Employing reflective practice to capture Indonesian EFL pre-service teachers' conceptions of English learning

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Abstract

Understanding the English language learning concept is crucial for success in learning English. Numerous studies have focused on English as a foreign language (EFL) in-service teachers' perceptions of English language learning, while only a few have examined EFL pre-service teachers. This research delves into the different aspects of the experiences, reflections, and conceptualizations of English language learning among EFL pre-service teachers. A group of eight Indonesian EFL pre-service teachers engaged in participatory action research (PAR) during their field experience practices (PPL) in junior and senior high schools. This study employed a thorough approach to data collection, incorporating photovoice, an open-ended questionnaire, and in-depth interviews. The results of data analysis involving identifying and categorizing themes reveal a diverse range of perspectives, wherein English is likened to a lamp, dictionary, cuisine, flowers, class, and artificial intelligence (AI). Furthermore, learning English is often portrayed as an engaging and demanding process, highlighting the importance of innovative pedagogical approaches. This study emphasizes the significance of collaboration between language and technology departments to remain at the forefront of educational advancement, establishing a solid foundation for future research and improvements in EFL teacher education.

Keywords: EFL pre-service teachers; English learning conception; English learning; field experience practices (PPL); photovoice; reflective practice
Introduction

Developing and revising beliefs play a crucial part in English as a foreign language (EFL) pre-service teacher education, alongside academic and practical knowledge of EFL instruction (Kaymakamoğlu, 2019; Kelly, 2017). When teachers embark on their teaching journey, they impart instruction that aligns with their underlying principles regarding the processes of teaching, learning, and the unique characteristics of their students. However, as a result of their prior experience as students, the majority of pre-service teachers come into teacher education with certain beliefs that can impact their practice but may not necessarily be advantageous for students (Kelly, 2017). Understanding EFL pre-service teachers' conceptions of English learning is thus essential for identifying students' needs and developing highly effective and well-prepared English teachers.

Conceptualizing English learning has been a practice observed among EFL in-service teachers, as documented in previous scholarly investigations (Lévesque, 2005; Vansledright, 1997, 2002). The findings indicate that students' learning experiences can be substantially impacted and bolstered by their conceptions of the subject (Driver et al., 1996). Consequently, there is a growing recognition of the need for EFL pre-service teachers to develop the ability to reflect on English language education concepts (Altalhab et al., 2021; Kusumarasdyati & Retnaningdyah, 2020). Researchers widely recognize reflective practice as a crucial indicator of professional competence for teachers, as it facilitates effective planning and comprehension of educational concepts, thereby contributing to teaching quality improvement (Borg, 2011) and successful English language teaching in the classroom (Gudeta, 2022; Larrivee, 2008; Schön, 1983).

According to Dewey (1933), EFL pre-service teachers can engage in reflective practice by being open-minded, responsible, and wholehearted,
which are necessary for effective reflection. Personalized reflection tools are crucial in this endeavor (Mathew et al., 2017). One approach that might be employed is the integration of photovoice as a tool for reflective practice (LaDonna & Venance, 2011). The inherent visual characteristics of photovoice substantiate the notion that individuals can effectively convey their knowledge and viewpoints through the medium of photography (Wang & Burris, 1994). Photovoice showed to shape the students’ ideas by showing what they are thinking with six questions, namely: (1) what is here?, (2) what is happening?, (3) how does this relate to our lives?, (4) why are things this way?, (5) how could this image educate people?, (6) what can I do about it? (Wang et al., 2004).

Research utilizing reflective practice to explore EFL pre-service teachers’ conceptions of English language education has received a burgeoning interest in recent years. This research has focused on various aspects, such as the characteristics of effective EFL teachers (Göksel & Rakıcıoğlu Söylemez, 2018), assessment concepts (Prastikawati et al., 2022), and changing views on English for various purposes in teacher education (Dang et al., 2024). Nevertheless, there is currently a lack of research on the use of reflective practice to gain insights into the conceptions of English learning among EFL pre-service teachers during their practicum. In addition, there has been limited exploration of the use of photovoice as a tool for reflective practice in conceptualizing English language learning. Hence, the present study aims to address the existing research gap by employing the photovoice method as a reflective practice tool to capture Indonesian EFL pre-service teachers’ conceptions of English language learning. The following questions will serve as a guiding framework for this research:

