

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### **A. Background of Study**

The learning experience of students involves not only acquiring information from learning materials but also a process of internalization, understanding, and personal interaction with the materials. Kolondam et al. (2023) stated that student learning experience is an important component in influencing student learning outcomes. Biggs and Tang (2011) emphasized that learning is not merely about transferring knowledge but involves students actively constructing their understanding based on interactions with the content, their prior knowledge, and the surrounding environment. A deep understanding of students' learning experiences has a significant impact on the effectiveness of their learning and academic development. The absorption and processing of learning information by students can be influenced by factors such as their learning style, learning environment, and level of motivation (Dale H. Schunk, 2008). For instance, the Self-Regulated Learning model suggests that learners who are more aware of and actively manage their learning processes achieve better outcomes, highlighting the role of internal factors in shaping learning experiences.

Additionally, in an era of education that emphasizes inclusive approaches, it is increasingly important to pay attention to the variability of students' learning experiences. According to Deci & Ryan (2017), creating

inclusive learning environments that cater to diverse needs enhances students' intrinsic motivation and supports their autonomy, competence, and sense of belonging. Identifying and understanding the factors that influence students' learning experiences can help create more supportive and responsive learning environments for diverse students. Examining the background of this issue provides comprehensive insight into the dynamics of students' learning experiences, opening up opportunities for developing innovative and inclusive learning strategies. For example, Derakhshan et al. (2021) argue that an emotionally supportive classroom fosters higher engagement, especially for learners navigating challenges in second-language acquisition. This research outlines the challenges that students face in their learning experiences and suggests ways to improve education in a more holistic and effective manner, echoing Kolb (2014) assertion that experiential and reflective learning fosters deeper and more meaningful understanding.

This is in line with what is written in the Qur'an in Surah At-Thaahaa verse 114 below:

فَتَعَلَى اللَّهِ الْمَلِكُ الْحَقُّ وَلَا تَعْجَلْ بِالْقُرْآنِ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ يُقْضَىٰ إِلَيْكَ وَحْيُهُ وَقُلْ رَبِّ  
زِدْنِي عِلْمًا

This verse explains that Allah sent Prophet Muhammad SAW to pray to Him always, in order to gain additional knowledge. These sciences include experience, human relations, government, and warfare. Asking for additional knowledge is an example that must be followed by all the people

of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, because the knowledge of Allah SWT is vast. Acquiring knowledge will increase our belief in the greatness of Allah. It emphasizes the importance of knowledge as a means to deepen one's faith. The above verse suggests that humans are encouraged to continuously learn and expand their knowledge, with the hope that this will strengthen their faith.

Students' learning experiences have long been a focus of educational research, as they are integral to understanding how individuals navigate and succeed in different academic settings. Learning experiences encompass a range of cognitive, emotional, and social dimensions, reflecting not only the content of instruction but also how learners perceive and interact with their educational environments. These experiences are shaped by various factors, including the quality of instruction, classroom dynamics, motivation, and the learners' socio-cultural contexts. Over recent years, studies have continued to emphasize the importance of these multifaceted factors. Mercer et al. (2019) highlights the critical role of motivation and emotional well-being in driving successful learning outcomes, particularly in second language acquisition. Similarly, Derakhshan et al. (2021) stress the significance of classroom environments, arguing that supportive teacher-student and peer interactions foster greater engagement and participation. These findings collectively underscore the need to explore students' learning experiences in depth, especially in unique educational contexts such as intensive language programs.

