Utilizing Photovoice to Enhance Iranian Intermediate EFL Learners' Productive Skills

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Abstract

Productive skills have a vital role in learning the English language as they provide foreign learners with opportunities to practice real-life activities in the classroom. The photo-based method for teaching language skills has been developed due to advances in visual technology, the shift to student-centered learning, and the demand for 21st-century skills. Thus, this study aimed to examine the effectiveness of utilizing Photovoice on Iranian intermediate learners' English language productive skills. The research followed a quantitative quasi-experimental design that included pretest and post-test equivalent treatment and control groups. Sixty intermediate female language learners were chosen from a private institute in Isfahan, Iran. First, they were selected conveniently and then they were homogenized based on their performance on the Preliminary English Test. They were divided into two experimental (*n* = 30) and control (*n* = 30) groups. The experimental group received Photovoice as a methodological innovation, incorporating reflective and collaborative activities, while the control group received routine language instruction involving traditional teaching practices such as lectures, textbook exercises, and grammar drills. One pretest and one post-test were administered to assess the learners' speaking and writing skills. Then, between-subjects MANOVA and t-tests were employed to analyze the data. The results revealed that Photovoice significantly helped students improve their speaking and writing skills. The present study might have useful implications for curriculum designers, language learners, teachers, and other researchers who are considering the use of Photovoice in language classes.

Keywords: Participatory action research, Participatory learning, Photovoice, Speaking skill, Writing skill

In the era of globalization, English has grown in popularity as a medium for all types of communication, whether locally or globally. Besides, people in different countries require proficiency in English to communicate effectively and succeed in a globalized world. Moreover, teaching and learning English is crucial for effective communication to meet the growing demand for English proficiency at local, national, and global levels. English is also

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regarded as a foreign language in Iran and is utilized for academic development, job promotion, and international travel. Several efforts have been made by all parties involved in the Iranian educational system to help improve students' English performance and meet the increasing demands both locally and globally.

Learning English is a gradual and continual process that involves overcoming various challenges and obstacles. This process includes developing specific skills. Productive skills, which include speaking and writing, are essential because they enable learners to participate in communicative activities like reports, written studies, and oral presentations. Thus, effective development and learning of these skills are necessary. Moreover, the majority of language learners assess their language learning based on how well they can speak and write a language (Robillos & Bustos, 2023).

Visual methods such as Photovoice can be applied to language education to enrich language learning by promoting active engagement in purposeful communicative tasks (Gallo, 2002), and facilitating learners' speaking skill development. Photovoice is built upon Freire's method of empowerment education (Freire, 2014), in which knowledge is acquired through reflecting on and discussing community issues. Photovoice also draws upon participatory methods of documentary photography, which provide background for individuals to represent their personal opinions (Suprapto et al., 2020). The photos can be accompanied by teachers' questions. Questioning practice presents a reciprocal teaching method in language teaching and this strategy can be used to foster learners' speaking (Nasr-Esfahani et al., 2021; Syafi'i & Sudarso, 2022).

To elaborate on the problem statement, it is necessary to consider the larger consequences of insufficient productive skills development among Iranian EFL learners. The inability to effectively speak and write in English has serious consequences for students' academic and professional lives (Kaviani & Mashhadi Heidar, 2020; Siregar et al., 2024). Regarding English speaking and writing skills in Iranian intermediate EFL classes, some students do not know how to start speaking or writing in English. In addition, a lot of the EFL students have pronunciation difficulties and lack mastery of vocabulary (Shahani et al., 2021; Yekta et al., 2024). Besides, while writing on the prescribed topic, students often become fatigued and confused since they find it difficult to generate thoughts (Nasr-Esfahani et al., 2022; Sari & Sultan, 2022). They also face a range of writing obstacles according to their proficiency levels. The problems are typically classified as instructional, psychological, linguistic, or cognitive difficulties (Fareed et al., 2016). These disparities have serious consequences on students' general language learning as well as their capacity for communication.

In light of the above discussion, the researchers were inspired and motivated to utilize Photovoice to improve Iranian intermediate EFL learners' productive skills. Besides, the method had never been applied in an Iranian context in the same way the researchers chose. This made it worthwhile to conduct action research to determine whether it could address the speaking and writing weaknesses Iranian students face. More importantly, what made this study

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significant was that, unlike relatively little previous research that examined utilizing Photovoice on EFL learners' speaking or writing skills, the current research investigated the effects of Photovoice on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' productive (both speaking and writing) skills. More specifically, the research could offer a perspective on the effectiveness of Photovoice as a methodological innovation in enhancing language learners' speaking and writing skills. It could also provide a conceptual framework for future studies in this field.

Literature Review

The review of literature helps researchers to obtain a thorough theoretical and empirical comprehension of the topic. It explores the potential of images to generate new ideas, understand concepts, and examine existing ones. The following two parts synthesize numerous sources to discuss the theoretical and empirical findings of Photovoice in English language learning and teaching.

Theoretical Background of the Study

Empowerment education, feminist philosophy, and documentary photography are the three main theoretical frameworks that are included in Photovoice. Kuratani and Lai (2011) argued that community involvement in social action is emphasized in all three theoretical frameworks. The community level follows by improving quality of life, and ultimately the institutional level is targeted for enforcing change through policies (Wang & Burris, 1997).