1. How do reflective practices assist EFL pre-service teachers in articulating and understanding their perceptions of English learning?
2. How does the reflective practice during field experience practices (PPL) influence EFL pre-service teachers’ readiness and aspirations for their future roles as English teachers?
3. In what ways do EFL pre-service teachers utilize reflective practice to perceive and adapt to the evolving landscape of English language education?
Literature review

EFL pre-service teachers’ skill development through reflective practice

The capacity to reflect on one’s activities for continuous learning is known as reflective practice. Reflective practice in EFL pre-service teaching involves reflecting on teaching experiences to improve skills and practices, which involves analyzing and evaluating teaching methods, identifying areas for improvement, and developing teaching strategies (Nuraeni & Heryatun, 2021). It is increasingly popular in pre-service language teacher education (Mathew et al., 2017). As Cirocki and Farrel (2016) point out, reflective practice allows pre-service teachers to explore their views on teaching and make connections between theory and practice. Reflective practice also allows pre-service teachers to organize or reshape actions, knowledge, theories, or beliefs that guide teaching for their professional development (Zwozdiak-Myers, 2018). Tedick (2013) emphasizes the need for extensive practical experience in training future teachers, as this prepares them to handle real-life challenges in the EFL classroom. Some previous studies have explored reflective practice in pre-service teacher education, such as Sabgini and Khoiriyah (2020) investigating how pre-service teachers incorporate self-reflection into their English language teaching practicum for young learners. Torro et al. (2021) study provides insights into how pre-service students perceive reflective teaching practices. The teaching practicum provides PSTs with a hands-on experience in teaching and learning in which reflective practice skills are taught to pre-service teachers, as developing critical thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making skills is essential (Pokhrel, 2022). Meanwhile, Korucu Kış and Yükselir (2021) comprehensively examined reflective practices in Turkey’s pre-service English teaching context. This provides the theoretical foundation for this research on the perception of EFL pre-service teachers, developed through the photovoice method as a tool for reflective practice in English language learning.

Unveiling conceptions in English learning through reflective practice

Effective EFL teaching requires a detailed understanding of EFL pre-service teachers’ teaching concepts. Çapan’s (2014) study examined EFL pre-service teachers’ ideas about grammar teaching in an EFL context, focusing on their initial teaching practices. Narváez et al. (2017) discussed EFL pre-service teachers’ views on English language teaching strategies and their influence on the concept of English language learning. Baleghizadeh and Shahri (2014) examined EFL teachers’ views on speaking proficiency to reveal how they prioritize language skills in their teaching. According to Schön (1983), reflective
practice helps teachers understand the complexity of teaching by evaluating methods. Preparing EFL pre-service teachers requires hard work to analyze and improve concepts of language teaching and learning. Azizah et al. (2018) examined EFL pre-service teachers’ English teaching experiences and emphasized the need for reflective practice to conceptualize English language learning in EFL teacher education. Likewise, Güneş (2023) examined pre-service English teachers’ teaching and learning process, focusing on how teachers navigate gender and classroom dynamics in schools, thus providing exciting insights. This is relevant to this research, which explores the perception of future English teachers by using the photovoice method as a reflective practice tool to enhance classroom learning effectiveness.

**Reflective practice during field experience practices (PPL) in EFL context**

Reflective practice during field experience practices (PPL) in the context of EFL is based on the theoretical framework of Schön (1983), who introduced the concept as a deliberate process of learning from experience to improve future performance. In the field of EFL education, Farrell (2021) supports the idea that reflective practice during PPL is essential for prospective language teachers, as it offers a structured environment to gain practical experience, receive constructive feedback, and critically reflect on their teaching methods. Farrell (2021) further advocates using reflective journals, peer observation, and structured reflective tasks as effective tools for implementing reflective practice during PPL. Nuraeni and Heryatun (2021) found that pre-service English teachers’ teaching practicum included reflective reflection, which helped them understand and improve English teaching principles. It establishes a theoretical foundation for reflective practice during PPL in the EFL context.

