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INITIATING ESP WRITING THROUGH PHOTOVOICE: A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY OF INDONESIAN UNDERGRADUATE MANAGEMENT STUDENTS

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Abstract: Starting to write is often the most challenging stage for students in English for Specific Purposes (ESP), particularly in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts. Few studies, however, have examined how students initiate writing rather than focusing on the final product, leaving a gap in understanding the emotional and cognitive processes involved in writing initiation. This study addresses this gap by exploring how Photovoice supports students in beginning ESP writing. A qualitative case study was conducted with 15 undergraduate students from a Management Study Program at a private Islamic university in South Sumatra. Data were collected from students' written texts, reflective responses, and semi-structured interviews, and analyzed thematically. The findings indicate that Photovoice provides a concrete starting point for writing, helping students generate ideas from familiar daily-life contexts and reducing hesitation when facing a blank page. Participants reported feeling more emotionally prepared and confident, and Photovoice also facilitated early draft organization, allowing a natural progression from description to reflection and connections with management-related topics. The study contributes to ESP writing pedagogy by demonstrating that multimodal, experience-based approaches like Photovoice can enhance students' engagement and support the initiation phase of writing in EFL higher education contexts.
Keywords: *cognitive engagement; emotional engagement; ESP writing; Photovoice; qualitative study; writing initiation.*

INTRODUCTION

Writing in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is a key academic skill for university students, particularly those preparing for professional fields such as management and business. ESP writing requires students to communicate ideas clearly, apply discipline-related knowledge, and organize texts in ways that reflect professional practices (Hyland, 2019; Cintamulya et al., 2023; Fiialka et al., 2024). However, in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, many students experience difficulties long before they reach concerns about language accuracy or text structure. One of the most persistent challenges emerges at the very beginning of the writing process, when students are expected to start writing and transform ideas into written form. At this stage, students often hesitate, feel unsure about what to write, and struggle to generate initial ideas, which can delay or even prevent the writing process from moving forward (Rehman et al., 2025; Hafner & Ho, 2020; Goshu & Gebremariam, 2024).

Recent research highlights that the early stage of writing is a critical moment that strongly influences students' engagement with writing tasks. Writing anxiety and hesitation frequently appear during planning and idea generation, when learners are uncertain about content and direction (Sun, 2024; Taufiqulloh, 2025). In the Indonesian EFL context, students often postpone writing because they feel emotionally unprepared and

cognitively unsure about how to begin expressing ideas in English (Cahyono & Mutiaraningrum, 2021; Susilawati, 2023). These challenges indicate that writing difficulties are not solely linguistic but are closely related to students' emotional readiness and cognitive engagement, consistent with the L2 writing process theory, which emphasizes writing as a staged and recursive activity. Emotions such as fear of making mistakes, low confidence, and uncertainty about ideas can interrupt idea generation and discourage participation, particularly at the initial stage of writing (Mei et al., 2025; Moonma, 2021; Ye & Xu, 2024). When these affective barriers are present, students are less likely to organize thoughts or sustain the writing process (Guo, Zou, & Chen, 2023; Hiluf & Alemu, 2024; Baleghizadeh & Maryam, 2019).

To address these issues, scholars highlight the importance of supportive entry points that facilitate engagement from the start of the writing process (Zhang & Zhang, 2024; Golparvar & Khafi, 2021; Zhang et al., 2023). Rather than focusing solely on the final product, instruction should consider how learners initiate writing, integrating both cognitive and affective factors. Multimodal and experience-based approaches have been shown to provide concrete stimuli and scaffold idea generation, which aligns with the affective dimensions of L2 writing (Unsworth, 2024; Taylor & Leun, 2020; Ragab et al., 2025). In EFL contexts, such approaches help learners access ideas more concretely and engage more actively at the early stages of writing (Guo et al., 2023; Cárcamo, Villalón, & Ferreira, 2025).

