



# INTERNATIONAL PROCEEDING OF INNOVATIVE SCIENCE AND TRANSDISCIPLINARY STUDIES

e-ISSN: 2746-3338

Available online at <https://ipistrans.lppmi.or.id>

Email: [proceedings@lppmi.or.id](mailto:proceedings@lppmi.or.id)

## Language, Hoaxes, and Information Power on Facebook Social Media

Sokha Chenda

---

### Corresponding Author

---

Email:  
[sokha.chenda@rupp.edu.kh](mailto:sokha.chenda@rupp.edu.kh)

---

### Keywords

*Facebook hoaxes,  
misinformation, digital  
discourse, information  
power, social media,  
linguistic manipulation*

---

### Abstract

---

The proliferation of hoaxes and misinformation on Facebook has emerged as one of the most pressing challenges to democratic discourse, public health, and social cohesion in the digital age. This article examines the intersection of language, deception, and power dynamics in the creation, circulation, and impact of hoaxes on Facebook's platform. Through analysis of linguistic strategies employed in misinformation narratives, algorithmic amplification mechanisms, and the political economy of attention in social media ecosystems, this study reveals how hoaxes function as instruments of information power that shape public opinion, influence behavior, and undermine epistemic authority. The discussion explores three critical dimensions: the rhetorical and linguistic features that make hoaxes persuasive and shareable, the socio-technical infrastructures that enable viral dissemination of false information, and the power relations that determine whose voices are amplified or suppressed in Facebook's information environment. Understanding these dynamics is essential for developing effective interventions to combat misinformation while preserving democratic values of free expression and diverse perspectives in digital public spheres.

Royal University of Phnom Penh (RUPP), Cambodia

---

This paper was presented at The 1st International Conference on Global Synergy of Scholars and Researchers (IC-GSSR 2026), with the theme "*Integrating Technology and Local Wisdom for Sustainable Global Advancement*," organized by HLM Group of Institution, India, January 26-28, 2026

## INTRODUCTION

Facebook, with over 2.9 billion monthly active users as of 2024, has become one of the most influential information platforms in human history, fundamentally reshaping how people access news, engage with public issues, and construct understanding of social and political realities. However, this unprecedented reach has also made Facebook a primary vector for the spread of hoaxes and misinformation, with false or misleading content achieving viral circulation that often exceeds the reach of accurate information from credible sources. According to Vosoughi et al. (2020) and Muhsyanur et al. (2021), false news spreads significantly faster and more broadly than true news on social media platforms, driven by the novelty and emotional intensity of deceptive content that triggers sharing behaviors more effectively than factual reporting. This asymmetry in information diffusion creates serious challenges for public discourse, enabling hoaxes to shape perceptions and influence behaviors at scale before corrections or fact-checks can gain comparable traction.

The language used in hoaxes on Facebook demonstrates sophisticated rhetorical strategies that exploit cognitive biases, emotional vulnerabilities, and social identity dynamics to maximize persuasiveness and sharing. Linguistic features including sensational headlines, emotionally charged vocabulary (Muhsyanur and Mustapha, 2023), apparent insider knowledge, and appeals to group solidarity combine to create narratives that feel authentic and urgent to target audiences while evading critical scrutiny. Freelon and Wells (2020) argue that understanding misinformation requires analyzing not just factual accuracy but the persuasive mechanisms through which false claims achieve credibility and motivate action, including linguistic choices that activate confirmation bias, identity-protective cognition, and social proof. These rhetorical strategies have become increasingly refined as creators of hoaxes learn from successful misinformation campaigns and adapt their messaging to platform affordances and audience psychologies (Herlina, Muhsyanur, 2024).

The concept of information power provides a crucial framework for understanding hoaxes on Facebook, as the ability to shape public discourse, set agendas, and determine what counts as credible information represents a fundamental form of political and social influence in contemporary societies. Information power operates through multiple mechanisms including the capacity to produce and disseminate content at scale, algorithmic amplification that determines visibility and reach, network effects that create cascades of attention, and the establishment of interpretive frameworks that shape how events and issues are understood. As van Dijck et al. (2021) demonstrate, Facebook's platform architecture concentrates information power in ways that advantage certain actors—including those willing to deploy deception strategically—while marginalizing others, creating asymmetries that have profound implications for democratic governance, public health communication, and social cohesion.