**Method**

**Research design**

In this study, the photovoice method adopted a critical paradigm utilizing a participatory action research (PAR) approach (Lewin, 1946), wherein we and the participants were actively engaged and consistently assessed the process. Reflective practice played a crucial role in the PAR process, which is a potentially suitable and effective approach for exploring how EFL pre-service teachers’ conceptions of English learning (Morales, 2015). Photovoice is a qualitative research technique involving photographs and narratives generated
by participants (Nehe et al., 2022). PAR was chosen for this study because it allowed the active involvement of EFL pre-service teachers as participants in generating and interpreting visual and narrative data related to their experiences and perspectives on English language learning during their field experience. By capturing, selecting, and interpreting photographs that reflected aspects of English learning, participants could articulate their thoughts and provide rich data for analysis. This participatory action research aligned with the research objectives of understanding EFL pre-service teachers' perceptions and experiences of English language learning in a real-world teaching context.

**Participants**

Through a purposive sampling technique (Wynn, 1977), involving carefully selecting individuals who met the essential criteria for the research, eight students (six female and two male) majoring in English education in the seventh semester who conducted their field experience practices (PPL) in junior and senior high schools in Medan City, Indonesia, voluntarily participated in this study. Table 1 shows the participants’ demographics.

**Table 1**

*The demographic information of the participants*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Ages (years)</th>
<th>Grade taught</th>
<th>School level taught</th>
<th>Teaching practice experience (Yes/No)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>XII-Science</td>
<td>Senior High School</td>
<td>Yes (1 year)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>VIII-Social studies</td>
<td>Junior High School</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>IX- Science</td>
<td>Junior High School</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P4</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>VII-Science</td>
<td>Junior High School</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P5</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>XII-Social studies</td>
<td>Senior High School</td>
<td>Yes (2 years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P6</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>XI-Science</td>
<td>Junior High School</td>
<td>Yes (1 year)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P7</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>XI- B</td>
<td>Senior High School</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P8</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>VII-Social studies</td>
<td>Junior High School</td>
<td>Yes (1 year)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Potential participants in this study should have completed three PPL programs related to their majors. The criteria included successful participation in the PPL 1 program, which involved thorough physical observation of the school environment; the PPL 2 program (a microteaching practicum); and the PPL 3 program, which focused on real classroom teaching experiences. This
selection process ensured that participants possessed the expertise and insights relevant to the research questions. This research was conducted on PPL 3 program based on their teaching experience in the classroom. Participants gave informed permission after being briefed on the study’s aim, adhering to strict ethical standards. The participants’ identities were kept anonymous throughout the study. They were labeled P1-P8. The data collected was kept private during data analysis.

**Data collection**

In this study, data collection was conducted through a dual approach (Bommier, 2014) involving the integration data collection method to obtain a holistic, diverse, and well-rounded understanding of the research topic by leveraging the complementary strengths of photovoice, open-ended questionnaires, and in-depth interviews (Libarkin et al., 2005). The first step in the data collection was the photovoice method, which captured how Indonesian EFL pre-service teachers conceptualized English language learning. Participants were given a photovoice worksheet (Table 2) and were asked to take pictures at the start, middle, and end of their teaching sessions. This worksheet provided a framework for participants to describe their captured photos according to instructions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Photo</th>
<th>Narrative:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Where did you take this picture? (Inside or outside campus, home, outside home, others)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What does this picture represent? (More than two sentences)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. How does this picture show English learning? (More than two sentences)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Why did you choose this picture? (More than two sentences)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Wang & Burris, 1997)

In-depth interviews were conducted using the SHOWeD photovoice technique (Wang et al., 2004) to delve deeper into participants’ responses in the photovoice and to ascertain whether their interview results clarified or contradicted what had been described in the photovoice (Table 3). The interviews, lasting around thirty minutes, delved into participants' observations, events, personal connections, reasons for occurrences, and
possible actions. The questions were carefully refined to align with the SHOWeD method, and the sessions were recorded with the participant’s consent.

Table 3

In-depth interview photovoice “SHOWeD”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SHOWeD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What do you <strong>See</strong> here?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What is really <strong>Happening</strong> here?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. How does this relate to our lives?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Why does this problem/situation/concern/strength exist?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. How can this image <strong>Educate</strong> policy-makers/decision-makers, or others; how are we <strong>Empowered</strong>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. What can we <strong>Do</strong> about it?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Wang et al., 2004)

Afterward, we conducted an open-ended questionnaire to collect their insights on English learning by providing EFL pre-service teachers with open-ended questionnaires based on their practical field experience (see Table 4). Participants were given two days to complete the open-ended questionnaires, which were then collected on paper. Participants’ responses were organized and condensed to ensure clarity and encompass a range of perspectives on learning English. Open questions can have multiple answers, emphasizing the importance of having a clear objective for questions and providing clear answers (Karaman & Büyükökț, 2023). The data integration was accomplished by organizing the themes that emerged from the in-depth interviews and the photovoice method. The dataset was presented in a narrative format, providing a comprehensive insight into the viewpoints of EFL pre-service teachers regarding English language education.