One pedagogical approach that embodies this perspective is Photovoice. Developed as a participatory research method, Photovoice encourages learners to capture photographs of personal experiences and use them as a basis for reflection and meaning-making (Rosmawanty & Abdulrahman, 2021; Militansina, 2020). In educational settings, Photovoice has been found to support self-expression, reflection, and student voice by linking personal experiences to academic tasks (Douglas, 2021; Fitria, 2024; Lin & Bollen, 2025). Recent studies in EFL writing contexts indicate that Photovoice helps students generate ideas, reflect on experiences, and engage actively in writing tasks (Jayantini, 2022; Nurhadi, 2022; Militansina, 2023; Adawiyah et al., 2024). By using their own photographs as concrete starting points, learners can reduce hesitation and produce writing that feels meaningful and relevant (Pournia, 2022; Tambunan, Siregar, & Hutapea, 2024).

Photovoice is often combined with guided reflection frameworks, such as the SHOWeD model, which encourages learners to move from observation to interpretation and reflection (Rosmawanty & Abdulrahman, 2021). Reflective learning scholars argue that guided reflection helps learners make sense of experience and transform it into meaningful learning (Nobutoshi, 2023; Germain-Rutherford & Karamifar, 2022; Davids & Rinquest, 2024). In writing contexts, this reflective process can support students in organizing their initial ideas and moving from simple description toward more thoughtful reflection and early analysis, which are important components of ESP writing (Beltrán-Palanques, 2024; Amirbayeva, 2024; Al Ali & Wardat, 2024).

Despite the growing body of research on Photovoice, multimodal learning, and ESP writing, there remains a notable gap in the literature. Most existing studies focus on writing outcomes, general engagement, identity development, or genre mastery (Arsyad, 2019; Zhai, 2023), while the initiation stage of writing, the moment when students begin writing and move from hesitation to drafting has received limited empirical attention. In ESP contexts, particularly in Indonesian higher education, research has largely emphasized genre-based instruction, feedback, and final written products (Susilawati, 2023; Zagoto et al., 2025), leaving the processes that support students at the very beginning of writing underexplored. As a result, there is still insufficient understanding of how pedagogical approaches such as Photovoice support students' emotional and cognitive engagement when they first start writing in discipline-specific contexts.

Responding to this gap, the present study explores how Photovoice supports the initiation of ESP writing among undergraduate management students in Indonesia. Using a qualitative case study approach, this study examines students' experiences during the early stage of writing, with particular attention to how photographs activate ideas, how guided reflection supports emotional readiness, and how students begin to organize their thoughts into written texts. Accordingly, the study addresses the following research question: How does Photovoice support students' emotional and cognitive engagement during the initiation stage of ESP writing? By focusing on writing initiation, this study contributes to ESP pedagogy by highlighting the importance of supporting

students at the moment they begin writing, rather than concentrating solely on final products or linguistic accuracy.

Writing in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is closely connected to how knowledge is communicated within particular academic and professional fields. Unlike general English writing, ESP writing requires students to engage with discipline-specific content, purposes, and conventions. In management contexts, writing tasks often involve describing real situations, explaining processes, or reflecting on business-related phenomena. As Hyland (2019a) points out, ESP writing is shaped by "disciplinary ways of meaning making," where language, content, and context are inseparable. For EFL students, this expectation can be demanding. Many students are required to write about topics that are conceptually familiar, yet linguistically challenging. Research has shown that students' difficulties in ESP writing are not always caused by limited grammatical knowledge, but by challenges in organizing ideas and connecting experience with academic expression (Ayu et al., 2023; Jaihow & Sinwongsuwat, 2024; Herdina & Ningrum, 2023). These challenges often become visible at the earliest stage of the writing process, when students are expected to begin writing.

The act of beginning to write, often referred to as writing initiation, plays a crucial role in shaping the overall writing process. Writing initiation involves generating initial ideas, deciding how to approach a topic, and taking the first steps toward drafting. Although this stage may appear simple, research suggests that it is one of the most difficult phases for EFL learners. Sun (2024) explains that hesitation and anxiety frequently emerge during the planning and idea-generation stage, when learners feel uncertain about content and direction. In EFL contexts, writing initiation is particularly challenging because students must manage cognitive demands related to content development while simultaneously dealing with language production. Waruwu (2022) notes that this dual demand often leads to delays in writing, as students struggle to balance what to say with how to say it. As a result, students may postpone writing, produce minimal drafts, or avoid writing tasks altogether.