Collecting data by individuals' taking pictures of their concerns is the first step in empowerment education. After that, the participants engage in moderated dialogues in which they share what the images mean to them (Karimi et al., 2019). The group discussion enables the participants to build on one another's concerns, assisting in the development of the community's stated needs (Mudra et al., 2023). The individual's self-image will change as members feel more committed to enhancing the well-being of their community. From this perspective, research is viewed as participatory rather than neutral. It adopts the primary objectives of and dedication to critical consciousness, emancipation, and social justice as people confront their roles within communities.

In the same way, feminist theory is focused on changing mental frameworks to understand and value women's subjective role as researchers, activists, and participants (Wang & Burris, 1997). According to feminist theory, people who have a voice, define the language, shape history, and take part in decision-making are the ones who gain power (Kuratani & Lai, 2011). Photovoice explicitly supports the participants' and facilitators' commitment to enhancing the well-being of the communities. It assists participants in challenging the current quo and ultimately revising depictions that contribute to gender, class, racial, ethnic, and other forms of oppression (Golden, 2020).

Finally, documentary photography is another theoretical framework that has been widely applied to give marginalized groups a platform to share their beliefs and narratives (Suprapto

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et al., 2020). By putting the power in the hands of the oppressed, Photovoice empowers people to make decisions and choose the subjects that are conveyed in the images. These people are more creative and perceptive as community members than even the most skilled photographers and photojournalists (Wang & Burris, 1997).

What decision-makers, administrators, and academics consider to be significant in schools is nearly always at the core of educational reform research and school reform discourse (Mahmoudi-Dehaki et al., 2021; Schell et al., 2009). Additionally, by relating photography to real-life situations, the Photovoice method in the classroom creates extraordinary teaching and learning experiences for both instructors and students. Like guided questions, Photovoice protocols are a set of questions that researchers pose to participants to record and comprehend their feelings, concepts, and thoughts about the events. A team-based assignment may be a good opportunity to study how identities, values, experiences, and assumptions influence the negotiation and decision processes involved in the selection (Chio & Fandt, 2007).

Photovoice highlights how critical it is for community members to take action and inform decision-makers about the reality of their lives. Additionally, the digital photography assignment gives the students the chance to carefully pick and arrange their most powerful images to develop a narrative or story and customize it for their target audience (Ferdiansyah et al., 2020). Likewise, Photovoice empowers young people to participate in all areas of research, from data collecting to data dissemination. It facilitates a collaborative learning process in which young people, politicians, and researchers may all contribute.

Although the Photovoice method attempted to empower participants by actively participating, contributing to study design, and generating knowledge, in certain instances, the method might lead to disempowerment (Allen, 2012). As stated by Wangdi and Shimray (2022), many people, particularly those who were in situations where Photovoice projects typically operate, might be confronted with problems, pressures, and competing demands that make participation difficult. Besides, due to the time and effort required for Photovoice, young participants may require a lot of encouragement to finish the project's tasks (Karimi et al., 2019).

Empirical Studies

Photovoice is not just a useful method for studying social activities; it can also be applied effectively in educational reform. Some researchers have previously studied the use of Photovoice in higher educational reforms (Fadhilah, 2023; Tsang & Lian, 2021; Wass et al., 2020). Through drawing on a study that tested several methodological methods, Wass et al. (2020) examined students' perceptions of excellent instruction and successful learning at universities. In addition to more conventional data-collecting methods like unstructured focus group interviews and critical event management, the study employed Photovoice as a visual data collection method. The findings indicated the value of Photovoice as a method in higher education studies, but it should be used with caution, just like any other data-gathering method.

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Besides, Tsang and Lian (2021) studied the causes of educational pressure in Hong Kong and gave policymakers suggestions on how to address the issue. Fifteen undergraduate participants from a private higher education institution in Hong Kong were asked to capture and share images of their own learning experiences through the use of Photovoice. The findings pointed to several potential causes of academic stress, including parents, school administrators, and test pressures. The results revealed that the inconsistencies within the educational system were the underlying social cause of academic stress.

Furthermore, some studies have emphasized the value of methods like Photovice, which involve immersing participants in a topic, linking them to external learning resources, and encouraging critical thinking (Ferdiansyah et al., 2020; Jayantini et al., 2022; Mudra et al., 2023; Nisa, 2021; Rosmawanty & Abdulrahman, 2021; Sari & Sultan, 2022). In a study, Ferdiansyah et al. (2020) recommended incorporating Photovoice as a useful method, as it could help maximize learning without placing undue strain on learners. This classroom-based method was easily adapted by language teachers to facilitate communication and engagement with their students (Graziano, 2011; Rosmawanty & Abdulrahman, 2021).

Additionally, Jayantini et al. (2022) discovered that contemplation through photovoice SHOWed might provide fruitful outcomes by taking images and using them as methods of generating descriptive texts. Despite any shortcomings in data-gathering methods that researchers should be aware of (Allen, 2012; Creighton et al., 2018), Photovoice also provided a beneficial methodology (Sari & Sultan, 2022). In a more recent study, Mudra et al. (2023), used Photovoice along with semi-structured interviews to gather data. The students took some pictures to visually convey their feelings about paper writing and publishing barriers. They were asked to employ the images to share their thoughts and experiences throughout the interviews. To put it briefly, the Photovoice helped in expressing the students' real emotions regarding the drafting of research papers and the obstacles they faced in getting published.

