PHOTOVOICE IN EFL ESSAY WRITING: STUDENT TEACHERS' EXPERIENCE

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Abstract: Although research regarding writing for English as a foreign language has been much discussed and reported, little empirical evidence addresses photovoice, which documents the student teachers' learning experience on essay writing in the Asian context. To fill this void, this article reports on a case study investigating the student teachers' learning experience on essay writing using photovoice. The research findings indicate that integrating photovoice in EFL writing instruction positively influenced student teachers' self-awareness, motivation, and reflective learning habits. Student teachers reported increased engagement in the writing process, improved self-evaluation and peer evaluation skills, and a greater sense of agency in addressing writing challenges, ultimately leading to enhanced writing proficiency and confidence. This study reveals the positive impact of photovoice in EFL writing instruction for Asian student teachers, enhancing self-awareness, motivation, and reflective learning habits and improving writing proficiency and confidence.

Keywords: *photovoice, EFL writing, student teachers, reflective learning, and writing proficiency*

INTRODUCTION

In critical qualitative studies, photovoice, or the usage of digital photography, has been investigated to record both respondents' and students' personal experiences. For instance, qualitative researchers investigate photovoice to gather qualitative data by requesting participants to report their livelihoods using digital photography. (Balansag, 2020; Call-Cummings, Hauber-Özer, Byers, & Mancuso, 2019; Dicicco, 2014; Mulder & Dull, 2014). Furthermore, photovoice has been explored to capture students' in-class experiences from an educational perspective (Ferdiansyah, Widodo, & Elyas, 2020). Photovoice supports students by providing an opportunity to increase participation and assist students in developing compelling and reflective thinking (Karimi, Chalak, & Tabrizi, 2018). Therefore, acknowledging students' agency and identity in digital photography methodology can motivate teachers and students.

Photovoice is a powerful method used in language learning to enhance engagement and reflection among learners. In a study by Drajati et al. (2020), photovoice was utilised to allow students to express their perspectives on education through storytelling with self-selected digital photographs. Furthermore, Karimi et al. (2018) investigated the impact of photovoice on the levels of reflection manifested in EFL students' narratives. The study's findings revealed that photovoice encouraged reflection among Iranian EFL students and fostered positive attitudes toward learning through active participation. Moreover, photovoice, especially when integrated with the Facebook interface, enhances language competency among non-native pre-service English teachers, as demonstrated in a study by Rubrico et al. (2014). Overall, these studies highlight the valuable role of photovoice in language learning, promoting affective engagement, reflective practices, and positive learning attitudes among learners.

In the context of tertiary education, Ferdiansyah et al. (2020) explored that using photovoice as a pedagogical tool benefits second-year undergraduate students by enhancing their engagement in the writing process, fostering reflective thinking, and developing critical and creative thinking skills, ultimately providing a valuable and enjoyable learning experience. Furthermore, Villacañas de Castro (2017) reported that the student teachers realised photovoice provided them with a meaningful

educational experience. Therefore, their experience can be helpful for them as a guiding light for their future teaching. In addition, Graziano (2011) discovered that photovoice enabled pre-service English teachers to ruminate on effective language teaching and learning strategies through the use of photovoice. Informed by this empirical evidence, the researcher would like to report how second-semester student teachers of English language education majors participated in various writing stages on learning to write essays and recorded their emotional experience through photovoice as a learning platform. Moreover, there were still fewer empirical studies on photovoice that document the student's learning experience on writing, particularly in the Asian context (e.g., non-English speaking countries).

RESEARCH METHOD

This study investigates a case study examining how second-semester students teachers of English language education major in an Indonesian State Islamic Institute utilised photovoice to record their practice in learning to write. These student teachers did an essay writing course in which a text-based pedagogy was adopted. Improving student teachers' writing skills was the aim of the course. In this case, the student teachers were required to express their skill to write several pieces of writing with various genres that they had learned in the semester, such as argument essay, agree disagree essay, advantage disadvantage essay, and problem solution essay. In this course, 16 students (5 males and 11 females) engaged in the text-based writing lesson. They ranged from 18 to 19 years old. This study adopts a text-based writing framework by Mickan (2017). The text-based writing framework consists of students' observation, comprehension, response, analysis, and composition of the texts. Later, this framework was transformed into the pre-writing, while-writing, and post-writing stages.

