



**THE EMOTIONAL GEOGRAPHIES OF UNIVERSITY
EFL STUDENTS IN VOCABULARY LEARNING
THROUGH INSTAGRAM REELS**



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A THESIS

Submitted to Fulfill One of the Requirements for *Sarjana Pendidikan*
Degree in English Education



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**ENGLISH EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
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2026**

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Dengan ini mohon agar skripsi tersebut segera dimunaqosahkan.

Demikian nota pembimbing ini dibuat untuk digunakan sebagaimana mestinya. Atas perhatian bapak/Ibu, saya sampaikan terima kasih.

Wassalamu'alaikum Wr.Wb.

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MOTTO

"Allah tidak membebani seseorang melainkan sesuai dengan kesanggupannya"
(QS. Al-Baqarah : 286)

"Sesungguhnya hati manusia itu mudah berbolak-balik daripada air dalam bejana yang telah mendidih"
(HR. Muslim: 24317)

"Semua jatuh bangunmu hal yang biasa, angan dan pertanyaan waktu yang menjawabnya, berikan tenggat waktu bersedihlah secukupnya, rayakan perasaanmu sebagai manusia "
(Baskara Putra - Hindia)



ABSTRAK

Meskipun penggunaannya sebagai sumber belajar kosakata semakin meningkat, penelitian yang mengeksplorasi bagaimana mahasiswa EFL menggambarkan geografi emosional mereka dalam belajar kosakata melalui Instagram Reels masih terbatas. Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi bagaimana mahasiswa EFL menggambarkan geografi emosional mereka dalam belajar kosakata melalui Instagram Reels. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan pendekatan penyelidikan naratif yang dilakukan di sebuah universitas di Pekalongan, Jawa Tengah, Indonesia. Peserta terdiri dari tiga mahasiswa Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris yang secara aktif menggunakan Instagram Reels untuk belajar kosakata. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara semi-terstruktur dan catatan refleksi. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa mahasiswa menggambarkan Instagram Reels sebagai ruang digital yang akrab dan terintegrasi ke dalam aktivitas sehari-hari mereka. Mereka juga merasakan kenyamanan psikologis, berkurangnya tekanan belajar, dan meningkatnya motivasi saat belajar kosakata melalui platform tersebut. Dalam aspek sosio emosional, mahasiswa melaporkan adanya rasa keterikatan dengan pembuat konten dan pengguna lain meskipun tidak ada interaksi langsung. Keterlibatan yang dirasakan secara langsung terlihat melalui respons fisik seperti menghentikan pengguliran layar, memusatkan perhatian, dan mengulang pengucapan saat menonton konten kosakata. Dari segi relasional, para siswa memandang Instagram Reels sebagai sumber belajar yang bermakna dan terkait dengan kebutuhan akademis serta tujuan belajar pribadi mereka. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa pembelajaran kosakata melalui Instagram Reels melibatkan berbagai dimensi emosional yang membentuk tingkat keterlibatan siswa dalam lingkungan pembelajaran digital.

Kata Kunci: Emotional Geographies, Pembelajaran Kosakata, Instagram Reels, Mahasiswa EFL.

ABSTRACT

Despite its growing use as a vocabulary learning resource, limited research has explored how university EFL students describe their emotional geographies in vocabulary learning through Instagram Reels. This study explored how university EFL students described their emotional geographies in vocabulary learning through Instagram Reels. This research employed a qualitative method with a narrative inquiry approach conducted at a university in Pekalongan, Central Java, Indonesia. The participants consisted of three English Education students who actively used Instagram Reels to learn vocabulary. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and reflection logs. The findings revealed that the the students described Instagram Reels as a familiar digital space integrated into their daily activities. They also experienced psychological comfort, reduced learning pressure, and increased motivation while learning vocabulary through the platform. In socio emotional aspects, the students reported a sense of connection with content creators and other users despite the absence of direct interaction. Embodied engagement appeared through physical responses such as stopping scrolling, focusing attention, and repeating pronunciation while watching vocabulary content. In relational aspects, the students positioned Instagram Reels as a meaningful learning resource connected to their academic needs and personal learning goals. These findings suggest that vocabulary learning through Instagram Reels involves various emotional dimensions that shape the students' engagement within digital learning environments.