In the Iranian EFL setting, a few research have been undertaken on employing instructor questions and questioning tactics to improve teaching materials in English language classrooms (Banitalebi & Ghiasvand, 2023; Chalak & Ahmadi, 2017; Karimi et al., 2018; Karimi et al., 2019; Pourhaji et al., 2020). Banitalebi and Ghiasvand (2023) used simple questioning tactics to identify learning-oriented assessment (LOA) practices during classroom interactions. They revealed that in the EFL contexts, teacher questioning strategy had a significant role in demonstrating and implementing LOA. Furthermore, classroom interactions and teacher discourse provided rich environments for distributing the LOA seeds. Besides, Karimi et al. (2019) found that Photovoice encouraged students' analytical thinking and intercultural sensitivity. Likewise, teachers should avoid restricting their questioning to knowledge-based issues. Instead, they were encouraged to pose clarifying questions that elicited more detailed and syntactically complex responses (Karimi et al., 2018; Pourhaji et al., 2020).

Based on the aforementioned studies, it can be inferred that Photovoice, a method that originated in the West, may be modified and applied well in particular situations, like Iran.

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While numerous studies have examined the effectiveness of Photovoice in various fields, there is a lack of scholarly research on utilizing Photovoice-based teaching methods on the productive skills of Iranian intermediate EFL learners. Moreover, regarding the above benefits of Photovoice, the researchers think it is worth trying to utilize this method inside the classroom. The use of Photovoice may improve students' productive skills, which can perhaps be employed more frequently in the classroom. The following research questions were formulated to be answered in the study:

1. Does the use of Photovoice have any significant effect on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' speaking skill?

2. Does the use of Photovoice have any significant effect on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' writing skill?

Method

The methodology section includes descriptions of the study's design and context, participant characteristics, instruments, and data collection procedure, as well as the pilot study that deals with issues of reliability and validity. Finally, it elaborates on the data analysis procedure.

Design and Context of the Study

The current study adopted a quantitative quasi-experimental design that included pretest and post-test equivalent groups. The researchers followed quantitative research because they sought to investigate the effect of utilizing Photovoice on EFL learners' productive skills. Therefore, the quantitative data was crucial in the overall design, and they were collected from the pretest and post-test. Furthermore, the organized assignment of 'experimental units' to treatment levels, along with the corresponding statistical analysis, formed the basis of the experimental design (Kirk, 2013, p.1). This design assisted the researchers in determining the effectiveness of Photovoice in enhancing language learners' productive skills. In this study, Photovoice, as a participatory learning method, was the independent variable, while productive skills served as the dependent variable.

Participants

A convenience sample of 60 intermediate female EFL participants aged from 15 to 17 with a mean age of 16.50 was chosen from a pool of 112 language learners at a private institute in Isfahan, Iran, with efforts to minimize bias by ensuring a diverse representation within the available population. Then, they were assigned into two equal experimental and control groups. The rationale behind choosing intermediate EFL learners was their prior education in a basic comprehension of English sentence structures, as well as their ability to make simple speech and provide written commentary on an image (Bagherbeigi, 2019). Following the guidelines of Fraenkel and Wallen (2012) and Tritz (2011), this group size was idealized for conducting a

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Photovoice experimental research. To guarantee the participants' homogeneity, a Preliminary English Test (PET) was administered. Based on the scores, the participants were all at the intermediate proficiency level. The information about the demographic background of the participants is given in Table 1.

Table 1

Demographic Background of the Student Participants

No. of Students	60
Proficiency Level	Intermediate
Gender	Females
Age	15-17
Native Language	Persian
Target Language	English
Academic Years	2023-2024

Regarding the ethical issues, the participants were requested to sign a consent form before participating in the study. They were assured that their identity would remain anonymous and their responses would be kept confidential. They were also made aware that they had the right to discontinue their participation in the study at any stage. The participants' convenience, readiness, and confidentiality were considered important ethical factors that should be taken into account in research (Pandey, 2024).

Materials

The study's main textbook was *Intermediate Top Notch 1B (3rd ed.)* by Saslow and Ascher (2015), which is the most frequently used coursebook in Iranian language institutes. The second textbook that covered pre-writing, while writing, and post-writing stages and supplemented the Top Notch series for boosting participants' paragraph writing skill was *Paragraph Writing: From Sentence to Paragraph* by Zemach and Islam (2017). For intermediate EFL learners who want to improve their productive skills, these coursebooks are great resources because of their simplicity and practicality. Additionally, the participants received a Photovoice manual to assist them with research goals, prerequisites, and photo-taking points (See Appendix A).

Instruments

The main data for this study came from the use of the B1 Preliminary English Test (PET), as well as a pretest and a post-test of speaking and writing. The following sections provide more information about the instruments.

