

The Photovoice Project: Fostering Students' Autonomous, Collaborative, and Authentic Business/Engineering English Learning Experiences

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ABSTRACT

This perspective article elaborates an instructional approach to business English learning utilizing a photovoice project as a strategy to promote a real-world learning encounter. In professional and vocational colleges, project-based learning (PBL) is an instructional strategy for promoting autonomous, collaborative, and authentic learning nuances. This article sheds light on how photovoice project fosters the students' technical and business English learning experiences. The project empowers students to take charge of their learning, work collaboratively, and engage in real-world business context. This paper presents the concept of photovoice, learners' autonomy and collaboration towards photovoice, authentic business English learning encounters, technology-integrated photovoice, project evaluation, and case studies on photovoice project. On top of that, language teachers can utilize project-based photovoice as a valuable tool for promoting innovative and engaging business English learning activities, thus providing students with contextual-based learning environment and preparing them for the real business world. It also brings several implications: 1) for vocational English teachers, implementing photovoice projects offers a powerful tool to create innovative and engaging learning activities, 2) for students, these projects provide a contextualized learning environment that prepares them for the real business world by developing practical language skills and industry-specific knowledge, and institutions will benefit by fostering an educational approach that bridges classroom learning with real-world applications, thereby enhancing the overall quality and relevance of their programs.

Keywords: Photovoice; PBL; business English; Engineering English; and contextual language learning

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INTRODUCTION

In Indonesian vocational higher education and All India Council of Technical Education, project-based learning (henceforth PBL) has emerged as a valuable instructional strategy, offering students opportunities to develop autonomy, collaboration, and authenticity in their learning (Anas et al., 2021). To date, research on photovoice has been well-documented in the literature (Kokotsaki et al., 2016; S. Wang, 2020); however, little investigation addresses how photovoice is integrated in PBL approach to promote authentic business English and engineering English learning experiences. For this, research based on observations was done in the Indonesian vocational English classroom and the Indian engineering and technical English classroom. This article delves into the transformative potential of photovoice projects in fostering students' business and engineering English learning experiences. By engaging in photovoice projects, students are empowered to assume control over their own learning, work collaboratively with their peers, and actively engage in real-world business contexts (Thomas, 2017). This paper aims to introduce the concept of photovoice, explore the role of learner autonomy and collaboration within photovoice projects, highlight the authentic business English learning and technical English encounters facilitated by such projects, discuss the integration of technology into photovoice projects, examine project evaluation methods, and present case studies that demonstrate the effectiveness of photovoice projects. Furthermore, language teachers can leverage project-based photovoice as a powerful tool to promote innovative and engaging business and technical English learning activities, creating a contextually rich learning environment that prepares students for the challenges of the real business world.

Authenticity plays a pivotal role in business English learning (Andrews, 2004), and photovoice projects offer a unique opportunity to expose students to real-world business contexts (Laur, 2013; Madoyan, 2016). For example, photovoicing small-medium enterprises (SMEs) provides the students with real-world business activities, thus improving their business communication skills, interactions, and competencies. Through photovoice, students are encouraged to explore authentic business/engineering scenarios, conduct interviews with professionals, capture images that reflect business practices, and develop narratives that reflect their insights. This immersion in authentic business/engineering experiences provides learners with a deeper understanding of business and technical English, exposes them to industry-specific vocabulary and jargon, and enables them to develop communication skills relevant to professional settings. Photovoice projects thus bridge the gap between classroom learning and the real business world, creating a meaningful and relevant learning environment for students (Evans-Agnew & Strack, 2022).

"Photovoice projects are an inquest about the learners' domain knowledge within themselves."



On the other hands, the integration of technology into photovoice projects further enhances students' learning experiences and outcomes (Edwards et al., 2012). With the aid of digital tools and platforms, students can capture, edit, and share photographs, as well as create multimedia presentations that showcase their understanding and creativity (Bereczki & Kárpáti, 2021). The use of technology not only enhances students' technical skills but also aligns with the demands of the modern business and technical landscape, where proficiency in digital tools and communication platforms is essential. Additionally, the inclusion of case studies further illustrates the potential and effectiveness of photovoice projects in business and engineering English learning, providing practical examples of how students have benefitted from this approach and highlighting their success in developing language skills and professional competencies.