Keywords : Emotional Geographies, Vocabulary Learning, Instagram Reels, EFL Students

PREFACE

Praises and gratefulness are sent to Allah SWT who has poured His grace and His love and bestowed me guidance, health, wealth and patience so that the writing process of my research proposal research entitled **“The Emotional geographies of University EFL Students in Vocabulary Learning Through Instagram Reels”** can be completed. It is submitted to English Education Department, UIN K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid Pekalongan to fulfil one of the requirements of Research Seminar Proposal Course. This proposed study can be accomplished because of many supports from several people. Therefore, in this occasion I would like to express my sincere gratitude to:

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The Researcher

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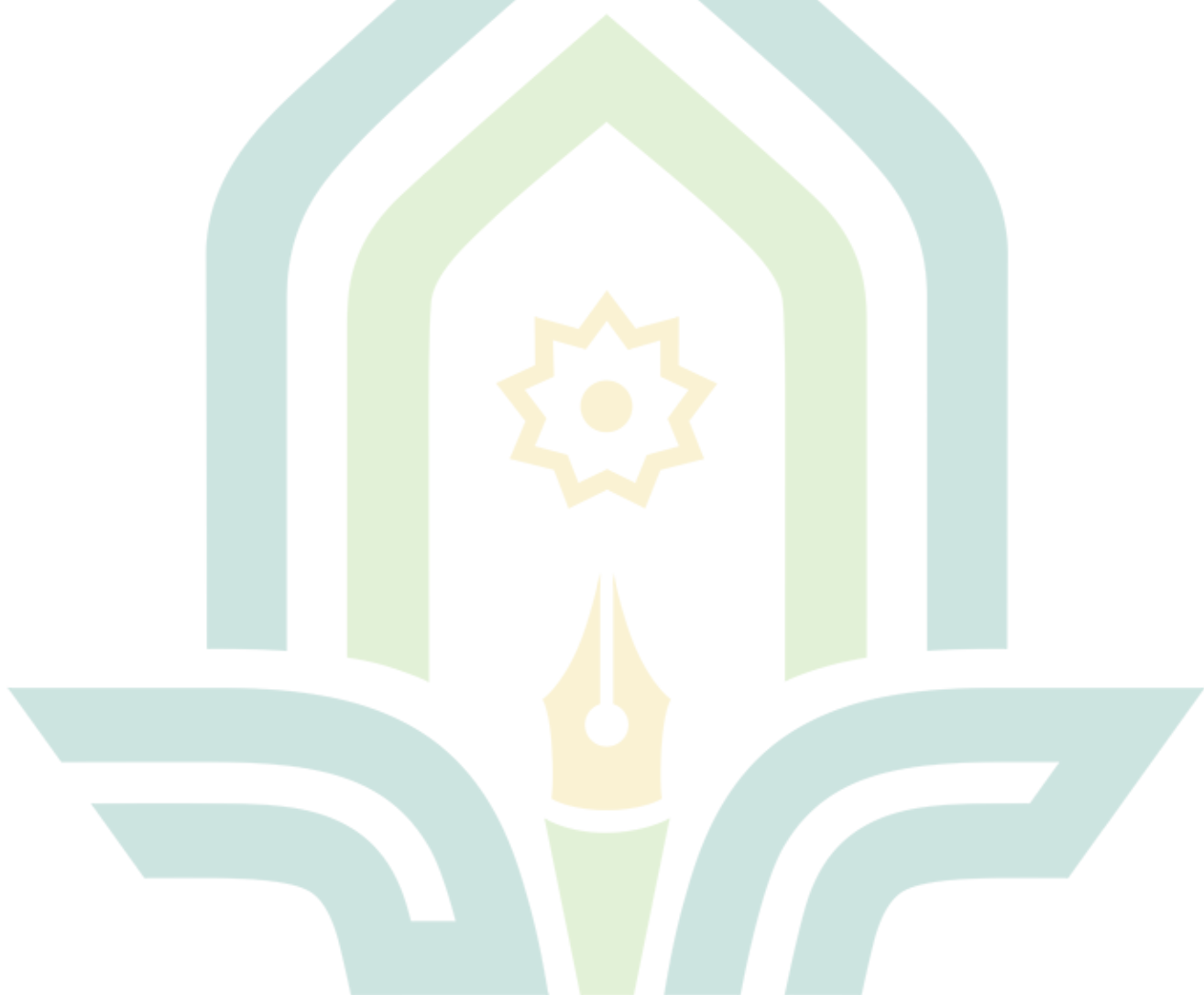
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CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Vocabulary is the foundation of communication because words label ideas, objects, and actions that allow people to express meaning (Hatch & Brown, 1995). In EFL contexts, vocabulary learning is often seen as one of the greatest challenges for the students. Ghazal (2007) emphasizes that vocabulary should not only be taught as isolated words but also through strategies that help the students become independent learners. These vocabulary learning strategies include metacognitive, cognitive, memory, and activation techniques (Schmitt, 1997; Gu & Johnson, 1996), all of which encourage learners to actively engage with new words. The students who learn how to manage and monitor their vocabulary learning tend to develop confidence and achieve greater proficiency (Oxford, 1990).