Table 4

Open-ended questionnaires

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Open-ended questionnaires</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>How do you perceive the concept of English learning?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>What experience did you get during the PPL?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Does your experience during field experience affect your readiness to become an English teacher in the future?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>How do you adapt to the evolving landscape of English learning?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Table by authors)
Data analysis

In this study, data analysis utilized grounded theory methodology, a systematic and iterative set of methods for building theories rooted in the data collected (Charmaz, 2014). Grounded theory is a qualitative research approach originally formulated by Glaser and Strauss (1967) in the 1960s (Heatha & Cowleyb, 2004). The data analysis commenced with examining the photovoice worksheet (Wang & Burris, 1997) and "SHOWeD" photovoice interview (Wang et al., 2004); by identifying the key themes of EFL pre-service teachers' conceptions of English learning, we collected key themes to consider patterns that formed a new group consisting of one superordinate theme made up of six subordinate themes (see Figure 1 for details).

Relationships between images and worksheet responses were scrutinized, and resulting stories were grouped by theme. Open-ended questionnaire responses were then analyzed, categorizing similar answers in alignment with the research questions. Following grounded theory principles, data were collected from various sources, ensuring a holistic understanding. Caulfield (2023) highlighted that thematic analysis proved instrumental in exploring individual perspectives on English language learning, field experiences, teacher readiness, and adaptability to English language learning technology. The study’s thematic analysis involved categorizing themes from narrated photovoice data and presenting images by corresponding themes, like Figures 2 and 3 depicting English as a world language. Open-ended questionnaire results were organized by research questions, such as the responses of participants who agreed with the questions, and then we presented them in narrative form.

Trustworthiness

This research often addresses aspects of ensuring data trustworthiness with terms such as credibility, authenticity, or trustworthiness (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Trustworthiness is addressed methodically using various techniques to enhance credibility, dependability, and transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). We used regulation of data sources with various techniques in data collection, such as photovoice, open-ended questionnaires, and in-depth interviews, are employed to comprehend participants' perspectives. The transferability of research findings was facilitated by providing rich and detailed descriptions of the research setting, participants, and data collection methods. A pilot study was conducted to eliminate ambiguity in interview questions and maintain the reliability and validity of the interview process. Additionally, in this study, we provided students with basic knowledge to acquire and maintain accurate
perspectives, along with opportunities to clarify the meaning of this foundational knowledge. Furthermore, collaboration with various disciplines of study was undertaken to gain diverse perspectives during the research process. This helped clarify assumptions and contributed to a more comprehensive exploration of the research topic.

**Figure 1**

*Superordinate theme and subordinate themes*

Utilizing photovoice as a Reflective Practice to assist EFL pre-service teachers in articulating and understanding their perceptions of English learning

The impact of reflective practice during the field experience practices (PPL) on the readiness and aspirations of future EFL pre-service teachers

EFL pre-service teachers’ adaptation to evolving technologies for English language learning

(Source: Figure by authors)
Findings

Utilizing photovoice as a reflective practice to assist EFL pre-service teachers in articulating and understanding their perceptions of English learning

The use of photovoice as a reflective practice tool has been shown to play a role in helping pre-service EFL teachers capture the concept of English language learning. It can be seen from the results of the photovoice data, in-depth interview photovoice "showed," and open-ended questions that each participant has a different way of conceptualizing English learning. P1 conceptualized English learning as a lamp. As the results of the photovoice narrated in (Figure 2), P1 said:

Because the lamp is one of the lighting tools used to illuminate, so does the English language; its presence can provide enlightenment for someone because English has become an important aspect of education, and as we know, all social media also use English on average. (P1)

In contrast to P2, who conceptualizes English learning the same as John M. Echols' dictionary. As the results of the photovoice in (Figure 3), P2 expressed:

Learning English without new vocabulary is empty, so the key to learning English is to master the vocabulary, just like all the vocabulary in this dictionary. (P2)

While P3 conceptualizes English learning with food, why is this P3 said as this statement is clearly narrated in the photovoice (Figure 4).

