# A PHOTOVOICE INVESTIGATION OF JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL: ENGLISH STUDENTS' LEARNING EXPERIENCE IN INDONESIA

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**Abstract:** Photovoice is a learning method that uses photography to document and explore the experiences, perspectives, and concerns of individuals or communities. It is a participatory approach to research, which involves giving cameras to participants and allowing them to take photographs that reflect their lives and their views on specific issues. This study aims to investigate a photovoice of Junior High School English student's experience in Indonesia. The research method is used a qualitative research method. Qualitative research is a type of research that is exploratory and aims to understand and interpret social phenomena in their natural settings. The researchers used the photovoice method to explore the experiences and perspectives of junior high school students studying English in Indonesia. In this study, the researchers used thematic analysis to identify and analyse the patterns and themes that emerged from the data. Overall, the study used a qualitative approach to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences and perspectives of junior high school students studying English in Indonesia. The result from this study is: theme I is about classroom environment, theme II: students-teacher interactions, theme III: peer collaboration and support, theme IV: language anxiety and confidence.

**Keywords:** English, education, photovoice, students' learning experience

## INTRODUCTION

Student's Learning Experience is a broad and multidimensional concept that refers to the various experiences that a student encounters during their learning journey. These experiences can include academic, social, emotional, and cultural aspects of learning.

The educational environment, teaching strategies, curriculum, student-teacher interactions, social and cultural contexts, as well as the individual characteristics of the student, such as motivation, prior knowledge, and learning style, can all have an impact on how well a student

learns. A happy learning environment can boost students' academic performance, motivate them more, improve their social and emotional wellbeing, and get them ready for lifetime learning. Negative learning experiences, on the other hand, might result in academic disengagement, subpar academic achievement, and unfavourable attitudes toward learning.

Based on some expert in student's learning experience like Senge, Senge emphasizes the importance of creating a learning organization where students can continuously learn, grow, and innovate. In his book "The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization" (Senge, 1990), Senge argues that learning is a lifelong process, and the goal of education should be to create a culture of learning that empowers students to become creative problem-solvers and lifelong learners. According to Dewey, He believed that learning should be experiential and based on the students' interests and needs. In his book "Experience and Education" (Dewey, 1938), and argues that learning should be integrated with real-life experiences and should focus on problem-solving and critical thinking skills.

Students' learning experiences are shaped by their interactions with the environment and their reflections on those interactions (Kolb, 1984). He proposed that learning is a cyclical process that involves four stages: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. In this model, learning occurs when individuals engage in a process of reflective observation and active experimentation that builds on their concrete experiences and leads to the development of new knowledge and skills. Furthermore, according to Ladson-Billings (1995) has highlighted the need to recognize and value the cultural knowledge and experiences that students bring to the classroom, and to use this knowledge to enhance their learning experiences.

Learning methods in learning experience are the various techniques and procedures used to investigate and understand the complex and multidimensional nature of the learning experience. These methods are used to collect and analyse data from various sources, including students, teachers, and other stakeholders involved in the learning process.

According to Wang and Burris (1997), Photovoice is a participatory research method that can be used to explore and understand the experiences of marginalized individuals or groups, including those in the context of education and learning. In this method, participants are given cameras and are asked to take photographs that reflect their experiences and perspectives on a particular issue or topic, such as their learning experience. The use of photovoice in education has several advantages. Firstly, it allows participants to visually communicate their experiences and perspectives, which can be particularly valuable for marginalized or underrepresented groups who may have limited opportunities to express their views. Secondly, the use of photography can encourage participants to reflect on their experiences and to identify areas for improvement or change. Thirdly, the participatory and collaborative nature of the photovoice method can help to empower participants and to ensure that their voices and perspectives are represented in the research process. Some of the topics that have been explored using the photovoice method in education include student engagement, teacher professional development, and school climate.

In photovoice, participants are typically marginalized or vulnerable individuals or communities who may have limited opportunities to express their perspectives and experiences. Through the use of photography, they can visually communicate their thoughts, feelings, and experiences in a powerful and accessible way.

The purpose of "A Photovoice Investigation of Junior High School: English Students' Learning Experience in Indonesia" is to explore and understand the learning experience of junior high school students in Indonesia who are learning English as a second language. The study aims

to use the photovoice method to empower the students to visually communicate their experiences and perspectives on learning English and to identify the key factors that shape their learning experience. The study seeks to address the gap in the literature on the learning experience of junior high school students in Indonesia and to provide insights into the strategies and practices that can enhance the quality of English language learning for this group of learners. The study also aims to highlight the voices and perspectives of marginalized students who may have limited opportunities to express their views and experiences.