Preliminary English Test

To confirm that the students were at an equal level of language proficiency, the B1 Preliminary English Test (PET), developed by Cambridge Assessment English, was utilized to homogenize the students. PET is a standardized test for those who can speak and write in

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English at an intermediate level. Moreover, the reading, writing, speaking, and listening components are all covered in PET (Rezaee & Askari, 2024). Besides, Nourdad et al. (2018) state that PET, as a standardized test, bears the required validity, specifically content and construct validity, which is supported by studies confirming its alignment with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and its consistent measurement of language proficiency levels (Figueroa & Zimányi, 2021; Mansouri et al., 2024; Rojas & Mendinueta, 2024). The time allocated to the test, based on the PET guidelines, was 130 minutes. According to the test guidelines, those who scored between 140 and 159 were considered to be at the intermediate level.

Pretest and Post-test of Speaking

The Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) Speaking Test, revised in June 2022, was used to evaluate the participants' fluency, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and overall coherence. The TOEIC was chosen mainly because detailed explanations for every score were accessible. Additionally, the examiners had the opportunity to ask a variety of questions on key components of speaking assessment, reducing the likelihood of memorization and imitation. The test included 11 items ranging from basic to challenging. Two raters were invited to take part in scoring. Following the guidelines created for the TOEIC speaking test, the raters evaluated the results. Based on the test direction, items 1 to 10 were rated on a scale of 0 to 3, and item 11 was rated on a scale of 0 to 5. Finally, the sum of the ratings was transformed into a score on a scale of 0 to 200. The pretest items were rearranged and utilized as the post-test. In other words, the post-test followed the same format as the pretest but with a different item arrangement. Participants had thirty minutes to complete the speaking pre/post-tests.

Pretest and Posttest of Writing

The students completed a pretest and a post-test on writing to assess their level of proficiency in language writing production. The TOEIC Writing test, revised in June 2022, consisted of eight questions designed to assess the writing proficiency of the participants. The TOEIC writing test was selected mainly due to its standardized format, distinctive grading structure, and the classification of items from simple to difficult (Shmidt, 2003). Based on the test guidelines, in the first section, for questions 1 to 5, the participants should compose a sentence on the provided picture within about eight minutes. In the following section, questions 6 to 7, the participants had approximately ten minutes to reply to the presented email. The final section of the test, question 8, asked the participants to compose an essay in thirty minutes, in which they needed to answer a question and express, justify, and provide evidence for their position on a given topic. The pretest items were rearranged and used as the post-test. In other words, the post-test was parallel to the pretest in which the arrangement of the items had been changed. Each pretest and post-test lasted about one hour.

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Pilot Study

The reliability of the PET and speaking tests was established by computing Cronbach's Alpha in a pilot study with 20 EFL learners who were representative of the main sample concerning their general foreign language proficiency. The values of reliability were interpreted according to the reliability standards suggested by DeVellis (2021). The values of Cronbach's Alpha estimated for the instruments were (α_{PET}= .79; $\alpha_{pretest\ speaking}$= .74; $\alpha_{post-test\ speaking}$= .88).

Based on the reliability standards suggested by DeVellis (2021), the reliability values for the PET and pretest scores were 'acceptable,' and the reliability value of the post-test was 'very good'. Additionally, the test-retest method was used to determine the reliability of the writing tests. Aligned with the guidelines outlined in the *Examinee handbook: TOEIC Speaking & Writing tests* (2022), the raters rated the TOEIC writing scores. They were reliable based on the correlation that was calculated between the two test administrations. The correlations between the first and the second administrations of the pretest and post-test of writing were .88 and .86, respectively. These values were sufficiently high to demonstrate the reliability of the writing tests.

Furthermore, TOEIC is a standardized test utilized as a baseline for evaluating individual English proficiency (Shmidt, 2003). Inter-rater reliability was estimated by computing the Pearson correlation coefficient. The two raters' ratings on the speaking and writing tests had a .97 correlation, which was deemed a strong correlation by Cohen et al. (2018). Moreover, the validity of the content of the instruments was confirmed by two experts in TEFL. They reviewed the items for relevance, clarity, and alignment with the research objectives. The validity of TOEIC speaking and writing scores has also been supported by Powers et al. (2009), who correlated the test results with test takers' self-assessments of their proficiency in performing a variety of common English language tasks.

Data Collection Procedure

The research was conducted in 2023 over the fall and winter semesters. The participants were informed about the research project and the ethical concerns involved in the investigation. They also signed a consent form prepared by the researchers, granting permission for data collection and analysis. All the participants had an intermediate proficiency level. Sixty participants were conveniently selected and homogenized based on their PET results. Then, they were randomly divided into two groups, each consisting of thirty participants. Afterward, they took a TOEIC speaking and writing pretest before being exposed to the specific Photovoice treatment. In the following stage, utilizing the Photovoice method, the experimental group developed their skills, while the control group focused on more traditional methods. The intermediate Top Notch 1 B and Zemach and Islam's (2017) Paragraph Writing: From Sentence to Paragraph were the main coursebooks for the two groups. Although both groups received the same instructional sequencing and content, the experimental group benefited from the use of Photovoice, which specifically helped them improve their productive skills.

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The experimental group's participants were introduced to documentary photography, given a research guidebook, which was a photo training manual, and asked to provide both written and verbal comments on the photos. They took photos based on their interests or their daily lives. The participants were also encouraged to photograph during school hours, at home, or in their community, especially while engaging in speaking or writing activities. Before collecting pictures, the researchers informed the subjects that their images could not be used in any publications without their permission. The research participants' task was to compose an explanatory text including three paragraphs with a word count of around 150–200. This type of text blends thoughts with context, requiring the writer to structure the paragraph to address the 'what,' 'why,' and 'how' of an event or issue (Jayantini et al., 2022). This genre was selected since the students were already familiar with this kind of writing from their previous academic years.

