

Teacher Perceptions of Joyful Learning in Elementary English Instruction Based on the TPACK Framework: An Interpretative Phenomenological Study

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ABSTRACT

This case study research aims to understand the perceptions and experiences of elementary school English teachers towards joyful learning in English learning based on the TPACK (Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge) framework. Data were collected through questionnaires from 20 teachers and semi-structured interviews with 5 teachers. Triangulation methods were used to ensure the validity of the data. Qualitative data were analyzed using the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) approach to reveal the personal meanings that teachers construct from their experiences in implementing joyful learning. The findings indicate that teachers perceive joyful learning as an important strategy for building students' emotional engagement through a positive classroom atmosphere and interactive activities. Teachers also expressed confidence and enthusiasm in using technology to create joyful English learning, although some faced limitations in facilities and training. This study highlights the importance of ongoing support in teacher professional development to strengthen the practice of TPACK-based joyful learning.

Keywords: case study; elementary school English teachers; Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis; joyful learning; TPACK

INTRODUCTION

English has become an important subject in the era of globalization. In the era of globalization, English holds a strategic position as a mandatory skill. Mastery of this language enables individuals to communicate across borders, streamlines interactions in business and education, and opens broader access to various professional opportunities. Thus, English proficiency can be seen as a crucial tool for navigating the dynamics of global competition and building international networks (Sidabutar, 2020). In line with the importance of mastering English as a primary skill in facing global competition and building international networks, strategic efforts to prepare the younger generation can be made by introducing English from elementary school. Introducing English from elementary school provides opportunities for students to gain early learning experiences that can support the development of language skills while building intercultural competence (Cameron, 2002). Early foreign language learning also helps foster self-confidence, curiosity, and lifelong learning habits. English language learning in elementary schools is part of an educational strategy influenced by national policies, global demands, and societal needs. On the one hand, English is positioned as a strategic skill for increasing international competitiveness and building cross-cultural competence from an early age. However, its implementation still faces various challenges, such as limited teacher quality, curriculum gaps, and differences in social and political conditions that influence practice on the ground. However, for elementary school students, foreign language learning is often considered difficult if the teaching strategies used by teachers do not align with the child's developmental characteristics. Nevertheless, there is a consensus that introducing English from elementary school is a crucial investment that can strengthen students' global communication skills and prepare them to face competition in the era of globalization (Cao, 2019)(Hoa & Tuan, 2007).

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Although mastering English from elementary school is considered a crucial investment in building global competency, the learning process cannot be separated from an approach that aligns with the child's developmental characteristics. An inappropriate approach can actually leave students feeling stressed and viewing a foreign language as a burden. Therefore, a learning strategy is needed that emphasizes not only cognitive aspects but also fosters students' motivation, self-confidence, and interest in learning. One relevant approach to addressing this need is joyful learning. This concept emphasizes creating a positive, interactive, and meaningful classroom atmosphere, so that students feel engaged both cognitively and affectively. Joyful learning is an approach that emphasizes creating a fun, interactive, and meaningful learning environment so that students feel engaged both cognitively and affectively. This model has been proven to increase student motivation, creativity, and learning outcomes because the learning process is designed to be joyful and free from boredom (Aqil et al., 2020)(Rohani et al., 2021)(Irmawati et al., 2024). Research shows that when students experience joy in learning, their intrinsic motivation increases and their emotional engagement is stronger (Mirvis & Csikszentmihalyi, 1991; Fredricks et al., 2004). In the context of English language learning, joyful learning can help students reduce foreign language anxiety, encourage students to try speaking, and strengthen active participation (Raharja & Ashadi, 2019).

