SOCIAL DISCOURSE OF *FAKE NEWS* IN FRENCH AND ITS DIGITAL SOCIAL MEDIA LITERACY

Merry Andriani[1]*; Annisa Fitriani Kalsum[2]; Gabriele Nadina Elloianza[3]

[1-3]French Study Program, Faculty of Cultural Sciences, Universitas Gadjah Mada
Jl. Nusantara No. 1 Bulaksumur, Yogyakarta 55281, Indonesia
[1]merry.andriani@mail.ugm.ac.id; [2]annisafitrianikk@mail.ugm.ac.id; [3]gabrielenadina@mail.ugm.ac.id

ABSTRACT

The research explored the social discourse of fake news in the French language and the French government's efforts to overcome it with digital media literacy through social media. Fake news was getting more intense with the existence of social media as an instrument of dissemination. The fake news data were observed first, then selected according to the intensity of its distribution, and taken through social media platforms with the most users in France, namely Facebook and Twitter. Then this data set was verified and confirmed through the official fact-checking platform to ensure that the data text was fake news. This data verification method also practiced techniques socialized by the French government through a digital media literacy program. All data were analyzed qualitatively using a critical paradigm, particularly critical sociolinguistics, and post-truth theory. The analysis results show a relationship between language practice through fake news texts circulating on social media and the practice of government propaganda discourse through digital media literacy. These two practices also give rise to certain social practices and movements in French society. This also shows that digital media literacy efforts alone are ineffective enough to overcome the problems caused by fake news in society.

Keywords: social discourse, fake news, French language, digital social media, social media literacy

INTRODUCTION

Fake news is news deliberately created to hide the truth and reach the widest audience so that it is designed in such a way as to be disseminated (Rini, 2017). The phenomenon of the spread of fake news through social media can be found almost all over the world in the last decade. The definition of fake news itself has become a long debate among world academics in formulating this social phenomenon epistemologically (Egelhofer & Lecheler, 2019). According to McIntyre (2018), actually fake news is not a new thing in human civilization; it has even existed since 1439, along with the invention of print media technology. The real news was difficult to prove at that time because there was no journalistic code of ethics and adequate control over the news printed (McIntyre, 2018).

Habgood-Coote (2019) is one of those who oppose using the terms fake news and post-truth to discuss fake news, arguing that the two vocabularies are linguistically flawed and are often used as propaganda tools. However, this opinion is opposed by many other researchers and academics (Bernecker et al., 2021; Pepp, Michaelson, & Sterken, 2019; Rini, 2017), who argue that the Habgood-Coote argument cannot be proven. Research carried out by Pepp, Michaelson, and Sterken (2019) shows that the term fake news is a new idiom that best describes this social phenomenon. The vocabulary 'fake news' became the trending word of choice for Collins dictionary in 2017. The same French word called '*infox*' was also chosen as word of the year in 2018 by Le Robert dictionary in France. According to the translation found in the UNESCO journalism training manual, the Indonesian version of the term itself is '*berita palsu*' (Ireton & Posseti, 2019).

Meanwhile, social media is the vehicle most often used as an instrument for spreading this fake news (Aricat, 2018; Bernstein & Hooper, 2021; Pathak

et al., 2020), given its easy access, wide network, and low price. This has the potential to be a threat to contemporary civilization because the majority of the world's population accesses news via social media. In 2016, 67% of Americans accessed news through social media (Niedringhaus, 2018). Meanwhile, in France, according to data from the statistical center l'INSEE in the period 2016-2020, the number of the French population who access the internet is 85%, and 75,9% of them access news through social media. For comparison, in Indonesia, according to BPS in 2019, the number of Indonesians who can access the internet is 73,79%, and as many as 96,4% of Indonesians access it via mobile phones. The number of active social media users in Indonesia in 2019 reached 150 million (Zahra, Purnomo, & Kasiwi, 2020).