Following Mickan's (2017) writing framework, the students' pre-writing phase began with gathering pictures of any items they were interested in. The following was the writing phase, during which five participants, as representatives, were invited to share their findings. Each student presented at least one photo per session, discussing it while telling a story related to the photograph. The photographs initiated discussions between the instructor and students when the instructor inquired about them. The instructor monitored the students' progress weekly and occasionally joined them in taking photos. Afterward, each student worked individually using the Photovoice PHOTO method to create their explanatory text. Considering the PHOTO model developed by Mitchell et al. (2018), the participants were required to provide answers to the three Ws for each picture. Beginning with the initial 'W' (**W**hat do you see?), students wrote about what they observed in the picture. The second 'W' (**W**hat do you think about it?) asked participants to describe reasons for taking the photo, as well as why and how the phenomena happened. The last 'W' (**W**hat actions can you take to address it?) allowed participants to generate potential solutions or reactions. Then, the students were required to proofread and recheck their writing in the post-writing phase.

Finally, the participants wrote their answers in a journal and presented them as verbal comments or storytelling in front of the class. The teacher examined the learners' descriptions of the pictures for accuracy and provided the necessary revisions. At the end of the semester, the photos were displayed on the walls of the institute's large hall for the exhibit. Participants, standing next to their photos, presented them in a gallery walk to other teachers and students. The participants were asked different questions to elicit more clarifications, elaborations, and information on the problems being discussed. The entire process allowed the students an opportunity to improve their English productive skills as well as to express their concerns and desires in front of the audience and have their voices heard.

The treatment group followed the three key phases of the PHOTO model of instruction, which included Teach, Apply, and Reflect. In the first stage, the teacher began by simplifying and explaining the concept of Photovoice to the participants while also teaching them the

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necessary strategies. Then, small groups were formed, and learners were asked to discuss the photos, give presentations, and create visuals that reflected their perspectives during the process of developing their speaking ability. They captured a picture that occasionally showed signs of an issue. During the second phase, the researchers applied those instructions practically. During the last phase of the instruction, the students were encouraged to reflect on their productive skills and the knowledge that they had acquired. To investigate their learning experiences, the students narrated their images, and the teacher qualitatively examined their justifications.

On the other hand, conventional teaching-learning methods were applied to the control group. While students were passively listening to the lectures, the teacher was actively involved in the traditional style of language instruction. The teacher worked on the speaking and writing sections of the textbook, which were the same as those worked on by the experimental group. Nevertheless, this group did not use the Photovoice method. Instead, the students discussed their thoughts on the subject through the speaking and writing tasks covered in the textbook. One of the institute's objectives was to enhance students' vocabulary range and spoken English skills. Routine peaking and writing strategies were covered in the first part of the course (about 35 minutes), and conventional language production was the focus of the second half of the session. Finally, after the completion of the treatment phase, the speaking and writing post-tests were administered to both groups.

Data Analysis Procedure

The statistical analysis was conducted using version 26 of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The analytical phase involved summarizing test results and applying descriptive (means, standard deviations) and inferential statistics (MANOVA, paired t-test). A between-subjects MANOVA was employed to answer the research questions. It evaluated the Photovoice method on two dependent variables, namely the students' speaking and writing skills across different groups. The reason for using MANOVA was its ability to handle multiple dependent variables simultaneously, which provided a more thorough analysis of the data (Tabachnick et al., 2013). Besides, the use of between-subjects MANOVA was particularly appropriate for comparing the effectiveness of different teaching methods across distinct groups of participants (Stevens, 2002).

Results

The results section of the research summarizes the statistical analyses and focuses on how implementing Photovoice affects the speaking and writing skills of the participants. Initially, descriptive statistics are presented to describe the basic features of the data that were collected from the control and experimental groups through speaking and writing tests. Following this, inferential statistics are employed to determine the significance of the observed changes.

Testing the Normality

Before conducting the primary statistical analysis, the fundamental presumptions underlying parametric tests were reviewed. First, normality was examined by running the Shapiro-Wilk test. The Shapiro-Wilk test was carried out to evaluate the normality of the data for both the experimental and control groups during the pretest and post-test for speaking and writing skills. The results are given in Table 2.

Table 2

Tests of Normality

	Groups	Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	Df	Sig.
pretest speaking	Control	.95	30	.29
	Experimental	.97	30	.63
posttest speaking	Control	.93	30	.07
	Experimental	.93	30	.08
pretest writing	Control	.97	30	.60
	Experimental	.97	30	.54
posttest writing	Control	.97	30	.63
	Experimental	.97	30	.66

For the speaking pretest, both control and experimental groups showed non-significant p-values, which indicated normal distribution. Similarly, the post-test speaking skills for both groups were also normally distributed. In the case of the writing pretest, both groups displayed non-significant p-values, which also confirmed the normality of the distributions. For the post-test writing skills, both the control group and the experimental group had normally distributed scores. Thus, the assumption of normality was satisfied for all groups across both speaking and writing skills, which allowed for the use of parametric tests in the following statistical analyses.