Although joyful learning offers an effective approach to creating a more engaging and meaningful English learning environment for elementary school students, its successful implementation depends heavily on teachers' competence in designing learning. Creating enjoyable learning involves more than just providing entertaining activities; it also requires the harmonious integration of pedagogical strategies, material selection, and technology utilization. Therefore, teachers need a comprehensive framework to combine these three aspects to create an optimal learning experience. This framework is called Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK), which emphasizes the importance of synergy between technology, pedagogy, and content in learning. Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) is a knowledge framework that integrates technology, pedagogy, and content (Mishra & Koehler, 2006). The TPACK framework emphasizes that mastery of technology alone is not enough; teachers must be able to combine it with appropriate pedagogical strategies and a deep understanding of the lesson content. In English language learning, this means the use of digital media (such as interactive games, digital storytelling, or language learning apps), aligned with pedagogical strategies (e.g., task-based learning or collaborative learning) and relevant language content. Thus, TPACK serves as an important foundation for teachers to design English lessons that are fun, interactive, and tailored to the needs of elementary school students.

Although the concepts of joyful learning and the TPACK framework have both been widely discussed, research linking the two in the context of English language learning in elementary schools remains limited. Most research on TPACK emphasizes teachers' mastery of technology or the integration of technology into specific subjects (Koehler et al., 2013), while studies on joyful learning often focus on pedagogical strategies without highlighting the technology integration aspect. Few studies have explored how elementary school teachers interpret joyful learning as they attempt to integrate technology, pedagogy, and content into their daily practices. Understanding teachers' perceptions is crucial, as they are the primary agents translating educational theory into real-life classroom practice (Caputolan et al., 2025).

In light of this gap, it is crucial to conduct research that thoroughly examines how elementary school teachers interpret and apply the concept of joyful learning within the TPACK framework to English language learning. Such a study is expected to provide both theoretical and practical contributions by providing a more comprehensive understanding of the integration of technology, pedagogy, and content within the context of English language learning at the elementary school level. Therefore, this study aims to explore and interpret elementary school English teachers' perceptions and experiences regarding the implementation of TPACK-based joyful learning, specifically regarding how they interpret the concept, how they integrate aspects of technology, pedagogy, and content into their English teaching practices, and the challenges they face in the process.

METHODS

Research Design

This research used a qualitative approach with a case study design. This design was chosen because it was appropriate for exploring teachers' perceptions and experiences in depth in a specific context, namely the implementation of TPACK-based joyful learning in English instruction in elementary schools. According to Yin, (2011), case studies allow researchers to comprehensively understand phenomena by considering real-world conditions. To analyze the data, this study employed an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) approach, which focuses on understanding the meaning of participants' experiences from their own perspectives (Tindall, 2009)(Batzoglou, 2024).

Research Participants

The research participants were 20 elementary school English teachers from various schools in Magelang Regency, selected purposively, based on the following criteria: (1) having actively taught English in elementary schools for at least two years, and (2) having experience using both simple and digital technology in their teaching. Of these 20 teachers, five were selected for in-depth interviews to gain a more detailed understanding of their experiences. The selection of the five interview participants was based on their varied experiences, school backgrounds, and their willingness to share information openly.

Data Collection

Data were collected using two main techniques. The first is an open-ended questionnaire administered to 20 teachers to obtain a general overview of their perceptions regarding the concept of joyful learning and its implementation within the TPACK framework. In addition, Semi-structured interviews with five selected teachers were used to explore their personal experiences, reflections, and challenges they face in their teaching practices. This questionnaire and interview approach was chosen so that the collected data reflected both general perceptions and personal experiences of teachers. According to Dodgson, (2017) the combination of these two instruments can enrich the data and increase the validity of the research findings.

Data Analysis

To answer the research questions, qualitative data were analyzed in depth to capture the teachers' perspectives and experiences holistically. The analysis focused not only on what the participants said, but also on how they interpreted their lived experiences in implementing joyful learning in English language learning. The qualitative data were analyzed using the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) approach, a method that emphasizes the exploration of personal meanings that individuals construct from their experiences Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, (2009) in (Batzoglou, 2024). This approach enabled researchers to more comprehensively understand teachers' interpretations of the implementation of joyful learning in the context of TPACK. 1. IPA Analysis Steps Referring to Smith, Flowers, & Larkin (2009) in Batzoglou, (2024) , the stages of data analysis using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) are as follows:

1. Reading and Reviewing the Data

The researcher read the interview transcripts repeatedly to understand the participants' experiences comprehensively.

2. Making Initial Notes

The researcher wrote exploratory notes on important points, such as keywords, emotional expressions, or salient experiences.