Based on the statistics, it can be obtained an overview of how significant the potential of the internet, and social media is, and at the same time, the potential for exposure to fake news that accompanies it, to the demographics of people in Indonesia, France, and America. These three countries may be able to represent the actual situation on three different continents; Asia, Europe, and America, which can be considered as an illustration in general of the socio-demographic context of the world today. During this pandemic, the dissemination of fake news further exacerbates the social situation and makes it difficult to control the epidemic in the community. In the Indonesian context, for example, many news stories in the mass media about people being influenced by fake news and refusing to go to the hospital for fear of being treated as a Covid patient. Various narrations of true stories circulating on social media, which are sometimes difficult to ascertain the truth, dominate the discourse around the outbreak in society. More or less, the same thing also happens in France, a country whose literacy level has reached 99,9% compared to Indonesia, which only reached 93,9%, according to UNDP data in 2018. Even today, there are still French people who are anti-Covid-19 vaccines and have held demonstrations every week for the past few months.

The elaboration on what fake news is and how social media is connected to fake news is elaborative yet can be compressed. The introduction shall focus on the background of the research: (1) Why and what is going on with fake news in French, and how has social media responded? (2) How are the previous studies around the topics? (3) Which gap from the previous studies that researchers wish to fill-in? (4) Thus, why do the researchers decide to conduct a study with a, b, and c as the result of the research? (5) How will the result of the research contribute? What is the significance? It does not have to be Indonesia in specific, but kindly ensure the strength of contribution.

The government and the public, both in France and Indonesia, of course, do not remain silent while watching the spread of fake news on social media that is accessed daily. Several scholars have conducted research to solve the problem, such as Tukina, Mozin, and Sanjaya (2020) have written an example of case-

solving hoax information in Indonesia. Various forms of digital, print, and audio-visual media literacy are intensively carried out. The public can easily access social media literacy accounts, also known as 'fact-checking', to verify news, images, or videos suspected of being fake news (Bigot, 2017; Bigot, Gomez, & Noûs, 2020). However, how effective this media literacy effort is, has not been widely studied by academics. One of the researchers who questioned this in the French context is Monnier (Hernández-Fuentes & Monnier, 2020; Monnier, 2018, 2020), but in his research, he only discusses the debate around the narration of fake news in French society. According to Alemanno (2018), fake news is just a symptom of a much deeper-rooted problem in society, and he has proposed a taxonomy to look closely at each. Research on fake news is mostly done in the fields of informatics, communication, psychology, law, and socio-politics, as seen in Figure 1.
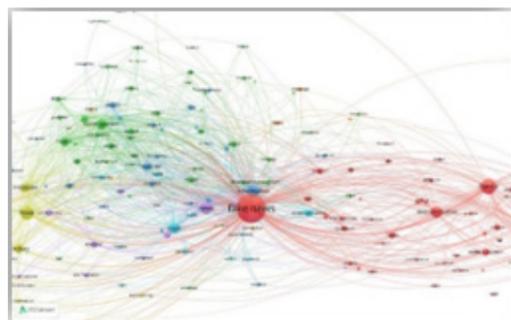

Figure 1 Research Map Concerning Fake News in France and Indonesia

The map in Figure 1 shows the proportion of the distribution of research articles with the theme of fake news in general, and specifically for the context of France and Indonesia. The majority of research on this theme has been dominated by the American context since the 2016 election (Troude-Chastenet, 2018) with the example of the Trump case and using the perspective of informatics, communication, and politics (Figeac et al., 2019; 2020; 2021). Within the French context, fake news research has also emerged during the election of President Macron (Cossette, 2021; Smith, 2019; Dauphin, 2019).

The research theme map related to fake news shows that there is still relatively loose space for the context of Indonesia and France. This means that many aspects of this fake news phenomenon still need to be explored or investigated further. One perspective rarely found is analysis from a linguistic or sociolinguistic point of view, as will be discussed in the research. The language perspective in researching fake news is an important step because the basic material for fake news is language. Several scholars have provided research on the informatic system using linguistic-based tools to detect fake news on social media, such as De Oliveira et al. (2021); Mahyoob, Algaraady, and Alrahaili (2020); Oshikawa, Qian, and Wang (2020).