In the pre-writing stage, students first saw a sample of the essay text. They learned about communicative goals, text structure, and lexico-grammatical features. They planned their writing in response to the text using the teacher's writing prompt. To assist individuals in visualising their ideas, they could employ graphic organisers like fishbone diagrams. They considered their reflections on the teacher's given self- and peer-assessment forms as they developed the thoughts into a whole paragraph. After going through a series of writing exercises, they revised the paragraph and handed it to their lecturer for final assessment.
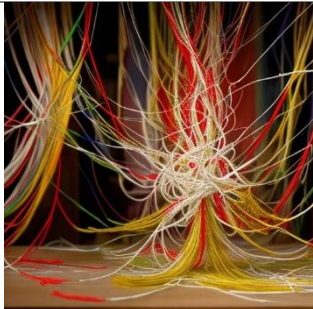
In this writing course, student teachers used photovoice as a pedagogical platform to create texts in accordance with the paradigm proposed by Koltz et al. (2010). They were required to compose 150-word photovoice texts that addressed the photo's context, their motivations for taking it, and their emotional responses to the writing process. The study chose six photovoice texts from three student teachers (Putri, Abdul, and Fitri) who routinely submitted their work through the e-learning platform blog. The selected photovoice adhered to the organisational structure of photovoice reflected the learning experiences of the student teachers and displayed originality.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION
Writing orientation

The author described the various essay genres that would be covered over the course of the semester. Student teachers were introduced to text-based pedagogy. They started with brainstorming, clustering, and writing the concept of their writing. The student teachers were instructed to complete and turn in five main portfolio entries: a first draft, a self-assessment, a peer assessment, a revised document, and a photovoice. While written assignments were handed to the teachers, students used blogs to post photos regarding the essays that served as reflective journals. Following is Putri's photovoice.

Table 1. Photovoice of a Student Teacher During a Writing Orientation Session

This photo was taken at my home when I saw my mother sewing my father's clothes. I saw the tangled thread.	Context
The picture was a representation of my state of mind at the time during the essay writing class. My thoughts were jumbled together like a messy thread. When I was assigned an essay that debates the pros and cons of a certain view, I felt the same way.	Reasons
I had yet to learn how to begin an essay. It was challenging to find the words to express them. Moreover, it was difficult to untangle the thoughts in my head and figure out where to begin writing. As soon as I noticed my friend was able to complete the essay swiftly, I started to get anxious. Since I couldn't formulate a coherent defence on either side, I was left feeling completely bewildered. I was curious as to whether or not my buddies were having a similar experience. Despite questioning my friends and thinking about it, I was concerned about if my language and concepts are powerful and engaging enough. I had not finished either. But I had to force myself to complete it because time was running out, and finally I eventually finished it on time. To improve my English writing skills, I believe I need to learn more about writing. However, after the class, I discovered that I wasn't the only one who felt this way.	Emotion

Inspired by this photovoice, Putri used a picture of tangled threads to talk about how she felt at the start of the writing unit. When she had been asked about her journey, she made the analogy of tangling threads. When she first started, she was depressed and found it hard to decide coherently on each side of the essay, leading to confusion in selecting which idea to pursue. This emotional turmoil and indecision influenced her physiological state, as anxiety can arise from various factors, including fear of failure, self-doubt, and pressure to perform (Ahmed, 2019). The combination of her depressive state and anxiety-inducing factors impacted her ability to approach the essay with clarity and focus.

Nonetheless, she attempted to inspire herself to keep digging for the solution. She had a problem in her cognitive state as she wanted her work to be done perfectly. She was afraid that her writing was not strong and not good enough. Two concrete implications of this student teacher's perspective for writing instruction in EFL classrooms exist. To begin with, teachers can use photovoice to gain insight into students' perspectives on the writing process. So the teachers can help the students with writer's block. Second, teachers can use photovoice to try out new and effective pedagogical interventions and activities.

Pre-writing stage
The goal of this reading-based pre-writing activity is to expose students to a variety of genres. The selections were taken from Abdul. Student teachers interpreted the text and then examined its structure

and content to determine its meaning and purpose. Then, they were presented with an idea-generating writing prompt. They can draw a fishbone diagram if they're having trouble visualising their draft. This is the photovoice Abdul wrote in the classroom.

