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## Bridging teaching experience and reflective academic writing through photovoice: Indonesian *PLP-KKN* students in Thailand

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### Abstract

This study aimed to explore how Photovoice supported Indonesian pre-service teachers participating in an international Praktik Lapangan Persekolahan and Community Service program (*PLP-KKN*) in Thailand in developing reflective academic writing based on their teaching experiences. The study focused exclusively on the Indonesian *PLP-KKN* students, while the teaching context in Thailand functioned as an intercultural learning environment rather than the object of investigation. A qualitative case study design was employed, involving two Indonesian student-teachers. Data were collected through Photovoice-based reflective writing and follow-up interviews. In this study, photographs functioned as reflective prompts that helped participants recall experiences, reflect on meaningful teaching moments, and organize their ideas in writing. The findings revealed that Photovoice helped participants express their teaching experiences more clearly and meaningfully in reflective academic writing. The use of photographs encouraged deeper reflection, supported idea development, and helped connect personal experiences with academic reflection. This study concludes that Photovoice can serve as a practical and effective reflective tool in international practicum and service-learning programs, particularly in supporting pre-service teachers' reflective thinking and reflective academic writing in intercultural learning contexts.

### Keywords

Intercultural learning, photovoice, *PLP-KKN*, pre-service teachers, reflective academic writing

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## Introduction

Writing is an important skill for university students, especially for pre-service teachers. In teacher education programs, students are not only expected to understand teaching theories but also to reflect on their teaching experiences and express their thoughts through academic writing. Writing, in this context, is not only used to complete assignments, but also to help students think more deeply about what they experience in the classroom. Through reflective academic writing, pre-service teachers can describe what happened during teaching, evaluate their actions, and connect real classroom situations with what they learned at university. Studies have shown that reflective writing plays an important role in developing professional awareness and teaching identity among pre-service teachers (Abrar et al., 2023; Schön, 1983).

Reflective academic writing is closely related to experiential learning. According to experiential learning theory, learning occurs when individuals reflect on their experiences and transform them into meaningful knowledge (Kolb, 2015). In teacher education, this means that teaching experiences become meaningful only when students are encouraged to reflect on them. Without reflection, teaching practice may become a routine activity without deeper learning. Therefore, reflective writing is considered an essential part of teacher preparation programs because it helps students understand not only *what* they do in the classroom, but also *why* they do it and *what* they learn from it.

Reflective writing becomes even more important during teaching practicum programs such as *Praktik Lapangan Persekolahan* and Community Service (PLP-KKN). In PLP-KKN, pre-service teachers are placed in real school environments where they interact with students, manage classrooms, and deal with real teaching challenges. Research in teacher education suggests that learning from teaching practice does not happen automatically. Students need structured reflection to help them analyze their experiences and learn from them (Fajaryani et al., 2021; Mukminin et al., 2015). Without reflection, teaching experiences may remain personal stories rather than sources of professional learning.

When PLP-KKN is conducted in an international setting, such as in Thailand, pre-service teachers also experience intercultural learning. They are exposed to different teaching styles, classroom interactions, school cultures, and social norms. Intercultural learning theory explains that these experiences can support personal and professional growth if students are guided to reflect on cultural differences and similarities (Byram, 1997; Deardorff, 2020). However, without proper reflection, students may only notice surface-level differences and fail to develop deeper understanding of intercultural teaching experiences.

Despite its importance, many pre-service teachers find reflective academic writing difficult. Previous studies report that students often struggle to remember specific teaching moments, organize ideas clearly, and move beyond simple descriptions when writing reflections (Abrar et al., 2023; Latifi et al., 2023). Instead of analyzing experiences, students often only describe what happened in the classroom. This happens because reflective writing requires complex thinking processes, such as recalling experiences, understanding emotions, analyzing actions, and expressing ideas in academic language at the same time (Flower & Hayes, 1981). For many students, this process is challenging without adequate support.