Descriptive Statistics of the Pre/Post Tests

This section presents the descriptive statistics for the pretest and post-test scores of speaking and writing skills for both the experimental and control groups.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics for the Pretest and Post-test Scores of Speaking and Writing Skills

	Groups	Mean	SD	N
pretest speaking	Control	144.32	1.87	30
	Experimental	144.31	1.88	30
pretest writing	Control	158.16	1.64	30
	Experimental	158.82	1.75	30
posttest speaking	Control	144.71	1.87	30
	Experimental	150.11	1.76	30
posttest writing	Control	158.53	1.58	30
	Experimental	164.21	2.10	30

The statistics in Table 3 indicated that both groups had nearly similar speaking skills before the intervention, as shown by the small difference in their mean scores and the comparable

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standard deviations. This similarity suggested that any differences in the post-test scores could be related to the intervention on Photovoice rather than pre-existing differences. Similar to speaking skills, the pretest writing scores were also very close between the two groups, which indicated that there was a similar level of writing ability before the intervention. This similarity in the pretest writing scores further supported that any observed changes in the post-test scores were a result of the Photovoice intervention. In the post-intervention, the mean of the experimental group's post-test score increased highly in comparison with the control group, which revealed only a slight increase from the pretest to the post-test.

Results of the Inferential Statistics

The productive skills of both groups were found to differ on both the pretest and post-test. The results of the inferential statistical analyses are given to assess the significance of these differences. A variety of statistical tests, including MANOVA and t-tests, were used to ascertain if Photovoice was beneficial in improving productive language skills. The Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices was employed to evaluate the assumption of homogeneity of covariance matrices for the pre/post tests among the groups once the normality assumption was established. Tables 4 and 5 present the results.

Table 4

Box's Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices (Pretest Scores)

Box's M	.61
F	.19
df1	3
df2	605520.00
Sig.	.89

Tests the null hypothesis that the observed covariance matrices of the dependent variables are identical between groups.

For the pretest scores, the test yielded a Box's M value of 0.61, with an F value of 0.19, and degrees of freedom (df1 = 3, df2 = 605520.00). Retaining the null hypothesis that the observed covariance matrices of the dependent variables were identical among the groups, the significance value exceeded the alpha level of 0.05. Thus, the assumption of homogeneity of covariance matrices was met, and the use of MANOVA was appropriate for analyzing the pretest scores.

Table 5

Box's Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices (Post-test Scores)

Box's M	2.74
F	.88
df1	3
df2	605520.00
Sig.	.45

Tests the null hypothesis that the observed covariance matrices of the dependent variables are identical between groups.

Given that the p-value (0.450) exceeded the conventional threshold of 0.05, the null hypothesis, which stated that the covariance matrices were equal across groups, was not

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rejected. It was concluded that there was sufficient evidence to support the assumption of homogeneity of covariance matrices for the post-test scores, too. This allowed for the appropriate application of multivariate analysis techniques in the inferential analyses. After establishing the homogeneity of covariance matrices, Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances was run to determine the assumption of homogeneity of variances for the pretest and post-test scores between the groups. The results are given in Table 6.

Table 6
Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances

		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
pretest speaking	Based on Mean	.01	1	58	.88
pretest writing	Based on Mean	.13	1	58	.71
post-test speaking	Based on Mean	.04	1	58	.84
post-test writing	Based on Mean	3.54	1	58	.06

For the pretest of speaking and writing, the p-values were higher than the significance level of .05, which indicated that the assumption of homogeneity of variances was met for both the pretest speaking and writing scores. Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances was also carried out to evaluate the assumption of homogeneity of variances for the post-test scores between the two groups. For the post-test of speaking and writing, the p-value was higher than .05, which indicated that there were equal error variances across groups. After establishing all necessary assumptions, MANOVA tests were run on the pre/post-test scores of speaking and writing. The results are given in Table 7.

Table 7
Multivariate Tests (Pretest and Post-test Scores)

Effect		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Groups pretest scores	Pillai's Trace	.03	1.107	2.00	57.00	.33	.037
	Wilks' Lambda	.96	1.107	2.00	57.00	.33	.037
	Hotelling's Trace	.039	1.107	2.00	57.00	.33	.037
	Roy's Largest Root	.039	1.107	2.00	57.00	.33	.037
Groups post-test scores	Pillai's Trace	.81	127.02	2.00	57.00	.00	.037
	Wilks' Lambda	.18	127.02	2.00	57.00	.00	.037
	Hotelling's Trace	4.45	127.02	2.00	57.00	.00	.037
	Roy's Largest Root	4.45	127.02	2.00	57.00	.00	.037

The multivariate tests on the pretest scores revealed that the effect of the groups was not significant. Pillai's Trace, Wilks' Lambda, Hotelling's Trace, and Roy's Largest Root all showed non-significant results with a significance level (Sig.) of .33 and a Partial Eta Squared value of .03. The results indicated that only 3.7% of the variance in the speaking and writing scores could be related to the grouping variable. The results suggested that there was no significant difference in the pretest scores of speaking and writing between the groups before

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the intervention. On the other hand, the results of the multivariate test for the post-test scores showed that the significance level (Sig.) for all four tests was .00, which indicated that the results were highly significant. The Partial Eta Squared value was .81 for each test, which suggested that 81.7% of the variance in the speaking and writing test scores was explained by the intervention effect. These results indicated that there was a significant difference in the post-test scores between the groups. The high Partial Eta Squared value (.81) reflected a large effect size (Pallant, 2020), and showed that the intervention had a strong impact on the participants' speaking and writing skills and that the differences observed were not due to chance. Therefore, the Photovoice intervention enhanced the participants' productive skills in the experimental group as opposed to the control group. The Tests of Between-Subjects Effects for the post-test scores of speaking and writing are given in Table 8.

