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FOSTERING HIGH SCHOOL ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE (EFL) STUDENTS' SPEAKING CONFIDENCE THROUGH PHOTOVOICE 2.0: A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY

by

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Abstract:

This study explores the implementation, impact, and students' perceptions of Photovoice 2.0 in fostering speaking skills. Employing a qualitative case study design, it involved eight purposively selected high school students at SMA Negeri 7 Semarang. Data were gathered through digital observations, semi-structured interviews, and qualitative analysis of voice notes using a validated rubric. The data analysis involved thematic analysis and triangulation to ensure the credibility of the findings. The results indicated that Photovoice 2.0 empowered students as co-researchers and showed strong potential in reducing speaking anxiety. Based on the qualitative speaking rubric, students achieved a high average score of 4.56 out of 5.0, with Comprehensibility and Content & SHOWED Analysis receiving the highest marks (4.75). The Vocabulary aspect recorded the lowest score (4.25), suggesting a need for more explicit linguistic support. Overall, students perceived the method positively, noting increased motivation, confidence, and material relevance. This study concludes that Photovoice 2.0 serves as a strong pedagogical strategy that develops both oral proficiency and critical thinking within digital learning environments. Furthermore, the study implies that integrating Photovoice 2.0 serves as a transformative pedagogical tool for EFL teachers to foster a more inclusive speaking environment and effectively mitigate students' speaking anxiety.

Kata kunci: *digital learning, photovoice 2.0, speaking confidence, student perceptions, the SHOWED framework*

Abstrak:

Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi implementasi, dampak, dan persepsi siswa terhadap metode Photovoice 2.0 dalam menumbuhkan keterampilan berbicara. Desain studi kasus kualitatif digunakan dalam penelitian ini, melibatkan delapan siswa SMA Negeri 7 Semarang yang dipilih melalui purposive sampling. Data dihimpun melalui observasi digital, wawancara semi-terstruktur virtual, dan analisis kualitatif terhadap performa berbicara melalui rubrik tervalidasi. Teknik analisis data melibatkan analisis tematik dan triangulasi untuk memastikan kredibilitas temuan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan Photovoice 2.0 memberdayakan siswa sebagai co-researchers dan berpotensi kuat mengurangi kecemasan berbicara. Berdasarkan rubrik kualitatif, siswa mencapai skor rata-rata tinggi sebesar 4,56 dari skala 5,0, dengan aspek Comprehensibility serta Content & SHOWED Analysis mencatat

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nilai tertinggi (4,75). Aspek Kosakata (Vocabulary) mencatat skor terendah (4,25), menunjukkan perlunya dukungan linguistik yang lebih eksplisit. Secara keseluruhan, persepsi siswa sangat positif terhadap metode ini, menekankan pada peningkatan motivasi, kepercayaan diri, dan relevansi materi pembelajaran. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa Photovoice 2.0 berfungsi sebagai strategi pedagogis efektif yang tidak hanya mengembangkan kemahiran lisan tetapi juga mendorong pemikiran kritis siswa dalam konteks pembelajaran digital. Lebih lanjut, penelitian ini menyiratkan bahwa pengintegrasian Photovoice 2.0 berfungsi sebagai alat pedagogis transformatif bagi guru Bahasa Inggris (EFL) untuk menciptakan lingkungan berbicara yang lebih inklusif dan secara efektif memitigasi (mengurangi) kecemasan berbicara siswa.

Kata Kunci: *kepercayaan diri berbicara, pembelajaran digital, Photovoice 2.0, persepsi siswa, kerangka SHOWED*

INTRODUCTION

Speaking skills are a core competency in language learning, essential for capably conveying ideas, feelings, and information verbally. This proficiency involves complex cognitive and emotional mechanisms, emphasizing that language acquisition is deeply rooted in the learners' ability to connect their personal values and emotions with their linguistic performance (Kristiawan et al., 2024). However, in many educational contexts such as Indonesia and Vietnam this skill remains a major challenge for secondary school students (Trinh & Pham, 2021). As Thornbury (2021) emphasizes, the difficulty in speaking often stems from the pressure of real-time processing, which leads to a lack of confidence and fear of making grammatical mistakes. This anxiety is further complicated by perfectionism among L2 learners, which often hinders their willingness to communicate (Carl et al., 2023). Factors such as a lack of interaction and insufficient exposure to authentic input in teacher-centered classrooms often lead to low fluency and confidence among learners (Kamilah et al., 2025). This issue is exacerbated by conventional, teacher-centered methods that fail to encourage active participation and critical thinking (Song et al., 2025).