It is also emphasized by several Indonesian scholars (Pinem, 2021; Rahayu & Sensusiyati, 2020; Wijana, 2021), who have researched fake news or hoaxes in the Indonesian context using corpus-based data with forensic linguistic techniques. Based on the explanation of these problems, the question in the research is how the fake news social discourse is produced in French. What are the linguistic features in French used in the fake news text? How are media literacy efforts through social media and French television to overcome this? How effective are these efforts in social practice in French society? The result of the research could be served as a model of analysis for the same phenomena in the Indonesian context.

METHODS

The research applies multiple perspectives which are incorporated into one paradigm of post-structuralism/post-modernism, especially approaches with critical perspectives in critical sociolinguistics. The object of research concerns with texts on social media related to fake news that involves a post-truth theory perspective to explore it comprehensively. So, the post-truth theory that has been heavily echoed in recent years (since 2016) is used as a supporting theory. In the study of contemporary western philosophy, according to McIntyre, post-truth is often considered to be born from a post-modernist tradition that rejects a single truth and grows other narratives outside the grand narrative (McIntyre, 2018). An example of a case often used by McIntyre is when Trump claims the party celebrating his appointment as President of America is the most crowded and lively. Then, to substantiate this claim, he distributes an engineered photo different from the photo of the journalists who covered it. Trump has not lost his mind in defending the false claims and photos; his team appears on television, confirming it and issuing a statement that it is an 'alternative fact'. In this case, it can be seen how the authorities manipulate and make fake news to legalize claims that are not based on reality and general knowledge. Jacques Derrida's perspective on post-modernism, especially the principle of language that is not representative of reality and the instability of meaning (Derrida, 1967), becomes an analytical tool to explore how later this language became the main instrument in the production of fake news.

The basic assumptions of the critical perspective of Norman Fairclough with the theory of discourse and social change (Fairclough, 2009) becomes the main basis for exploring issues related to the phenomenon of language practice, discourse practice, and social practices used to reproduce the language of fake news. Language instruments with linguistic features are used in creating narratives or discourses that mislead the truth. Furthermore, lastly, the assumption of "social discourse" from Marc Angenot is used as a point of view to place the problem of fake news in critical sociolinguistic analysis. The definition of social discourse, according to Angenot (2006), is all

that is discussed and written in the context of society collectively. It covers everything that is printed and publicly discussed or represented by electronic media/social media today (Angenot & Provenzano, 2014).

The data collection method in the research is carried out in three stages. The first is through observation of virtual conversations on several social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, and Telegram. The data collection period is during the pandemic period, namely April-August 2021 until the majority of the data is related to pandemic and vaccine issues. The second stage is the identification and retrieval of news data or posts that repeatedly appear on several social media accounts with the highest frequency of use in accessing news in France, namely Facebook and Twitter. The third stage is the verification of data suspected of being fake news. The verification method used for this third stage is by applying several fact-checking techniques that are often socialized by the official platforms of the French government, as well as the mass media in general. The data collected and confirmed as fake news is then classified according to the linguistic features found and categorized based on the type of social discourse identified. Furthermore, some selected data are re-verified and discussed with several French people to find out firsthand how social discourse related to fake news is discussed by the French community. All data are then analyzed qualitatively and re-selected. Then some data specimens are presented in accordance with the theoretical framework described.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Through discourse and social change theory, Fairclough (2009) has presented a critical discourse analysis model using three dimensions; macro structure, mesostructure, and microstructure. In addition, there are also three levels of practice that can be applied in analyzing a discourse with a critical perspective, namely textual practice, discourse practice, and social practice. Given the limited space for exposure for the research, a discussion is presented through the three practical perspectives adapted to the object of the research. First, language practice examines textual practices and French linguistic features that appear in fake news texts on French social media. Second, the practice of discourse is done by applying the interdiscursivity method, connecting the fake news social discourse with the discourse of refutation raised in the digital media literacy process. Furthermore, third, social practices discuss social changes related to the emergence of fake news texts.