## METHODOLOGY

The research method used in the study titled "A Photovoice Investigation of Junior High School: English Students' Learning Experience in Indonesia" is a qualitative research method. Qualitative research is a type of research that is exploratory and aims to understand and interpret social phenomena in their natural settings. Qualitative according to Denzin & Lincoln (1994), is a method which focuses on involving and interpretive, naturalist approach to its subject matter. In qualitative method, the descriptive method will be used because the researcher gave emergence through observing activities and interviewing (Crosswell, 2009).

The researcher used the photovoice method to explore the experiences and perspectives of junior high school students studying English in Indonesia. The photovoice method is a participatory research method that enables participants to visually communicate their experiences and perspectives through photography. The researchers then conducted qualitative data analysis of the photographs and accompanying discussions to gain insight into the students' learning experiences. The Participant in this research is students at Junior High School.  Qualitative data analysis involves analysing data in a subjective manner to identify patterns and themes that emerge from the data. In this study, the researchers used thematic analysis to identify and analyse the patterns and themes that emerged from the data. Overall, the study used a qualitative approach to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences and perspectives of junior high school students studying English in Indonesia.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

**Findings**
**Theme 1: Classroom Environment**

The photographs captured by the students provide a glimpse into the diverse classroom environments in which English learning takes place in Junior High School. Students' images portray well-equipped classrooms with comfortable seating arrangements, and vibrant learning materials. These photographs showcase an environment that is conducive to active engagement and interactive learning. In such classrooms, students have access to a range of resources, including textbooks, audiovisual materials, and digital tools, which support their language development.

The students said that he feels learning something is about where we learning is. She said that when he was in the silent situation, or in the interest place, he felt comfort. She stated, "when I am in this class, I feel comfort and quiet. This classroom situation makes me feel want to grow better day by day, even though I think there are so many weaknesses here".

However, contrasting images also emerged, depicting classrooms with limited resources, overcrowded conditions, and outdated materials. These photographs shed light on the challenges faced by students in some educational settings. Limited access to learning resources, such as textbooks and supplementary materials, can hinder students' progress and limit their exposure to authentic language use. Additionally, overcrowded classrooms can create difficulties in

maintaining a conducive learning atmosphere, as students may struggle to receive individual attention and participate actively in class activities.

The varying classroom environments captured through the photographs highlight the need for equitable access to resources and improved infrastructure in English classrooms across Indonesia. Schools that lack adequate facilities and resources may benefit from targeted support and investments to create a more conducive learning environment. This includes initiatives such as providing additional teaching materials, upgrading technological infrastructure, and reducing class sizes to enhance student-teacher interaction and engagement.

Moreover, the photographs bring attention to the significance of classroom aesthetics in creating a positive learning environment. Students' images often showcase visually appealing classrooms, with colourful displays, student artwork, and inspirational quotes. Such visual elements contribute to a welcoming atmosphere that can motivate students and create a sense of ownership in their learning space. Schools could explore opportunities to enhance classroom aesthetics, fostering a more engaging and inspiring environment for English learning.

The photographs captured reveal a range of classroom environments in English learning. While some classrooms offer modern resources and a stimulating atmosphere, others face challenges related to limited resources and overcrowding. Recognizing the importance of equitable access to resources and conducive learning environments, policymakers, school administrators, and teachers can work together to improve classroom infrastructure, provide necessary materials, and create visually appealing spaces. By addressing these aspects, we can enhance the English learning experience for students across Indonesia and foster a more inclusive and supportive educational environment.



Figure 1. 'Grow' –Lili.

**Theme 2: Teacher-Student Interactions**

The photographs captured by the students in this theme revolve around the relationships between English teachers and students. These images provide a glimpse into the dynamics and quality of interactions within the classroom setting.

Several photographs depict teachers who are actively engaged with their students, fostering a positive and supportive learning environment. These teachers are shown smiling, interacting, and actively participating in discussions. The students in these images appear comfortable and confident, suggesting that the teachers' approachability and encouragement have a positive impact on their English learning experiences. The photographs highlight the importance of a teacher's role in creating a safe and inclusive space where students feel valued and empowered to express themselves in English.

"I give this image because it reminds me when I write it when I am learning English. I feel so fun and enjoy. I love my teacher because she always appreciates what I have done with my assignments. I want to be her in the future."

However, the photographs not just convey such positive interactions. It's also reveal instances of distant and disengaged teachers, where the students' body language and expressions

appear disinterested or disengaged. These photographs prompt discussions about the potential impact of such interactions on students' motivation, self-esteem, and overall learning experience. It raises questions about the need for more supportive and interactive teaching methods that cater to diverse learning styles and promote active student participation.

Additionally, the photographs capture moments of one-on-one interactions between teachers and students. Images show teachers providing individual guidance, clarifying doubts, and offering personalized feedback. These interactions are seen as valuable opportunities for students to receive personalized attention and support in their English language development. Conversely, other photographs depict situations where individual attention is lacking or limited, possibly indicating the need for improved teacher-student ratios and resources to enhance individualized support.