To address these pressing challenges, innovative student-centered methods are urgently needed. One strong potential participatory strategy is Photovoice. Originally a tool for social action, Photovoice has been redefined as a powerful pedagogical instrument that empowers participants to use photography to document and reflect on their personal experiences. This method is rooted in the empowerment education and participatory photography theory, which emphasizes the shift of authority from teacher to student. Unlike traditional methods, Photovoice allows students to take control of their learning narrative through images and stories (Teti et al., 2025). As a flexible and empowering method, it enables learners to voice their concerns and ideas through a creative visual medium.

Through the process of selecting and narrating images, students engage in deep critical reflection, which is a key component in meaningful language acquisition. Recent studies confirm that such participatory visual methods not only improve speaking skills but also significantly enhance educational awareness and student capacity (Sprague et al., 2021). Furthermore, integrating Photovoice in the classroom helps build students' confidence by mitigating public speaking anxiety, as it provides a visual prompt that reduces the cognitive load during verbal production (Pranata & Halim, 2020).

Despite its potential, a significant research gap exists. Existing literature focuses mainly on the conventional Photovoice or its use in sociological studies, often relying solely on qualitative test results, thus lacking a deep exploration ef students' perceptions and experiences (Ciolan & Manasia, 2024). While recent studies have started to portray students' perception of classroom activities through Photovoice, specific focus on how this method functions within the independent curriculum *(Kurikulum Merdeka)* is still evolving (Puteri et al., 2024). Moreover, the role of Photovoice in exploring specific linguistic strategies, such as vocabulary acquisition during speaking tasks, remains under-researched (Sakinah & Melani, 2024). Crucially, few studies have explored the impact of digital voice-note performance on students' overall oral proficiency in a secondary school context (Janu et al., 2020). Based on these identified gaps, the objectives of this study are to describe the process of Photovoice 2.0 implementation, to identify the developing aspects of speaking including fluency, vocabulary, comprehensibility, and content analysis, and to explain students' perceptions regarding its potential. By adopting a qualitative approach focusing on student experience, these findings are expected to serve as valuable guidance for teachers in applying innovative pedagogy to improve the overall quality of English education.

With the rapid advancement of technology, Photovoice has evolved into Photovoice 2.0, a digital adaptation that utilizes modern devices like smartphones and digital platforms to enable real-time collection of visual and narrative data (Palm, 2024). This digital version deepens the participatory dimension by allowing instant recording and sharing of voice notes, empowering students as "co-researchers". Exploring Photovoice within digital storytelling represents a new frontier in language acquisition, offering students a more creative and secure space for self-expression (Handayani & Pradana, 2025). This is consistent with the views of Hockly & Dudeney. (2023), who argue that digital platforms

can bridge the gap between classroom theory and authentic practice. This digital shift is crucial as it addresses the limitations of traditional Photovoice by providing a more accessible and interactive platform for EFL learners to develop their oral proficiency through iterative reflection.

The shift toward Photovoice 2.0 also represents a significant move toward digital literacy integration in language classrooms. Unlike the traditional method that relies on physical prints, the digital version encourages students to engage in a more iterative process of creating, editing, and reflecting on their visual and auditory outputs. Handayani & Pradana (2025) argues that this digital storytelling landscape offers a 'new frontier' where learners can navigate their cultural identity and linguistic challenges simultaneously. This is particularly relevant in the era of global connectivity, where students are expected to not only master the grammar of a language but also the digital mediums through which that language is most frequently communicated. By utilizing smartphones as tools for academic inquiry rather than just social entertainment, students develop a more professional and critical stance toward their own learning process.