The first part of the discussion is the language practice on social discourse fake news in French on social media. The search for language practice and the use of linguistic features found in fake news text in French on social media examines morphological, syntactic, and semantic aspects. Morphologically, the analysis of verified text forms as fake news tends to use the following features: (1) use of insufficient or

excessive and inappropriate punctuation marks; (2) excessive use of emoticons; (3) selection of provocative lexical types; (4) orthograph errors (writing spelling). Data-01 is based on these morphological categories.

Data-01 (Source: Twitter, accessed on June 9, 2021)

ALEXANDRA HENRION-CAUDE GÉNÉTICIENNE MONDIALEMENT CONNUE D'UNE GRANDE COMPÈTENCE EN ARN À CALCULÉ " LES VACCINÉS " ONT 2 FOIS PLUS DE RISQUES DE MOURIR OU AVOIR DE GRAVES SÈQUELLES QUE ""LES NON VACCINÉS"" CHEZ A. BERCOFF "AVC ,PHLÉBITE,CRISE CARDIAQUE EMBOLIE PULMONAIRE"

Translation:
Alexandra Henrion-Caude a world-renowned geneticist with her expertise in the field of RNA has calculated that 'vaccinated persons' are twice as likely to die or suffer from severe complications than 'unvaccinated persons' in A. Bercoff, 'Stroke, inflammation, heart attack, pulmonary embolism'.

In Data-01, textual anatomy clearly shows some irregularities, such as the use of capital letters in all words. If looking back, this text does not use a period or comma articulation sign. This paragraph consists of one sentence, which does not end with a period, as is the rule of the French orthograph. Then some words use two quotation marks at once, at the beginning and end. There are words with one quotation mark but typed with excessive spaces. It can be concluded that in Data-01, it is found that the use of punctuation marks is lacking and/or nonexistent, and some punctuation marks are used improperly.

Data-02 shows the excessive use of emoticons and orthography errors or spelling errors in French in a post on social media.

Data-02 (Source: Twitter, accessed on June 9, 2021)

Faut faite tourner
Les medias sont pas au courant...ya pas de variant indien 😂😂😂😂
🔴🔴* *[COMMUNIQUÉ OFFICIEL / GOUVERNEMENT DE L'INDE]*
****************************** ❌❌
❌❌👇👇👇👇👇❌❌❌
Le gouvernement indien lance une déclaration officielle à la planète précisant que toutes les nouvelles du virus liées à son pays SONT FAUX; ainsi que la nouvelle "souche de l'Inde" N'EXISTE PAS et exige que cette nouvelle soit retirée des plates-formes de toute urgence. L OMS à sérieusement du souci à ce faire
(Underline all data from the author as a marker)

Translation:
Must be circulated
The media don't know about it… there is no Indian variant😂😂😂😂
🔴🔴* [Official information/Government of India]

****************************** ❌❌
❌❌👇👇👇👇👇❌❌❌
The Indian government launches an official declaration to the entire planet affirming that all news about the virus related to its country is false; likewise, the news of the "Indian Plague" does not exist and demands that it be immediately withdrawn from all platforms, WHO really has a hard time doing it.

At a glance, the text in Data-02 already shows an anomaly and an informal form; moreover, it is credible as a text claimed to be "official government information". The informal text style is seen in the use of many emoticons. It is also found an orthograph error in the text, *"...ya pas"*, which should have been written *"il n'y a pas"*, meaning "nothing," and the word *"soucie"* meaning "problem", should have been written *"souci"*. Then there is also the use of capital letters that do not comply with the spelling rules in French: *"SONT FAUX", "N'EXISTE PAS".* Syntactically, the error is also found in the conjugation of *"faut faite tourner"*, which should have been written as « *il faut faire tourner* ». As it is well known, French is a language of flexion that uses conjugation to match verbs with the subject, time, and mode. The conjugation process has standard rules, and its error is often socio-culturally indicating the social class and education level of the speaker.

