


## Expressing Feelings Creatively: Integration of Visual Documentation and Reflection in English Language Learning in Elementary Schools

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### ABSTRACT

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji integrasi dokumentasi visual dan refleksi dalam pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris materi “Feelings” pada siswa sekolah dasar. Latar belakang penelitian berangkat dari kebutuhan pembelajaran kosakata emosi yang tidak hanya mendukung keterampilan bahasa, tetapi juga perkembangan kecerdasan emosional anak. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif dengan melibatkan satu kelas siswa sekolah dasar melalui observasi, dokumentasi visual, dan catatan refleksi. Analisis data dilakukan menggunakan Analisis Tematik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penggunaan media visual seperti foto, video, dan kartu kosakata mampu meningkatkan pemahaman siswa terhadap kosakata emosi serta memperkuat keterlibatan mereka dalam kegiatan belajar. Persentase keterlibatan siswa mencapai 55.6 persen pada kategori tinggi, dan penguasaan kosakata meningkat signifikan dari 30 persen menjadi 82 persen setelah kegiatan. Respons emosional siswa juga berkembang, terlihat dari meningkatnya kemampuan mengungkapkan emosi secara spontan dari 22 persen menjadi 74 persen. Kendati demikian, penelitian menemukan beberapa tantangan seperti durasi pembelajaran yang singkat, perbedaan kemampuan antar siswa, dan kendala teknis selama dokumentasi. Kesimpulannya, integrasi dokumentasi visual dan refleksi merupakan pendekatan efektif untuk meningkatkan pembelajaran kosakata emosi pada siswa sekolah dasar. Metode ini mampu menciptakan pembelajaran yang kontekstual, multimodal, serta mendukung perkembangan linguistik dan emosional siswa. Penelitian ini merekomendasikan pengembangan media visual yang lebih variatif, durasi pembelajaran yang lebih panjang, serta pemanfaatan portofolio visual sebagai bagian dari evaluasi pembelajaran.

*This study aims to examine the integration of visual documentation and reflection in English language learning materials. “Feelings” in elementary school students. The background of the study stems from the need for emotional vocabulary learning that not only supports language skills but also the development of children’s emotional intelligence. This study used a descriptive qualitative approach involving one class of elementary school students through observation, visual documentation, and reflection notes. Data analysis was conducted using Thematic Analysis. The results showed that the use of visual media such as photos, videos, and vocabulary cards can improve students’ understanding of emotional vocabulary and strengthen their engagement in learning activities. The percentage of student engagement reached 55.6 percent in the high category, and vocabulary mastery increased significantly from 30 percent to 82 percent after the activity. Students’ emotional responses also developed, as seen from the increase in their ability to express emotions spontaneously from 22 percent to 74 percent. However, the study found several challenges such as the short learning duration,*

*differences in ability between students, and technical difficulties during documentation. In conclusion, the integration of visual documentation and reflection is an effective approach to improving emotional vocabulary learning in elementary school students. This method is able to create contextual, multimodal learning and supports students' linguistic and emotional development. This research recommends the development of more varied visual media, longer learning durations, and the use of visual portfolios as part of learning evaluation.*



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## INTRODUCTION

Learning English at the elementary school level presents unique challenges because students are at a stage of language and emotional development that is still rapidly changing and evolving. Mastery of vocabulary related to expressing feelings plays a crucial role in supporting communication skills and the development of children's emotional intelligence. (Tomlinson, 2022). A good understanding of emotions helps students not only express their feelings but also build healthy social interactions in everyday learning contexts (Zhao et al., 2023). The use of visual media in language learning is an effective approach that can provide a more concrete learning experience and help students associate words with realistic visual representations (Mekonnen et al., 2024). In the context of teaching vocabulary for expressing feelings, media such as photos, videos, and visual vocabulary cards are very useful for increasing student understanding and active engagement (Kim et al., 2023).

A multimodal learning approach that combines visuals, body movements, and verbal discussions provides a more comprehensive learning experience for elementary school-aged students, who tend to learn through concrete and interactive activities (Adawiyah, 2025).. Visual documentation combined with reflection encourages students to connect their real-life experiences with new vocabulary, making learning more meaningful and immersive (Luo, 2022). Information presented simultaneously in the form of images and words provides dual stimulation to the brain, accelerating the internalization of new vocabulary, particularly vocabulary related to emotional expression.

Developing visual literacy is also an important skill that must be honed in English learning in elementary schools, as it not only improves text comprehension but also students' critical thinking skills in interpreting messages in various media forms (Nugroho, 2024). Through visualization and reflection exercises, students can develop awareness of their emotional expressions, making it easier to apply emotional vocabulary in everyday communication (Lasekan, 2025).