PHOTOVOICE AND BUSINESS ENGLISH LEARNING

Photovoice is a visual method and transformative process that enables individuals to identify, depict, and amplify the essence of their community using a distinct approach to photography (Wang & Burris, 1997). It is a groundbreaking approach that can be implemented in business and engineering English learning, utilizing the potency of photography to empower individuals and encourage their active involvement in addressing business/engineering-related challenges. In this approach, participants, typically business/engineering English learners, use photography as a medium to capture images that reflect their perspectives, experiences, and concerns within the realm of business/engineering technology. By utilizing photovoice in business/engineering English learning, learners are provided with a platform to share their stories, challenge conventional notions, and advocate for positive changes in business/engineering practices. According to Sutton-brown, (2014), photovoice is a type of participatory learning where learners are actively involved in the project. It can be used a teaching tool where students engage themselves in learning with visual methods (Schell et al., 2009). With this in mind, photovoice in business English learning encourages learners to actively participate in projects and take ownership of their learning process. Moreover, photovoice empowers learners to become active contributors to their own learning journey, ultimately preparing them for the challenges and complexities of the business world.

Incorporating photovoice into education offers students a range of benefits (Schell et al., 2009), including business/engineering English learning. One of the key advantages is that it promotes a sense of authenticity and real-world applicability (Massengale et al., 2016). Through photovoice, students have the opportunity to capture images that are directly linked to the business and technical environment, such as its snapshots of workplaces, professional settings, or industry-specific objects. This hands-on approach enables them to engage with genuine business/engineering contexts, fostering a deeper comprehension of business and technical English vocabulary, concepts, and effective communication

strategies. By connecting language learning to real-life situations, students gain practical knowledge that can be directly applied in professional settings.

Photovoice provides a tangible and visual way for students to explore and interact with the business world, bridging the gap between classroom learning and real-life experiences (Andrews, 2004). Secondly, photovoice encourages creativity and self-expression (Christensen et al., 2020). By capturing images and composing narratives, students can express their unique perspectives, ideas, and insights on business/engineering-related topics. This creative process fosters innovative thinking and encourages students to think critically about the visual representation of their ideas. Through stories and interpretation, students develop their language skills by selecting appropriate vocabulary, constructing coherent narratives, and effectively conveying their thoughts in a business/engineering context. Furthermore, photovoice facilitates reflection and deeper learning (Horwitz, 2012). As students analyze and interpret their photographs, they are prompted to reflect on their own experiences, values, and understandings of business realities. This reflective practice enhances their metacognitive skills and encourages them to think critically about their role in the business world. By discussing and sharing their photographs and narratives with peers, students engage in meaningful discussions, further expanding their understanding of business/engineering English concepts and perspectives. Therefore, project-based photovoice combines the principles of project-based learning with digital photography to offer an engaging and authentic approach to business/engineering English learning. It promotes autonomy, creativity, and critical thinking while providing a real-world context for language practice. By utilizing photovoice, students can explore business/engineering-related themes, express their ideas visually and verbally, and deepen their understanding of business/engineering English concepts and communication strategies.

LEARNERS' AUTONOMY AND COLLABORATION TOWARDS PHOTOVOICE

Project-based photovoice serves as a powerful tool in promoting autonomous learning by empowering students to take ownership of their learning process (Yuliani & Lengkanawati, 2017). Through this strategy, students are given the freedom to choose their own topics, plan and execute their projects, and make decisions independently. This autonomy not only fosters a sense of responsibility but also encourages students to actively engage with their learning materials and take control of their educational journey. By allowing students to have a say in their project's direction, they become more invested in the learning process and develop a sense of ownership over their achievements. Furthermore, self-reflection and goal setting play crucial roles in promoting autonomous learning in project-based digital photovoice. Students are encouraged to reflect on their progress, evaluate their strengths and weaknesses, and set goals for improvement. This reflective practice enables them to become self-directed learners who take the initiative to identify areas for growth and devise strategies to enhance their learning outcomes. In other words, photovoice serves as

methodological guide to explore social phenomena (Sutton-brown, 2014). By reflecting on their experiences and setting meaningful goals, students develop a deeper understanding of their own learning styles, preferences, and strengths, ultimately becoming more self-reliant in their educational pursuits.