Because I am interested in learning English like I am interested in food, as well as students' interest in learning English when they feel that English can change their perspective on the world. (P3)

In contrast to participant 4, who conceptualized English as interesting as flowers, P4 said, "I feel that the beauty of these various flowers like English also lies in its diversity, namely the richness of its vocabulary, pronunciation, and different ways of learning it," as in the results of photovoice (Figure 5).

Then, P5 and P6 conceptualized English learning with English class. P5 and P6 said:

When I teach English, students claim to have difficulty and lack of interest in learning English as a foreign language; therefore, prospective English teachers are more creative in their English learning methods so that students'
understanding of English learning increases and students are more interested in English lessons. (P5)

When I teach English classes, I hold group discussions on English tenses; I see students’ desire to overcome their fear of pronunciation, so teachers must foster a positive environment for effective language learning. (P6)

As well as what P6 said about the reasons why he conceptualized English class, their explanation of the concept of English learning is clearly exposed in photovoice (Figures 6 and 7). Similarly, P7 and P8 also conceptualize English with AI. As depicted in the photovoice results (Figures 8 and 9), P7 and P8 shared:

Because I see that students in the current era make use of AI a lot during learning. English because there are also many AI tools such as QuillBot, Chat GPT, DeepL, and others that are often used to help them learn English. (P7)

Students also recognized the significant help of AI in completing assignments and enhancing their English learning experience, and I think the use of AI in English learning is commonplace. (P8)

As indicated above, the photovoice results revealed EFL pre-service teachers’ diverse views on English language learning. This analysis shows that this method can help teachers reflect on English language learning, teaching methods, and student understanding.

Theme 1: English is a world language

The P1 stated, "English is a world language" with a lamp photo (Figure 2). P2 explained that "English is a world language." with a photo of the Jhon M. Echols dictionary (Figure 3). In Figure 2, P1 explained that English is an international language that is a must-have today. Even all social media platforms use English, so learning it is like a lamp, and one day, someone who can speak English will be able to compete abroad (Figure 2).

In Figure 3, P2 used a picture of the John M. Echols’ dictionary to illustrate how English learning played a similar role. As we all know, learning English requires a vast amount of vocabulary, which is covered in every subject. My junior high school teacher once told us that mastering vocabulary is the key to learning English, and that includes every word in this dictionary (Figure 3). English learning and the global status of English are closely connected. Balancing the benefits of English learning with the preservation of local
languages and cultures is a complex challenge for teachers and policymakers worldwide.

**Figure 2**

*English is a lamp (photovoice by P1)*

> P1: I think of English learning as a lamp. Because light is one of the lighting tools used to illuminate, likewise with English, its presence can provide enlightenment for someone because English has become a language that someone must at least own. English learning is not just for learning; it has become an aspect of our lives. In social media, many use English; articles and YouTube shows already use English. Therefore, English learning is like a lamp, and English is an international and world language, so one day, someone who can speak English will be better able to compete outside the country.

**Figure 3**

*English learning is the same as John M. Echols’ dictionary (photovoice by P2)*

> P2: This is John M. Echols's English dictionary. This is an Indonesian English dictionary in which many vocabulary words are made for readers who want to find the meaning of English vocabulary. Therefore, many students and teachers have this dictionary to multiply the vocabulary obtained every time they learn English. Still, along with the development of time and technology, dictionaries are rarely used in learning English. They are more interested in using Google Translate or DeepL. English learning plays the same role; as we know, English has a lot of material and a lot of vocabulary that we get from the material. When I was in junior high school, my teacher said that English is the language of the world and the key to learning English is to master the vocabulary, just like all the vocabulary in this dictionary.
In Figure 3, P2 uses a picture of John M. Echols' dictionary to illustrate how English learning plays a similar role. As we know, learning English requires a huge vocabulary. My junior high school teacher once told us that mastering vocabulary is the key to learning English, and that includes every word in this dictionary (Figure 3). English language learning and the global status of English have a close relationship. Balancing the benefits of English language learning with the preservation of local languages and cultures is a complex challenge for teachers and policymakers around the world.