3. Developing Emergent Themes

From initial notes, the researcher identified initial themes that described the meaning of the participants' experiences.

4. Looking for Relationships Between Themes

Initial themes were grouped to identify conceptual relationships that would form a higher-order structure of meaning.

5. Continuing to the Next Case

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The same process was carried out for each participant, while respecting the uniqueness of each experience.

6. Identifying Cross-Case Patterns

The themes from each participant were compared to identify similarities, differences, and patterns of collective meaning.

Data Validity

To ensure data validity, this study employed method triangulation, comparing questionnaire results with interviews. Furthermore, member checking was conducted by asking participants to confirm a summary of the interview results to ensure that the researcher's interpretations aligned with their intentions. Ethical considerations were also maintained by obtaining participants' voluntary informed consent and ensuring the confidentiality of their identities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study aims to understand elementary school English teachers' perceptions and experiences of joyful learning in English instruction based on the TPACK (Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge) framework. Data were obtained through questionnaires from 20 teachers and semi-structured interviews with five teachers. Analysis was conducted using an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) approach to uncover the personal meanings teachers construct from their experiences implementing joyful learning.

The research findings revealed that teachers perceive joyful learning as an important strategy for building student emotional engagement through a positive classroom atmosphere and interactive activities. Teachers also emphasized the importance of technology integration to support joyful learning, despite limited facilities and the need for ongoing training.

The research results presented in the following table illustrate elementary school English teachers' perceptions of the implementation of joyful learning, deep learning, and TPACK in their teaching practices. The analysis was conducted based on dimensions, indicators, questionnaire items, and the average scores obtained. This provides an overview of the extent to which teachers understand the concepts of joyful learning, fostering critical thinking skills, and integrating technology into the teaching process. Thus, these findings provide a basis for discussing how these three approaches complement each other in supporting effective English learning at the elementary school level. The following table displays the results of the questionnaire related to the dimensions of joyful learning, deep learning, and TPACK along with indicators, supporting theories, items, and average scores.

Table 1

Questionnaire Results on Joyful Learning, Deep Learning, and TPACK

Dimensions	Indicator	Item Questionnaire	Average
Joyful Learning	Understanding of the draft learning pleasant	1. I understand the draft of Joyful Learning	3.45
	Create positive atmosphere in class	7. I try create fun learning atmosphere 8. I believe student Study better If they like	3.3
	Use creative & interactive activity	7. I use games / interactive activities in the moment I teach	3.25
		15. I use games , songs , or creative activity other to create atmosphere Study	3
	Notice students' interests & needs	9. I pay attention students' interest in choosing activity to Study	3.6
	Designing enthusiastic learning	14. I designed activity fun learning so that students feel enthusiastic moment Study	3.4

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Deep Learning	think critical Skills	2. I encourage student to think critically in lesson	2.7
	Relatedness material with life real	3. I associate material with context real life of the students.	3.45
	Facilitation reflection & discussion	4. I facilitate discussion and reflection in class	3.15
TPACK	Integration of materials , pedagogy , and technology	10. I feel capable to combine learning material with technology	3.45
		12. I understand How to integrate technology , content materials and teaching strategies	3.2
	Utilization technology for learning	11. I use technology to support approach fun learning	3.1
	Exploration of digital media for teach	13. I'm used to it search and try digital media (video, etc.) for learning	3.3

In addition, data analysis using an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) approach yielded several themes that illustrate teachers' perceptions and experiences in implementing TPACK-based joyful learning. These themes include teachers' understanding of joyful learning, strategies used in the classroom, TPACK integration in practice, challenges faced, and professional development needs. The proof of the quotation can be seen as follows

Theme 1: Understanding Joyful Learning

Teachers define joyful learning not only as a learning process that makes students feel happy, but also as an approach that encourages their cognitive and emotional engagement. Some teachers emphasize that joyful learning should connect the material to students' real lives to make it more meaningful. One teacher stated, "*Joyful learning is when children feel that learning is fun, not stressful.*" This statement indicates that a positive learning atmosphere is seen as important for reducing learning stress in students. Another teacher added, "*We try to connect the material to everyday life so that children feel connected to what they are learning.*" This illustrates that joyful learning is also understood as a contextual strategy that links learning experiences to students' daily lives. Thus, teachers view joyful learning as a student-centered and contextual pedagogical practice, although in reality, not all teachers are able to implement it consistently in the classroom.