Studies conducted in Indonesian higher education contexts show similar patterns. Cahyono and Mutiaraningrum (2021) found that many Indonesian EFL students feel anxious and unprepared when asked to start writing, even when they understand the topic. Susilawati (2023) further reports that students often associate the beginning of writing with fear of making mistakes and negative evaluation. These findings highlight that writing initiation is not merely a technical step, but a complex process shaped by both emotional and cognitive factors.

Writing research increasingly recognizes that writing is not a purely cognitive activity. Emotional factors such as confidence, motivation, and anxiety strongly influence how students approach writing tasks. Jawas (2019) argues that emotions can either support or hinder the writing process, particularly at the early stages. When students feel anxious or insecure, they may struggle to activate ideas, even when they possess sufficient knowledge of the topic. From a cognitive perspective, writing requires planning, idea generation, and organization. However, these processes are closely linked to emotional readiness. Sun (2024) emphasizes that emotional tension during the planning stage can interfere with cognitive processing, making it difficult for learners to begin writing. Guo, Zou, and Chen (2023) similarly suggest that emotional engagement supports sustained cognitive engagement in writing tasks, as students who feel more emotionally connected to a task are more willing to invest mental effort.

Together, these studies suggest that effective support for writing initiation must address both emotional and cognitive dimensions. Helping students begin writing therefore requires instructional approaches that reduce emotional barriers while also providing cognitive scaffolding for idea generation and organization.

One approach that has gained attention in recent years is multimodal learning. Multimodality views meaning-making as a process that involves multiple semiotic resources, including visual, textual, and experiential elements (Unsworth, 2024). In writing instruction, multimodal approaches offer alternative ways for students to access ideas and express meaning, which can be particularly helpful at the initiation stage. Research in EFL writing contexts shows that visual resources can function as effective scaffolds for idea generation. Guo et al. (2023) found that integrating images into writing tasks helped students engage more actively and reduced resistance to writing. Similarly, Cárcamo, Villalón, and Ferreira (2025) report that multimodal tasks supported learners in organizing ideas and expressing meaning with greater confidence. These findings suggest that visual stimuli can lower cognitive load and provide concrete entry points into writing, especially for students who struggle to begin writing from

abstract prompts.

In ESP contexts, visual support is especially relevant because professional communication often involves interpreting real-world situations, data, and visual representations. By incorporating visual elements into writing instruction, educators can help students connect lived experience with academic and professional writing tasks.

Photovoice was originally introduced as a participatory research method that enables participants to document and reflect on their experiences through photography (Militansina, 2020). In educational contexts, Photovoice has been adapted as a learning practice that encourages students to use photographs as starting points for reflection and expression. Rather than asking learners to write from abstract topics, Photovoice allows them to begin from personal and familiar experiences.

Recent studies indicate that Photovoice has considerable potential in writing instruction. Jayantini (2022) reports that Indonesian EFL students felt more confident expressing ideas when writing was grounded in their own photographs. Militansina (2023) similarly found that Photovoice supported students' motivation and self-awareness during writing tasks. Nurhadi (2022) shows that Photovoice enabled students to connect personal experiences with academic content, resulting in more meaningful written texts. These studies suggest that Photovoice supports both emotional and cognitive aspects of writing by providing a concrete and personally relevant starting point.

Photovoice is often accompanied by guided reflection frameworks, such as the SHOWeD model, which helps learners move from observation to interpretation. Reflective learning scholars argue that guided reflection enables learners to make sense of experience and transform it into learning (Rafique, 2025). In writing contexts, this reflective process can help students organize initial ideas and move from simple description toward early reflection and explanation, which are essential components of ESP writing.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research design using a case study approach (Patton, 2020; Tisdell et al., 2025). The design was chosen because the focus of the study was to understand students' experiences when beginning to write in an ESP context, rather than to measure learning outcomes or test the effectiveness of an instructional method statistically. Writing initiation is a complex process that involves emotional readiness, idea generation, and early organization of thoughts. These processes cannot be adequately captured through numerical data, but require close attention to students' voices, reflections, and writing experiences.