Table 8

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects Post-test Scores

Source	Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Groups	Speaking	437.40	1	437.40	131.74	.00	.69
	Writing	484.50	1	484.50	139.50	.00	.70
Error	Speaking	192.55	58	3.32			
	Writing	201.43	58	3.47			
Corrected Total	Speaking	629.95	59				
	Writing	685.93	59				

a. R Squared = .69 (Adjusted R Squared = .68)

b. R Squared = .70 (Adjusted R Squared = .70)

The Tests of Between-Subjects Effects for the post-test scores revealed statistically significant findings for both speaking and writing skills. The F-values were 131.74 for speaking and 139.50 for writing, and both were significant at $p < .01$. The Partial Eta Squared values were .69 for the speaking test and .70 for the writing test, which meant that approximately 69.4% of the variance in the speaking scores and 70.6% of the variance in the writing scores in the post-test was explained by the group factor. The Error terms were relatively small and showed minimal within-group variability. The results revealed that the experimental group significantly outperformed the control group in both skills in the post-intervention. The Partial Eta Squared values indicated a considerable effect size (Pallant, 2020), and demonstrated the significant effect of the Photovoice intervention on enhancing the participants' speaking and writing skills. The results of t-tests are presented in Table 9.

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Table 9

Paired Samples Test

			Mean difference	Std. D	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Control	Pair 1	pretest speaking - post-test speaking	-.39	2.05	-1.04	29	.30
	Pair 2	pretest writing - post-test writing	-.36	1.74	-1.15	29	.25
Experimental	Pair 1	pretest speaking - post-test speaking	-5.80	1.52	-20.83	29	.00
	Pair 2	pretest writing - post-test writing	-5.39	2.13	-13.81	29	.00

For the control group, the differences between the pretest and the post-test scores of speaking (M = -0.39, SD = 2.05) and writing (M = -0.36, SD = 1.74) were not significant, with p-values of .30 and .25, respectively. In contrast, the experimental group showed great improvements in both speaking (M = -5.80, SD = 1.52, p < .01) and writing (M = -5.39, SD = 2.13, p < .01). The results also identified the experimental group's participants significantly enhanced their productive skills after engaging in the Photovoice intervention. Figure 1 displays the participants' performance in the pre-and post-tests of speaking and writing.

Figure 1

Participants' Performance in the Pretest and Post-tests of Speaking and Writing
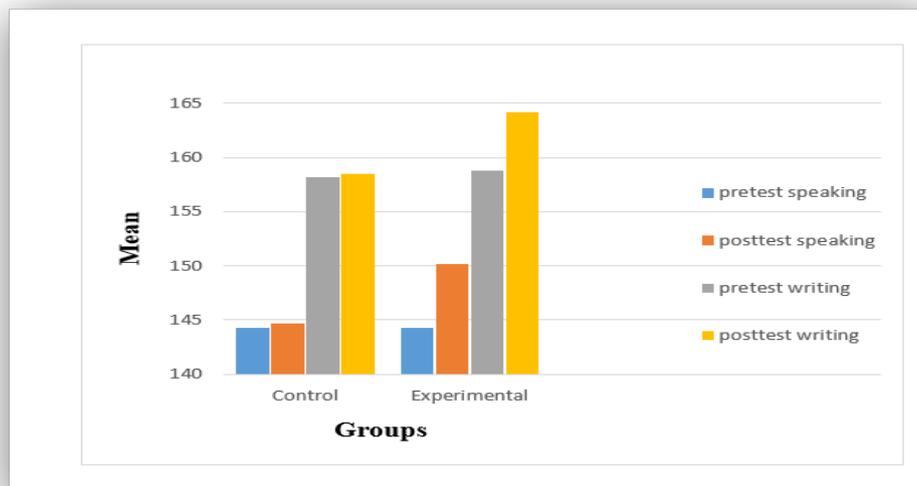
The bar graph for the pretest scores showed the participants' initial performance levels before the intervention, which were nearly the same. Conversely, the bar graph for the post-test scores revealed the participants' achievements after the Photovoice intervention. The experimental group demonstrated higher scores in both speaking and writing as opposed to the

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control group. This difference determined that the Photovoice intervention effectively enhanced the participants' productive skills of the experimental group.

Discussion

The objective of this study was to examine how Photovoice, as a participatory learning method, affects students' productive skills. The results indicated that using Photovoice improves speaking skill in a statistically significant way. The results also revealed that utilizing Photovoice had a statistically significant impact on enhancing writing skill. Participants used the Photovoice method to share their experiences and discuss any concerns they might have.