The photographs also convey the importance of effective communication and understanding between teachers and students. Some images show teachers using visual aids, gestures, and non-verbal cues to facilitate comprehension and make English learning more accessible. These approaches are seen as valuable tools to bridge language barriers and create an inclusive classroom environment.
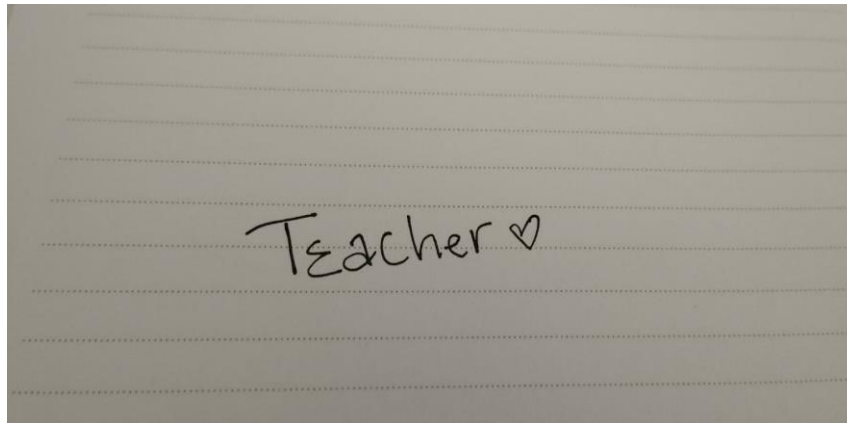


Figure 2. 'Appreciating' –Jojo.

**Theme 3: Peer Collaboration and Support**

The photographs captured by the students reveal the significance of peer collaboration and support in the English learning experience. images portray students working together, exchanging ideas, and actively participating in group activities. These photographs showcase a sense of camaraderie and collective learning, where students support and assist each other in their language development journey.

In photographs, students are seen engaged in group discussions, brainstorming ideas, and collaboratively solving language-related tasks. These images depict an environment where students feel comfortable sharing their thoughts, asking questions, and seeking help from their peers. The power of peer collaboration is evident in these photographs, as students learn not only from their teachers but also from their classmates, fostering a cooperative and inclusive learning atmosphere.

"I take this photo because my teacher instructs us to make something by using English and it should be colourful. My team and I are so confused. But my friend gives the solution to make something different but it will be good. So, that is our project to make a *'hiasan dinding'*.

Moreover, the photographs also capture instances where students engage in collaborative projects, such as group presentations or creative assignments. These images highlight the benefits of collaborative learning, including the opportunity to develop teamwork skills, enhance

communication abilities, and learn from diverse perspectives. Through collaborative projects, students can combine their individual strengths, support each other's weaknesses, and collectively produce high-quality work.

However, alongside the positive images, there are also photographs that reveal challenges and gaps in peer collaboration. Some students shared pictures where exclusion, competition, or cliques were evident, indicating the presence of social dynamics that hindered collaboration. These images prompt discussions about the importance of fostering inclusive environments where all students feel welcomed, respected, and supported.

To address these challenges and promote peer collaboration, educators and schools can implement various strategies. Encouraging teamwork through structured group activities, assigning projects that require cooperation, and fostering a supportive classroom culture can all contribute to a more inclusive and collaborative learning environment. Additionally, providing guidance on effective communication, conflict resolution, and active listening skills can empower students to engage meaningfully in collaborative tasks.

Figure 3. 'colourful' –Nayla.

## Theme 4: Language Anxiety and Confidence

The photographs captured by the students offer insights into the experiences of language anxiety and self-confidence in English learning. In some images, students are seen confidently participating in classroom activities, presentations, and discussions. These photographs showcase students who embrace opportunities to use the English language, demonstrating their proficiency and displaying a sense of self-assurance. Such images reflect a positive learning environment that nurtures students' confidence in their language abilities.

Conversely, other photographs reveal feelings of nervousness, fear, and hesitancy among students when engaging in English language tasks. These images portray students who may experience language anxiety, which can hinder their willingness to actively participate in class or express themselves in English. Language anxiety can be influenced by factors such as fear of making mistakes, perceived judgment from peers or teachers, and lack of self-confidence in language proficiency.

"It's the first time we are in the class. All of us cannot speak English as well. We are so scare and anxiety. But when our teacher come and speak English. We don't know what she talks. So, we just quiet and listening to her without understand anything. But, at the end, our teacher know that we cannot or even do not know English. She begins to teach us slowly and patiently. She always appreciates us and that thing make us feel worth and confidence. We do not know before if English is so fun. We thank to our teacher that change our sight in English.