Although vocabulary is a key part of learning a language, many students still find it hard to remember and use new words correctly. Schmitt (2008) explains that vocabulary learning is gradual and multi-faceted, requiring repeated exposure in different contexts to grasp meaning, pronunciation, word combinations, and grammar. Nation (2001) outlines four related strategies: input-focused meaning, output-focused meaning, deliberate study, and fluency-building. Without sufficient repetition and active engagement, vocabulary remains shallow and is easily forgotten. Research by Sanaoui (1995) and Coady (1997) shows that learners using organized methods like vocabulary notebooks, flashcards, or context clues retain words better than those relying solely on repetition.

Nowadays, many students turn to Instagram Reels as an effective and innovative medium for vocabulary improvement. Instagram Reels, which feature short, engaging videos, provide visual and interactive content that facilitates vocabulary acquisition by presenting words in context with multimedia

elements. Khairunisa et al. (2025) found that Instagram Reels significantly improve the students' vocabulary learning outcomes by making content visually appealing, interesting, and memorable. Similarly, Hasbi and Cahyaningsih (2024) highlighted that Instagram accounts like *kampunginggrism* offer varied, creative vocabulary lessons through feeds, stories, reels, and quizzes, which enhance learners' motivation and retention.

While Instagram Reels offer numerous benefits, some challenges remain. The Students can be distracted by entertainment content unrelated to learning, which may hinder focus and language acquisition (Wardana et al., 2025). Widodo (2023) also warns that short-form videos sometimes lack in-depth explanations needed by beginner learners. Furthermore, over reliance on passive consumption through social media might reduce active language production, as noted by Rezaei (2021). Therefore, a balanced approach integrating Instagram Reels with active learning strategies is essential for effective vocabulary development.

This study uses the concept of emotional geographies to understand how university EFL students describe their relationship with Instagram Reels as a digital space for learning vocabulary. Learning vocabulary through Instagram Reels relates not only to cognitive understanding but also to how students engage with the platform through comfort, attention, social connection, and personal involvement when interacting with content. According to Bondi et al. (2007), emotional geographies examines how emotions are shaped through individuals relationships with particular environments and social contexts. In digital learning environments, emotional conditions such as comfort, reduced pressure, and social connectedness can influence learners participation and engagement (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014). Additionally, Mayer (2009) emphasizes that multimodal learning environments that combine visual and audio elements can support learners attention and understanding. Godwin-Jones (2018), on the other hand, highlights that short digital content can

encourage meaningful engagement in vocabulary learning. Thus, emotional geographies is an appropriate perspective through which to explore how the students engage with vocabulary learning through Instagram Reels as part of their everyday digital activities.

Vocabulary learning through Instagram Reels involves not only exposure to new words, but also the students' engagement with the digital environment while interacting with the content. In this process, the students may experience comfort, social connection, focused attention, and personal involvement that shape how they engage with vocabulary learning. However, limited studies have specifically explored how university EFL students describe their emotional geographies in learning vocabulary through Instagram Reels as a digital learning space. Therefore, this study offers a different perspective by examining vocabulary learning through the lens of emotional geographies to better understand how emotional dimensions influence the students' engagement in digital vocabulary learning environments.

1.2 Formulation of the Problem

This study addresses the following research question: How do university EFL students describe their emotional geographies in vocabulary learning through Instagram Reels?

1.3 Operational Definition

1.3.1 Vocabulary : Words EFL learners understand and use correctly, covering meaning, form, pronunciation, grammar, collocation, and context, per Nation's (2001) model, including receptive/productive knowledge and breadth or depth.

