

## EXPLORING INSTAGRAM AFFORDANCES IN SCAFFOLDING ENGLISH SKILLS AMONG PRE SERVICE TEACHERS

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### ABSTRACT

English language proficiency of most English teachers in Indonesia is still at the lower intermediate level. As a result, it must be improved. Since teachers are crucial in providing exposure to their students. This improvement can begin while they are still working as prospective teachers. In today's digital era, social media can be used as English learning media, including Instagram. Instagram is the second most used social media in Indonesia and it is popular among university students as well as pre service teacher who are pursuing higher education. Instagram has many features and contents that make it not only an entertainment media but also potentially used as a learning media. While several prior studies have looked into Instagram's use in learning English, but there are not many that have focused on the affordances of Instagram that assist in language learning. Thus, this study aims to identify the affordances of Instagram that can be utilized for learning English. This research adopts a case study method for data collection, utilizing documentation, and semi-structured interviews. The participants of this study were eighth-semester English education students from one of the universities in Bogor. Findings from this research reveal that all Instagram affordances, including editability, association, persistence, and visibility, can be utilized to learn English.

**Keywords:** English Skills, Instagram Affordances, Pre Service Teacher

### INTRODUCTION

According to Renandya et al. (2018), English teachers in Indonesia have limited proficiency in the English language, with most of them reaching only a lower intermediate level. This is illustrated by the significant number of Indonesian English teachers who feel inadequate and lack confidence in their English usage while teaching, resulting in their reliance on their first language during English instruction. Furthermore, in 2024, findings from an English proficiency test revealed that the majority of English teachers across junior high schools, senior high schools, and vocational schools in Indonesia exhibited English skills at the B1 (Intermediate) level or lower (Ministry of Education, Culture, Research & Technology, 2024). The information presented clearly indicates that the English language abilities of English teachers in Indonesia remain limited and require enhancement, beginning with the pre-service teacher phase.

Possessing sufficient English language proficiency is an essential and clear requirement for English educators (Renandya et al., 2018). This is crucial since, in Indonesia, English functions as

a foreign language that is not utilized in everyday communication and is primarily studied in schools (Sulistiyo 2008, cited in Sulistiyo & Haswindy, 2018). Consequently, teachers hold a significant responsibility in delivering exposure to students within the classroom, and utilizing English during lessons is vital as a means for them to acquire and practice the target language (Sulistiyo & Haswindy, 2018). Thus, it is imperative for English instructors to possess adequate English language skills to facilitate students' exposure to English in the classroom and to offer them models for using the target language.

In the current digital age, Costley (2014, cited in Lam Kieu et al., 2021) found in his study that leveraging technology can be a successful method for learning English. Today, students are highly accustomed to technology, as they have grown up alongside rapid technological advancements (Poláková & Klímová, 2019). This group of students is known as Generation Z, born between 1997 and 2012, and currently aged between 10 and 25 years (Jumiatmoko, 2023). Likewise, pre-service teachers also fall under Generation Z, as they are typically aged 18 to 22

years (Tyagi & Tyagi, 2020). They tend to favor technology over traditional books, preferring to learn via technological means (Poláková & Klímová, 2019). One aspect of technology that can be effectively used is social media (Wijipratiwi & Lolita, 2023). Generation Z enjoys engaging with social media, spending significant amounts of time on these platforms (Siagian & Yuliana, 2023). Social media is a component of web 2.0-based mobile technology that facilitates communication (Boyd, 2014, cited in F. Handayani, 2017). Numerous social media platforms can be utilized, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and others (Arif, 2019).

According to the Global Digital Report 2024 published by Meltwater, Instagram ranks as the second most utilized social media platform in Indonesia, with 85.3% user engagement. WhatsApp holds the top position with 90.9%, followed by Facebook at 81.6%, and TikTok at 73.5% (Howe, 2024). Instagram is also very popular among students, especially university students (Baruti & Subekti, 2023). This is attributed to Instagram's distinctive features compared to other social media platforms. Its uniqueness lies in the variety of functionalities it offers, such as the ability to upload content (both images and videos), include captions, create stories, like posts, comment on content, browse and follow different accounts, review feeds from followed accounts, explore hashtags or other users, and share photos or videos in stories (Al-Ali, 2014). With these diverse features, Instagram not only functions as a platform for communication and entertainment (Anindita & Noveintine, 2022), but it has also evolved into a medium suitable for educational purposes, particularly in language learning, especially English (Pasha et al., 2023).