A case study approach was considered appropriate because the research was conducted within a specific learning context, namely an ESP writing class for management students. The case study allowed the researcher to explore how Photovoice functioned naturally within classroom practices and how students responded to it during the early stages of writing. By focusing on a bounded group of students and a particular instructional setting, this design enabled an in-depth and contextualized understanding of writing initiation as it occurred in real classroom situations.

This study received ethical approval from the university research ethics committee. All participants were informed about the study's purpose and procedures, and written consent was obtained prior to data collection. Participants were assured of confidentiality, and pseudonyms (SP1–SP15) were used to protect their identities. Participation was voluntary, and students were informed that they could withdraw at any time without consequences.

The researcher acted as a teacher-researcher in the ESP writing class. This dual role allowed the researcher to observe students' natural engagement with Photovoice while maintaining an awareness of potential biases. Reflexive notes were kept to monitor how the researcher's interactions might influence students' responses and data interpretation.

The participants of this study were 15 undergraduate students enrolled in an ESP writing course in the Management Study Program at a private university in South Sumatra. The students were in their third semester and had previously taken general English courses, but had limited experience with discipline-specific academic writing. These students were selected using purposive sampling because they were directly involved in Photovoice-based writing activities and were able to provide rich information related to the research focus.

The participants represented a range of writing abilities and levels of confidence, which allowed the study to capture diverse experiences of writing initiation. To protect their identities, all participants were assigned pseudonyms (SP1–SP15). Participation in the study was voluntary, and students were informed that their written

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Volume 14, Issue 1, February 2026

work, reflections, and interview responses would be used solely for research purposes. Pseudonyms (SP1–SP15) were assigned to protect participants' identities, and participation was voluntary.

Several instruments were used to collect data in order to capture students' writing initiation experiences from different perspectives.

Photovoice-based writing tasks: Students were asked to take or select photographs from their daily lives related to management or socio-economic contexts, such as small businesses, workplaces, marketplaces, or service activities. These photographs served as prompts to help students begin writing from familiar and meaningful situations.

Guided reflection worksheet: Based on the SHOWeD framework, this worksheet contained reflective questions guiding students to describe what they saw in the photograph, explain what was happening, relate the situation to their own lives, and reflect on its broader meaning. This instrument supported idea generation and helped students move from observation to reflection before and during writing.

Students' written texts: Produced after the Photovoice and reflection activities, these texts provided evidence of how students began writing, how ideas were introduced, and how early organization developed.

Semi-structured interviews: Conducted to gain deeper insights into students' experiences (Kvale, 2021). Example interview questions included: (1) How did you feel when starting to write using the Photovoice activity? (2) How did the photographs influence your readiness to write? (3) Can you describe the transition from hesitation to drafting your first ideas?

The semi-structured format allowed students to express their thoughts freely while still addressing the main focus of the study.

The data analysis followed a thematic analysis approach (Braun & Clarke, 2022). All data sources, including students' written texts, Photovoice reflections, and interview transcripts, were analyzed systematically to identify recurring patterns related to writing initiation.

The analysis began with familiarization, during which the researcher read the data repeatedly to gain an overall understanding of students' experiences. Initial codes were then generated by identifying meaningful segments of data related to key aspects of writing initiation, such as hesitation, idea activation, emotional readiness, and early organization of writing. Coding was conducted manually to allow close engagement with the data, and all codes were documented systematically.

Next, the codes were grouped into broader themes that represented patterns across participants. To validate the themes and ensure trustworthiness, several strategies were applied:

Peer debriefing. Two independent colleagues reviewed the initial codes and themes to provide feedback and reduce potential researcher bias.

Member checking. Selected participants were asked to review the preliminary themes and confirm whether the interpretations reflected their experiences accurately.

Triangulation. Findings were compared across different data sources (written texts, Photovoice reflections, and interview transcripts) to ensure consistency and credibility.

Themes were reviewed and refined iteratively to ensure they accurately reflected students' experiences and were clearly supported by the data. Throughout the analysis, attention was given to how Photovoice supported students at the beginning of writing, particularly in terms of emotional and cognitive engagement.