Learning activities that combine visual documentation and reflection can increase students' engagement and confidence in spontaneously using emotional vocabulary. The opportunity to observe and reflect on self-expression and that of peers in documentation strengthens social and affective engagement in language learning (Nurdiana & Santosa, 2023). This increased participation is consistent with findings that diverse learning media can accommodate the diverse learning styles of elementary school-aged children (Rahmawati et al., 2024). However, several practical challenges, such as short learning durations, differences in English language proficiency among students, and the technical conditions of the documentation, must be addressed to ensure optimal and inclusive integration of visual documentation and reflection. Teachers need to flexibly adapt strategies based on student responses to overcome these obstacles and maintain student comfort throughout the learning process (Lestari, 2024).. This research formulates the main question: How is the process of implementing visual documentation and reflection in English language learning on the material "Feelings"?in elementary school?

To what extent can these activities increase students' engagement and understanding of the Feelings vocabulary? What are the challenges and reflective findings during the implementation of visual documentation-based learning?

As a future development effort, enriching visual media through situational illustrations, short videos, and the use of augmented reality technology has also been shown to have a positive impact on improving English learning outcomes in elementary school students. Extending learning time and more

structured reflective learning can further strengthen the understanding and application of vocabulary for expressing feelings in a natural and sustainable manner. (Purnama, 2024). This study aims to examine in depth the impact of integrating visual documentation and reflection on learning vocabulary for expressing feelings in English for elementary school students, with the hope of providing practical recommendations that suit the needs of students and teachers in the field.

## **METHOD**

This research uses an approach qualitative descriptive with model reflective participatory, implemented on English learning material “Feelings” in upper elementary school classes during a series of activities. The research was conducted in the classroom where the activities took place, in collaboration with an English teacher as facilitator. Research targets and subjects is a class consisting of approximately 20–27 students, selected through purposive sampling based on their involvement in emotion-themed learning activities. English teachers also acted as collaborators to strengthen the validity of the field data.

Research data includes observation data on learning activities, visual documentation (photos, videos, and student work), as well as researcher reflection notes. The instruments used include observation sheets, visual documentation checklists, and field reflection sheets. Research procedures carried out through three stages: Preparation, including coordination with teachers, preparation of visual media (emotion faces, vocabulary cards, drawing tools), and preparation of documentation checklists. Implementation, in the form of observing the learning process, recording visual documentation, and recording student responses to the use of visual media. Reflection, namely the preparation of researcher reflection notes after activities to assess the effectiveness of learning, obstacles, and students' emotional responses.

Data analysis techniques use Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2012), which includes: data familiarization, coding, grouping codes into themes, and extracting meaning. Analysis is carried out by linking the findings to the emotional vocabulary learning objectives, emotional intelligence theory, and visual-based learning principles. To improve credibility the study applied source triangulation through observation, visual documentation, and reflection, as well as limited member checking with the accompanying teacher. The analysis results were interpreted in relation to the research focus, namely how visual documentation and reflection can enrich the learning process of the “Feelings” material.

## **RESULTS and DISCUSSION**

### **English Learning Context in the Classroom**

English learning on the topic Feelings This lesson was implemented in an elementary school classroom context, characterized by students still experiencing rapid language and emotional development. The topic of expressing feelings is relevant because it directly relates to students' ability to recognize and convey emotions in everyday life. Classroom conditions indicate that students have a strong interest in visual activities, so a picture-based approach was chosen as a strategy to improve vocabulary comprehension and learning engagement.

The application of visual documentation in the "Feelings" vocabulary learning process shows that the use of media in the form of photos and direct expressions has a positive impact on the learning process of elementary school students. During the observation stage, students are asked to demonstrate emotional expressions such as happy, sad, angry, and surprised, then the interactions are recorded through photos and videos. This documentation serves as a stimulus for connecting facial expressions, English vocabulary, and emotional situations. This process creates more meaningful learning because students do not simply receive material verbally, but experience it directly through visual observation and physical practice. Learning becomes more contextual and personal. This aligns with research that emphasizes the importance of using visual media in language learning to improve students' information processing and memory retention (Mekonnen et al., 2024).

### **Visual Media and Learning Activities**

The learning media used include: emotion faces, vocabulary cards, and creative activity sheets. These visual media help students connect concrete expressions with relevant words, making it easier to internalize concepts. During the activities, students observe, imitate, group expressions, and engage in

reflective activities such as drawing or explaining their own feelings. This approach aligns with the principles of visual literacy which emphasizes the use of visual representation to support meaning.

The integrated learning of visuals, gestures, facial expressions, and verbal discussion in this activity demonstrates the strong characteristics of a multimodal learning approach. Visual documentation serves as a semiotic resource that helps students interpret emotions holistically. Photos of students displaying various expressions allow them to understand the meaning of vocabulary contextually, rather than simply memorizing a list of words.

This finding aligns with multimodal learning theory, which emphasizes the need for diverse representations to enhance students' understanding. The use of multiple modes of representation strengthens cognitive and affective processes in language learning, particularly in elementary school-aged students who tend to learn through concrete experiences (Kim et al., 2023).



Figure 1. Integrated visual learning process

### **Analysis of Students' Cognitive and Behavioral Changes**

Analysis of changes in behavior and language skills showed quite clear progress. At the beginning of the activity, only about 30 percent of students were able to correctly name emotional vocabulary. As the learning progressed, that figure increased to 82 percent. Furthermore, students began to use emotional vocabulary spontaneously in classroom interactions. They not only imitated facial expressions but also associated them with appropriate vocabulary. Increased active participation was evident in the way students responded to instructions, identified expressions more quickly, and demonstrated the courage to use new vocabulary without being directly prompted.