Theme 2: Joyful Learning Strategies in the Classroom

In classroom practice, teachers employ various strategies to create a joyful learning atmosphere. These strategies include the use of songs, games, creative projects, humor, role-play, and even extracurricular activities. One teacher stated, "*I often use English children's songs, and they quickly memorize them and have fun.*" This quote demonstrates that songs are an effective way to help students learn while having fun. Another teacher added, "*Simple games help children feel like learning isn't a burden.*" This illustrates that simple games can reduce students' stress and increase their engagement in learning. Thus, teachers interpret the joyful learning strategy as a way to foster students' intrinsic motivation through interactive and fun activities. However, limited time and ideas often hinder the smooth implementation of this strategy in the classroom.

Theme 3: Integrating TPACK into Learning

Teachers showed variation in integrating technology into English learning. Some teachers felt confident using digital applications to support a fun learning environment, while others still experienced limitations in skills and facilities. One teacher stated, "*I am already quite familiar with using simple applications like Kahoot or Wordwall.*" This statement indicates that mastery of technology can increase teachers' creativity in designing more interactive learning activities. However, another teacher stated, "*It is still difficult to choose the right application; sometimes it even confuses the students.*" This quote

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demonstrates that pedagogical skills in selecting and adapting digital applications remain a challenge. Thus, teachers interpret TPACK integration as an opportunity to enrich learning, but their experiences vary, greatly influenced by individual digital competency and school support facilities.

Theme 4: Challenges in Implementation

In the process of implementing TPACK-based joyful learning, teachers face various challenges that limit their freedom of movement. The most frequently cited obstacles are limited time, lack of resources, and minimal practical training. One teacher stated, *"Sometimes I have creative ideas, but the time is limited."* This quote indicates that although teachers have the motivation and ideas to innovate, limited time prevents the realization of the strategies they have designed. Another teacher added, *"Our school facilities are lacking, so not all ideas can be implemented."* This statement confirms that limited facilities are an external obstacle that limits teachers' opportunities to deliver interactive and enjoyable learning. Therefore, this challenge not only impacts teacher creativity but also creates a sense of overwhelm that can reduce the consistency of joyful learning implementation.

Theme 5: The Need for Professional Development

Teachers emphasized the importance of professional development support to strengthen TPACK-based joyful learning practices. They desired training that was applicable, sustainable, and based on real-life classroom practice. One teacher stated, *"We need workshops that are practical, not just theory, so they can be directly applied."* This quote indicates that teachers hope the training can provide concrete skills relevant to everyday teaching needs. Another teacher added, *"Group discussions among teachers are very helpful because we can share experiences with each other."* This statement illustrates the importance of collaborative spaces for teachers to exchange ideas and solutions. Thus, teachers understand the need for professional development not only as an improvement in technical competence, but also as a form of support and empowerment that allows them to be more confident in implementing joyful learning consistently.

To clarify the results of the interpretive phenomenological analysis, the research findings are summarized in a table containing the main themes (superordinate themes), subthemes (subordinate themes), and direct quotes from teachers as data evidence. This table helps demonstrate the relationship between teachers' meanings, the strategies they employ, the challenges they face, and the need for professional development in implementing TPACK-based joyful learning.

Table 2

Summary of Findings of Science Analysis on Elementary School English Teachers' Perceptions and Experiences of TPACK-Based Joyful Learning

Superordinate Theme	Subordinate Theme	Teacher Quotes
Understanding about Joyful Learning	Joyful learning as fun and meaningful learning atmosphere	"Joyful learning is when child feel Study That fun, isn't it? stressed."
	Relatedness with life daily	"We tried to connect material with dai life ly so that child feel near with what was learned ."
Joyful Learning Strategies in the Classroom	Songs and interactive games	"I often use children song in English Language, they So fast memorized and are happy ."
	creative and humorous Activity	"The simple game help child feel that Studying is No burden."
TPACK Integration	Use simple digital applications	"I've already used to use application simple like Kahoot or Wordwall ."