**The impact of reflective practice during the field experience practices (PPL) on the readiness and aspirations of future EFL pre-service teachers**

Reflective experiences during the field experience practices (PPL) emerged as an important factor influencing EFL pre-service teachers' readiness and aspirations for their future roles as English language teachers. Based on the results of the open-ended questionnaire data. P1 said, "During my PPL, I got a lot of experiences and lessons about how to be a good teacher. I feel ready to be an English teacher in the future." The same as P2, who also said she was ready to be an English teacher in the future. Just like P7 and P8 who said:

There are many interesting new things that I got from my PPL experience, one of which is the use of English learning media, which has developed and made learning more interesting and effective. (P7)

I am very ready to become an English teacher in the future because, during my PPL, it turned out that I felt my basic was to become an English teacher. (P8)

The excerpts above indicated that the participants claimed to be very ready and interested in becoming English teachers in the future. In contrast to P3 and P6, who find it difficult to prepare themselves to become English teachers in the future, they shared:

During my PPL, I faced many difficulties during teaching, maybe because I lacked patience in dealing with students when teaching. (P3)

It is difficult for me to become an English teacher in the future because, during my PPL, I faced several obstacles because the average student in my class did not like learning English. (P6)

EFL pre-service teachers' readiness for future roles varies based on field experiences. P1 and P2 express confidence, citing positive PPL experiences. P7
and P8 highlight the benefits of English learning media. In contrast, P3 struggles with patience, and P6 faces student disinterest. Individualized training is crucial for comprehensive teacher preparation.

Meanwhile, P4 and P5 are not ready to become English teachers, as they said:

I feel that I am not ready to become an English teacher because I always feel less confident and nervous when teaching in front of students. (P4)

During my PPL, I realized my lack of mastery of English when teaching; this makes me not ready to become an English teacher. (P5)

The above excerpts showed that the experiential engagement in PPL lays the foundation for a more nuanced and realistic self-assessment, measuring their readiness to become English teachers in the future.

Theme 2: Exciting yet challenging

Learning English can be exciting yet challenging, with many obstacles. When she was first interested in the English education major, she was curious because English is an international language. The results of the photovoice of P3 and P4, who used photos of food and flowers, illustrate that English is interesting; she thought learning English was fun because some people like exploring the language’s structure, while others like the cultural and communicative aspects. Figures 4 and 5 show photovoice results. Learning English is fun, but complex grammatical structures, extensive vocabulary, different pronunciations, and complicated sound systems can make it difficult. According to P5 and P6, they used photos of students learning English in class. P5 stated that English class students admitted to struggling and not wanting to learn English. This photo explains why English students struggle; according to P4, students fear mispronouncing English sentences due to limited vocabulary and lack of class practice to boost self-confidence. Thus, EFL pre-service teachers as prospective English teachers should be more creative in their English learning methods to improve students’ understanding and interest in English lessons, as shown in Figures 6 and 7.

Both photovocies promote English learning. Figure 4 shows how learning English affects satisfaction compared to eating a delicious meal. Figure 5 compares the English language to a beautiful bouquet and emphasizes the joy of learning. These perspectives illuminate the complexity of English learning’s appeal.
Figures 6 and 7 show that P5 and P6 provide student and teacher perspectives on English learning. In Figure 6, P5 shows an 11th-grade science
student studying English. The photo inspires aspiring English teachers to use more creative and effective methods to improve students' comprehension and enthusiasm for English. This photo fits "Show me English," showing students studying English. Figure 7 shows P6 teaching English 9b at an Islamic Junior High School in Medan, Indonesia. The photo shows students discussing board tenses together. Participants emphasize identifying and solving kids' learning issues. Passion for discussing the course shows students can overcome English learning obstacles. The teacher promotes a welcoming learning environment for students who struggle with English pronunciation and fear making mistakes. Students' joy and enthusiasm during English classes prove that different teaching methods can help them learn English.

**Figure 6**
*English class (photovoice by P5)*

These photovoces (Figures 6 and 7) present a holistic view of the English learning environment, highlighting student issues and teachers' role in creating engaging and supportive classrooms. The shared experiences demonstrate the need to use innovative teaching methods and create a positive, supportive environment to boost students' enthusiasm for learning English.
**Figure 7**

*English class (photovoice by P6)*

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**EFL pre-service teachers’ adaptation to evolving technologies for English language learning**

English drives technological progress. English’s role in technology is expected to grow as technology advances, emphasizing its connection to the narrative of technological development. Based on in-depth interviews and open-ended questions. Some participants shared similar opinions, such as P1, who said:

> I adapt to technological developments by actively integrating them into lesson plans, such as by exploring educational applications, online resources, and multimedia tools to make the learning experience more interactive and engaging for students. (P1)