Table 2. Photovoice of a Student Teacher During a Pre-Writing Stage

This photo was taken on the terrace of my house. I like raising village chickens. My father and I feed and care for the village chickens every day.	Context
Raising village chickens is my hobby. Most people eat broiler chickens that have been chemically injected because they are cheaper and grow fast. They also like to eat village chicken, which is healthier than broiler chickens. But only some people like to raise village chickens.	Reasons
This picture showed how I felt when I was in my third meeting to write an essay. I reflected, "Nurture your passion for writing, and watch it grow into a beautiful masterpiece". It takes time, discipline, and hard work to become the best writer. I enjoy learning to write like a chick that will develop into a healthy and ready-to-eat chicken. It turns out that a fishbone diagram is a good way to organise these ideas so that you don't get lost when you're writing. The village chicks taught me to be patient in order to get healthy chickens. We should be patient and picky about what we eat if we want to eat healthy chicken. If we want to become the best writers, the strategy is to train ourselves by practising writing with a suitable trainer.	Emotion

Above, you can see a photovoice example in which Abdul uses chicks analogy to talk about how he felt after the third meeting of his intensive writing practice. He mentioned that he would grow to enjoy writing with time. Additionally, finding pleasure in writing can be achieved by seeking feedback and engaging in regular writing practice (Rohmah & Muslim, 2021). In his photovoice, the student teacher participant has taken up a fishbone diagram as a means of facilitating his brainstorming. Abdul may find it easier to develop concepts that could be expanded upon in his writing with the help of this visual scaffold. Teacher strategies for dealing with writer's block during the pre-writing stages (such as listing, clustering, pooling ideas, free writing, or the journalist's questions) can be informed by this photovoice.

Paragraph development

In a task on paragraph development, student teachers began to develop their ideas by composing a whole paragraph from the pre-writing work. They were asked to write a specified number of words on the topic of their choice. During this meeting, the teacher helped the student teachers build their paragraphs by asking several questions and discussing their ideas. This photovoice documentation provides evidence of Fitri's engagement with the writing task.

Table 3. Photovoice of a Student Teacher During a Paragraph Development
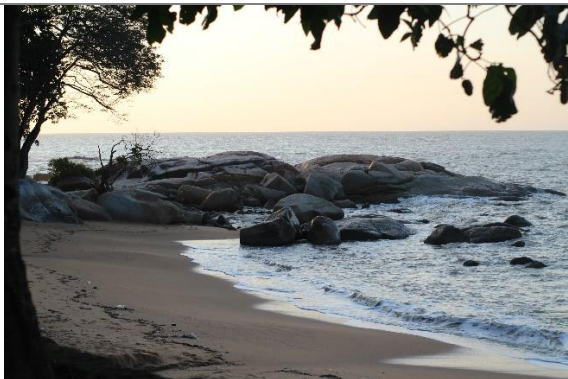

When I got lost on the road in Pontianak, I took this picture. I was at a crossroads and needed to decide which way to go. I finally made the right choice.	Context
I have no idea which way to turn to get back home. If I took the wrong path, then I would get lost or find my way home.	Reasons
Developing essay paragraphs could be tricky because of the need for both self-evaluation and peer evaluation from my friend. When I was writing an essay, I always felt fear that I would use the wrong words because of my lack of vocabulary. I was also afraid that my friend could not make sense of what I had written since it lacked coherence and cohesion. I was feeling fear of their criticism. I have high hopes that everybody who reads what I write will find it simple and easy to comprehend. I think that hard work will lead to good results; as a result, I had to keep working hard to formulate coherent paragraphs.	Emotion

The essay discusses Fitri's writing struggles, comparing herself to getting lost at a crossroads in Pontianak. She faced challenges with self-evaluation and seeking feedback from peers. The fear of using inadequate vocabulary and difficulty achieving coherence and cohesion troubled her. Additionally, she was anxious about facing criticism. Her determination to overcome obstacles through hard work and persistence remains the driving force behind her pursuit of becoming a skilled and confident writer, as supported by a study that found that higher levels of writing self-efficacy were positively correlated with better writing performance among Iraqi EFL undergraduate students (Sabti, Md Rashid, Nimehchisalem, & Darmi, 2019). Teachers must assume various roles to support students in their writing endeavours, as students often grapple with issues like fear of criticism, limited vocabulary, and lack of organisation. Utilising photovoice as a tool can offer valuable empirical data to help teachers devise practical strategies for improving students' lexical proficiency and overall writing skills. Dokchandra (2018) emphasises the importance of the process writing approach in teaching students to write. To address the lack of organisation, teachers can discuss using transition signals to improve coherence and cohesion in students' writings while encouraging vocabulary expansion through reading, word exercises, and context-based learning activities to solve the lack of vocabulary.