The political economy of Facebook's business model creates structural incentives that inadvertently facilitate the spread of hoaxes, as the platform's revenue depends on maximizing user engagement, which sensational and emotionally provocative content achieves more effectively than measured factual reporting. Algorithmic recommendation systems prioritize content that generates clicks, comments, and shares, creating feedback loops where misinformation that triggers strong emotional responses receives preferential distribution regardless of veracity (Muhsyanur et.al, 2024). These platform dynamics intersect with human psychology in ways that favor deception over truth-telling, as Zuboff (2020) argues in her analysis of surveillance capitalism, where the commodification of attention creates systems that exploit human vulnerabilities rather than cultivating informed citizenship or rational deliberation.

The linguistic dimension of hoaxes extends beyond individual message content to encompass broader discursive strategies including the construction of alternative knowledge systems, the weaponization of uncertainty, and the strategic deployment of conspiracy theories that reframe political and social conflicts in ways advantageous to those spreading misinformation. These discursive formations create what Farkas and Schou (2019) term "post-truth" environments where emotional resonance and identity affirmation take precedence over empirical verification, and where claims to insider knowledge or suppressed truth position hoaxes as acts of resistance against mainstream institutions rather than deceptive manipulation (Muhsyanur, 2024). Understanding these meta-narratives is essential for comprehending why hoaxes persist despite debunking efforts and why some audiences become resistant to factual correction.

The global nature of Facebook's platform creates additional complexities for understanding and addressing hoaxes, as misinformation campaigns often cross linguistic and national boundaries, adapting content to local contexts while leveraging transnational networks and coordination. Different linguistic communities experience distinctive forms of misinformation reflecting local political conflicts, cultural sensitivities, and information ecosystems, yet increasingly coordinated campaigns deploy similar strategies across multiple languages and regions simultaneously. As Bradshaw and Howard (2021) document in their research on computational propaganda, state actors, political organizations, and commercial entities operate sophisticated misinformation infrastructures that exploit Facebook's global reach to influence public opinion across borders (Muhsyanur, 2023), making hoaxes on social media platforms matters of international concern requiring coordinated responses that respect linguistic and cultural diversity while establishing shared standards for information integrity.

## DISCUSSIONS

### Linguistic Mechanisms and Rhetorical Strategies in Facebook Hoaxes

The linguistic construction of hoaxes on Facebook demonstrates consistent patterns that exploit fundamental features of human language processing, social cognition, and digital communication environments to maximize persuasive impact and viral potential. Headline construction represents a critical element, with hoaxes typically employing sensational, emotionally charged, or curiosity-inducing formulations that trigger immediate affective responses and create strong incentives to click and share before carefully evaluating content veracity. Research by Molina et al. (2021) reveals that hoax headlines disproportionately use linguistic markers of certainty ("definitely," "proven"), emotional intensity ("shocking," "devastating"), and in-group appeal ("they don't want you to know"), creating rhetorical packages that signal urgency and insider knowledge while bypassing analytical processing that might identify logical inconsistencies or implausible claims.

The use of authentic-seeming details and specific references serves to enhance the perceived credibility of hoaxes, creating what linguists term "verisimilitude"—the appearance of truth through realistic detail even when the overall narrative is fabricated. Hoaxes frequently incorporate genuine names, dates, locations, and factual elements woven into false narratives, making the content more difficult to verify quickly and creating cognitive anchors that lend credibility to surrounding false claims. This strategic use of factual fragments within deceptive frameworks represents what Tandoc et al. (2020) identify as a sophisticated evolution in misinformation tactics, moving beyond easily debunked wholly fabricated stories toward hybrid forms that blend truth and falsehood in ways that complicate fact-checking and exploit the labor-intensive nature of verification processes that few social media users undertake before sharing content (Muhsyanur, 2025).

Emotional manipulation through language choice constitutes another central feature of Facebook hoaxes, with content creators strategically deploying vocabulary and framing that triggers anger, fear, disgust, or moral outrage—emotions that research demonstrates most strongly motivate social sharing and reduce critical evaluation. The linguistic encoding of threat ("your children are in danger"), injustice ("they're stealing from you"), or betrayal ("you've been lied to") activates emotional processing that overrides rational analysis and creates urgency to share information with others as a form of social protection or moral duty. According to Brady et al. (2020), moral-emotional language that aligns with recipients' existing value commitments increases sharing likelihood by over 20% per moral-emotional word used, explaining why hoaxes targeting specific ideological communities employ language saturated with group-relevant moral content that simultaneously reinforces identity and motivates dissemination.

The strategic deployment of ambiguity and interpretive flexibility in hoax language allows content to spread across diverse audiences with different beliefs and concerns while

---

maintaining plausible deniability for creators and sharers. Hoaxes frequently use suggestive rather than explicit claims, rhetorical questions that imply conclusions without stating them directly, and carefully hedged language that avoids definitive assertions that could be definitively debunked. This linguistic strategy creates what Phillips and Milner (2021) call "participatory disinformation," where audiences actively engage in constructing and propagating false narratives through their own interpretations and elaborations of deliberately ambiguous source material, making them invested in defending rather than questioning the misinformation they have helped to develop and disseminate.