The statement from P1 is the same as what P2 and P5 stated. P1, P2, and P5 have a common approach when adjusting to technological advancements in English language teaching. They are dedicated to actively incorporating technology into their lesson plans by utilizing educational apps, internet resources, and multimedia tools. The shared focus on promoting interactive and captivating student learning experiences highlights a common goal.
P3 and P6 improve English language acquisition by integrating technology such as projectors, PowerPoint, and interactive programs, resulting in a dynamic educational environment, as they expressed:

I encourage students to experiment with new technology tools in the classroom, such as in-focus projectors, PowerPoint, and AI tools that help English language learning, thus encouraging a dynamic and adaptive teaching environment. (P3)

I use interactive apps and other tools to make lessons more engaging. Continuous professional growth keeps me up to speed, ensuring my students benefit from technology improvements. (P6)

P3 and P6 emphasize the significant impact of technology on the field of English language instruction. P3 promotes student exploration and utilization of resources such as projectors and AI, cultivating adaptability. Meanwhile, P6 focuses on delivering engaging lectures via interactive applications, ensuring that continuing professional development aligns with the latest technology breakthroughs to maximize student benefits.

This is how the participants adapted to technological developments in English language learning. As for example P4, P7, and P8 acknowledged:

I utilize AI for collaborative learning that encourages student interaction and teamwork; I integrate online discussion forums, online projects, and collaborative online editing of assignments to enhance language learning through today’s technological advances. (P4)

I participate in workshops and webinars, working with colleagues to explore new tools. Integrating digital platforms increases student engagement, making lessons more dynamic. Adapting to technological advancements ensures a modern and successful teaching style. (P7)

I use intelligent boards and instructional apps to accommodate different learning styles. Regularly attending tech conferences allows me to find new tools. Adapting to technology advances keeps my teaching approaches contemporary, fostering a tech-savvy and empowered student population. (P8)

In the above excerpts, the participants, including P4, P7, and P8, showcase adept technology integration in English language learning. P4 employs AI for collaborative learning, emphasizing interaction and teamwork. P7 actively engages in workshops and webinars, fostering dynamic lessons through digital platforms. P8 utilizes intelligent boards, instructional apps, and tech
conferences, ensuring contemporary and inclusive teaching methods. Their statements are almost the same. This approach effectively creates a dynamic, interactive, and adaptive learning environment in line with today's technological developments.

**Theme 3: Attached to each other**

The English language largely drives the development of technology. Technology's unprecedented pace will increase English's role as the language of technology. English is important to human development's ongoing narrative. P7 and P8 took photos of themselves doing AI-related tasks for their assignments (Figures 8 and 9). This shows they believe AI in their work is no longer common. Technology, especially in English, has advanced. Participants valued artificial intelligence's help in completing the task and learning English.

**Figure 8**

*English is AI (photovoice by P7)*

Participants' photovoces (Figures 8 and 9) show that AI is a valuable and common tool in English language education. The focus on AI's role in completing tasks and improving learning indicates a positive reception and adoption of these technological advances. With AI improving language learning, this analysis helps explain how language education is changing.
Discussion

From the findings of the first research question, utilizing photovoice as a reflective practice to assist EFL pre-service teachers in articulating and understanding their perceptions of English learning. This finding is in line with research conducted by Lieblein et al. (2018). Photovoice promotes student dialogue, collaboration, and active participation to emphasize the importance of a supportive school environment, a good learning environment, family and friends, recovery and recreation, goals and ambitions, and attachment in improving school attendance. Photovoice benefits EFL pre-service teachers. Both studies used photovoice as a research tool, but the research contexts differed. Meanwhile, Sabgini and Khoiriyah’s (2020) research explored the use of self-reflection by pre-service teachers in teaching English to young learners. Moreover, the findings regarding the global importance of English, particularly in the context of social media, fostered a deeper awareness of the pervasive
influence of English in various aspects of their lives. This is also stated in the Rasool and Winke (2019) study in Pakistan’s English language learning context, and research conducted by Putri (2018) indicates that utilizing the photovoice approach is an excellent method for enhancing students’ speaking skills. The study by Safitri et al. (2024) also found photovoice effective for studying teacher emotions, particularly in the context of Dictogloss technology. These results indicate that both photovoice and self-reflection are valuable tools for EFL pre-service teachers, enhancing their awareness and comprehension of the various aspects of English language education.