1.3.2 Instagram Reels: Short instagram videos offering multimodal English input via visuals, audio, text, and effects, serving as informal digital learning spaces with authentic language, aligned with Mayer's (2009) multimedia principles.

1.3.3 Emotional Geographies : Emotions in digital spaces affecting engagement, attention, and vocabulary growth, fostering safety, connection, and belonging to motivate participation, as per Bondi et al. (2007).

1.4 Aim of the Study

The aim of this study is to explore of university EFL students emotional geographies as they engage in vocabulary learning through Instagram Reels.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The significance of this study can be summarized as follows :

1.5.1 Theoretical Significance:

This study contributes to the discussion of Emotional Geographies by extending the application of Bondi et al.'s (2007) framework to the context of vocabulary learning through Instagram Reels. It provides a theoretical perspective on how Emotional Geographies can be understood within a digital learning environment where vocabulary learning is integrated into the students' everyday social media activities.

1.5.2 Empirical Significance:

This study provides empirical evidence regarding how university EFL students describe their Emotional Geographies while learning vocabulary through Instagram Reels. The findings highlight spatial, psychological, social, embodied, and relational dimensions that shape the students' engagement with vocabulary learning in a digital environment.

1.5.3 Practical Significance:

This study provides useful insights for the students and educators regarding the use of Instagram Reels as a medium for vocabulary learning. The findings may help the students become more aware of their engagement in digital vocabulary learning and assist educators in understanding emotional factors that influence the students' participation and learning experiences in digital environment.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Framework

2.1.1 Vocabulary

2.1.1.1 Definition and Types of Vocabulary

Vocabulary refers to the collection of words that learners understand and use to communicate meaning in different contexts (Hatch & Brown, 1995). According to Nation (2001), vocabulary knowledge involves understanding the form, meaning, and use of words, including pronunciation, spelling, grammatical patterns, and word associations. Vocabulary is considered an essential component of language learning because it supports learners in understanding and expressing meaning effectively.

Nation (2001) divides vocabulary into two main types: receptive vocabulary and productive vocabulary. Receptive vocabulary refers to words learners recognize and understand while listening or reading, whereas productive vocabulary refers to words learners actively use in speaking or writing. In addition, Nation (2006) classifies vocabulary based on frequency levels, including high-frequency, mid-frequency, and low-frequency or technical vocabulary. These classifications provide a foundation for understanding vocabulary acquisition and use in language learning.

2.1.1.2 Vocabulary Learning Strategies

Nation (2013) notes that vocabulary learners use different strategies to acquire, store, and retrieve words effectively. Similarly, Schmitt et al. (2001) and Oxford (1990) categorize these strategies as metacognitive, cognitive, memory-based, or activation-based. These approaches offer learners diverse methods to plan, monitor, and assess their vocabulary development. Metacognitive strategies include planning, monitoring, and evaluating. Examples include selecting words to study and managing study time (Schmitt et al., 2001; Nation,

2013). Cognitive strategies, on the other hand, focus on direct interaction with the material. Examples include reviewing, taking notes, guessing meaning from context, using a dictionary, and reading to discover meaning (Schmitt et al., 2001). Memory strategies aim to facilitate storage and recall through association, visualization, grouping, and mnemonics (Nation, 2013). Finally, activation strategies encourage using words in oral and written communication to activate understanding through concrete practice (Schmitt et al., 2001).

2.1.2 Instagram Reels

2.1.2.1 Features of Instagram Reels

Instagram Reels serves as a short form video tool on Instagram, allowing users to produce and view clips lasting between 15 and 90 seconds. These videos often blend visuals, sound, text overlays, filters, and effects, positioning reels as a dynamic, multimodal digital space. According to Mayer's Multimedia Learning Theory (2021), multimedia formats support learning because they allow information to be processed through both visual and auditory channels, thereby enhancing comprehension and retention.

Furthermore, Reels offers authentic language exposure, where users encounter English in real life scenarios such as storytelling, tutorials, narratives, or casual conversations. As Selwyn (2016) points out, social media sites like Instagram act as informal learning spaces, where individuals discover content organically, driven by their personal interests.