### **Algorithmic Amplification and Platform Architectures of Deception**

Facebook's algorithmic systems for content distribution, while designed to maximize user engagement and platform usage, create systematic advantages for misinformation over accurate information through mechanisms that prioritize emotional intensity, novelty, and network effects in ways that hoaxes exploit more successfully than conventional journalism or factual reporting. The News Feed algorithm, which determines what content users see and in what order, privileges posts that generate rapid engagement through reactions, comments, and shares—precisely the behaviors that sensational hoaxes trigger more effectively than moderate, nuanced, or complex factual content (Muhsyanur et al., 2021). As Eslami et al. (2020) demonstrate through analysis of algorithmic curation patterns, this engagement-based ranking creates feedback loops where early viral spread of hoaxes ensures their continued promotion to broader audiences, while factual corrections that generate less intense engagement remain comparatively invisible even when eventually produced.

The architecture of sharing on Facebook, including one-click redistribution, minimal friction in forwarding content to multiple groups simultaneously, and the social signaling functions of public sharing, creates technical infrastructures that favor rapid viral spread over careful evaluation. Unlike traditional media environments where content distribution required institutional resources and editorial gatekeeping, Facebook's democratization of distribution enables anyone to potentially reach millions through cascading shares, but without corresponding democratization of fact-checking resources or accountability mechanisms. This asymmetry between ease of spreading information and difficulty of verifying it creates what Wardle and Derakhshan (2019) term "information disorder," where the velocity and volume of content circulation overwhelm the capacity for verification, enabling hoaxes to achieve saturation before corrections can be mobilized (Muhsyanur et al., 2022).

Group dynamics and echo chamber effects, amplified by Facebook's algorithmic tendency to show users content similar to what they have previously engaged with, create reinforcing environments where hoaxes circulate within ideologically homogeneous communities that lack exposure to contradictory information or alternative perspectives. The platform's group feature, designed to facilitate community building around shared

interests, becomes weaponized for coordinated misinformation campaigns where closed or secret groups serve as incubation spaces for hoax development, testing, and launch before broader dissemination. Research by Cinelli et al. (2021) demonstrates that users primarily encounter news content aligned with their existing beliefs, with algorithmic filtering and social network homophily combining to create information environments where hoaxes that confirm group prejudices or reinforce collective identity face minimal challenge or correction, instead receiving validation through social proof as numerous trusted contacts share the same misinformation.

The attention economy dynamics of Facebook, where user attention represents the scarce resource being competed for by countless content creators, incentivizes the production of increasingly extreme, sensational, or emotionally provocative content to break through the noise and capture audience engagement. This creates evolutionary pressures favoring hoaxes over factual content, as creators learn that exaggeration, fabrication, and emotional manipulation achieve better results than accuracy or nuance. The platform's advertising systems further complicate this landscape by enabling microtargeting of specific demographic and psychographic audiences with tailored misinformation, while simultaneously providing financial incentives for viral content regardless of veracity. As Iosifidis and Nicoli (2020) argue, these platform economics fundamentally alter the information ecosystem in ways that advantage deception, creating market failures where truth cannot compete with lies on equal terms and where individual rationality in content creation leads to collective irrationality in information quality.

### **Power Relations and Information Warfare in Digital Public Spheres**

The relationship between hoaxes and political power on Facebook extends beyond individual instances of misinformation to encompass systematic campaigns by state actors, political organizations, and advocacy groups that deploy deception strategically to influence public opinion, suppress dissent, and undermine adversaries. These information operations exploit Facebook's global reach, microtargeting capabilities, and algorithmic amplification to conduct what Bjola and Pamment (2019) term "digital influence operations"—coordinated efforts to manipulate information environments through networks of fake accounts, coordinated sharing, paid advertising, and strategic narrative construction that shape public discourse on issues ranging from elections to public health to social movements. The scale and sophistication of these operations transform hoaxes from isolated acts of individual deception into instruments of organized power projection.

The asymmetry in resources and capabilities between different actors in Facebook's information ecosystem creates unequal power relations where well-funded organizations can deploy sophisticated misinformation campaigns while marginalized communities lack comparable resources for counter-messaging or truth-telling. State actors and wealthy

---

political organizations can employ data scientists, psychologists, and professional content creators to develop highly effective misinformation, purchase advertising to ensure wide distribution, and operate at scales that overwhelm fact-checkers and civil society organizations operating on limited budgets. This resource asymmetry means that truth does not compete with lies on level playing fields but rather in contexts where deception often commands superior resources and institutional support. As Bennett and Livingston (2020) observe, this imbalance represents a fundamental challenge to democratic information systems, where financial and technical resources rather than factual accuracy determine information influence.