Several studies have discussed the use of Instagram in English language learning. Aidah (2021) examined high school students' perceptions of using Instagram for learning English in East Java and found that Instagram is a good tool for learning. Prastya Syahputra et al. (2023) explored English language learning content on Instagram and found that the most frequently viewed content consisted of short videos and photos, particularly related to grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. Fonnalita et al. (2022) investigated high school students' perceptions of the quiz feature on Instagram Stories, and the results showed positive perceptions. However, these studies have not

extensively discussed Instagram's affordances in supporting English language learning. Additionally, previous research has primarily focused on high school students, not prospective English teachers. Therefore, this study aims to investigate what are Instagram's affordances that can be used to learn English.

### **Instagram affordances**

The concept of affordance was first introduced by Gibson (1979) in the context of the environment and developed by Norman (1988) in object design, then adapted in various fields including technology and social media (Ronzhyn et al., 2022). Social media affordance is the relationship between users and social media where the relationship occurs when users take advantage of the available opportunities provided by social media features (Cabiddu 2014, cited in Khan et al., 2019). In summary, social media affordance is the relationship between users and social media where users utilize the features on social media and encourage them to take certain actions according to the goals they want to achieve.

Affordance is not a feature of a technology, but affordance arises when there is interaction between the user and the feature (Bjärstorp & Ragnerstam, 2023). Pee (2018) also stated the same thing that the concept of affordance is not about features, but focuses on the utilization of features to perform certain actions and tasks. The features in social media do not change even though users use them for specific purposes and in various contexts (Treem 2015, cited in Pee, 2018), while affordances can change according to user utilization (Jeong & Hmelo-Silver, 2016)..

In this research, the author adopts the theory of social media affordance from Treem & Leonardi (2013) to find out what affordances Instagram has. The theory of Treem & Leonard (2013) is a pioneer in research on social media affordance (Chen et al., 2016) therefore the researcher decided to adopt the theory. There are four types of social media affordances based on Treem & Leonardi (2013), namely visibility, editability, association, and persistence. The following is an explanation of each affordance:

### **Editability**

As noted by Walther (1993, cited in Treem & Leonardi, 2013), editability pertains to "the fact that individuals can spend a good deal of time and

effort crafting and recrafting a communicative act before it is viewed by others” (p.159). In simpler terms, editability involves an individual's effort to create or revise a message prior to it being seen by others. On Instagram, this capability is available through the Direct Message feature, allowing users to draft a message, make edits for any mistakes before sending, and, if necessary, modify it after it has already been sent.

Moreover, editability can also encompass the editing of content, referring to a person's capacity to change or alter shared materials, such as correcting spelling mistakes or removing content (Treem & Leonardi, 2013). For instance, on Instagram, this is achievable by modifying a post both before and after it has been uploaded. In conclusion, editability represents the potential provided by social media platforms for users to modify messages and content, both prior to and following their upload. Therefore, editing in this context encompasses not just the message itself but also the associated content.

#### **Association**

According to Treem & Leonardi (2013) associations refer to “established connections between individuals, between individuals and content, or between an actor and a presentation” (p.162). In essence, association represents the capability to create or establish relationships among individuals. As highlighted by (Treem & Leonardi, 2013) the connection between one person and another is referred to as social ties. These social ties can develop through various actions like following accounts, friend recommendations, subscribing, tagging others, and participating in groups or channels (Gibbs 2013, cited in Zhou et al., 2018). On Instagram, this can be accomplished by tagging other users in created posts, following others while allowing them to follow back (Koehler & Vilarinho-Pereira, 2023), joining broadcast channels, and forming groups. In conclusion, association is the capability that social media provides to users for building relationships or networks with other users. In brief, it can be described as utilizing social media for making connections. Therefore, association enables users to connect with or gain access to other individuals.