To support reflective writing, educational researchers emphasize the importance of scaffolding. Scaffolding theory explains that learners need guidance and support when performing complex tasks, especially when they are still developing their skills (Hammond & Gibbons, 2005). From a socio-constructivist perspective, learning and reflection are supported

by tools that help students organize their thinking and connect experiences with meaning (Vygotsky, 1978). Research shows that providing appropriate tools can help students reflect more deeply and express their ideas more clearly in writing.

One type of scaffolding that has received attention in recent educational research is the use of visual tools. Visual support, such as images or photographs, can help learners remember experiences, focus their reflection, and organize ideas (Mayer, 2020; Sweller, 2019). Visual learning theory explains that combining visual and verbal information makes learning more effective because it helps reduce cognitive difficulty. In reflective writing, visual prompts can help students move from abstract thinking to concrete reflection based on real experiences.

Photovoice is one reflective approach that uses photographs as a tool for reflection. Photovoice allows participants to take pictures of meaningful experiences and use them as prompts for reflection and writing. Studies conducted in the last five years show that Photovoice supports reflective learning by helping students recall experiences, express emotions, and focus on important moments (Adawiyah et al., 2024; Jayantini, 2022). In teacher education, Photovoice has been found to help pre-service teachers identify significant teaching experiences and reflect more deeply on their teaching practices (Fajaryani et al., 2021).

Recent studies also suggest that Photovoice can support reflective academic writing. Photographs provide concrete references that help writers organize ideas and connect personal experiences with academic reflection (Kerman et al., 2024; Latifi et al., 2023). By looking at photographs, students can remember specific teaching moments more clearly and write reflections that are more focused and meaningful. This approach is consistent with experiential learning theory, which emphasizes the importance of revisiting experiences during reflection (Kolb, 2015).

While many studies have discussed reflective learning and the use of Photovoice, limited attention has been given to how Photovoice supports specific aspects of reflective academic writing, such as idea organization, depth of reflection, and academic tone. This limitation is particularly evident in international practicum contexts involving Indonesian pre-service teachers. Most existing studies tend to focus on general reflection or learning outcomes rather than on the writing process itself.

In addition, research that explores Indonesian pre-service teachers' reflective academic writing during international *PLP-KKN* programs remains scarce. This gap indicates the need for a study that focuses not only on reflection, but also on how reflection is transformed into reflective academic writing within an intercultural learning context. This study addresses the following research question: How does Photovoice support Indonesian pre-service teachers in developing reflective academic writing during an international *PLP-KKN* program?

## Literature Review

### *Reflective academic writing in teacher education*

Reflective academic writing plays an important role in teacher education because it helps pre-service teachers learn from their teaching experiences. Through reflective writing, students are encouraged to look back at what happened in the classroom, think about their teaching decisions, and understand what they have learned from practice. Reflective academic writing allows students to move beyond simply telling a story about teaching and begin to explain the meaning of their experiences in a more thoughtful and academic way. Previous studies show that this type of writing supports professional awareness and helps pre-service teachers

connect their experiences with academic learning (Nguyen & Ngo, 2023; Soodmand Afshar & Doosti, 2022).

Reflective writing becomes even more meaningful during teaching practicum programs. When pre-service teachers are actively involved in classroom teaching, reflective writing helps them process their experiences more deeply. Research indicates that students learn more effectively when they are guided to reflect on their teaching experiences through writing rather than relying only on teaching practice itself (Farrell, 2020; Mann & Walsh, 2020). In this sense, reflective academic writing is not only a writing activity, but also a learning process that supports the development of future teachers.

### ***Challenges in reflective academic writing***

Although reflective academic writing is important, many pre-service teachers find it difficult. Several studies report that students often write reflections that mainly describe classroom events without deeper analysis. This happens because students are not always sure how to reflect critically on their experiences. For example, Latifi et al. (2023) found that reflective writing tasks often result in descriptive texts when students lack guidance on how to analyze their experiences. Similarly, Kerman et al. (2024) reported that students struggle to organize reflective ideas and connect personal experiences with academic concepts.