The final themes were reported using representative excerpts from students' reflections, written texts, and interview responses, ensuring that the findings remained grounded in participants' voices. These procedures enhanced the credibility, dependability, and transparency of the analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings of the study drawn from the implementation of Photovoice in an ESP writing class for undergraduate management students. The findings are based on an analysis of students' photographs, reflective writings guided by the SHOWeD framework, and semi-structured interviews. Through these data sources, this study captures how students experienced the process of starting to write and how Photovoice shaped their emotional and cognitive engagement. The analysis shows that Photovoice influenced students' writing initiation by helping them feel more emotionally ready, think more clearly about what to write, and gradually change their writing behavior. The findings are organized into three main themes and several sub-themes.

In this study, students were asked to write about business-related situations and everyday professional experiences commonly found in management contexts, such as small enterprises, service activities, marketplaces, and workplace

routines. These tasks reflect typical ESP writing demands in management education, where students are expected to describe real situations and express basic professional reasoning in English. Based on the analysis, students' writing experiences during the Photovoice activities can be grouped into three major themes, as summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. *The role of Photovoice in students' ESP writing experiences*

Themes	Sub-themes
Emotional Engagement through Photovoice	Awareness of emotional barriers in writing
	Reconnecting writing with personal experiences
Cognitive Support for Writing Development	Idea generation through photographs
	Guided reflection using the SHOWeD framework
Development of Self-Regulated Writing Behaviors	Reduced writing avoidance
	Improved planning and writing confidence

Emotional engagement through Photovoice

Emotional engagement through Photovoice referred to the ways students became emotionally involved in the writing process after photographs were introduced as reflective tools. The findings showed that Photovoice helped students pay closer attention to their emotional responses toward writing, particularly emotions that had previously prevented them from starting to write. Through taking photographs and reflecting on their daily experiences, students were able to identify feelings that influenced their writing behavior. Emotional engagement was reflected in two main aspects: awareness of emotional barriers in writing and reconnecting writing with personal experiences.

Awareness of emotional barriers in writing

The findings indicated that students' initial writing difficulties were largely influenced by emotional factors rather than by a lack of ideas or insufficient language ability. Before participating in the Photovoice activities, many students described their writing problems simply as procrastination or low motivation. However, after reflecting on their photographs, students became more aware of specific emotions such as fear of making mistakes, anxiety about language accuracy, and mental or physical fatigue that affected their readiness to begin writing.

Interview data revealed that these emotions often emerged at the very beginning of the writing process and directly influenced students' decisions to delay writing:

> "When I saw my photo, I realized that I was afraid to start writing because I worried my writing would not be correct." (SP3)

> "After daily activities, I often felt tired, and that feeling made me delay writing." (SP7)

These responses suggested that students hesitated to write not because they lacked ideas, but because emotional pressure reduced their readiness to begin. This pattern was also evident in students' reflective writings:

> "I felt nervous before I even started writing, so I delayed it." (SP3)

> "When I saw a writing task, I felt anxious and pressured, and that made me avoid starting." (SP5)

Taken together, the interview and written data indicated that students' hesitation at the initiation stage was closely related to emotional barriers. Photovoice supported students by making these emotions more visible and understandable, allowing them to recognize how their feelings influenced their writing behavior.

Reconnecting writing with personal experiences

In addition to raising emotional awareness, Photovoice helped students reconnect writing tasks with their own personal experiences. Using photographs taken from daily life allowed students to approach writing from familiar and meaningful situations rather than from abstract topics. As a result, writing felt less intimidating and easier to begin.

Students explained during interviews that writing became clearer when it was based on experiences they had personally encountered:

> "This photo was from my daily activity. When I wrote about it, I did not feel confused because it was my own experience." (SP1)

> "After using my photo, I knew what I wanted to write because I had experienced it myself." (SP9)

This connection between experience and

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writing was also reflected in students' written texts:

> "I chose this photo because it showed my experience helping a small business." (SP1)

> "Writing based on my photo made me more confident because I understood the situation." (SP9)

These findings showed that grounding writing in personal experience reduced hesitation and increased students' confidence. Photovoice enabled students to see writing as a meaningful activity connected to their real lives, rather than as an abstract academic task.