#### **Persistence**

According to Treem & Leonardi (2013), persistence is defined as the state in which the

content “remains accessible in the same form as the original display after the actor has finished his or her presentation” (p.155). In simpler terms, something is considered persistent if the content uploaded or submitted is still retrievable, visible, or findable by users in its original format. Even when users log out of social media, anything they have posted remains accessible and does not expire or vanish, unless it is removed by the user (Treem & Leonardi 2013). Furthermore, since the content stays on social media and is not erased, it facilitates easier searching and reviewing for both the original user and others.

On Instagram, stories are kept in the archive accessible only to the owner, while stories saved as highlights can be viewed by all users (Koehler & Vilarinho-Pereira, 2023), and users can also save posts from others. All of these features are permanent and can be accessed at any time, unless deleted by the user. In conclusion, persistence provides users with the capability to have content that lasts indefinitely, does not disappear, and can be revisited in its original state. With this permanence, content remains visible to others, even when the owner of the content logs out of the application.

#### **Visibility**

According to Treem & Leonardi (2013) visibility is the “ability to make their behaviours, knowledge, preferences, and communication network connections that were once invisible (or at least very hard to see) visible to others in the organization” (p.150).. In other words, this ability provides a way for information about ourselves to be visible to others. On Instagram it can be done when users upload photo or videos to their feeds or stories, like and comment on people's posts (Treem & Leonardi, 2013), sharing ours or others' posts within or outside the application, using hashtags to share photos or videos, and write captions on our stories or feeds.

Visibility is not just about how users share their information or express themselves, but about how easy it is for users to find information about other users (Treem & Leonardi, 2013, cited in Evans et al., 2017). Apart from reading comments, there are also other examples that can be done to find out information about other users, especially on Instagram, namely see likes on their post or others, see and search other user by utilizing search features, see other post by looking at algorithm

(Treem & Leonardi, 2013), see other people's followers, and seeing posts that other people have tagged (Koehler & Vilarinho-Pereira, 2023). In summary, visibility is the ability that social media gives to users to see other users' information, both through their behaviour, preferences, and friendship network connections. Besides that, it is not only about seeing other users account, but also about how users can search for this information.

## METHOD

This research used a case study approach. The participants of this study were eighth semester students majoring in English education at one of the universities in Bogor. The researcher chose the participants who actively use Instagram and use them to learn English. The data collection used documentation and semi structured interview to find out what are Instagram affordances that can be used to learn English.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Findings

In order to address the initial research question regarding the Instagram affordances to learn English, the researcher gathered information through semi-structured interviews and relevant documentation to back up the data. Below is the information the researcher discovered:

#### 1. Editability

Based on the interview findings, one participant mentioned that when crafting an English caption on Instagram, she did not post it right away but followed a series of steps beforehand. Here is what she expressed during the interview:

*"When I want to write a caption in English, first I write the words that I already know in English. Then the other words that are still Indonesian, I translate it into English. After the entire text is finished, I check the grammar first before uploading it." (Excerpt 1)*

Based on excerpt 1, it can be inferred that the process of editing English captions involves writing in English, translating unfamiliar words, and reviewing grammar. These steps are carried out prior to uploading the English caption intended for sharing on Instagram.

This assertion aligns with the findings from the documentation that has been completed. The research conducted by (Lestari & Wicaksono, 2022) indicates that the editing process in writing

is a crucial step to ensure the production of quality writing. Here, editing refers to the independent review of the writing before publication, including grammar, punctuation, and spelling checks.

Therefore, both the findings from the interviews and the documentation support that the capability for editability can be utilized to enhance English learning, particularly in the editing phase before publishing the writing.