2.1.2.2 Instagram Reels as a Language Learning Tool

Instagram Reels functions as an effective digital tool for vocabulary learning by offering consistent exposure to new words in authentic settings. Its concise, engaging video format improves enjoyment and accessibility for EFL students through repeated audiovisual engagement. Nation (2001) emphasizes that contextual exposure and repetition build deeper understanding and fluent language use, elements that these videos effectively provide. Supporting studies confirm its

advantages: Khairunisa et al. (2025) observed that Reels enhance learning with appealing visuals and real-life examples; Hasbi and Cahyaningsih (2024) highlighted that educational accounts provide varied exercises, such as quizzes and example sentences, to improve retention; and Wardana et al. (2025) noted that its mobile friendly design supports self-directed, flexible learning. However, limitations include potential distractions from entertaining but unrelated content, insufficient depth for complex vocabulary due to brevity.

2.1.3 Emotional Geographies

2.1.3.1 Definition of Emotional Geographies

Emotional geographies explores how emotions influence and are influenced by space, interactions, and relationships within learning environments. Bondi et al. (2007) define this approach as one that investigates the emergence of emotional experiences at the intersection of individuals and the spaces they occupy. These emotions are not simply personal; they are also socially and spatially constructed, suggesting that learners' feelings are shaped by their environments, interactions, and broader contexts. In educational settings, Emotional geographies explains how learners navigate emotions such as comfort, belonging, anxiety, or motivation during their learning process (Bondi et al., 2007). Essentially, Emotional geographies aims to understand the interconnectedness of emotions, space, and interactions in shaping learning experiences, particularly in multimodal and technology based contexts.

2.1.3.2 Dimensions of Emotional Geographies in Digital Learning

Bondi et al. (2007) argue that emotions stem from various aspects, which can be leveraged to understand EFL students' experiences in online learning. In digital platforms like Instagram Reels, these aspects manifest in the following ways:

2.1.3.2.1 Spatial emotional aspects

Spatial emotional aspects refer to how learning environments influence learners engagement with vocabulary content. On Instagram Reels, vocabulary learning occurs within

a familiar digital environment that students access in their daily routines. The short-video format also makes learning feel more integrated into everyday activities rather than a separate formal process. Selwyn (2016) explains that digital platforms can function as learning spaces that shape learners interaction and participation. Bondi et al. (2007) further emphasize that emotions are connected to individuals' relationships with particular spaces and environments.

2.1.3.2.2 Psychological emotional aspects

Psychological emotional aspects refer to learners internal responses while learning vocabulary in digital environments. Through Instagram Reels, learners may experience curiosity, confidence, comfort, or occasional confusion when engaging with vocabulary content. Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) explain that emotional conditions such as reduced anxiety and increased confidence can support language learning engagement. In Emotional geographies, these responses are shaped through learners' relationships with the learning environment (Bondi et al., 2007).

2.1.3.2.3 Socio emotional aspects

Socio emotional aspects refer to how social interaction and relationships influence vocabulary learning activities. On Instagram Reels, learners may develop a sense of connection through content creators, comments, and shared learning content. Horton and Wohl (1956) describe this as parasocial interaction, where individuals develop a sense of closeness with media figures despite having no direct interaction. Bondi et al. (2007) explain that emotions are also shaped through social relations and interactions within particular environments.

2.1.3.2.4 Embodied emotional aspects

Embodied emotional aspects refer to physical and sensory responses during vocabulary learning activities. While watching Instagram Reels, learners may stop scrolling, focus more closely on the screen, or repeat pronunciation while

following the content. Mayer (2009) explains that multimodal learning environments combining visual and audio input can support learners' attention and understanding. Bondi et al. (2007) further note that emotions are expressed not only cognitively but also through bodily responses and physical engagement.

2.1.3.2.5 Relational emotional aspects

Relational emotional aspects refer to how learners position themselves in relation to vocabulary learning activities. In Instagram Reels, learners may connect vocabulary content with their academic identity and role as English Education students. Norton (2013) explains that learners' engagement is influenced by how they position themselves within language learning contexts. Bondi et al. (2007) also emphasize that emotions are shaped through individuals' relationships with others and with the environments they engage in.

2.2 Previous Studies

Several previous studies have discussed Emotional Geography, digital learning environments, and vocabulary learning in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), the most recent study was conducted by Wahyuni et al. (2025) explored the Emotional geographies of EFL students participation in group assignments used a qualitative narrative inquiry framework to explore the emotional experiences of three Indonesian EFL students during group assignments. Data collection was based on narrative interviews and reflective journals. The results of the study showed that emotions such as trust, belonging, and security significantly influenced student engagement and participation in learning activities. Positive emotional atmospheres encouraged collaboration and self confidence, while negative emotional experiences led to indifference and decreased communication. Although this study focused on collaborative learning rather than digital tools, its analysis of Emotional geographies provides an important

theoretical foundation for understanding how feelings and social bonds influence learning behavior, especially in digital contexts such as Instagram Reels.

