



## **Enhancing Efl Students' Speaking Confidence and Engagement Through Photovoice-Based Board Games**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study aimed to describe how the application of Photovoice-Based Board Games increased students' confidence and engagement in speaking English. The background of this research stemmed from the issue of Indonesian students' low confidence in speaking English in class, which was caused by anxiety, limited vocabulary, and teacher-centered learning methods. The study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design. Data were collected through observation and interviews with a group of high school students in Kalimantan who participated in Photovoice-based learning activities and board games. The findings indicated that these activities enhanced student engagement by fostering a fun and collaborative learning atmosphere. They also boosted students' confidence in speaking through visual reflection and social support within the classroom. However, several challenges remained, such as limited vocabulary and difficulty in organizing ideas. Overall, Photovoice-Based Board Games proved to be a practical and innovative approach to developing EFL students' speaking skills in a pressure-free and meaningful learning environment.

**Keywords:** Photovoice, board game, confidence, engagement, English language learning, EFL

### **INTRODUCTION**

Speaking ability is one of the most important skills in learning English as a foreign language (EFL). However, many Indonesian students still face difficulties in developing their speaking skills, even though they have been studying English for years at school. Common obstacles include speaking anxiety, limited vocabulary, and low confidence in expressing ideas spontaneously (Mahardika and Widyantoro, 2024). In practice, many students feel nervous when speaking in front of the class, afraid of making mistakes, and ultimately choose to remain silent rather than actively participate. These difficulties cannot be separated from the teacher-centered learning model, with its heavy emphasis on grammar memorization and written exams.

As a result, opportunities for students to communicate naturally become limited. Asi and Fauzan (2024) emphasize that traditional exam-oriented approaches often make students passive, less engaged, and leave them with no space to practice language in context. In fact, speaking skills can only develop through meaningful interactions in a safe learning environment that encourages the courage to express oneself. In response to this problem, a game-based learning (GBL) approach has begun to be widely applied in the context of EFL. According to (Kapp, 2012), GBL integrates game elements such as rules, challenges, and social interaction to create an engaging learning experience while fostering intrinsic motivation. In the context of speaking, games such as board games have been shown to reduce anxiety, foster enthusiasm, and facilitate spontaneous and natural language use (Perdana and Bungai, 2024). Thus, GBL is a promising alternative for increasing student participation.

Apart from games, another practical approach to encourage speaking skills is Photovoice. This method was first introduced by Wang and Burris, (1997) as a participatory approach that allows participants to express their experiences and views through photographs. In the context of language learning, Photovoice provides students with the opportunity to describe their own photographs and use them as material for reflective conversation. Research findings by Hasby et al. (2025) show that the use of Photovoice in English language learning can increase students' confidence and emotional engagement, because the material used is rooted in meaningful personal experiences.

Considering the potential of both, the combination of board games and Photovoice can be a complementary learning strategy. Board games provide a dynamic and enjoyable space for social interaction. In contrast, Photovoice provides a personal context that encourages students to speak with a sense of ownership on the topics discussed. The collaboration of these two approaches is believed to create a reflective and interactive learning atmosphere, thereby increasing students' confidence and engagement in speaking English naturally.

Based on this description, this study attempts to answer the main question, "How can the *Photovoice-Based Board Games* increase students' confidence and engagement in speaking English?" Thus, the purpose of this study is to describe in depth how *Photovoice-Based Board Games* can play a role in increasing students' confidence and engagement in learning to speak English. This study is expected to provide practical contributions for English teachers in developing innovative, enjoyable, and contextually relevant learning strategies. Additionally, this study is also expected to provide theoretical contributions to the development of participation and reflection-based learning models in teaching English as a foreign language.

## METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative approach with a case study design. This approach was chosen to gain an in-depth understanding of students' experiences in participating in Photovoice-Based Board Game learning activities. The qualitative paradigm enabled the researcher to capture the complexity and contextual nuances of the learning process as experienced by the participants.

### Research Participants

The participants of this study consisted of 34 high school students from a city in Kalimantan. The names of both the school and the students were anonymized to maintain confidentiality and ethical compliance. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, based on their activeness and willingness to engage in English-speaking activities.