At the syntactic level, many of the fake news texts analyzed in this research have these characteristics: - Conjugation errors - Use of imperative sentences - Omission of the subject of the sentence. In addition to Data-02, in the Data-03, some conjugations are not suitable.

Data-03 (Source: Facebook, accessed on June 21, 2021)
👁️🌐🔙 *Vous vous souvenez peut-être il y a 2 semaine lorsque* 🤹
Biden a déclaré « Chaque lit d'hôpital sera occupé par des patients atteints d'Alzheimer » ? Les prions sont similaires à la maladie d'Alzheimer mélangée à la maladie de Parkinson et à des vertiges sévères si graves qu'il n'est plus possible de marcher sans tomber.
Apportez des aimants lorsque vous allez à l'épicerie et assurez-vous de les tester sur les aliments que vous achetez.
Si les aimants s'y collent, c'est contaminé. N'achète pas.

Translation:
👁️🌐🔙 You may remember, 2 weeks ago when 🤹
Biden announces « Every hospital bed will be filled with patients who has Alzheimer's » ? Bacteria that cause disease are similar Alzheimer's which mixes with Parkinson's

disease and causes headaches
It's so bad that if you walk, you'll fall.
Bring a magnet when you shop at the shop and make sure
You test the food you buy.
If the magnet sticks to the food, it's contaminated. Do not buy.

At first glance, Data-03 looks like there is no problem with the anatomy of the text, and the emoticons used are not excessive. If not closely attention, the text can be considered normal, like a post on social media, regardless of its illogical content. However, at the end of the Data-03 text, there is an error in the conjugation of the imperative sentence or the imperative sentence *"N'achète pas"*, which should be written as *"N'achetez pas"*, considering that in the previous sentence, the pronoun that becomes the reference is *"vous"*. Command sentences in French have a different structure from affirmative sentences. In the command sentence, the subject of the command is not listed and can only be known through its conjugation.

Data-04 is the title of a post on Facebook with a command sentence written in all capital letters and using an excessive exclamation point. In the text, there are three imperative sentences underlined by the author as a marker.

Data-04 (Source: Facebook, accessed on June 21, 2021)

LISEZ ET PARTAGEZ TRÈS MASSIVEMENT !!!!! URGENT !!!!!
Q SCOOP – À lire d'urgence: « Pourquoi la quatrième vague de Véran va-t-elle arriver à l'automne » et « Synthèse vidéo de la covid dans le monde ».
par Qactus
Article long, mais prenez vraiment le temps de le lire, car l'automne risque de vous arriver très fort en pleine face, si vous n'êtes pas préparés.

Translation:
Read and share massively!!!!! Urgent!!!!!
Q SCOOP – For immediate reading: « Why the fourth wave of Véran is coming in the fall » and « Video short report covid in the world ».
by Qactus
Long article, but take the time to read it, because Autumn risks getting you into trouble, if you are not prepared.

The order sentence to disseminate news on posts found on social media is one indicator of fake news. Referring to the definition presented by Rini (2017), one of the criteria for news that can be categorized

as fake news is a design in such a way as to reach as many public as possible and spread very quickly. In addition, fake news text also tends to omit the subject of the sentence. This indicates, at the same time, unclear news sources and references. In Data-04, the subject is omitted in the sentence 'article long', which grammatically indicates an incomplete sentence. It should be written «*C'est un article long*» according to the grammatical rules.

The same thing is also found in Data-05, the following fake news text whose contents scare the public with the dangers of vaccines. However, the sentence does not use a clear subject or object, as underlined.

Data-05 (Source Twitter, accessed on June 9, 2021)
À ce stade, pour ceux qui ont été testés, vous avez encore une chance d'y échapper tant que vous ne prenez pas le 💉!
🔴 *Ça explique d'ailleurs pourquoi l'ivermectine et autres traitements sont interdits!Les anticorps naturels et/ou les traitements détruisent ces structures*💥

Translation:
At this stage, for all those who have been tested, you still have one chance to pass as long as you haven't taken the 💉!
🔴 This explains why ivermectin and other medications are banned! Natural antibodies and/or medications destroy these structures 💥

The fake news surrounding the vaccine controversy during the pandemic has been found circulating on social media in various versions. One of the most frequently found appearing repeatedly can be seen in Data-6.