Based on the findings of the second research question, the impact of reflective practice during the field experience practices (PPL) on the readiness and aspirations of future EFL pre-service teachers, as suggested by Nuraeni and Heryatun (2021) that reflective practice can be included in pre-service teachers’ curriculum and not only during teaching practicum as it provides enormous benefits for pre-service English teachers’ development. The findings also highlight the diversity of perceptions among the participants regarding their readiness and preparedness. Gudeta’s (2022) study suggested that teachers should pay more attention to practical, continuous, and open learning engagements that will facilitate reflective learning practices, which help address the dynamic and complex nature of teacher professional preparation. While some expressed confidence and readiness, others acknowledged challenges and areas for improvement, an argument supported by Nketsia and Carroll (2023) in their findings, teaching a foreign language in a community language school equipped teachers with practical skills, values, and the chance to apply their master’s program knowledge. In contrast to a study by Jalmav and Subekti (2022), the research advocates for the effectiveness of incorporating teacher-themed movies in teacher preparation. However, Pokhrel (2022) emphasizes the importance of reflective practice in shaping the professional life of English language teachers, highlighting their role in pedagogical development, self-efficacy, and overall teacher professionalism. Evidently, both the use of reflective practices and alternative methodologies, such as photovoice, contribute to a deeper understanding of EFL pre-service teachers’ perceptions and preparedness.

Based on the findings of the third research question, EFL pre-service teachers’ adaptation to evolving technologies for English language learning, as Zhang et al. (2023) state, the application of AI technology can help students by guiding them to experience the cultural background of English language and literature in English-language situations; students can practice applying their English language skills. Previous empirical research suggests that AI
technology may help students learn English. The same is true of Kelly et al. (2023) research. Meanwhile, Reddy (2022), who comprehensively explores the intersection between AI and creativity, stresses the need for critical understanding and using AI systems wisely in creative practice. The integration of AI into ELT, as explored in this study, is in line with recent discussions about the role of technology in language education (Ribeiro, 2020; Zhu, 2017). As technology continues to evolve, building a generation of EFL teachers who understand technology and are adaptable is crucial to continuing to improve language education worldwide. The findings drawn from this study indicate the need for ongoing professional development for EFL pre-service teachers focusing on technology integration.

This study has certain limitations. First, the sample size was small, involving only eight EFL pre-service teachers. Additionally, the study was conducted in a specific context, Medan City, Indonesia, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other contexts. Future research could involve a more extensive and diverse sample to enhance the transferability of the results. Despite these limitations, the findings have broader implications for teacher education programs and English language teaching practices. Photovoice and self-reflection techniques can be integrated into teacher training curricula to promote critical thinking, self-awareness, and a deeper understanding of the multifaceted nature of language learning. These methods can also be adapted for professional development programs for in-service teachers, fostering continuous growth and reflective practices.

Conclusion

This study aims to uncover the utilization of reflective practices, particularly photovoice, to capture various conceptions of English language learning among EFL pre-service teachers based on their experiences with using the innovative photovoice methodology. The participants related English to various metaphors and emphasized the global importance of English and the need for vocabulary acquisition. Field experience practices (PPL) significantly influenced the participants' readiness for their role as future English teachers. The study also highlighted the interesting and challenging aspects of English learning, underlining the importance of creative teaching methods to increase student interest and understanding. Participants actively adapted to technological developments, integrating educational apps, multimedia tools, and artificial intelligence (AI) into their teaching methods, emphasizing the close relationship
between technology and English. The findings contribute insights into the complex dynamics of English language education among prospective EFL teachers, with implications on customizing teaching methods, overcoming barriers, and building the confidence of prospective English teachers. The study also underscores the importance of innovative teaching approaches, especially those that combine fun with overcoming challenges and keeping up with technological developments, particularly the integration of AI.

However, there are some limitations, including small sample size, reliance on self-reported data, and potential interpretation bias in the use of photovoice. Recommendations for future research include professional development programs tailored to the issues identified during field experience practice. Incorporate technological tools, particularly AI, into English language teaching. Promoting reflective practice and fostering collaboration between language and technology departments can further improve English education. Practice recommendations: educational institutions should tailor development programs to address the challenges identified during PPL, apply technology and media in English language teaching, and promote reflective practices such as photovoice. Recognizing the relationship between English language learning and technology, collaborative efforts between language and technology departments should be encouraged to advance English language learning continuously.

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