E-E-L technique for brainstorming ideas for speaking tasks, the respondents moderately agreed to item “I would recommend this P-E-E-L technique to be used in speaking classrooms as a guideline to brainstorm for ideas” (M=4.48) despite only M=3.21 respondents believed that “Using the P-E-E-L technique helps me to improve my speaking ability during speaking assessment”. This finding is like the finding by a study by Gerald & Mukuka Joseph (2024) that, in academic settings, the P-E-E-L model is frequently preferred because it emphasises on essential elements of making a clear argument. University of Staffordshire (2025) echoed a similar idea that this technique helps students to effectively link their ideas for speaking tasks that ensuring the arguments presented are clear and remain on topic. Findings from this study indicate that although the P-E-E-L technique is moderately endorsed by ESL pre-university students, it primarily functions as a tool for organising and structuring ideas, rather than significantly enhancing speaking proficiency. This may be attributed to the limitations of the technique itself, as it effectively supports idea organisation but often falls short in helping students critically connect the P-E-E-L elements (Badger & White, 2000, as cited in Gerald & Mukuka Joseph, 2024). Consequently, while ESL pre-university students may appreciate the technique’s clarity and structure, they do not necessarily perceive it as a means to develop their speaking skills.

Conclusion

This preliminary study found that ESL pre-university students perceive the P-E-E-L technique as a moderately useful tool for organising ideas during speaking tasks. While students appreciated its clear structure for guiding brainstorming, the P-E-E-L technique might not possess strong and highly significant improvements in the students’ speaking ability during assessment. These findings suggest that P-E-E-L is more effective as a planning and organisational strategy rather than as a tool for critical enhancement of speaking ability. As such, language educators are encouraged to integrate complementary techniques that support idea development and critical thinking alongside P-E-E-L to maximise its effectiveness in speaking instruction. Nevertheless, the literature also suggests that the technique may face challenges, particularly in time-constrained or informal speaking contexts. Future research might consider exploring how the P-E-E-L technique can be further adapted to different speaking environments and how effective it is as compared to other brainstorming strategies that are used as a tool to improve speaking ability during assessment.

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