The weaponization of epistemological uncertainty represents a particularly insidious form of information power, where the goal of hoaxes is not necessarily to convince audiences of specific false claims but rather to create generalized confusion, undermine trust in institutions and expertise, and foster cynicism that prevents collective action or informed citizenship. Strategic deployment of contradictory hoaxes, attacks on fact-checkers and journalists, and promotion of conspiracy theories that cast doubt on all sources of information creates what Benkler et al. (2020) call "epistemic chaos"—environments where citizens cannot reliably distinguish truth from falsehood and retreat into identity-based information selection or passive disengagement. This weaponization of uncertainty serves authoritarian interests by making democratic deliberation impossible while allowing power holders to operate without accountability to factual reality.

The question of who possesses the power to define what constitutes a hoax versus legitimate information raises complex issues about authority, expertise, and democratic governance in digital public spheres. Facebook's deployment of fact-checkers, while attempting to address misinformation, concentrates definitional power in ways that raise concerns about censorship, bias, and the privatization of truth-determination that some argue should remain contested in democratic societies. Critics from different political perspectives accuse fact-checkers of ideological bias, while defenders emphasize the necessity of some mechanism for distinguishing truth from falsehood given the scale of deliberate deception. As Jack (2019) argues, this tension between combating misinformation and preserving free expression represents one of the central governance challenges of digital platforms, with no easy resolution that fully satisfies democratic values while effectively addressing the harms caused by viral hoaxes. The power to label content as false or misleading, to reduce its distribution algorithmically, or to remove it entirely from the platform represents significant authority over public discourse that Facebook exercises through combinations of automated systems and human reviewers operating according to policies developed largely without democratic input or oversight.

## CONCLUSION

The phenomenon of hoaxes on Facebook illuminates fundamental tensions in contemporary information systems between the democratization of communication enabled by social media platforms and the systematic advantages these systems provide to deception over truth-telling. Language serves as the primary vehicle through which hoaxes achieve their persuasive and viral power, with sophisticated rhetorical strategies exploiting emotional vulnerabilities, cognitive biases, and social identity dynamics to bypass critical evaluation and motivate sharing. Facebook's algorithmic architectures and business model create structural conditions that favor sensational misinformation over factual accuracy, while the platform's global reach and microtargeting capabilities enable information power to be exercised at unprecedented scales by those willing to deploy deception strategically. Understanding these intersections of language, technology, and power is essential for developing effective responses to misinformation that go beyond fact-checking individual claims to address the systemic features of digital information ecosystems that make hoaxes so prevalent and influential. Such responses must navigate difficult tradeoffs between combating harmful deception and preserving legitimate debate, between platform accountability and free expression, and between technological solutions and the cultivation of digital literacy and critical thinking capacities among users. The challenge of hoaxes on Facebook ultimately reflects broader questions about how democratic societies can maintain informed publics and rational deliberation in media environments fundamentally restructured by commercial social media platforms whose economic interests do not necessarily align with truth or democratic flourishing. Addressing this challenge requires coordinated efforts involving platform redesign, regulatory intervention, educational initiatives, and renewed commitment to journalistic institutions and expertise, while recognizing that perfect solutions remain elusive and ongoing vigilance essential in the ever-evolving landscape of digital deception and information power.

## REFERENCES

- Benkler, Y., Faris, R., & Roberts, H. (2020). *Network propaganda: Manipulation, disinformation, and radicalization in American politics*. Oxford University Press.
- Bennett, W. L., & Livingston, S. (2020). The disinformation order: Disruptive communication and the decline of democratic institutions. *European Journal of Communication*, 35(2), 122-139. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0267323120907146>
- Bjola, C., & Pamment, J. (2019). *Countering online propaganda and extremism: The dark side of digital diplomacy*. Routledge.
- Brady, W. J., Wills, J. A., Burkart, D., Jost, J. T., & Van Bavel, J. J. (2020). An ideological asymmetry in the diffusion of moralized content on social media among political leaders. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, 148(10), 1802-1813. <https://doi.org/10.1037/xge0000532>