Data-06 (Source: Twitter, accessed on June 10, 202)
Tweet from LIBERTÉ (@GaumontRene)
LIBERTÉ (@GaumontRene) Tweeted:
Bill GATES admet que son vaccin 💉
«expérimental» ARNm CHANGERA L'ADN POUR TOUJOURS….🤣🤣*! Faites vous piquer les cobayes* 🇫🇷 *!*

Translation:
Bill Gates admits that his «experimental» NRAm vaccine will change DNA forever….(laughing emoticon)! Let's give the FR guinea pigs (French flag icon) a shot!

HARO Pascal
@pascal_haro

Tweet from LIBERTÉ (@GaumontRene)
LIBERTÉ (@GaumontRene) Tweeted:
Bill GATES admet que son vaccin 💉 «expérimental» ARNm CHANGERA L'ADN POUR TOUJOURS….🤣🤣! Faites vous piquer les cobayes 🇫🇷 !
twitter.com/GaumontRene/st…
Translate Tweet

In Data-06, it can be seen that the command sentence used at the end of the post is ironic, at the same time, provokes emotion. People who receive the vaccine are considered guinea pigs. Moreover, the video included in this post has been modified and cut so that it looks like Bill Gates's recognition as one of the pharmacology industry entrepreneurs who sell vaccines. According to Linden (in Greifeneder et al., 2021), people who are provoked by fake news are often no longer able to filter information cognitively. For example, the inability to see grammatical errors, such as in Data-06 sentences, is found in many accounts that spread the text.

The linguistic semantic perspective can analyze the meaning of sentences more comprehensively. In the collected French fake news texts, references to unclear sources and the use of impersonal pronouns or impersonal subjects do not refer to a precise person or group. In addition, semantically, it is also found that persuasive and provocative sentences intend to provoke emotions, generate hatred, and often take advantage of racist and religious sentiments. As an example, it can bee seen in Data-07.

Data-07 (Source: Facebook, accessed on July 28, 2021)
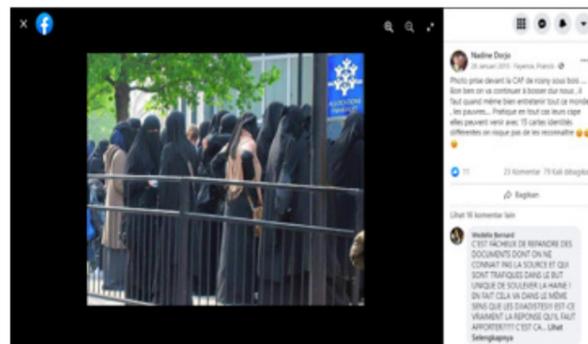

*Photo prise devant la CAF de <u>rosny sous bois</u> ....
Bon ben <u>on va continuer</u> à bosser dur nous , <u>il faut quand même</u> bien entretenir tout ce monde , les pauvres.... Pratique en tout cas leurs cape elles peuvent venir avec 15 cartes identités différentes <u>on risque</u> pas de les reconnaître* 😊😊😊

Translation:
Photo taken in front of CAF office rosny sous bois…. Yes, how else can we continue to work hard, right? After all, we all have to take care of all those people, the poor people…. But practically, how can they come with 15 different ID cards, we can't possibly recognize them 😊😊😊

The Facebook photo in Data-07 has shared 10.000 times within 48 hours in France before being declared fake news on August 12, 2018, by fact-checking verifier media. This photo is actually located in London, and if verified through a search engine on the Internet, it will be seen that the photo is an old photo that has been circulating on the Internet since 2014. It is not enough just to fake and edit photos; the photo illustration text also uses provocative sentences and provokes hateful emotions by exploiting religious sentiments. In this case, everything that smells of Islam in France has always been controversial after many events and social friction due to terrorism under the guise of Islam.