#### 2. Association

During interview, several participants stated that they follow English learning accounts on Instagram. They follow English learning account such as Jago Bahasa, Kampung Inggris LC, English with Lucy, and Smashing English with Laura. As one of the participants said:

*"...I follow the English learning accounts English with Lucy and Smashing English with Laura. I learn British English from both accounts." (Excerpt 2)*

From excerpt 2 it can be concluded that learning English on Instagram can be done by following English learning accounts. On Instagram, there are so many English learning account that can be used to learn English and each account has its own way of delivering English materials. Therefore, some of them might focus on British accent, American accent, etc.

The statement above is in accordance with the results of the documentation that has been done. In the study conducted by (Fitrianiingsih et al., 2024), it was found that by following English learning accounts on Instagram, students can learn English from those accounts. This is in line with a study by Manaroinsong (2018, as cited in Rayuningtya & Fitriani, 2021) which states that English learning accounts on Instagram can provide English exposure to students.

Thus, both the interview results and documentation show that affordance association can be used to learn English, especially when following English learning accounts on Instagram.

#### 3. Persistence

In interview, researcher found there was participant who stated that she saved some content that she thought useful for her and one of them is the content which explain about grammar. Here is what she said during interview:

*"I save content that is quite useful, one of which is content that explains the grammar about*

*the use of his and her, at first, I still got confused with its use, but after watching the content I understand it quite well..... Sometimes I like to review and study it again” (Excerpt 3)*

From excerpt 3 it can be concluded that the content shared on Instagram can be saved. After being saved, the content can be viewed again and if the content saved related to certain material, it can be learned again. Therefore, the content saved on Instagram not disappear and stored permanently.

The above statement is in accordance with the results of the documentation that has been done. In the study conducted by (Rasyiid et al., 2021), explains that the save feature on Instagram can be used to save content on Instagram including content that explains certain material. Then, the content that has been saved will forever be stored and will never be lost unless cancel save the content or is deleted by the content owner.

Thus, both interview results and documentation show that affordance persistence can be used to learn English, especially when saving English content on Instagram.

#### 4. Visibility

Based on the interview results, the researcher found that many participants read English texts on Instagram, such as captions, comments, quotes, poems, memes, and posts from English learning accounts. In addition, they not only read English texts, but watch English videos shared by other users such as seeing videos that appear in reels that discuss various topics, seeing videos that discuss motivation, English movie clips, English songs, and videos from English learning accounts that they follow. As stated by one of the following participants:

*“..... I usually read English quotes and poems.... On reels, usually there are movie clips or songs and I listen to them. By listening these, I get new vocabulary. Then, at first, I didn't know how to pronounce certain words correctly, but from listening to English movie clips or songs, I know how to pronounce it correctly.” (Excerpt 4)*

From excerpt 4 it can be concluded that Instagram provides a variety of English content in the form of videos and texts that can be accessed easily, one of which is through reels and explore. The English content can help to learn English such as helping to acquire vocabulary and learn pronunciation from English videos.

On the other hand, the researcher found participant who not only viewed English content on Instagram but often wrote captions or poems, as well as spoke English in their Instagram stories. As she said:

*“.....I really enjoy making English videos on my Instagram account which I share it to my close friend in a story.....Besides that, I also often write English poetry or caption in my Instagram story.....” (Excerpt 5)*

From excerpt 5 it can be concluded that the story feature on Instagram can be used a means to practice writing and speaking English. In addition, it can also be a means to share personal information that can be seen by many people through writing captions or talking about certain topics using English.

The above statement is in accordance with the results of the documentation that has been done. In the study conducted by (Aqira, 2021) explained that through the story feature on Instagram students can express themselves by making English videos in stories or writing English captions, so it can help them practice their English skills. In addition, (Putri, 2022) said that when watching videos, reading captions or seeing posts from someone's account on Instagram, it can indirectly acquire new vocabulary.

Thus, both interview results and documentation show that affordance visibility can be used to learn English, especially when viewing English text or videos and writing English caption or speaking English through story or feed on Instagram.

#### Discussion

The researcher used the theory of (Treem & Leonardi, 2013) to find out what Instagram affordances can be used to learn English. This theory divides social media affordance into 4 parts, namely editability, association, persistence, and visibility. Because this research focuses on social media Instagram, the theory is adjusted to the context of Instagram. Then the findings indicated that all the affordances of Instagram can be used to learn English.