Self-evaluation and peer evaluation

Implementing self-evaluation and peer evaluation activities for student teachers fosters reflection, helping them identify areas of proficiency and improvement in their writing methodologies. Reflective writing facilitates critical evaluation of their work over time, while peer evaluation promotes mutual learning and knowledge acquisition among student teachers, contributing to developing their learning autonomy. Following is Putri's photovoice.

Table 4. Photovoice of Self-Evaluation and Peer Evaluation

This photograph was taken while I was on vacation at Pasir Panjang Beach. I took trips to the beach so that I could enjoy some time alone.	Context
I wanted to get rid of the tiredness in my head that came from all the stresses of life. I wondered if it was possible for me to overcome the problems in this life on my own; I found it challenging to comprehend the current problems. I thought travelling and seeking advice from a trusted friend. It appeared to solve my life's issues.	Reasons
I believed that when a friend corrects my mistakes, I would feel better because the problem must be viewed from a different angle in order to be solved. It also motivated me to work harder and refine my writing. When my friend read my writing, he could identify its weaknesses. I felt gratitude and eagerness to learn from corrections and suggestions. I also helped a friend with his writing corrections, though it was difficult for me to identify the errors. It seemed complicated to judge someone's work, so I needed to be more patient so I could give my friend the best opinion I could. Exchanging and reviewing writings were highly beneficial in identifying weaknesses that I needed to be aware of.	Emotion

Putri reflected on the value of self- and peer-evaluation in this photovoice by using the metaphor of a beach. Through self-reflection and soliciting guidance from peers, she adeptly addressed writing difficulties, resulting in increased motivation and a strong desire for personal growth. Integrating self-evaluation and peer evaluation practices contributed to developing a reflective learning environment, thus facilitating a more profound comprehension of an individual's writing proficiencies. Teachers in the field of writing are advised to support the ongoing self-evaluation and evaluation by peers actively, thus

allowing students to engage with all phases of their writing development. This approach fosters a sense of appreciation and introspection over their advancement in writing skills. Therefore, reflective practice significantly benefits teachers by enhancing problem-solving, improving teaching practices, fostering knowledge sharing, and facilitating professional development, while also playing a crucial role in the growth and advancement of student teachers' learning (Derinalp, 2022).

Teacher's feedback

After self-correction and receiving feedback from their peers, the students submitted their completed writing work to the teacher. The feedback supplied by the teacher was crucial in fostering the student's growth in writing, as it offered them an alternative viewpoint on their work, enabling them to discern areas in need of refinement and opportunities for linguistic advancement. In addition, the teacher assumed the role of an editor and proofreader, guaranteeing that the students' written work went through a process of refinement before its submission. Following is Fitri's photovoice.

Table 5. Photovoice of Teacher's Feedback

This picture was taken while I was having meatballs with my friends.	Context
When I was tired from college assignments, thinking made me hungry because it was tiring. I invited my friends to eat meatballs with spicy beef soup. When it was raining, meatballs tasted so good that they made you feel warm and refreshed.	Reasons
When my teacher gave me feedback on my writing, it was like getting meatballs when I was hungry and cold. Errors in grammar, vocabulary, and thought organisation would be much easier to spot. I think that success can't happen by itself. We need other people to wake us up to see things from a different angle. Arrogant people can't accept ideas from others since they think they're righteous. It can have an effect on someone's success. I admire my teacher for making written corrections and comments. The teacher's feedback boosted my confidence and motivation for the next task.	Emotion

The photovoice presentation provided a visual representation of Fitri's discomfort with the writing assignment while also emphasising the significant impact of teacher comments. Fitri appreciated that the feedback provided by teachers had afforded her additional opportunity to critically evaluate and better her academic output, hence resulting in an augmentation of her linguistic proficiency. Furthermore, the individual acquired fresh insights from the received critique, which can be effectively utilised in forthcoming writing endeavours. In essay-writing classrooms, students receive feedback from their peers and teachers, cultivating a sense of drive and active involvement. The utilisation of a collaborative

approach in the process of reviewing, editing, and proofreading aids in the enhancement of students' writing skills, fostering their development into more skilled and motivated writers. Birjandi and Tamjid (2012) advocated that self-assessment, peer assessment and teacher assessment positively influenced writing performance and were more effective than teacher assessment alone.