In addition, Fauziah et al. (2025) analyzed the process of vocabulary acquisition through Instagram and TikTok using qualitative case study methodology. This study focused on six students enrolled in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) program at a private university in South Kalimantan who independently used short video platforms to learn vocabulary. Data were obtained through in depth interviews and observations of the students' learning routines. The results showed that Instagram and TikTok effectively increased exposure to new vocabulary by providing contextual and multimodal input. However, distractions from entertainment-oriented content often disrupt the students' concentration and reduce the depth of learning. This study is relevant because it highlights both the advantages and disadvantages of using short video platforms such as Instagram Reels for vocabulary acquisition, emphasizing the importance of emotional regulation and sustained attention in digital environments.

The study by Gunawan et al. (2025) explored the emotional experiences of Indonesian college the students learning vocabulary through Instagram accounts dedicated to English. Using a qualitative descriptive method, the research involved interviews and observations of the students interacting with Instagram-based vocabulary content. Findings showed that students feelings of support, confidence, and social connection strongly influenced their motivation and ability to remember new words. When the students felt emotionally safe and included online, they were more consistent and enthusiastic in learning vocabulary. This study is relevant to current research because it highlights how emotions and digital learning environments affect vocabulary learning, linking directly to Emotional geographies in EFL contexts.

The study by Kinasih (2024) explored the Emotional geographies experienced by the student teachers during their teaching practicum. Using a qualitative narrative inquiry approach, the research involved five university students who had completed their practicum, collecting data through narratives of their teaching experiences. The study examined both positive emotions, such as enjoyment, satisfaction, and meaningful experiences, and negative emotions, including nervousness, lack of confidence, and doubt. Findings revealed that the Emotional geographies framework by Hargreaves effectively explained the students emotional experiences as they adapted to new teaching environments, faced various challenges, and built their professional identity with the support of peers and supervisors. This study is particularly relevant as it highlights the dynamic emotional conditions pre-service teachers face during practicum, directly relating to emotional geographies in the context of EFL learning and teaching.

Relevant study conducted by Susanto (2020) examined the Emotional geographies of 25 international students from 12 countries learning Indonesian as a foreign language (BIPA) online during the COVID-19 pandemic. Using Hargreaves emotional geographies framework in a qualitative case study, data came from classroom observations, testimonial recordings, and interviews. Results showed positive emotions like intimacy, safety, happiness, seriousness, and successfulness boosted engagement, while negative ones such as confusion, anxiety, and shock hindered progress, highlighting the need for positive emotional maintenance in virtual language learning.

The previous studies (Wahyuni et al., 2025; Fauziah et al., 2025; Gunawan et al., 2025; Kinash, 2024; Susanto, 2020) have examined Emotional Geographies in various EFL contexts, such as teaching practicums, vocabulary learning through social media, group work, and online language learning. These studies demonstrate that emotional factors influence learners' engagement, motivation, and retention. However, limited studies

have specifically explored how university EFL students describe their Emotional Geographies while learning vocabulary through Instagram Reels as a digital learning space. Therefore, this study addresses this gap by exploring how university EFL students describe their Emotional Geographies in vocabulary learning through Instagram Reels, particularly in relation to digital learning engagement and interaction within the platform.

2.3 Conceptual Framework

The study's conceptual framework illustrates how vocabulary learning on Instagram Reels is influenced by learners' emotional geographies in digital environments. Instagram Reels serves as a multimodal platform, providing repeated exposure to authentic language through short videos integrating visual, auditory, and textual elements, aiding EFL students in understanding, retaining, and applying vocabulary. To analyze these emotional geographies, this study applies the framework proposed by Bondi et al. (2007), which explains that emotions emerge through individuals' relations with particular environments and social contexts. In this study, the framework is applied to understand the students' emotional geographies while learning vocabulary through Instagram Reels. Emotions emerging from interactions between individuals and their surroundings, including online platforms. In this framework, vocabulary acquisition is affected by emotional dimensions such as spatial, social, psychological, relational, and embodied responses to Instagram Reels and their impact on involvement in vocabulary learning. Based on the theoretical concepts discussed above, the conceptual framework of this study is presented in Figure 2.1 to illustrate the relationship between vocabulary learning through Instagram Reels and the dimensions of emotional geographies that shape students' engagement in vocabulary acquisition.