To provide a clear logical flow of this study, an integrated conceptual framework is illustrated in Figure 1. This framework demonstrates how the Photovoice 2.0 intervention, combined with the critical reflection process of the SHOWED framework, serves to enhance students' speaking confidence and their overall oral performance

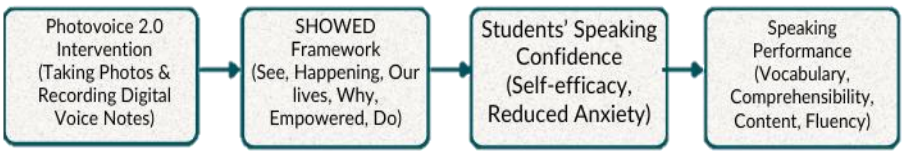


Figure 1. How the Photovoice 2.0 intervention works

Therefore, this study was designed to answer three main research questions that form the problem-solving plan, namely:

1. How do students perform Photovoice 2.0 activities in speaking learning?

2. What aspects of speaking are improved through the use of Photovoice 2.0?

3. How do students perceive the use of Photovoice 2.0 in supporting their speaking skills?

METHOD

Design

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design with a singles case study spproach adapted from Creswell, J. W., & Guetterman (2021). This design was chosen to investigate the phenomenom of Photovoice 2.0 implementation within a spesific real-life context withot manipulating the subjects (Mukumbang & van Wyk, 2020). The focus was to foster students' speaking skills through three sub-focuses: step-by-step implementation of Photovoice 2.0, speaking development, and students' perceptions based on the modified participatory framework (Teti et al., 2025; Wang, 2020). To ensure analytical clarity, the operational variables were centered on four qualitative dimensions: Fluency (speech smoothness), Vocabulary (lexical range), Comprehensibility (listener understanding), and Content (critical reflection via SHOWED framework). These variables were evaluated at SMA Negeri 7 Semarang to explore the method's potential in a real-life educational context.

Participant

This study utilized purposive sampling, focusing on a group of eight students eleventh-grade (aged 16-17) with an intermediate level of English proficiency, as indicated by their previous English course grades and teacher recommendations from SMA Negeri 7 Semarang. These participants were intentionally selected to gather deep, meaningful insights from their specific experiences during the school holiday period. This approach is consistent with the strategy of selecting specific participants to allow for a richer and more in-depth understanding of unique learning experiences (McKernan et al., 2020). By focusing on a small, dedicated group, the researcher could better capture the nuances of student engagement and the linguistic awareness that often emerges through participatory visual interventions (Sprague et al., 2021). To ensure data trustworthiness, this study positioned students as active contributors in the interpretative phase, aligning with modern participatory research standards (Bergold, J., & Thomas, 2022; Morris & Paris, 2022). Ethical considerations were strictly maintained; formal permission was obtained from the school authorities, and informed consent was secured from both the participants and their parents prior to data collection. To ensure confidentiality, all student data were anonymized using

pseudonyms, and participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time.

Instrument

To collect comprehensive data, this study utilizes three main instruments; a speaking performance test, non-participant observation, and semi-structured interviews. First, the sepaking performance test was administered in the form of digital voice note submissions. These outputs were assessed using an anlytic rubric focusing on fluency, vocabulary, comprehensibility, and content. To ensure the validity of this performance test, expert judgment was sought from an English lecturer to validate the suitability of the rubric and the instruction prompts. Second, non-participant observation was conducted to record student behavior. A structured observation checklist was utilized to monitor students' digital interactions, punctually, and quality of file submission on the platform without researcher interfence, considering that students' engagement with digital tools often reflects their perceptions of the learning activity (Puteri et al., 2024). Third semi-structured in-depth interviews were employed to gather students' narratives. An interview guideline consisting of 13 main questions was designed to explore students' perceptions, which was also validated through expert judgment before implementation to ensure the questions aligned with the research objectives.

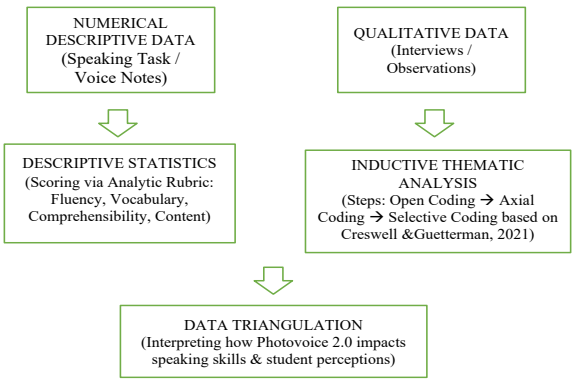
Data collecting technique

Data were obtained through a virtual mini-intervention and post-intervention procedures carried out in a continuous sequence. Initially, the researcher conducted digital observation of participant interaction and behavior within the online platform using structured observation sheets to record student engagement, motivation, and level of participation. Simultaneously, students performed the Photovoice 2.0 task by capturing photos and recording corresponding voice note narrations. This digital process represents a "new frontier" in modern language learning, where storytelling tools allow for creative self-expression (Handayani & Pradana, 2025). Subsequently, a speaking assessment was performed on the submitted voice notes using a specialized rubric focusing on fluency, vocabulary, comprehensibility, and content analysis. Finally, post-intervention semi-structured interviews were conducted virtually guided by the SHOWED framework. These