Post writing

During the post-writing stage, student teachers were encouraged to refine and polish their final drafts for potential publication. This process typically occurs at the end of the semester and involves a thorough review of the teacher's feedback, with subsequent incorporation of relevant suggestions. Critical aspects of refinement included improving clarity and coherence and ensuring a logical progression of ideas through suitable transitional phrases. A rigorous edit and proofreading phase were also undertaken to eliminate grammatical or spelling errors. The reexamination of valuable integration of feedback from peers and teachers further enhanced the overall quality of the writing, resulting in a polished and impactful final piece ready for potential publication. Following is Abdul's photovoice.

Table 6. Photovoice of Post Writing

I took a picture of a rainbow.	Context
When people look at the rainbow, they will feel amazed. The various colour, such as red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet, makes everybody feels the positive vibe and energy that bring happiness. After the tremendous rain, the rainbow will appear. Every rainbow shows that every struggle and hard work will give good results.	Reasons
The post-writing stage felt like seeing a beautiful rainbow after a big storm. I felt happy when I wrote, but when I checked my first draft, I felt confused and unsure. My ideas didn't connect, and my sentences could have been smoother, like the colours of a rainbow. I struggled to find the right words, and my vocabulary seemed limited. Also, grammar mistakes made my writing could have been better. However, I learned that practice made things better, like how a rainbow formed slowly after rain. As I revised and edited my writing, it started to get better and more beautiful, just like a complete rainbow. I realised that my writing could be outstanding with practice, and it gave me hope and motivation to improve even more.	Emotion

Abdul effectively conveyed his emotional state through the utilisation of photovoice. Writing brought him joy, similar to the awe-inspiring experience of observing a rainbow's diverse hues. Initially, his work appeared disjointed, like the colours after a storm. Overcoming language and grammar challenges through practice, his writing transformed into a vibrant rainbow, inspiring optimism and motivation.

Active involvement in the writing process enriched his educational experience, which is valuable for teachers to understand students' needs and improve their writing skills. This approach allows students to engage in a profound and rewarding journey, akin to witnessing a rainbow due to their commitment and diligence. Moreover, Martin and Dismuke (2015) investigated how students perceived the depth of learning in a writing methods course.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the presented photovoice narratives by student teachers offered valuable insights into the challenges and emotional experiences they encountered during a writing orientation session. Through powerful metaphors, the student teachers conveyed their struggles and triumphs in writing, providing a glimpse into their cognitive, emotional, and motivational states. The photovoice narratives highlighted common themes such as fear of failure, self-doubt, and the desire for improvement. Additionally, they underscored the significance of self-evaluation, peer evaluation, and teacher feedback in enhancing writing skills and fostering reflective learning environments. Incorporating photovoice as a tool in EFL classrooms held promise in aiding teachers to gain a deeper understanding of their students' perspectives, thereby enabling more effective pedagogical interventions and activities to address writer's block and other writing challenges. Furthermore, collaborative approaches in the post-writing stage promoted a sense of drive and active involvement, leading to polished and impactful final pieces that showcase the students' growth as skilled and motivated writers. Overall, the photovoice narratives offered valuable empirical data and practical implications for improving writing instruction in EFL classrooms.

Future studies in the field of writing instruction and the use of photovoice in EFL classrooms can be enhanced through longitudinal studies to track the progress of student teachers' writing skills over time, comparative research to evaluate the effectiveness of photovoice integration compared to traditional methods, and in-depth investigations into student perspectives on photovoice as a reflective tool. Additionally, exploring the impact of teacher training on photovoice implementation, examining culturally diverse settings, and extending research to other language skills would provide valuable insights. Quantitative analysis of photovoice data and investigations into specific writing genres can offer comprehensive understandings while exploring the relationship between photovoice and writing self-efficacy can provide valuable insights for improving writing instruction and fostering more effective learning environments in EFL classrooms.

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