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	Limitations skills in choosing application	"It's still difficult to choose the right application, sometimes rather confusing children."
Challenge Implementation	Time Limitations	" Sometimes there are creative ideas , but time limited."
	Limited facilities and resources	Our school facilities are lacking , so No all ideas are possible executed ."
The Need for Professional Development	applicable and sustainable Training	"We need an applicable workshop, not only theory, so that it Can be directly implemented ."
	Discussion and collaboration between teachers	" Discussion group between teachers help us, because it can each other exchange experience."

The table shows that each theme is interconnected in forming a comprehensive understanding of how teachers interpret and implement joyful learning. These findings provide an important basis for discussing the implications of TPACK-based learning in the elementary school context.

The findings of this study confirm that elementary school English teachers define joyful learning as a student-centered approach that encourages cognitive and emotional engagement. This aligns with the views of Lengkanawati, (2017) and Chung, (2020), who emphasize the importance of a fun learning environment to increase student motivation and participation. The use of strategies such as songs, games, creative projects, and humor demonstrates that teachers strive to integrate the affective dimension into learning, as emphasized by constructivist theory that relevant and meaningful learning experiences can enhance student understanding. However, teachers' limited time and ideas indicate a gap between theoretical knowledge and practical implementation, consistent with previous research findings that contextual factors often influence the consistency of innovative strategy implementation.

Furthermore, the variation in teachers' abilities to integrate TPACK demonstrates that technology is viewed as both an opportunity and a challenge. Teachers who are familiar with using simple digital applications feel more confident, while teachers who struggle to select appropriate media demonstrate a need to strengthen technology-based pedagogical competencies. This situation supports the findings of Mishra & Koehler (2006), who emphasized that TPACK is not only about mastering technology, but also about the ability to adapt technology to pedagogical objectives and content. Barriers such as limited facilities and a lack of practical training emphasize the need for ongoing institutional support. Thus, the results of this study underscore the importance of applicable, contextual, and collaborative teacher professional development programs to strengthen TPACK-based joyful learning practices in elementary schools.

Overall, the findings of this study indicate that elementary school English teachers perceive joyful learning as an important student-centered approach and strive to create a learning environment that is enjoyable, meaningful, and relevant to real life. Various interactive strategies, such as songs, games, creative projects, humor, and role-play, are considered effective in increasing students' intrinsic motivation, although their implementation is often hampered by limited time, facilities, and ideas. The integration of TPACK is perceived as an opportunity to enrich the learning experience, but differences in digital competencies and institutional support make teachers' experiences heterogeneous. Challenges faced in daily practice then strengthen teachers' awareness of the importance of continuous, practical, and collaborative professional development. Thus, these findings confirm that efforts to deliver TPACK-based joyful learning require not only teacher creativity but also systematic support through the provision of facilities and training appropriate to field needs.

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In addition, these findings also have important implications for English language learning practices in elementary schools. Implementing TPACK-based joyful learning requires not only teacher creativity but also structural support in the form of adequate facilities and ongoing training. Schools and teacher education institutions need to design professional development programs that emphasize practical skills, the use of relevant technology, and contextual strategies appropriate to the characteristics of elementary school students. With this support, teachers can more consistently create a fun, meaningful, and interactive learning environment, thereby optimally achieving the goals of English language learning, which are oriented toward student engagement.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that elementary school English teachers perceive joyful learning as an important approach to creating a fun, meaningful, and student-centered learning environment through interactive strategies such as songs, games, humor, creative projects, and role-play. Technology integration within the TPACK framework is seen as an opportunity to enrich learning, but limited facilities, differences in digital competencies, and a lack of practical training remain key challenges. Therefore, this study recommends the need for institutional support in the form of adequate facilities, ongoing, applicable training, and collaborative spaces between teachers. Theoretically, these results strengthen the concept of joyful learning within the TPACK framework. Further research is recommended to expand the participants and context, and use a longitudinal design to assess the consistency and long-term impact of implementing TPACK-based joyful learning on student learning outcomes.

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