- Bradshaw, S., & Howard, P. N. (2021). The global disinformation order: 2021 global inventory of organised social media manipulation. *Oxford Internet Institute*.
- Cinelli, M., De Francisci Morales, G., Galeazzi, A., Quattrociocchi, W., & Starnini, M. (2021). The echo chamber effect on social media. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 118(9), e2023301118. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2023301118>
- Eslami, M., Vaccaro, K., Karahalios, K., & Hamilton, K. (2020). "Be careful; things can be worse than they appear": Understanding biased algorithms and users' behavior around them in rating platforms. *Proceedings of the International AAAI Conference on Web and Social Media*, 11(1), 62-71.
- Farkas, J., & Schou, J. (2019). Post-truth, fake news and democracy: Mapping the politics of falsehood. *Routledge*.
- Freelon, D., & Wells, C. (2020). Disinformation as political communication. *Political Communication*, 37(2), 145-156. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2020.1723755>
- Iosifidis, P., & Nicoli, N. (2020). The battle to end fake news: A qualitative content analysis of Facebook announcements on how it combats disinformation. *International Communication Gazette*, 82(1), 60-81. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1748048519880729>
- Jack, C. (2019). What's propaganda got to do with it? *Columbia Journalism Review*. [https://www.cjr.org/tow\\_center\\_reports/whats-propaganda-got-to-do-with-it.php](https://www.cjr.org/tow_center_reports/whats-propaganda-got-to-do-with-it.php)
- Molina, M. D., Sundar, S. S., Le, T., & Lee, D. (2021). "Fake news" is not simply false information: A concept explication and taxonomy of online content. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 65(2), 180-212. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764219878224>
- Herlina, Muhsyanur, M. T. (2024). *Conceptualization of educational goals in an islamic perspective: a sociological study*.
- Muhsyanur and Mustapha, B. (2023). Challenges and Strategies in Teaching Indonesian to Indonesian Occupied Students in Malaysia. *TRICKS: Journal of Education And Learning Practices*, 1(1), 32-39. <https://journal.echaprogres.or.id/index.php/tricks/article/view/6>
- Muhsyanur et.al. (2024). Strengthening management of tourist guide services in bilebante tourist village, central lombok through public speaking skills. *Transformasi: Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat*, 20(1), 192-202. <https://journal.uinmataram.ac.id/index.php/transformasi/article/view/9682/3318>
- Muhsyanur, M. (2023). The Bugis People's Naming System in Bugis Ethnic Tradition. *Journal of Language and Literature*, 23(1), 67-76. <https://doi.org/10.24071/joll.v23i1.5062>
- Muhsyanur, M. (2024). *Love-Based Curriculum as a New Paradigm in Language Education : Between Cognition , Affection , and Spirituality*. 2(5), 12-19.
- Muhsyanur, M. (2025). Digital Literation: Denying Network-Based Hoaks Language in The News A Covid-19 Pandemic Discourse in Indonesia. *INSPIRATION: Instructional Practices in Language Education*, 4(1), 20-29. <https://jurnal.uinsu.ac.id/index.php/inspiration/article/view/25790>
- Muhsyanur, M., Larisu, Z., Sanulita, H., Ertanti, D. W., & Widada, D. M. (2022). Indonesian netizens expressions potentially satire with the Covid-19 pandemic on social media Facebook. *Linguistics and Culture Review*, 6(1), 55-69. <https://doi.org/10.21744/lingcure.v6n1.1942>
- Muhsyanur, Rahmatullah, A. S., Misnawati, Dumiyati, & Ghufron, S. (2021). The Effectiveness

- of "Facebook" As Indonesian Language Learning Media for Elementary School Student: Distance Learning Solutions in the Era of the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Multicultural Education*, 7(04), 38-47. <https://www.mccaddogap.com/ojs/index.php/me/article/view/8%0Ahttps://www.mccaddogap.com/ojs/index.php/me/article/download/8/10>
- Phillips, W., & Milner, R. M. (2021). You are here: A field guide for navigating polarized speech, conspiracy theories, and our polluted media landscape. *MIT Press*.
- Tandoc, E. C., Jr., Lim, D., & Ling, R. (2020). Diffusion of disinformation: How social media users respond to fake news and why. *Journalism*, 21(3), 381-398. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884919868325>
- van Dijck, J., Poell, T., & de Waal, M. (2021). The platform society: Public values in a connective world. *Oxford University Press*.
- Vosoughi, S., Roy, D., & Aral, S. (2020). The spread of true and false news online. *Science*, 359(6380), 1146-1151. <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.aap9559>
- Wardle, C., & Derakhshan, H. (2019). Information disorder: Toward an interdisciplinary framework for research and policy making. *Council of Europe Report DGI(2017)09*.
- Zuboff, S. (2020). The age of surveillance capitalism: The fight for a human future at the new frontier of power. *PublicAffairs*.