Photovoice not only promotes autonomous learning but also nurtures collaborative learning and genuine participation in the society (Warne et al., 2013). Students have the opportunity to work in teams, where they can brainstorm ideas, share responsibilities, and provide feedback to one another. This collaborative aspect enhances the learning experience by encouraging peer interaction, constructive discussions, and the exchange of diverse perspectives. By engaging in collaborative projects, students learn the value of effective communication, teamwork, and negotiation skills, which are essential in real-world business/engineering settings. In photovoice project, teamwork and collaboration become vital components of the learning process. Students learn how to work together, leverage each other's strengths, and overcome challenges collectively (Kokotsaki et al., 2016; Thomas, 2017). Through collaborative tasks, they develop essential interpersonal skills, such as active listening, empathy, and conflict resolution, which are crucial for successful teamwork and collaboration. By participating in group activities and exchanging feedback, students not only enhance their understanding of the subject matter but also develop valuable skills that can be transferred to future collaborative projects and professional environments. In other words, students not only develop their independence and self-directed learning skills but also acquire essential teamwork and communication abilities, preparing them for future success in both academic and professional settings.

AUTHENTIC BUSINESS/ENGINEERING ENGLISH LEARNING

The integration of a photovoice project into business/engineering English learning facilitates the creation of authentic and participatory learning experiences for students (Baker & Wang, 2006). By actively engaging in this project, students are afforded the opportunity to immerse themselves in real-world business scenarios, thereby enhancing the authenticity of their educational encounters. This is achieved through various means, such as conducting interviews with professionals and capturing genuine images that depict diverse aspects of the business environment. These activities enable students to gather valuable insights, perspectives, and experiences, thereby deepening their comprehension of business practices and enhancing the authenticity of their learning journey.

The utilization of authentic language, business vocabulary, and industry-specific knowledge holds paramount importance within the photovoice project for business/engineering English learning. The immersive exposure to real-world business/engineering scenarios allows students to become acquainted with authentic language use, thereby refining their linguistic proficiency and honing their ability to navigate professional communication. The incorporation of industry-specific terminology,

business jargon, and idiomatic expressions prevalent within the business domain contributes to the development of students' linguistic competence. By immersing themselves in authentic language contexts, students not only refine their communicative skills but also cultivate a profound understanding of the cultural and contextual intricacies integral to successful business interactions. However, they need teachers' guidance to help them figure out their contextual learning experiences (Erbaggio et al., 2012; Jenkins, 2011; Madoyan, 2016).

Overall, the integration of the photovoice project into business/engineering English learning empowers students to actively engage with authentic business/engineering scenarios. It can be used as reflective methodology (Hoffmann, 2024). Through the process of conducting interviews, capturing genuine images, and constructing narratives pertinent to business topics, students gain invaluable firsthand experience and insights into the intricacies of the business world. Additionally, the incorporation of authentic language, business vocabulary, and industry-specific knowledge further enriches students' ability to communicate effectively and confidently within professional settings. This authentic pedagogical approach equips students with the essential language skills and cultural understanding necessary to thrive within the authentic business landscape.

TECHNOLOGY-INTEGRATED PHOTOVOICE

Integrating technology into photovoice projects in language learning offers a dynamic and interactive approach that enhances student engagement and business English learning. Photovoice, a participatory action research method that combines photography with social advocacy, encourages students to capture and discuss their experiences and perspectives through images (López et al., 2005; C. Wang & Burris, 1997). When integrated with technology, photovoice can leverage digital tools such as smartphones, tablets, and social media platforms to create a more immersive and interactive learning experience (Malka, 2020). For instance, students can use digital cameras or smartphone apps to take photos and then upload them to collaborative platforms like Google Classroom or Padlet, where they can write descriptions, share reflections, and receive feedback from peers and instructors. This digital integration not only makes the project more accessible and engaging but also helps students develop essential digital literacy skills alongside their language skills.