Intensive English classes represent a distinctive and often high-stakes educational setting where learners are immersed in a focused and accelerated language learning process. These programs are designed to help students achieve substantial proficiency gains within a relatively short period. While they provide opportunities for rapid skill acquisition and increased confidence in language use, the demanding nature of intensive English programs presents unique challenges for students. Learners in these programs must navigate high cognitive loads, adapt to rigorous schedules, and often manage heightened levels of anxiety associated with performance pressures. Research by Zhang, Y., & Zhang (2020) highlights that engagement, particularly in interactive activities such as speaking and listening, is crucial for success in intensive English classes. This aligns with findings from Khajavy et al. (2021), who demonstrated that emotional resilience, perseverance, and grit are vital in helping students overcome challenges in intensive learning settings. Similarly, Grit is a central factor in developing persistence, as it has been shown to help students in intensive learning settings maintain their focus on long-term language goals (Duckworth, 2016). Together, these studies illustrate the dual nature of intensive English classes as both a source of growth and a test of learners' adaptability and emotional endurance.

Photovoice is a qualitative research method that combines photography with grassroots social action and is used to capture lived experiences from the perspective of participants. It is increasingly being

integrated into educational settings to explore students' experiences and enhance learning. As stated by Edwards et al., (2012), photovoice applies the usage of pictures as a tool to generate discussions and actively involve students in the whole teaching and the learning process. They use the photos they take as a means of expressing the ideas they want to write or speak about. Photovoice is a method that allows educators to see things from a student's point of view. When a student takes a photo and explains it in their own words, it helps educators understand each student's experiences better. Using photovoice as a teaching tool was beneficial because it made students feel included by letting them explore their own viewpoints. Photovoice has been employed to document students' experiences in critical qualitative research (Ferdiansyah et al., 2020). Photovoice offers understanding into participants' perspectives and facilitates analytical discussions (Khoir et al., 2019). For instance, in qualitative research, photovoice is employed to gather data wherein participants are tasked with documenting their lives through photography (Call-Cummings et al., 2019).

This research is motivated by the intention of capturing the learning experiences of students who enrolled in the Intensive English class. By using the Photovoice lens, the researcher aims to provide a more personalized, student-centered perspective on their educational journey and challenges. The study seeks to uncover the nuances that make their experiences distinctive within the educational context, contributing to the ongoing enhancement of English education programs and support

systems. Additionally, this research has the potential to advance the theoretical foundations of educational research by offering insights into the learning experience and challenges of superior class students in a higher education setting. Through this exploration, the researcher hopes to facilitate more effective, engaging, and student-centered approaches to English education, ultimately benefiting both educators and students within UPB and similar academic institutions. From the existing explanation, the researcher is concerned to carry out further research about **"EXPLORING STUDENTS' LEARNING EXPERIENCE IN INTENSIVE ENGLISH CLASS THROUGH PHOTOVOICE LENS"**

## **B. Definition of Key Terms**

### 1. Students' learning experience

It relates to the diverse activities, interactions and environments that students use to acquire knowledge, skills and attitudes. In this study, the focus was to investigate students' learning experiences, challenges and perceptions.

### 2. Intensive English Class

It is a program aimed at improving TOEFL scores and strengthening foreign language competence for UIN Antasari students. This research provides an overview of how this special English programme impacts students' academic and personal development,

as well as how they are engaged in the learning process.

### 3. Photovoice

Photovoice is a qualitative research technique approach where participants portray and describe their experiences through photography. Through this research, Photovoice was used as a tool for the students in the Intensive English Class to visually document their experiences and challenges.

## **C. Research Questions**

1. How do the students' photos represent their learning experiences in Intensive English Class?
2. What are the challenges encountered by students in the Intensive English class?

## **D. Research Objectives**

1. To explore the students' learning experience in Intensive English class using the Photovoice method.
2. To investigate the challenges encountered by students in the Intensive English class.

## **E. Research Significance**

### **1. Theoretically**

This study provide an understanding of students' learning experience and challenges in Intensive English class using the Photovoice method.

### **2. Practically**

#### **a. For students**

This research allows students to review and share their learning experiences, fostering self-awareness and encouraging active participation in their education.

#### **b. Teachers**

Discovering students' learning experiences and challenges can be beneficial and give other teachers inspiration to improve the quality of their learning, particularly when teaching in English intensive classes.

#### **c. Researcher**

This study functions as a reference for future research, showing the implementation of the Photovoice method in a way that explores educational experiences.