interviews aimed to mitigate potential public speaking anxiety by allowing students to reflect on their own visual prompts (Pranata & Halim, 2020). To ensure instrument transparency, a comprehensive speaking rubric was employed, covering four key criteria: Vocabulary, Comprehensibility, Content & SHOWED Reflection, and Fluency. Each criterion was measured on a 5-point Likert scale. The rubric was validated through expert judgment by senior English educators to ensure face validity and content appropriateness for high school EFL learners. The detailed assessment rubric is provided in Appendix 1 (Table 1). The reliability of the instrument was ensured through expert judgment (face validity) and data triangulation, where the rubric scores were cross-checked with interview transcripts to maintain consistency in findings.

Data analysis technique

The data analysis was structured into two distinct streams to ensure a comprehensive interpretation of the datasets. First, the descriptive data derived from the speaking performance task (voice notes) was analyzed to provide a descriptive summary of student performance based on the scoring rubric aspects, such as fluency, vocabulary, comprehensibility, and content. It is important to note that these numeric scores are used strictly for descriptive purposes to illustrate performance levels and do not involve inferential statistical testing. Second, the qualitative dataset gathered from interviews and digital observation records underwent a rigorous inductive thematic analysis adapted from established qualitative procedures (Creswell, J. W., & Guetterman, 2021). The coding procedure was conducted in three systematic stages: (1) Open Coding, where initial labels were assigned to raw interview transcripts; (2) Axial Coding, involving the grouping of



initial codes into broader categories; and (3) Selective Coding, to generate final recurring themes related to student perceptions. This analytical framework is essential for capturing the depth of students' visual and narrative experiences (Teti et al., 2025). Finally, the descriptive results and thematic findings were triangulated to ensure the trustworthiness of the conclusions, as illustrated in the data analysis flowchart in Figure 2 (Janu et al., 2020).

Figure 2: Data analysis framework

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

The findings of this study are organized based on the three research questions**, consist of the implementation process, the speaking performance analysis, and students' perceptions.**

1. *The implementation process and digital observation*

The Photovoice 2.0 intervention was executed as a virtual, one-shot task implemented over four days. Digital observation records showed that all eight participants (100%) followed the technical instructions for file naming and Google Drive sharing permissions. The recorded voice notes met the required duration of 1.5 to 2 minutes. In the digital group chat, 62.5% of students inquired about the 'Why' and 'Do' stages of the SHOWED framework. These interactions primarily focused on seeking vocabulary for their narrations and clarifying technical steps of the Photovoice process.

2. *Speaking performance analysis*

The assessment of the eight students' voice notes resulted in an overall mean score 4.56 out of 5.0. Detailed scores for each speaking aspect are presented in table 1.

Table 2: mean scores per speaking aspect

Aspect	Average Score (Max. 5.0)	Quality Explanation
Comprehensibility	4.75	Very good
Content & SHOWED Analysis	4.75	Very good
Fluency	4.5	Very good
Vocabulary	4.25	Good

Total average	**4.56**	**Very good**

Based on the data in Table 1, the highest scores were achieved in Comprehensibility and Content & SHOWED Analysis (both 4.75). Vocabulary received the lowest mean score (4.25) compared to other aspects, altough it remained within the 'Good' category.

3. *Students' perceptions and experiences (thematic analysis)*

The thematic analysis of the semi-structured interviews with the eight participants revealed three major themes. The distribution of these themes based on the interview transcripts is presented in Table 2.