One example of a technology-integrated photovoice project is having students document aspects of their daily lives or cultural experiences through photographs and then present these images in a digital format (Anas & Nur, 2022). Students can use tools such as Adobe Spark or Microsoft Sway to create multimedia presentations that combine their photos with audio recordings and written narratives. This allows them to practice their speaking, writing, and listening skills in a cohesive project. For instance, a student might photograph their local market and create a narrative explaining the cultural significance of

the market, the types of goods sold, and interactions with vendors (Díez et al., 2017). By doing so, students not only enhance their vocabulary and descriptive language abilities but also gain a deeper understanding of their own and others' cultures.

Another effective application of technology-integrated photovoice in language learning is through social media platforms (Foster et al., 2023). Teachers can create private groups on platforms like Facebook or Instagram where students can post their photovoice projects, comment on each other's posts, and engage in discussions. This method provides a real-world context for language use, as students must write captions, respond to comments, and interact in the target language. For example, students learning English can document aspects of their community that reflect environmental issues, post their photos with explanatory captions, and discuss potential solutions with classmates in the comments section. This not only reinforces language skills but also promotes critical thinking and collaborative problem-solving. Through these technology-integrated photovoice projects, language learners can experience a richer, more interactive, and socially relevant language learning process. Through these developments in learners, the educators can see the interest, competence and recognition of the learners (Henderson et al., 2023). Photovoice projects are an inquest about the learners' domain knowledge within themselves.

PROJECT EVALUATION

Evaluating project-based learning (PBL) involves assessing both the process and the outcomes of student projects to ensure that learning objectives are met and students develop essential skills. One critical aspect of PBL evaluation is formative assessment, which occurs throughout the project's duration. This involves providing continuous feedback to students on their progress, helping them refine their ideas, and guiding them toward effective problem-solving strategies. Teachers can use various formative assessment tools, such as journals, progress reports, peer reviews, and teacher-student conferences, to monitor students' ongoing work. For example, in a language learning project where students create a digital story, teachers might review drafts, offer feedback on language use, and suggest improvements on narrative coherence and technical aspects of the project.

Summative assessment, on the other hand, evaluates the final product and the overall learning outcomes of the project. This type of assessment focuses on the quality of the finished project, the depth of understanding demonstrated by the students, and the skills they have developed throughout the project. Teachers might use rubrics that outline specific criteria, such as creativity, content accuracy, language proficiency, collaboration, and presentation skills, to evaluate the final projects. For instance, in a history project where students create a documentary, the rubric might assess the historical accuracy, the narrative structure, the effectiveness of the multimedia elements, and the clarity of the spoken and written language. Summative assessment provides a comprehensive overview of what

students have learned and how well they can apply their knowledge and skills in a practical context.

Reflective assessment is also a vital component of evaluating PBL. This involves encouraging students to reflect on their learning experiences, the challenges they faced, and the strategies they used to overcome them. Reflective assessments can be conducted through self-assessment questionnaires, reflective essays, or group discussions where students share their insights and learn from each other's experiences. For example, after completing a group science project on environmental sustainability, students might write a reflection on what they learned about the topic, how they collaborated with their peers, and how they managed any conflicts or difficulties during the project. This reflective practice not only helps students internalize their learning but also fosters critical thinking, self-awareness, and a deeper understanding of the project's impact on their overall development. Through a combination of formative, summative, and reflective assessments, educators can comprehensively evaluate the effectiveness of project-based learning and support students in their continuous growth and development.