Reflective writing is also cognitively demanding. Students are expected to remember teaching experiences, consider their emotions, and express their ideas clearly in academic language at the same time. Without clear support, this process can feel overwhelming. As a result, students may produce reflections that are superficial or unclear (Hyland & Hyland, 2021; Noroozi et al., 2020). These findings suggest that reflective academic writing needs appropriate support so that students can reflect more meaningfully and confidently.

### ***Intercultural learning in international practicum programs***

Intercultural learning is an important aspect of international practicum programs. When pre-service teachers teach in a different cultural context, they are exposed to new classroom practices, communication styles, and school cultures. These experiences can provide valuable learning opportunities, but they can also create confusion if students are not guided to reflect on what they experience. Studies show that intercultural learning becomes more meaningful when students are encouraged to reflect on their teaching experiences in unfamiliar cultural settings (Nguyen, 2024; Pham & Tran, 2022).

Without reflection, pre-service teachers may misunderstand cultural differences or focus only on surface-level aspects of teaching. Reflective activities, including reflective writing, help students make sense of intercultural teaching experiences and develop intercultural awareness. Through reflection, students can better understand how culture influences teaching and learning, which is essential in international practicum programs (Deardorff & Jones, 2021; Pham & Tran, 2022).

### ***Photovoice as a reflective learning tool***

Photovoice has been widely used as a reflective learning tool in educational research. This approach allows learners to capture meaningful experiences through photographs and use them as prompts for reflection. By working with photographs, students can recall teaching

experiences more clearly and focus on moments that are meaningful to them. Studies show that Photovoice supports reflection by helping learners connect their experiences with their thoughts and feelings (Jayantini, 2022; Sutton-Brown, 2020).

In teacher education, Photovoice helps pre-service teachers reflect more deeply because photographs provide concrete references to real teaching situations. Instead of relying only on memory, students can use photographs to revisit their experiences and think more carefully about what happened in the classroom. Research shows that this visual support helps students connect reflection with actual teaching practice (Jayantini, 2022; Wang & Burris, 2020).

### ***Photovoice and reflective academic writing***

Photovoice also shows strong potential in supporting reflective academic writing. Photographs help students organize their ideas and focus their reflections on specific experiences. Studies indicate that reflective writing becomes clearer and more meaningful when students start from real experiences captured in photographs (Latifi et al., 2023). Visual prompts also help reduce writing difficulty and support idea development in reflective academic writing (Kerman et al., 2024).

In addition, Photovoice supports the emotional aspect of reflection. Photographs often trigger emotions that help students write reflections that feel more personal and authentic. Emotional engagement plays an important role in reflective writing because it helps students express their experiences more honestly and meaningfully (Barrett & Moore, 2021; Jayantini, 2022). For this reason, Photovoice can be a useful tool for supporting reflective academic writing, especially in practicum and intercultural learning contexts.

However, studies that focus specifically on the use of Photovoice to support reflective academic writing among pre-service teachers in international practicum programs are still limited. Most existing research discusses reflection in general or focuses on learning outcomes rather than the writing process itself. This gap highlights the need for further research, including the present study, which explores how Photovoice supports reflective academic writing among Indonesian pre-service teachers in an intercultural learning context.

## **Research Methodology**

### ***Research design***

This study adopted a qualitative research design using a case study approach. This design was chosen because the study aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of how Photovoice supported reflective academic writing, rather than to measure learning outcomes or test hypotheses. A qualitative case study allows the researcher to explore participants' experiences, reflections, and meaning-making processes within a specific and real-life context.

The case examined in this study involved Indonesian pre-service teachers who participated in an international *PLP-KKN* program. The focus was placed on the reflective writing process supported by Photovoice, while the international teaching context functioned as a learning environment that shaped participants' experiences.

### *Participants*

The participants of this study were two students from a private Islamic university in South Sumatra, Indonesia. Both participants were involved in an international *PLP-KKN* program conducted in Southern Thailand during the odd semester of 2025. They were selected using purposive sampling based on their active involvement in teaching activities during the program and their willingness to participate in reflective writing activities.