Table 3: Frequency of identified themes from student interviews (n=8)

NO	*Themes*	*Frequency*	*Percentage*
1.	*The Novelty of Expression and Increased Motivation*	*7*	*87%*
2.	*The Cognitive Demand of Structuring a Critical Narrative*	*5*	*62.5%*
3.	*The Voice Note Format as a Confidence Scaffolding*	*6*	*75%*

The first theme, the novelty of expression and increased motivation, was identified in 87.5% of the participants' responses. For instance, Student Aira stated that having a visual medium provided a new way to tell a story, which related to her level of anxiety during the speaking task.

The second theme involved the cognitive demand of structuring a critical narrative, particularly during the transition from visual elements to the 'Why' and 'Do' stages of the SHOWED framework. Student Darin noted that the most difficult part was changing the visual into a narrative, which required significant thought to find appropriate descriptive words.

The third theme, the voice note format as confidence scaffolding, was reported by 75% of the students. Participants utilized the controlled setting for preparation and self-correction. Student Nadzhif mentioned the necessity of ensuring a quiet environment to prevent interruptions during the voice recording process.

Discussion

The discussion evaluates the findings based on the research objectives: the implementation of Photovoice 2.0, its impact on speaking performance, and students' perceptions. The implementation of Photovoice 2.0 at SMA Negeri 7 Semarang has strong potential to transformed students from passive learners into active "co-researchers," a result that **aligns with** Sprague et al. (2021) regarding the power of participatory visual methods in enhancing student capacity. However, while Sprague et al. (2021) focused on broad educational awareness in a physical classroom, **this study contrasts** by demonstrating that the same participatory intensity can be achieved in a virtual space through digital platforms. Furthermore, the autonomy in selecting visual prompts acted as a primary driver of engagement, which is consistent with the visual-based learning autonomy envisioned in the *Kurikulum Merdeka* (Adawiyah et al., 2024; Puteri et al., 2024). Theoretically, this process confirms that participatory digital media increases cognitive and emotional engagement (Palm, 2024), moving students toward a more holistic communicative competence rather than rote memorization. In contrast to conventional teacher-centered methods discussed by Song et al. (2025), the Photovoice 2.0 intervention encouraged a "negotiation of meaning" (Kristiawan et al., 2024; Teti et al., 2025). This study also differs from Janu et al. (2020) in its instrumentation; while Janu utilized standard digital voice notes, this study integrated the SHOWED critical reflection framework to make the oral production more structured.

Regarding speaking performance, the high mean score of 4.56 indicates significant "confidence scaffolding." The highest scores in Comprehensibility and Content (4.75) suggest that the asynchronous format allowed students to bypass the "perfectionism trap" identified by Carl et al. (2023). However, a key difference emerges when comparing these results to Sakinah & Melani (2024). While their study observed students struggling with vocabulary in spontaneous tasks, this study found that the "secure space" of Photovoice 2.0 (Handayani & Pradana, 2025) allowed for rehearsal and self-correction, resulting in a respectable Vocabulary score (4.25). The use of personal photographs also reduced the "cognitive load," supporting the theory of Pranata & Halim (2020) Specifically, this study confirms that familiarity with the content allows students to allocate more cognitive resources to speaking mechanics, which contrasts with the findings of Trinh & Pham (2021) where high-pressure real-time processing often led to speaking anxiety. This finding also reinforces the theory by Philp & Duchesne (2021) that emotional engagement

and psychological safety are essential precursors to linguistic success, which were achieved through the asynchronous digital environment of Photovoice 2.0.

Finally, thematic analysis of students' perceptions revealed that 87.5% of participants felt empowered, reinforcing the need to explore student experiences as argued by Ciolan & Manasia (2024). Comparing the participants' level, this study's focus on high school students aligns with the demographic in Hieu (2023), yet it differs in its analysis by incorporating the SHOWED technique for higher-order thinking. Despite its limitations in sample size, this study fills a crucial research gap by providing qualitative evidence of how Photovoice 2.0 functions as a transformative tool for fostering both oral proficiency and critical agency in the digital era (Handayani & Pradana, 2025).

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

Conclusion

This study demonstrates a significant relationship between the implementation of Photovoice 2.0 and the enhancement of students' speaking confidence and performance. The intervention proves that by utilizing the SHOWED framework, students can transition from passive learners to active narrators, which directly influences their ability to construct structured and critical oral arguments. Furthermore, the use of asynchronous voice notes serves as a crucial scaffolding tool that bridges the gap between students' creative ideas and their oral production. This format indicated reducing speaking anxiety, allowing students to focus on comprehensibility and content depth rather than linguistic perfection. Ultimately, student perceptions reveal that the authenticity and autonomy provided by this participatory method foster a stronger sense of agency, making the language learning process more meaningful and personally relevant. These findings provide a practical framework for creating student-centered environments that prioritize expressive communication over rote memorization.