BUSINESS ENGLISH PHOTOVOICE PROJECTS

Photovoice projects in business English learning allow students to capture and analyze diverse aspects of local businesses. These include workplace cultures, marketing strategies, entrepreneurial journeys, customer service practices, sustainability efforts, cross-cultural business practices, and specific business processes. Through photography, students gain firsthand insights into these areas, enhancing their understanding of business English vocabulary, industry concepts, and effective communication skills. These projects promote critical thinking and prepare students for professional settings by immersing them in authentic business contexts. Educators can use photovoice to create engaging learning experiences that bridge classroom theory with practical applications, empowering students to apply their knowledge in real-world scenarios

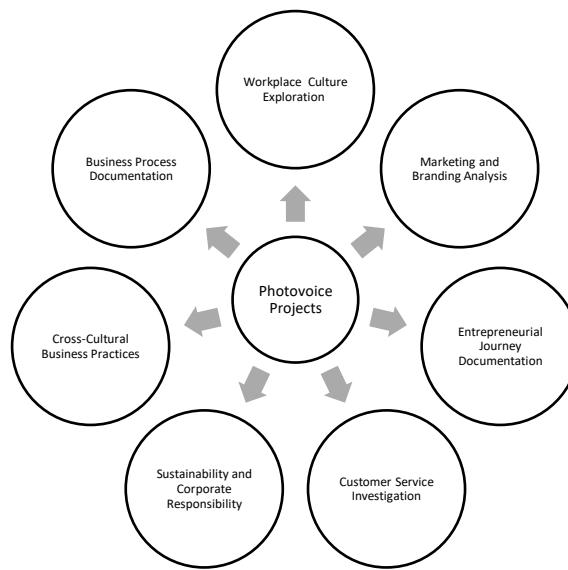
1. **Workplace Culture Exploration:** Students can take photographs that capture different aspects of workplace culture in local businesses. For example, they might photograph office layouts, team meetings, or employee interactions. These images can then be used to create presentations or digital stories that describe the work environment, communication styles, and organizational practices observed. This project allows students to practice business-related vocabulary and cultural nuances while engaging in authentic learning experiences.

2. **Marketing and Branding Analysis:** In this project, students photograph various marketing materials, such as advertisements, product displays, and branding elements in local stores or online. They can analyze these images to discuss marketing strategies, target audiences, and branding effectiveness. By creating reports or presentations based on their findings, students can enhance their business English skills, particularly in the areas of marketing terminology and persuasive communication.

3. Entrepreneurial Journey Documentation: Students can document the journey of a local entrepreneur through photographs, capturing stages such as product development, customer interactions, and business operations. These images can form the basis of a case study or a narrative project where students describe the entrepreneur's challenges, successes, and business strategies. This project encourages students to use business vocabulary and concepts while learning from real-life entrepreneurial experiences.

4. Customer Service Investigation: For this project, students take photos that illustrate customer service practices in various businesses, such as interactions at a reception desk, customer service counters, or service-related signage. They can then analyze these photos to discuss the effectiveness of the customer service approaches observed, providing recommendations for improvements. This exercise helps students develop language skills relevant to customer relations and service excellence.

Figure 1.
Business English Photovoice Project



5. Sustainability and Corporate Responsibility: Students can photograph businesses that implement sustainable practices or corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives. Examples might include eco-friendly packaging, recycling programs, or community service events. These photos can be used to create reports or presentations that discuss the business's sustainability efforts and their impact on the community and environment. This project integrates vocabulary related to sustainability and CSR, promoting an understanding of ethical business practices.

6. Cross-Cultural Business Practices: In this project, students photograph examples of business practices influenced by cultural factors, such as negotiation styles, workplace attire, or business etiquette. These images can serve as a starting point for discussions and analyses

of how culture affects business operations and communication. Students can create comparative studies or cultural guides, enhancing their understanding of cross-cultural communication in a business context.

7. Business Process Documentation: Students can document a specific business process through a series of photographs, such as product manufacturing, supply chain logistics, or service delivery. These photos can be used to create a step-by-step guide or instructional manual that explains the process in detail. This project helps students learn and use technical business vocabulary and process-oriented language.

These photovoice projects not only promote authentic and participatory learning but also help students apply business English in real-world contexts, enhancing their language skills and understanding of business concepts.