In this study, the students served as the main participants, while the intercultural context of teaching and community service in Southern Thailand was not treated as the object of analysis. The small number of participants allowed the researcher to explore their reflective experiences and academic writing processes in depth. To ensure confidentiality, pseudonyms were used throughout the study. Although this study involved only two participants, the focus of this qualitative case study was not on generalization but on gaining an in-depth understanding of reflective academic writing experiences. Rich data were obtained through repeated reflective writings and in-depth interviews, allowing meaningful insights into how Photovoice supported reflection and writing development.

### *Instruments*

A semi-structured interview and document analysis were employed as the instruments in this study. Before conducting the interviews, a document analysis was carried out. The documents analyzed were students' reflective academic writings produced during their participation in an international *PLP-KKN* program in Southern Thailand. These reflective writings were developed through Photovoice activities, in which participants used photographs as reflective prompts to support their writing.

The reflective writings were analyzed to explore how participants described their teaching experiences, reflected on their teaching practices, and articulated learning gained from those experiences. The aspects used in the document analysis were developed by the researcher based on relevant journal studies on reflective academic writing, Photovoice, and teacher education. These aspects were used to ensure that the document analysis was conducted systematically and consistently. The aspects of the document analysis are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** *Aspects used in document analysis*

No.	Aspects	Explanation
1.	Clarity of ideas	The extent to which ideas in the writing are clear, easy to understand, and focused on the teaching experience being reflected on.
2.	Organization of writing	The way ideas are organized logically, including the flow from experience description to reflection and learning.
3.	Depth of reflection	The extent to which the writing goes beyond describing events and shows thoughtful reflection on teaching experiences.
4.	Academic tone	The use of an appropriate academic style in reflective writing, avoiding overly informal or diary-like language.

The results of the document analysis were then used as a reference during the interviews to examine the consistency between participants' reflective writings and their verbal explanations. This process also helped to support and deepen the main data obtained from the interviews.

The interviews were conducted through face-to-face meetings at the office of the Bureau of Cooperation and International Affairs of the university. A semi-structured interview protocol was used as a guide during the interviews. The interviews were conducted in Indonesian to ensure that participants could express their ideas comfortably and clearly. Each interview lasted approximately 10–15 minutes and was audio-recorded with participants' consent. The recordings were then transcribed for data analysis.

### *Data analysis procedures*

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The analysis began with repeated reading of the reflective writings and interview transcripts to gain familiarity with the data. Initial codes were generated by identifying recurring ideas related to reflection, writing development, and learning experiences. These codes were then grouped into broader themes that represented how Photovoice supported reflective academic writing. The themes were reviewed and refined to ensure consistency and clarity. Throughout the analysis process, the researcher focused on participants' perspectives and ensured that interpretations were grounded in the data rather than personal assumptions. This procedure allowed the study to present a clear and credible account of the role of Photovoice in supporting reflective academic writing.

To ensure trustworthiness, this study applied data triangulation by comparing reflective writings and interview data. Prolonged engagement with the data and careful documentation of the analysis process supported credibility and dependability. The findings were grounded in participants' voices to minimize researcher bias and ensure that interpretations were based on the data.

### **Findings**

This section presents the findings of the study based on the analysis of students' reflective academic writing and interviews. The findings focus on how Photovoice supported Indonesian pre-service teachers in reflecting on their teaching experiences and developing reflective academic writing during the international *PLP-KKN* program in Southern Thailand. The findings are organized into themes and sub-themes to show clear patterns that emerged from the data.

The findings reveal that Photovoice played an important role in helping students reflect on their teaching experiences and express their reflections in academic writing. Through the use of photographs as reflective prompts, students were able to recall teaching experiences, reflect more deeply, recognize learning, and organize their writing more clearly. This theme is explained through several sub-themes below.