Based on these results, several suggestions are proposed. English teachers are encouraged to integrate asynchronous digital tools as formative assessments to support students with high speaking anxiety. While this method shows strong boosts confidence, educators should still provide explicit linguistic support to help students expand their technical vocabulary. For future researchers, it is recommended to conduct longitudinal

studies to observe the long-term sustainability of these speaking improvements. Future inquiries should also explore the comparison between virtual and face-to-face Photovoice implementations in diverse school settings to better understand the method's adaptability across various Indonesian educational contexts.

Limitation

Several limitations must be acknowledged in this study. First, due to its nature as a 'one-shot' virtual intervention, the researcher could not assess the long-term sustainability of the students' speaking improvements over an extended period. Second, given the small sample size of eight participants from a single institution, the findings are specific to this context and may not be generalizable to all educational settings. Finally, this study focused exclusively on asynchronous voice notes; thus, the results may differ from the dynamics of spontaneous, face-to-face oral communication. These limitations suggest that future research could benefit from longitudinal designs or larger, more diverse participant groups to further validate the impact of Photovoice 2.0.

Implication

From a theoretical standpoint, this study enriches the existing literature by demonstrating that Photovoice 2.0, when adapted into a digital format, serves as a bridge to higher-order thinking through the integration of the SHOWED framework. Practically, this research provides a clear model for EFL teachers to create a low-anxiety classroom environment by utilizing familiar digital tools. The core implication suggests that by positioning students as 'co-researchers' and allowing them to integrate their lived experiences into assignments, educators do more than just facilitate language acquisition. This approach fosters intrinsic motivation and critical literacy, making the learning process more authentic and relevant in the current digital era. Furthermore, these findings encourage curriculum developers to integrate participatory visual methods to support the student-centered goals of the *Kurikulum Merdeka*.

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Appendix

Appendix 1

Table 1. Speaking Performance Rubric Criteria

Aspect	Score 5 (Excellent)	Score 4 (Good)	Score 3 (Fair)	Score 2 (Poor)	Score 1 (Very Poor)
Fluency	Speaks very fluently with almost no unnatural pauses; narrative flows smoothly; duration meets 1.5-2 mins target.	Speaks fluently with occasional "ums" or hesitations; narrative is mostly smooth; duration is around 1.5 mins.	Speaks with noticeable hesitations; pauses are frequent but do not stop the flow; duration is around 1 min.	Speech is fragmented and slow; long pauses to search for words; duration is significantly below 1 min.	Frequent long silences; unable to complete sentences; narrative is extremely brief (<45 seconds).
Vocabulary	Uses a wide range of precise and critical vocabulary (e.g., *dilemma, consequence, essential, struggling*).	Uses varied vocabulary relevant to the topic; successfully uses several critical terms.	Uses adequate vocabulary; sometimes repetitive or relies on general terms instead of specific ones.	Very limited vocabulary; relies heavily on basic and repetitive words (e.g., *good, bad, happy*).	Vocabulary is insufficient even for simple descriptions; numerous word-choice errors.
Comprehensibility	Message is perfectly clear and easy to understand at first listen; pronunciation is near-natural.	Message is clear overall; minor errors in grammar or pronunciation do not hinder the core meaning.	Message is mostly understandable, though the listener requires extra concentration due to errors.	Message is difficult to follow; many parts are confusing or disconnected; requires multiple listening.	Message is unintelligible; the core meaning cannot be captured even after repeated listening.

Content & SHOWED Analysis	Provides a complete and deep SHOWED analysis; offers highly critical reflection and concrete solutions (Do).	Covers most SHOWED elements (especially *Why* and *Do*); shows clear reflection and logical reasoning.	Focuses mostly on descriptive elements (See, Happening) with limited analysis of *Why* or *Do*.	Merely describes the photo (See) without any deeper analysis or reflection; no solutions provided.	Content is irrelevant to the photo; no SHOWED elements present; narrative is extremely superficial.