ENGINEERING ENGLISH PHOTOVOICE PROJECTS

Engineering English learning may differ on the basis of engineering vocabulary and sentence structure, but the goal of the usage is more or less the same as business English. Considering this, the measurement remains the same in both types of language learning environments. For the project study, the engineering students used the engineering context for the photovoice. Their knowledge exploration has been done through speaking and writing skills. Their skills are measured as workplace culture exploration, marketing and branding analysis, entrepreneurial journey documentation, customer service investigation, sustainability and corporate responsibility, cross-cultural engineering practices, and technical process documentation

1. Workplace Culture Exploration: Students are instructed to take photographs of different aspects of workplace culture in local engineering environments. For example, they might photograph building construction areas, lathes, auto-mobile shops/repairing units, negotiations on mobile/laptop purchasing, office layouts, team meetings, or employee interactions. These images further develop to create presentations or digital stories that describe the work environment, communication styles, and organizational practices observed. This project supports students' acquisition of specific engineering-related vocabulary and cultural nuances while engaging in authentic learning experiences.

2. Marketing and Branding Analysis: In this project, students' photographs of various marketing materials, such as advertisements, product displays, and branding elements in local stores or online, they can analyze these images to discuss marketing strategies, target audiences, branding effectiveness, differentiate local terms with scientific technical terms, and collaborate in various engineering domains. By creating reports or presentations based

on their findings, students can enhance their engineering English skills, particularly in the areas of engineering terminology and persuasive communication.

3. Entrepreneurial Journey Documentation: Students can document the journey of a local engineering entrepreneur through photographs, covering stages like product development, customer interactions, engineering usage, and business operations. This can be used as a case study or narrative project, highlighting challenges, successes, and business strategies. This project encourages students to use business and engineering vocabulary while learning from real-life entrepreneurial experiences.

4. Customer Service Investigation: This project involves students analyzing photos of customer service practices in Engineering businesses, such as product production, counters, and signage. They analyze these photos to discuss effectiveness and provide recommendations for improvement, enhancing language skills for customer relations, engineering goods' needs, and service excellence.

5. Sustainability and Corporate Responsibility: Students can use their photography skills to document engineering projects that promote sustainability and corporate social responsibility (CSR). Examples include eco-friendly engineering, recycling programs, renewable energy resources, and community service events. These photos can be used to create reports or presentations discussing the sustainability efforts and their impact on the community and environment, promoting ethical engineering practices.

6. It Cross-Cultural Engineering Practices: This project involves students capturing images of engineering practices influenced by cultural factors, such as negotiation styles, workplace attire, and engineering roles during natural disasters. These images can be used to analyze how culture impacts engineering operations and communication, and can be used to create comparative studies or cultural guides.

7. Technical Process Documentation: This project enables students to create a step-by-step guide or instructional manual for a specific technical process, such as product manufacturing or service delivery, by documenting it using photographs, thereby enhancing their understanding of engineering business vocabulary and process-oriented language.

These photovoice projects not only promote authentic and participatory learning but also help students apply engineering English in real-world contexts, enhancing their language skills and understanding of business concepts. It can be confirmed that photovoice can be used to visualize the engineering identity experiences (Henderson et al., 2023).

CONCLUSION

In Indonesia and All India Council of Technical Education, integrating photovoice projects within project-based learning (PBL) significantly enhances students' business/engineering English learning experiences by promoting learner autonomy, collaboration, and engagement with real-world business/engineering contexts. These projects empower students to document and analyze authentic business/engineering environments, developing practical language skills, industry-specific vocabulary, and a deeper understanding of business/engineering practices. The incorporation of technology enriches the learning experience, fostering digital literacy alongside language proficiency. Evaluative methods, including formative, summative, and reflective assessments, ensure comprehensive understanding and continuous improvement of students' progress. By leveraging photovoice projects, educators can create innovative, engaging learning environments that prepare students for the complexities of the business/engineering world, ultimately contributing to the development of skilled and competent professionals.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

No conflict of interest reported by the authors

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