**Table 2.** *The role of photovoice in supporting reflective academic writing*

No.	Themes	Sub-themes
1.	Photovoice helped students remember teaching experiences	Recalling specific classroom situations through photographs Writing reflections based on real teaching experiences
2.	Photovoice supported deeper reflection on teaching	Thinking about teaching actions and challenges Understanding reasons behind teaching decisions
3.	Photovoice increased awareness of learning	Realizing what was learned from teaching experiences Recognizing personal and professional growth
4.	Photovoice supported reflective academic writing	Organizing ideas more clearly in writing Maintaining an academic tone in reflective writing

***Photovoice helped students remember teaching experiences***

The findings show that Photovoice helped students remember their teaching experiences more clearly. The photographs they took during teaching activities worked as reminders that brought back memories of what happened in the classroom. Because of this, students were able to recall specific situations and write reflections based on real teaching experiences. This theme is explained through two sub-themes.

***Recalling specific classroom situations through photographs***, interview findings show that Photovoice helped students recall specific classroom situations during their teaching activities. Students explained that photographs reminded them of what happened in the classroom, including their actions as teachers, students’ responses, and the overall classroom atmosphere. The photographs helped them remember details that might have been forgotten over time.

“When I looked at the photo, I remembered the classroom situation clearly. I remembered what I was doing and how the students reacted at that time.” (P1)

“When I saw the photo again, I could remember the class atmosphere and what really happened during the lesson.” (P2)

Students’ reflective writings also show that photographs helped them recall concrete classroom situations. In their writing, students described specific teaching moments shown in the photographs in a clear and detailed way.

“This photo shows the moment when I was teaching in front of the class. The students were paying attention, but some of them looked confused, so I tried to explain the lesson again.” (P1)

“This picture reminds me of my first time teaching in Thailand. I remember feeling nervous and trying to manage the class as well as I could.” (P2)

Overall, the interview responses and reflective writings show that Photovoice helped students recall specific classroom situations more clearly. The photographs acted as visual reminders

that supported memory and helped students focus their reflections on real teaching experiences.

**Writing reflections based on real teaching experiences**, interview findings show that Photovoice helped students write reflections based on real teaching experiences. Students explained that photographs guided them in deciding what to write and helped them focus on actual classroom events, which reduced confusion during the writing process. The photographs functioned as concrete references that directed students' reflections to what they had truly experienced during teaching.

“The photo helped me decide what to write. I just wrote based on what happened in that picture.” (P1)

“Using photos made my writing easier because I wrote about what I really experienced, not just my imagination.” (P2)

Students' reflective writings also show that their reflections were grounded in real teaching experiences. The writing focused on actual classroom situations and the learning gained from those experiences.

“From this teaching experience, I learned that I need to be more patient when explaining the lesson to students.” (P1)

“This picture represents my first teaching experience in Thailand. I felt nervous, but I learned how to manage the class better after the lesson.” (P2)

Overall, the interview responses and reflective writings consistently show that Photovoice supported students in writing reflections based on real classroom situations. By using photographs as reflective prompts, students were able to focus their writing on actual teaching experiences and express their reflections more clearly.

### ***Photovoice supported deeper reflection on teaching***

The findings show that Photovoice supported students in reflecting more deeply on their teaching experiences. Through photographs, students did not only remember what happened in the classroom, but also began to think about their teaching actions and the challenges they faced.

**Thinking about teaching actions and challenges**, interview findings show that Photovoice encouraged students to think more carefully about their teaching actions and the challenges they experienced in the classroom. When students looked at their photographs, they reflected on what they did during teaching and identified difficulties they faced, such as explaining lessons clearly or managing students.

“When I saw the photo, I started thinking about what I did during the lesson. I realized that my explanation was not clear enough for some students.” (P1)

“The photo made me think again about the challenges I faced in the class, especially when students did not understand the lesson quickly.” (P2)

Students' reflective writings also show that they reflected on their teaching actions and challenges. In their writing, students explained what they did during teaching and recognized the difficulties they encountered.

“From this teaching experience, I realized that I need to explain the lesson more slowly because some students had difficulty understanding.” (P1)

“This picture shows a challenging moment for me because I had to manage the class while explaining the lesson at the same time.” (P2)

Overall, these findings indicate that Photovoice helped students move beyond simply describing their teaching experiences. By reflecting on photographs, students became more aware of their teaching actions and classroom challenges, which allowed them to think more critically about their teaching practice and identify areas for improvement.