### Research Design and Context

The core activity involved the implementation of Photovoice-Based Board Games in English language classes. Students were instructed to take photographs related to predetermined themes and later used those photographs as prompts for speaking during a board game session modified to resemble *Snakes and Ladders*. This design encouraged interaction, creativity, and reflection in an enjoyable learning environment.

### Data Collection Techniques

Data were gathered using two primary techniques:

1. **Observation**, which aimed to record students' behavior, participation levels, and confidence throughout the activities; and
2. **Semi-structured interviews** were conducted to explore students' perceptions and reflections on their experiences using the Photovoice-Based Board Game approach.

### Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The analysis involved several stages, including coding, theme categorization, and

interpretation. Two major themes emerged from the findings: (1) increased engagement and (2) enhanced student confidence. Data credibility was reinforced through source triangulation and member checking with research participants to ensure trustworthiness and validity.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results of data analysis obtained through observation and interviews with students during the implementation of *Photovoice-Based Board Games* in English-speaking activities. Based on thematic analysis, two main themes were found, namely:

1. increased *student engagement* during speaking activities, and
2. increased *speaking confidence* of students in using English.

In addition, several challenges that still need to be addressed were identified, such as limited vocabulary and difficulty in organizing ideas.

### Increased Student Engagement in Speaking Learning

The results of the observation showed that the Photovoice-Based Board Games activity created a more lively and participatory classroom atmosphere. Most students appeared enthusiastic about participating in the game, interacting with their groupmates, and showing a willingness to speak more often than in conventional learning. The relaxed atmosphere of the game allowed students to feel free to express themselves without pressure from the teacher or fear of negative judgment.

From the observation notes, almost all students participated actively when it was their turn to explain the photos they had chosen. Some students even spontaneously responded to their groupmates' statements with follow-up questions. This indicates **authentic interaction**, which is communication that arises naturally and is not entirely planned.

The interview results reinforce these findings. One student stated:

*"When we play games like this, it feels more exciting and less tense. I feel more comfortable talking because my friends are also talking."*

This statement illustrates that game-based activities help create a sense of psychological security and build a spirit of collaboration among students. This situation is in line with (Alotaibi, 2024) view, which emphasizes that *Game-Based Learning* can reduce anxiety levels and increase participation because students focus on the activity rather than on language errors.

In addition, the Photovoice element, which requires students to bring personal photos, also plays an important role in increasing engagement. These photos spark curiosity and emotional closeness to the topic being discussed. For example, a student who displayed a photo of their school cafeteria talked at length about the atmosphere there and their experiences with friends. Thus, the topic raised became more meaningful and contextual for the students.

These findings support the results of (Handayani and Pradana, 2025) research, which states that Photovoice can increase students' emotional and cognitive engagement because the learning material is rooted in their personal experiences. By talking about familiar things, students feel they have authority over the topics discussed, so they are more actively involved in the discussion.

Student engagement increased due to a combination of two factors: the fun learning atmosphere of board games and emotional connection through personal photos. Both create a balance between social interaction and personal reflection, which is essential in developing speaking skills in an EFL context.

### Increased Student Confidence in Speaking

In addition to increasing engagement, this activity has also been proven to help students feel more confident in speaking English. Based on the interview results, most students admitted that they felt more courageous in speaking because the context of the activity was relaxed and not value-oriented.

One student said:

*"I'm usually afraid of making mistakes when speaking English. But when playing this game, it feels okay to make mistakes, the important thing is to speak first. After all, my friends are also playing casually."*

This statement shows that games can reduce the psychological barriers often experienced by EFL students, especially the fear of making mistakes. In the context of Game-Based Learning, mistakes are considered a natural part of the process of playing and learning, not as failures (Kapp, 2012). This makes students more open to taking linguistic risks and trying to use new language structures without worry.

In addition, the use of photos in Photovoice helps students prepare their ideas more easily before speaking. Photos serve as visual aids that trigger memories and clarify the topics to be discussed. Based on observations, students who previously tended to be quiet began to speak up when the photos they took became the subject of discussion. With visual support, they had a concrete starting point for developing ideas, making the speaking process feel more natural.

These findings are in line with research by Salsabila. et al. (2023), which shows that Photovoice increases confidence because it helps students speak based on meaningful and familiar contexts. Thus, Photovoice is not only a visual aid but also a means of self-reflection that strengthens students' confidence in their ability to communicate.