Cognitive support for writing development

The findings also demonstrated that Photovoice provided cognitive support by helping students generate ideas and organize their thoughts during the initiation stage of writing. The combination of photographs and guided reflection reduced cognitive difficulty and made the early stage of writing more manageable.

Idea generation through photographs

The analysis showed that photographs played a central role in supporting idea generation. Before using Photovoice, many students reported feeling unsure about what to write and how to begin. When they worked with photographs drawn from real-life experiences, ideas emerged more naturally because students had a clear reference point to think about. Interview data illustrated this process:

> "When I looked at my photo, ideas came easily because I already knew the situation." (SP4)

> "The photo helped me start writing because I did not feel blank anymore." (SP2)

Students' written texts reflected the same pattern:

> "The photo helped me find ideas faster because it came from my real experience." (SP4)

> "I knew what to write because the photo already showed the situation clearly." (SP2)

These findings indicated that photographs functioned as visual prompts that reduced cognitive load at the beginning of writing. By providing something concrete to focus on, Photovoice helped students move more smoothly from ideas to written text.

Guided reflection using the SHOWeD framework

In addition to photographs, guided reflection using the SHOWeD framework supported students in organizing and developing their ideas. The reflective questions encouraged students to think step by step and provided a clear structure for shaping their writing.

Students explained that the questions helped guide their thinking:

> "The questions helped me think clearly. I knew what to explain first and what to explain next." (SP6)

> "Using the questions helped me stay focused and write in order." (SP8)

This influence was also evident in students' written texts:

> "The SHOWeD questions helped me explain my photo, not only describe it." (SP6)

> "Because of the questions, my writing became more organized." (SP8)

Overall, these findings showed that guided reflection functioned as a cognitive scaffold that supported students in developing clearer and more organized writing during the initiation stage.

Development of self-regulated writing behaviors

The final theme reflected changes in students' writing behavior over the course of the Photovoice activities. The findings showed that students became more aware of their writing process and more capable of managing it independently. This awareness contributed to reduced writing avoidance and improved planning and confidence.

Reduced writing avoidance

The findings indicated that students were less likely to avoid writing tasks after participating in the Photovoice activities. Having photographs and clearer ideas made writing feel more manageable and reduced the tendency to postpone writing. Interview data illustrated this change:

> "Before, I often delayed writing. After using the photo, I tried to start writing earlier." (SP10)
> "I did not postpone writing too much anymore because I already had ideas from the photo." (SP5)

Students' written reflections supported this finding:

> "I was not as afraid to start writing as before." (SP10)

> "Because I knew what to write, I did not delay my writing." (SP5)

These findings indicated that writing avoidance decreased as students felt more emotionally and cognitively prepared to begin writing.

Improved planning and writing confidence

The findings also showed that Photovoice helped students plan their writing more effectively and increased their confidence. Writing based on personal photographs provided students with a clearer sense of direction and control over the writing process. Students described this improvement:

> "Using my photo helped me plan my writing. I knew what to write first." (SP12)

> "I felt more confident because the topic came from my own experience." (SP1)

Students' written texts reflected similar improvements:

> "I felt more confident when writing because I understood the story behind my photo." (SP12)

> "My writing felt more organized because I planned it before writing." (SP7)

Overall, these findings showed that Photovoice supported the development of self-regulated writing behaviors by helping students plan their writing and approach writing tasks with greater confidence and clarity.

This study explored how Photovoice supported undergraduate management students during the initiation stage of ESP writing. The findings reveal an emotional–cognitive–behavioral pathway through which Photovoice facilitated writing initiation. The first stage of support involved emotional engagement. Students initially experienced hesitation, procrastination, and anxiety when beginning to write, often stemming from fear of making mistakes, pressure to write accurately, and academic expectations. These emotional barriers were particularly pronounced in ESP writing, where students were expected to address professional and business-related contexts. Through Photovoice, students reflected on personal photographs, which helped them recognize and process these emotions. This emotional awareness reduced resistance to writing and encouraged students to start, aligning with prior research showing that writing avoidance is often driven by emotional discomfort rather than limited ability (Jawas, 2019; Sun, 2024).