***Understanding reasons behind teaching decisions***, the findings also show that Photovoice helped students understand the reasons behind their teaching decisions. By reflecting on photographs, students were able to explain why they chose certain teaching strategies or actions in the classroom. Interview results show that students used photographs to think about their decisions as teachers:

“When I looked at the photo, I understood why I chose that way of teaching. I did it because the students seemed confused at that time.” (P1)

“The photo helped me remember why I changed my teaching method during the lesson.” (P2)

This deeper reflection was also evident in students' reflective writing. The writing shows that students explained the reasons behind their teaching actions based on classroom situations.

“I decided to change my explanation because I saw that students were still confused, and I wanted them to understand better.” (P1)

“From this experience, I learned that my teaching decisions were influenced by how students responded in the classroom.” (P2)

Overall, these findings show that Photovoice supported deeper reflection on teaching by helping students think about their teaching actions, challenges, and the reasons behind their teaching decisions. The photographs encouraged students to move beyond describing experiences and reflect more thoughtfully on their teaching practice.

### ***Photovoice increased awareness of learning***

The findings show that Photovoice helped students become more aware of what they learned from their teaching experiences. By looking at their photographs, students were able to reflect on their experiences and realize learning that emerged from their teaching activities.

***Realizing what was learned from teaching experiences***, interview findings show that Photovoice helped students realize what they learned from teaching experiences. When students

looked at their photographs, they reflected on their teaching activities and identified lessons learned from those experiences.

“When I saw the photo, I realized that I learned how to explain the lesson more clearly and be more patient with the students.” (P1)

“The photo helped me realize that teaching is not easy, but I learned how to communicate better with students.” (P2)

Students’ reflective writings also show that they were able to clearly state what they learned from teaching. Their writing focused on learning gained from real classroom situations.

“From this teaching experience, I learned that I need to adjust my teaching style to students’ understanding.” (P1)

“This experience taught me that teaching requires patience and good communication with students.” (P2)

Overall, these findings show that Photovoice helped students move beyond simply describing what happened in the classroom. Through photographs, students were encouraged to reflect more carefully on their teaching experiences and identify clear learning points. The photographs supported students in recognizing learning that might otherwise remain unnoticed, helping them articulate what they learned in a more concrete and focused way in their reflective writing.

***Recognizing personal and professional growth***, the findings also show that Photovoice helped students recognize their personal and professional growth as pre-service teachers. Through reflection on photographs, students became more aware of changes in their confidence, sense of responsibility, and teaching skills. Interview findings show that students felt personal growth after reflecting on their teaching experiences:

“When I looked at the photo, I felt that I became more confident as a teacher compared to my first teaching experience.” (P1)

“The photo made me realize that I grew not only as a teacher, but also as a person who can handle challenges better.” (P2)

This awareness was also reflected in students’ reflective writing. Their writing shows that they connected teaching experiences with personal and professional development.

“This teaching experience helped me grow as a teacher because I learned to manage the class and control my emotions.” (P1)

“Through this experience, I realized that I am more responsible and confident in my role as a teacher.” (P2)

Overall, these findings indicate that Photovoice supported students in recognizing both personal and professional growth through reflection on teaching experiences. The use of

photographs helped students see changes in themselves over time, not only in terms of teaching skills but also in confidence and self-awareness. By reflecting on photographs and writing about their experiences, students were able to understand teaching as a learning process that contributed to their development as future teachers. This suggests that Photovoice encouraged deeper reflection that helped students recognize growth that developed gradually through practice.

### ***Photovoice supported reflective academic writing***

The findings show that Photovoice supported students in developing reflective academic writing. By using photographs as reflective prompts, students were able to organize their ideas more clearly and maintain an academic tone while writing about personal teaching experiences.

***Organizing ideas more clearly in writing***, interview findings show that Photovoice helped students organize their ideas more clearly in writing. Students explained that photographs gave them a clear starting point and helped them focus on one teaching experience at a time. This made it easier to arrange ideas in a logical order and avoid confusion during the writing process.