The review of the relevant literature revealed that certain research supports the implementation of Photovoice as a useful participatory learning method (Fadhilah, 2023; Jayantini et al., 2022; Nisa, 2021; Tsang & Lian, 2021). The studies revealed that giving participants a voice through this method not only offered them a sense of empowerment but also added rich levels of meaning to the study process by providing subtleties that other methods may overlook. The research concluded that Photovoice was a suitable method for teaching speaking skill to intermediate EFL learners. The instructor used strategies like questioning to scaffold the learning process and promote students' speaking skill. In line with Graziano's (2011) study, the current research highlights that Photovoice is an effective method for enhancing speaking and narrative skills in English. The results supported earlier research by Jayantini et al. (2022), and Putri (2018), which found that using the Photovoice method had an impact on language learners' proficiency. In this study, the students were requested to contribute images, which encouraged them to participate fully in class activities (Tsang & Lian, 2021).

Photovoice, which is seen to be advantageous in language classes, is employed as a methodological innovation to accomplish the purpose (Anwar, 2021; Karimi et al., 2019; Siregar et al., 2024). To be more precise, the current study uses the PHOTO model (Mitchell et al., 2018), which is thought to provide a clearer writing direction since it includes a series of questions that provide students writing inspiration. The results also supported the findings of Schell et al. (2009), who noted that by enabling participants to investigate their surroundings and gain new views on the world, Photovoice fostered the growth of students' language skills.

Consistent with Siregar et al. (2024), the findings suggest that Photovoice can effectively enhance students' writing skill in the classroom. The findings also confirmed Fadhilah's (2023) and Nisa's (2021) arguments that Photovoice was one of the useful methods for assisting teachers and learners who are having difficulty teaching and mastering writing skill. The results also align with Anwar's (2021) study, which concluded that using Photovoice improved the writing abilities of high school students who focused on mathematics and the natural sciences. Additionally, in line with Mickan's (2017) effective writing model, pre-writing, drafting, revising, editing and publishing were the main strategies for utilizing Photovoice in writing skill. Besides, the students used sensory details, metaphorical language, and detailed descriptions to construct rich and compelling narratives.

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Conclusion

The results revealed that the employment of Photovoice had positively impacted the participants' productive skills in English. By utilizing Photovoice in English language classes, students had the opportunity to evaluate and examine various standards, viewpoints, and styles in addition to pointing out their commonalities. They seemed to like using the camera to show their creativity and to enjoy the process of taking photographs. Besides, Photovoice, as an innovative method that includes rich research data, photography, narratives, critical reflection, collective activities, social change, and enhanced knowledge of personal and communal concerns, was suitable for a wide range of participants.

The present study might provide theoretical and practical implications and applications both at macro and micro levels for the field of English language teaching. The results could make a substantial contribution at the macro level by emphasizing the important and practical role that policymakers, syllabus designers, and material developers might play. Curriculum designers can incorporate fascinating content into the curriculum and modify the learning process to make it more problem-solving-based and learner-centric. Teachers should stay up to date on language teaching innovations such as Photovoice to make language learning more effective. Besides, Photovoice might be helpful to researchers by providing rich, visual data that offers a deeper comprehension of learners' perspectives and experiences.

Moreover, the implementation of the Photovoice method entailed several important limitations. It required meticulous planning and execution, such as ensuring that students were provided with cameras and adequately trained in various photography techniques. A major limitation was that participation required a time commitment that could be demanding, particularly for people who struggled to dedicate many weeks to a project. Besides, it was challenging for the majority of the participants to dedicate the necessary time to capture a meaningful, thought-provoking image.

Given the study's limitations, future research could explore strategies like offering flexible participation schedules or shortening the project duration to lessen the time commitment required from participants. More studies could explore the role of Photovoice in enhancing various competencies, such as students' confidence in verbal communication, as well as other areas like listening, reading, and vocabulary development. The findings of the study were limited to the context and the participants of this study. Therefore, it should not be generalized to every setting. Finally, it should be noted that the researchers accepted full responsibility for any errors or shortcomings in the study.

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UTILIZING PHOTOVOICE TO ENHANCE IRANIAN

Appendix A
Photovoice Manual for Participants

Section	Content
1. Introduction	Photovoice is a participatory research method that allows participants to express their perspectives through photographs. The goal is to capture and share your experiences related to Photovoice and productive skills.
2. Research Goals	-To explore your experiences and perspectives as an EFL learner. -To understand the challenges and opportunities you encounter in learning English.
3. Guidelines for Taking Photos	- Take photos that reflect your daily experiences related to learning English. - Ensure your photos are meaningful and represent your feelings, challenges, or achievements. - Respect others' privacy by avoiding identifiable images of individuals without their consent.
4. Ethical Considerations	- Use photos responsibly and avoid content that may be offensive or inappropriate. - Obtain permission before photographing others. - Your participation is voluntary, and you can withdraw at any time.
5. Writing Texts and Presenting	- Write a short essay (200-300 words) explaining the meaning behind your photo and how it relates to your experience as an EFL learner. - Prepare a brief presentation (2-3 minutes) to share your photo and its story with the class. - Practice speaking clearly and confidently during your presentation.

Thank you for participating in this project!

If you have any questions or need clarification, contact us.