Students' confidence is also strengthened by the social support that emerges during the game. In a collaborative atmosphere, students give each other positive feedback and laugh together when mistakes occur. This kind of interaction strengthens the sense of belonging and fosters a favorable climate in the classroom. Ly (2024) states that social support among students is an important factor in fostering language confidence because it makes students feel accepted and valued.

From these results, it can be interpreted that three main factors influence the increase in student confidence:

- (1) a stress-free learning atmosphere through games,
- (2) the use of personal photos that provide meaningful context, and
- (3) supportive social interactions among participants.

These three factors complement each other in creating a safe learning environment and encouraging students to be more courageous in speaking English.

### **Challenges Still Faced**

Although the implementation of Photovoice-Based Board Games has shown positive impacts, several challenges remain. From the observation results, some students still had difficulty constructing long sentences or finding the correct vocabulary when describing photos. Some tended to mix Indonesian when they lost their words in English.

In addition, some students need more time to prepare themselves to speak because they are not used to thinking spontaneously. This shows that although games can increase the courage to speak, linguistic ability remains an important supporting factor.

However, these challenges are actually opportunities for teachers to design more targeted follow-up learning activities, for example, by providing scaffolding in the form of thematic vocabulary lists, sentence construction exercises, or post-activity reflections. Thus, the process of increasing confidence can go hand in hand with improving language competence.

Overall, the results of this study reinforce previous findings that the integration of Photovoice and Game-Based Learning can create humanistic, communicative, and enjoyable learning. Photovoice provides space for students to express themselves reflectively, while board games create a collaborative atmosphere that encourages active participation.

When combined, they produce a balance between the affective dimension (confidence and motivation) and the social dimension (engagement and interaction), both of which are important foundations in the development of English speaking skills. Thus, *Photovoice-Based Board Games* can be seen as a practical, adaptive, and relevant pedagogical innovation in the context of language learning in Indonesia.

## CONCLUSION

This study aims to describe how the application of *Photovoice-Based Board Games* can increase students' confidence and engagement in speaking English. Based on the results of observations and interviews, it was found that the integration of these two approaches had a positive impact on the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) speaking learning process in the classroom.

First, *Photovoice-Based Board Games* activities create an interactive, relaxed, and enjoyable learning atmosphere. Board games encourage students to actively participate, interact with their peers, and dare to use English without fear of making mistakes. This increases their level of engagement in speaking activities.

Second, the use of Photovoice elements provides a meaningful personal context for students. Through the photos they take themselves, students have material for reflection that is close to real life, making the speaking process more natural and meaningful. This factor contributes to an increase in their confidence to speak in front of their peers.

Third, the collaborative atmosphere that emerges during the game strengthens social support among students. Mutual respect and humorous interactions help reduce speaking anxiety. Thus, *Photovoice-Based Board Games* not only help students speak more often but also change their perception of speaking as a fun and pressure-free activity.

Overall, Photovoice-Based Board Games are effective in increasing the confidence and engagement of EFL students in speaking English. This approach combines complementary reflective (through Photovoice) and interactive (through games) dimensions, creating a more communicative and humanistic learning environment.

## Implications

The results of this study have several important implications for English language teaching practice and further research:

1. Implications for English teachers: Teachers are advised to integrate game-based media and visual reflection, such as *Photovoice-Based Board Games*, into speaking lessons. This approach can be a creative alternative to increase student activity and confidence, especially in classes that tend to be passive. Teachers also need to act as facilitators who create a safe and supportive atmosphere during the activity.
  2. Implications for curriculum development: Personal experience-based and collaborative learning can be incorporated into the English curriculum to strengthen students' communicative and affective dimensions. Thus, speaking skills are honed not only linguistically, but also emotionally and socially, which are important for successful communication.
  3. Implications for further research: This study opens up opportunities for further exploration of the effectiveness of Photovoice-Based Board Games at different educational levels and in different contexts, such as in higher education or in online learning environments. Future researchers may also add quantitative instruments to measure improvements in student confidence and engagement more objectively.
- General pedagogical implications: The Photovoice-Based Board Games approach shows that language learning that combines reflective and recreational elements can foster students' intrinsic motivation. When students feel that learning is relevant to their

lives and is conducted in a fun atmosphere, their speaking skills will develop more naturally.

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