“The photo helped me organize my writing. I knew which experience to write first and what to explain next.” (P1)

“When I used the photo, my ideas were more focused, so my writing did not feel messy.” (P2)

Students’ reflective writings also show clearer organization of ideas. Their writing followed a logical flow, starting from describing the teaching situation and moving toward reflection and learning.

“This picture shows my teaching activity in the classroom. After that lesson, I reflected on what I did and what I need to improve.” (P1)

“From this experience, I described the situation first and then explained what I learned from teaching the class.” (P2)

Overall, these findings indicate that Photovoice helped students structure their reflective writing more clearly. The photographs functioned as guides that helped students arrange their ideas step by step, making their writing easier to follow.

### ***Maintaining an academic tone in reflective writing***

The findings also show that Photovoice supported students in maintaining an academic tone in their reflective writing. Although the reflections were based on personal teaching experiences, students were able to express their thoughts in a more formal and academic way. Interview findings show that photographs helped students stay focused on teaching experiences rather than personal stories unrelated to learning:

“The photo helped me stay focused on teaching, so my writing was more academic and not like a personal diary.” (P1)

“Using photos made me think more carefully about how to write in a proper academic way.” (P2)

This was also reflected in students’ written reflections. Their writing showed an effort to use formal language and focus on learning rather than emotions alone.

“This teaching experience helped me understand the importance of clear explanation in the learning process.” (P1)

“Through this experience, I realized that effective teaching requires preparation and good communication with students.” (P2)

Overall, these findings show that Photovoice supported students in maintaining an academic tone while reflecting on personal experiences. The photographs helped students focus their reflections on teaching and learning, which encouraged them to write in a more academic manner. By combining real experiences with reflective writing, students were able to produce reflective academic texts that were clear, focused, and appropriate for an academic context.

## Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that Photovoice played a meaningful role in supporting Indonesian pre-service teachers in reflecting on their teaching experiences and developing reflective academic writing during the international *PLP-KKN* program. The use of photographs enabled students to recall specific classroom situations and ground their reflections in real teaching experiences. This finding strongly aligns with experiential learning theory, which emphasizes that learning begins with concrete experience and is deepened through reflection (Kolb, 2015). Photographs functioned as tangible representations of experience, allowing students to revisit teaching moments and transform them into reflective writing. This process is also consistent with constructivist learning theory, which views learning as an active process of meaning construction based on experience (Fosnot, 2013).

In addition, the role of photographs in supporting memory and reflection can be explained through dual coding theory, which suggests that information processed through both visual and verbal channels is more easily recalled and understood (Paivio, 2006). In this study, photographs worked together with writing to help students remember classroom situations more clearly and express them in words. This supports Mayer’s (2020) multimedia learning theory, which highlights the value of visual elements in helping learners organize and process information more effectively.

The findings also show that Photovoice encouraged deeper reflection on teaching actions and challenges. Students were not only describing what happened but were also thinking about why certain situations occurred and how they responded as teachers. This reflects Schön’s (1983) concept of reflective practice, particularly reflection-on-action, where professionals revisit their actions to improve future practice. Furthermore, this reflective process can be understood through Dewey’s (1933) view of reflection as active, persistent, and

careful consideration of experience. Photovoice provided a concrete focus that supported this reflective thinking, helping students move beyond surface-level reflection.

From a sociocultural perspective, [Vygotsky \(1978\)](#) emphasizes that learning is mediated by tools and signs. In this study, photographs acted as mediating tools that supported students' thinking and reflection. By using photographs, students were able to externalize their experiences and reflect on them more deeply. This also relates to scaffolding theory, which explains that learning is supported through tools and guidance that help learners perform tasks they may struggle with independently ([Hammond & Gibbons, 2005](#)). Photovoice served as a form of cognitive scaffolding that supported reflective writing.