Understanding and addressing language anxiety is crucial to create a supportive and inclusive English learning environment. Educators can adopt strategies to alleviate anxiety, such as implementing a supportive feedback system that focuses on effort and improvement rather than

solely on correct answers. Providing opportunities for low-stakes speaking activities, creating a non-judgmental atmosphere, and integrating language games and engaging activities can also help reduce anxiety levels among students.

Furthermore, it is essential for educators to acknowledge and celebrate students' achievements and progress, reinforcing their self-confidence in English learning. Encouraging students to set realistic goals and providing regular feedback that recognizes their growth can boost their self-esteem and motivate them to actively participate in language-related tasks.

In addition to classroom interventions, involving parents and caregivers in the language learning process can have a positive impact on students' language confidence. Educators can organize workshops or information sessions to educate parents about the language learning journey and provide guidance on how they can support their children's language development at home. Creating a supportive network involving teachers, students, and parents can enhance students' language confidence and create a more holistic English learning experience.


Figure 4. 'Teacher' –Alvin.

**Discussions**

The photovoice analysis conducted on the learning experiences of English students in junior high schools in Indonesia has revealed several significant themes: Classroom Environment, Teacher-Student Interactions, Peer Collaboration and Support, and Language Anxiety and Confidence. These themes offer a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and successes that students encounter in their English education journey. Through this discussion, we will delve deeper into each theme and explore their implications for improving English language learning in the Indonesian educational system.

The first theme, Classroom Environment, showcases the stark contrast between well-equipped classrooms with modern technology, comfortable seating arrangements, and engaging learning materials, and those with inadequate facilities, overcrowded classrooms, and limited access to resources. The photographs vividly portray the impact of the physical environment on students' learning experiences. A positive and conducive classroom environment plays a crucial role in facilitating effective learning. It is essential for educational policymakers and school

administrators to recognize the significance of providing well-equipped classrooms and adequate resources to enhance English language instruction.

The second theme, Teacher-Student Interactions, emphasizes the importance of fostering positive relationships between teachers and students. The photographs reveal the pivotal role of engaged and supportive teachers who create a positive learning environment. Approachable, patient, and encouraging teachers have a significant impact on students' motivation and willingness to participate actively in English language learning. Conversely, the images also highlight instances of distant and disengaged teachers, suggesting a lack of interaction and support. This theme underscores the need for teacher professional development programs that focus on effective communication, instructional strategies, and creating positive teacher-student relationships.

Peer Collaboration and Support, the third theme, underscores the role of peer interactions in English language learning. The photographs demonstrate the power of collaboration, as students are seen working together, exchanging ideas, and helping each other during group activities. Such collaborative learning experiences promote a sense of camaraderie, foster a supportive learning environment, and enhance language acquisition. However, the images also indicate instances of competition, exclusion, and a lack of cooperation among peers. To address these challenges, educators should encourage collaborative learning strategies, promote inclusive group dynamics, and foster a supportive peer culture that enhances English language proficiency for all students.

The final theme, Language Anxiety and Confidence, focuses on the emotional aspect of English language learning. The photographs reveal both confident and enthusiastic students actively participating in classroom activities, as well as individuals who experience feelings of nervousness, fear, and hesitancy. Language anxiety can hinder students' progress and impede their willingness to engage in English language learning. Educators must create a safe and supportive learning environment that addresses students' anxieties and builds their confidence. Implementing strategies such as fostering a non-judgmental atmosphere, incorporating positive reinforcement, and providing opportunities for authentic language use can help alleviate language anxiety and promote self-confidence in English language acquisition.

The implications derived from these themes provide valuable insights for improving English language learning in junior high schools in Indonesia. By considering the findings of this photovoice analysis, educational policymakers, school administrators, and teachers can implement targeted interventions. These may include providing resources for classroom improvement, organizing teacher training programs focused on fostering positive teacher-student interactions, facilitating collaborative learning experiences, and implementing strategies to alleviate language anxiety and enhance student confidence.

Additionally, the photovoice methodology employed in this study empowered students to voice their experiences and perspectives actively. Incorporating student voices and perspectives in educational decision-making processes can lead to more student-centred approaches to English language education. Students' active participation in shaping their learning experiences enhances their sense of ownership and motivation, ultimately contributing to more effective language learning outcomes.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the photovoice analysis of English students' learning experiences in junior high schools in Indonesia has shed light on significant themes: Classroom Environment, Teacher-Student Interactions, Peer Collaboration and Support, and Language Anxiety and Confidence. These themes provide valuable insights into the challenges and successes in English language

learning. By leveraging these insights, educational stakeholders can implement targeted strategies and interventions to create a conducive learning environment, foster positive teacher-student interactions, promote collaborative learning experiences, and address language anxiety. The ultimate goal is to enhance English language learning outcomes for students in junior high schools, paving the way for a more inclusive, supportive, and effective English language education system in Indonesia.

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