The second stage involved cognitive support. Photographs served as concrete, familiar prompts, reducing cognitive load and facilitating idea generation, consistent with Cognitive Load Theory (Sweller, Ayres, & Kalyuga, 2022). Guided reflection using the SHOWeD framework further scaffolded cognitive processes by helping students organize thoughts, plan their writing, and maintain focus during drafting. Connecting writing tasks with students' personal and professional experiences also enhanced relevance and meaning, reflecting principles of Experiential Learning Theory. This cognitive scaffolding allowed students to move from abstract uncertainty to structured writing, making the task more approachable and manageable.

Behavioral regulation

The third stage focused on self-regulated writing behavior. As emotional and cognitive challenges decreased, students demonstrated changes in writing behavior, including reduced avoidance, improved planning, and increased confidence at the start of writing. These behaviors align with Self-Regulated Learning Theory (Faridh et al., 2019; Panadero, 2022) and indicate that meaningful and supportive experiences, rather than direct instruction alone, can foster independent management of the writing process. By integrating emotional readiness and cognitive scaffolding, students developed the ability to initiate writing autonomously.

Taken together, the findings suggest that Photovoice operates along an integrated emotional–cognitive–behavioral pathway: (1) Emotional awareness reduces resistance and builds readiness. (2) Cognitive scaffolding through photographs and guided reflection supports idea generation and organization. (3) Behavioral regulation emerges as students gain confidence and autonomy in initiating writing.

This framework demonstrates how Photovoice can function as a holistic pedagogical approach, addressing the intertwined emotional, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions of writing initiation in ESP contexts. By positioning emotional readiness as foundational, followed by cognitive support and self-regulated behavior, this study extends previous Photovoice research and provides a

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clearer understanding of how students begin writing in ESP contexts, particularly for management students.

CONCLUSION

This study explored how Photovoice supported students in initiating ESP writing by addressing challenges that emerged at the early stage of the writing process. The findings revealed that students' difficulties in starting to write were not primarily caused by limited language proficiency or lack of writing knowledge, but were closely related to emotional barriers, cognitive uncertainty, and difficulties in self-regulating writing behavior. Through the use of Photovoice, students experienced meaningful changes in how they approached writing at its initial stage.

Photovoice helped students become more emotionally prepared to write by increasing awareness of feelings such as anxiety, fear of making mistakes, and academic pressure. This emotional readiness reduced resistance toward writing and encouraged students to begin. In addition, photographs provided concrete support for idea generation, allowing students to move from abstract thinking to clearer expression. Guided reflection further assisted students in organizing ideas and planning their writing more effectively.

As emotional and cognitive challenges decreased, students demonstrated changes in writing behavior, including reduced avoidance, improved planning, and increased confidence when starting to write. These changes indicate the development of more self-regulated writing behavior, suggesting that supportive and meaningful writing experiences can help students manage the writing process independently.

Limitations of the study include its small sample size (15 students) and context specificity (a single ESP writing class at a private university in South Sumatra), which may limit generalizability. Additionally, the dual role of the researcher as teacher-researcher could have influenced student responses, despite efforts at reflexivity.

Implications for practice include the recommendation that ESP instructors integrate multimodal, experience-based activities such as Photovoice to support students at the beginning of writing. Explicit attention to emotional readiness, idea scaffolding, and self-regulation strategies can enhance engagement and improve the quality of early drafts. Future research could explore longitudinal or mixed-methods designs to examine the sustained impact of Photovoice on writing development and to test its applicability in different EFL contexts.

In conclusion, Photovoice provides a practical, supportive, and meaningful approach for initiating ESP writing. For ESP instructors, this study emphasizes the importance of creating entry points that reduce students' emotional and cognitive barriers, helping them begin writing with confidence. In the current era of increasingly diverse EFL classrooms and growing emphasis on learner-centered pedagogy, supporting students at the moment they start writing is more relevant than ever.

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