##### 1. Editability

Researcher found a student who did the editing process before uploading the English caption on Instagram story. The editing process occurs through several stages, namely writing words using

English, translating unknown vocabulary, checking grammar, and finally uploading to Instagram story. This activity reflects the affordance of editability, because there is an editing process before uploading the caption to Instagram story. This is in line with the statement of (Treem & Leonardi, 2013), which states that editability can occur when someone composes a message or edits content before uploaded. Because the caption written in English and in editing process occurs the English learning process such as writing words using English, translating unknown vocabulary, and checking grammar. Then it can be said that editability affordance can be used to learn English, one of which is by doing the editing process before uploading an English caption to an Instagram story or feed.

## 2. Association

Researcher found that some students followed English learning accounts such as Jago Bahasa, Kampung Inggris LC, English with Lucy, and smashing English with Laura on Instagram. By following those account, researcher found that they acquired new vocabulary and learned pronunciation from those account. This activity reflects the affordance of association, because following other people's accounts is one way to build connections or relationships with other people. This is in line with the statement of (Treem & Leonardi, 2013), which says that association can occur when someone builds a network or relationship or connection with others. Koehler & Vilarinho-Pereira (2023) explained that in Instagram this can happen when following other people's accounts, and tagging other people. By following those account, they not only build connection with the owner account and other people who followed the same account, but they can also learn English, acquire new vocabulary, and learn pronunciation. Then it can be said that this affordance association can be used to learn English, one of which is by following English learning accounts on Instagram.

## 3. Persistence

Researcher found a student who often save useful content on her Instagram, one of which is saving content that explains about grammar. She said when the content was saved, she liked to look back to relearn it. This activity reflects the affordance of persistence, because saving content on Instagram is

one way that content can still be accessed and viewed even though it has logged out of Instagram. This is in line with (Treem & Leonardi, 2013), who say that persistence can occur when content that has been uploaded can still be accessed, found or seen by others according to its original form. On Instagram to make content accessible at any time, one way can be done by saving the content. Because the content saved related with English learning, then after save it, it can be viewed and studied again, then it can be said that this persistence affordance can be used to learn English, one of which is by saving content related to English learning.

## 4. Visibility

Researcher found that a lot of students read English texts and watch English videos shared by others on Instagram. They usually see the content in explore or reels because in these features the content shared by others is collected. In addition, they also not only see content on Instagram but some of them like to write captions, English poetry, and also speak English on their Instagram stories. In writing captions or speaking English, they usually tell or express what they are experiencing. These activities reflect the affordance of visibility, because seeing the content shared by others is a way to find out information related to others. In addition, writing captions or speaking English also includes visibility because it is one way that information about ourselves can be spread and seen by others. This is in line with (Treem & Leonardi, 2013), which states that visibility is a way of how information about ourselves can be seen by others and how we found information. Thus, there are 2 types, first how information can be seen by others and second how to find out information.

On Instagram, this can be done by writing captions on stories or feeds, reading comments, and viewing other people's posts by looking at algorithms. Because the content that the students see is related to English so that they not only get information about a particular topic but are also indirectly learning English. Also, because they writing caption in English in their story or feed so that they not only spreading the information about themselves to other people but they also learn English writing indirectly. Then it can be said that this visibility affordance can be used to learn English, one of which is by viewing content related

to English or writing captions using English on Instagram stories or feeds.

## CONCLUSION

This research aims to find out what Instagram affordances can be used to learn English. Based on the results of interviews and documentation that has been done that all Instagram affordances namely editability, association, persistence, and visibility, can be used to learn English. Editability occurs when doing the editing process such as checking grammar before uploading English captions. Meanwhile, association occurs when following English learning accounts on Instagram. Persistence occurs when saving content related to English learning. Finally, visibility occurs when seeing English posts shared by others in the form of text or video as well as writing captions on stories or Instagram feeds.

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