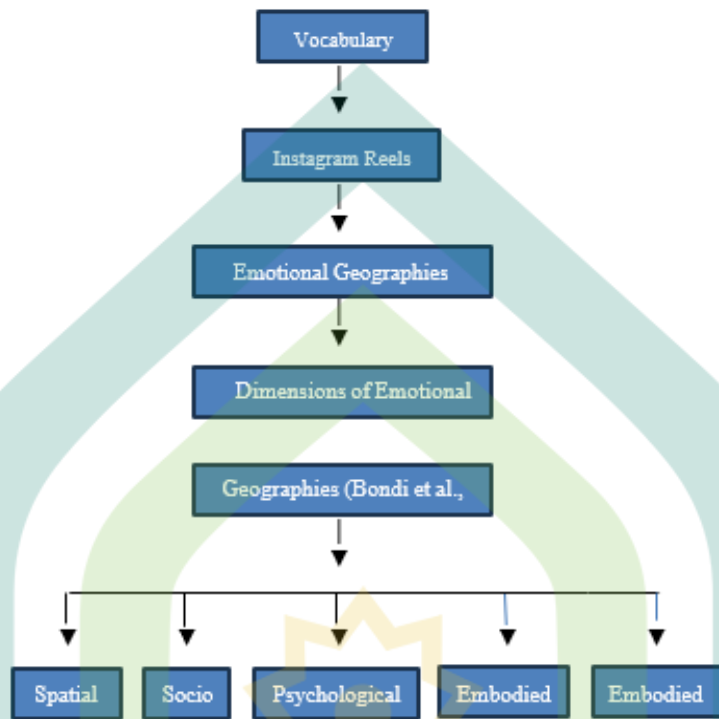


Figure 2.1 Conceptual Framework

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

5.1 Summary of Findings

This study examined how university students of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) describe their emotional geographies when learning vocabulary through Instagram Reels, considering five dimensions: spatial, psychological, social, embodied and relational. From a spatial perspective, students described Instagram Reels as a familiar and approachable digital environment, embedding vocabulary learning in their daily routines rather than viewing it as a separate, formal activity. This familiarity led students to interpret vocabulary learning as something that occurred naturally during routine platform use. From a psychological perspective, students described Instagram Reels as a flexible, low-pressure learning space that allowed them to engage with vocabulary content at their own pace, using features such as replaying and revisiting videos. These findings suggest that students viewed Instagram Reels as a digital learning environment that facilitated comfortable, self-directed vocabulary learning.

From a social perspective, the students described vocabulary learning as a socially connected activity rather than an entirely individual one. They perceived a sense of companionship with content creators and recognized the presence of other users engaging with similar content. In terms of the embodied dimension, the students described engaging with vocabulary content through physical actions, such as shifts in attention, facial responses, and vocal repetition. From a relational perspective, the students positioned themselves as learners whose interaction with vocabulary learning was influenced by their academic identity as English education students. Taken together, these findings demonstrate that students described vocabulary learning on Instagram Reels as both a cognitive activity and a process shaped by digital space, social connection, bodily involvement, and their

positioning toward the learning activity.

5.2 Recommendation

Based on the findings of this study, the students especially university EFL students are encouraged to use Instagram Reels not only for entertainment but also as a supportive space for vocabulary learning. Since the platform allows flexible, repeated, and self-paced learning, the students can take advantage of vocabulary content that matches their interests and daily learning needs. In addition, engaging with educational content creators, saving useful videos, and revisiting vocabulary materials may help the students maintain consistent vocabulary exposure in a more comfortable and less pressured learning environment.

Considering that this study involved only three English Education students from a single university and focused specifically on vocabulary learning through Instagram Reels, For future research, it is recommended that researchers explore emotional geographies in broader digital learning contexts with more diverse the participants and larger data coverage. Future studies may also investigate other language skills or different social media platforms to gain richer perspectives on how digital environments shape students' engagement in language learning. In addition, further research could examine Emotional geographies in different educational settings to provide deeper understanding of digital language learning practices.

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