Another important finding is the increased awareness of learning and personal growth among students. Through Photovoice, students were able to clearly identify what they learned from teaching experiences and recognize changes in their confidence and professional identity. This finding aligns with self-regulated learning theory, which emphasizes reflection as a key component of learning awareness and self-development ([Zimmerman, 2002](#)). By reflecting on photographs, students monitored their own learning and evaluated their progress as teachers. In addition, [Bandura's \(1997\)](#) social cognitive theory highlights the role of self-reflection in developing self-efficacy. Students' reflections show growing confidence, suggesting that Photovoice supported their belief in their ability to teach.

Emotional engagement also played an important role in students' reflective processes. The photographs often triggered emotions related to teaching experiences, such as nervousness, responsibility, and pride. According to [Immordino-Yang \(2016\)](#), emotions are closely linked to learning and meaning-making. When learners connect emotions with experience, reflection becomes more meaningful. This suggests that Photovoice supported not only cognitive reflection but also emotional engagement, which strengthened students' awareness of learning and growth.

The findings further indicate that Photovoice supported reflective academic writing, particularly in organizing ideas and maintaining an academic tone. From a writing perspective, [Flower and Hayes' \(1981\)](#) cognitive process theory of writing explains that writing involves planning, translating, and reviewing. Photovoice supported the planning stage by providing a clear focus for writing, which helped students organize ideas more effectively. This is also supported by cognitive load theory, which explains that reducing unnecessary cognitive demands allows learners to focus on higher-level thinking ([Sweller, 2019](#)). By reducing uncertainty about what to write, Photovoice enabled students to concentrate on developing and organizing their reflections in a more academic manner.

In the context of an international *PLP-KKN* program, Photovoice also supported intercultural learning. Teaching in a different cultural environment can create uncertainty and confusion if experiences are not reflected upon. Intercultural learning theory emphasizes reflection as a key process for understanding experiences in unfamiliar cultural contexts ([Byram, 1997](#); [Deardorff, 2020](#)). In this study, Photovoice helped students make sense of their teaching experiences in Southern Thailand by connecting visual evidence with reflection and writing. This allowed students to interpret their experiences more thoughtfully and develop greater intercultural awareness.

Overall, this study extends previous research on Photovoice by demonstrating its multiple roles in reflective learning and writing. Photovoice functioned as a memory aid, a reflective tool, a scaffold for deeper thinking, and support for reflective academic writing. By integrating visual experience with reflection and writing, Photovoice helped pre-service teachers develop reflective awareness, learning insight, and academic writing skills in a

meaningful and connected way. These findings suggest that Photovoice has strong potential for use in teacher education, particularly in practicum and international teaching contexts where reflection and writing are essential components of learning.

### Conclusion

This study explored how Photovoice supported Indonesian pre-service teachers participating in an international *PLP–KKN* program in developing reflective academic writing. The findings show that Photovoice helped students recall real classroom experiences, reflect more deeply on their teaching practices, become more aware of learning gained from teaching, and express their reflections in a clearer and more academic way.

Photovoice functioned as a reflective tool that helped students remember specific classroom situations through photographs. These visual prompts enabled students to ground their reflections in real teaching experiences rather than abstract ideas. As a result, students were able to reflect not only on what happened in the classroom, but also on their teaching actions, challenges, and the reasons behind their teaching decisions.

The study also found that Photovoice increased students' awareness of learning and personal growth. Through reflection on photographs, students were able to recognize what they learned from teaching experiences and identify changes in their confidence, responsibility, and professional identity as future teachers. This shows that Photovoice supported learning awareness and reflective thinking during the teaching practicum.

In addition, Photovoice supported the development of reflective academic writing. The use of photographs helped students organize their ideas more clearly and maintain an academic tone while writing about personal teaching experiences. By providing a clear focus for reflection and writing, Photovoice reduced confusion during the writing process and supported students in producing more structured and meaningful reflective texts.

Overall, this study concludes that Photovoice has strong potential as a reflective learning and writing support tool in teacher education, particularly in international practicum contexts. By connecting experience, reflection, and writing, Photovoice helped pre-service teachers develop reflective awareness and academic writing skills in a meaningful and integrated way.

### Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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