Observations showed that of the 27 students, 55.6% were in the high engagement category, 29.6% in the moderate category, and 14.8% in the low category. These percentages indicate that most students responded positively to visual documentation-based learning activities. Students were seen actively demonstrating expressions, guessing vocabulary, and discussing based on the photos displayed. Their engagement increased when learning combined visual elements and physical activities, as both are more aligned with the developmental characteristics of elementary school children.

Vocabulary comprehension also improved when students connected visual representations with corresponding English words. The use of photos sourced from their own interactions strengthened vocabulary memory through personal associations. This process aligns with the principle of dual coding, which states that information processed through both verbal and visual channels is more easily understood and remembered by students (Luo, 2022; Li et al., 2022).

The visual documentation activity resulted in several positive changes in students' learning behavior. They became more confident in showing facial expressions, more responsive to teacher instructions, and more actively engaged in class discussions. Spontaneous responses, such as trying to guess the emotions of their peers in photos or commenting on their own expressions, indicated that learning became more interactive. Furthermore, students became more willing to take part in group activities. Visual documentation helped create a collaborative atmosphere as students worked together to observe, evaluate, and imitate the expressions shown in the photos. This active participation demonstrates that visual media can enhance affective and social engagement in language learning, especially at the elementary school level.

### **Emotional Responses and Student Engagement**

Students' emotional responses also improved significantly. At the beginning of the session, only 22 percent of students were able to express emotions spontaneously, while by the end of the session, this figure had risen to 74 percent. Creative activities such as drawing self-expressions helped students reduce their fear of making mistakes and created a safe space for them to practice basic emotional regulation. These findings demonstrate that visual media not only reinforces vocabulary learning but also plays a role in developing emotional awareness.

Reflections from the accompanying teacher reinforced these observations. The teacher noted that visual media engaged students more, including those who were typically passive or lacking in confidence. Visual documentation allowed the teacher to more clearly observe student development, particularly the shift from hesitant to more confident expressions. The teacher also assessed that visual media served a dual purpose as a learning aid and a means of understanding students' emotional responses within the social context of the classroom. This played a crucial role in the success of visual documentation-based learning. Reflective notes indicated that students initially had difficulty distinguishing between sad and tired expressions. Additional visual examples, such as illustrations and short videos, were added to enhance student understanding. This type of adaptation strengthened the effectiveness of learning because the teacher could adjust strategies based on students' actual responses in class.



Figure 2. Students' emotional responses and engagement

### **Challenges and Implications of Visual Documentation Implementation**

These findings have important implications for EFL learning at the elementary school level. The integration of visual documentation and reflection has been shown to be effective in improving vocabulary mastery and emotional literacy. First, visual documentation can be an effective strategy for improving thematic vocabulary comprehension because students can associate words with real-life experiences. Second, this method can be applied to other materials such as colors, daily routines, and classroom objects. Third, teachers can develop student visual portfolios to monitor the development of language skills over time. This approach can be an alternative learning strategy for teachers when presenting abstract materials such as emotions, as it provides a concrete and easily understood learning experience for students.

However, there were several limitations. The relatively short learning duration limited the depth of exploration of the material. Visual documentation occasionally distracted students who tended to be overly interested in the camera. Disparities in English proficiency among students also meant that some students took longer to grasp word associations and expressions. These aspects need to be addressed to improve future activities. Furthermore, not all students share the same level of comfort when asked to demonstrate certain expressions. We must ensure that the documentation process respects students' comfort levels, especially in the context of elementary school learning. Technical challenges such as room lighting, camera position, and photo quality also impact the effectiveness of visual documentation as analytical material.

As a recommendation, learning can be developed by adding a variety of visual media, such as situational illustrations or short videos. Reflection sessions can be more structured to provide students with clear guidelines for expressing their feelings. Teachers can also utilize visual documentation analysis to continuously monitor student progress. Furthermore, extending the learning duration can provide students with more opportunities to internalize vocabulary and explore emotions more naturally.

## CONCLUSION

This study shows that the integration of visual documentation and reflection in English language learning materials “*Feelings*” in elementary school, learning can increase engagement, vocabulary comprehension, and emotional awareness. The use of visual media such as photos, videos, vocabulary cards, and facial expressions has been shown to strengthen the connection between visual representations and English vocabulary. Students not only memorize vocabulary but also relate it to concrete experiences through self-expression and visual observation.

Key findings showed improvements in students' cognitive and behavioral abilities, such as an increase in the accuracy of emotional vocabulary from 30 percent to 82 percent, and an increase in the ability to express emotions spontaneously from 22 percent to 74 percent. Visual documentation also contributed to student engagement, with 55.6 percent of students in the high engagement category. Visual media made it easier for students to differentiate emotional expressions, increased participation, and created a more interactive and collaborative classroom atmosphere.

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