The location of the edited photo is intentionally added with the CAF (Caisse Allocation Familiale) logo to look like it is in front of the CAF office. This is a government office in France that administers monthly financial assistance for families with children or people whose income is below the national standard. CAF funding is sourced primarily from the taxes of French citizens. Everyone has the same right to get this CAF assistance, including international students who are studying in France. So it is understandable now that the provocation by the fake news text on Data-07 is intended to provoke the hateful emotions of the French, who have to work hard and pay huge taxes every year. The next persuasion sentence is also provocative by playing on religious issues, showing the abuse of the burqa. As is known, since 2010 there has been a ban on covering the face in public places (*LOI N° 2010-1192 Du 11 Octobre 2010 Interdisant La Dissimulation Du Visage Dans l'espace Public* (1), 2010). Furthermore, since October 11, 2020, it has been emphasized that women are prohibited from wearing the burqa because it will be difficult to identify their faces. This is considered to provide the potential for criminal acts in the community.

Another issue that is often used as a fake news theme is racist sentiment, as was done by Trump to win the election in the United States (McIntyre, 2018). The actual facts are no longer the main thing in the news; all ways are done to get public attention. According to McIntyre (2018), at a time when the world functions with social media algorithms, public attention is correlated with economic motives. Public attention on social media is a money mine; the number of clicks, shares, and views for each post can be financially rewarding. So it is not surprising that truth or fact is no longer a priority in this so-called post-truth era.

In Data-08, it can be seen other examples of posts on Facebook that use sentences that provoke racist sentiments. The lexical component used is extremely racist for the French context; *"un blanc s'est permis"*, *"des pompistes Burundais noirs"*, *"monkeys"*, *"singes"*.

Data-08 (Source: Facebook, accessed on August 5, 2021)

A Bujumbura au Burundi, <u>un blanc s'est permis</u> de traiter des <u>pompistes Burundais noirs</u> de "monkeys", entendez "singes" Français...Ils l'ont chicoté lui-même comme un animal sauvage 😋*#désobéissancecivileacte2 #rezopanacom*

Translation:
In Bujurumba, Burundi, a white person is allowed to treat black Burundian pom officers like « monkeys », meaning French « monkeys »… They themselves shout at him like a wild animal.

The text in Data-08 is an illustration of a video showing a Caucasian being beaten by four Africans at a gas station. Media verifiers have confirmed that this incident happened long ago, not in Burundi but in South Africa. The actual incident is criminal; the beaten Caucasian bought fuel but refused to pay and tried to run away. This fake news circulating exploits the racism of whites and blacks that has been like fire in the husks of society for a long time.

The second part of the discussion is digital media literacy discourse practices and efforts against fake news in France. All data on fake news discourse texts collected in the research can be verified by background on several news verifier media in France, also known as fact-checking media. Through the digital media literacy program, these media provide platforms in the form of websites, image, and video verifiers, and some media also have accounts on several social media. Some of these media are covered by large, well-established media, whether from official government agencies, public media such as AFP, or private media such as France24, Liberation, Le Monde, and others. This fake news verification reporting model has been known in France since 2000 (Bigot, 2017) and gave rise to a separate type of journalism called *"journalism de vérification"*. The models of clarification or verification of news often found through social media are visual verification, audio-visual verification, and news text verification. Several television channels in France also have fake news verification programs, which are also broadcast through the television channel's Youtube media, thus providing wider access for the public without being constrained by space and time. The majority of these verification programs are titled: *"vrai ou fake"*, *"intox"*, *"infox,"* or *"désinfox"*.

In Data-09, it can be seen that screenshot data from several fake news posts and their verification from media verifiers on social media. The verification comes from the official body of the ministry of foreign affairs for immigration through the Twitter account @Désinfox Migrations. This post refutes false information spread by a well-known figure in France, Marine Le Pen from the extreme right party, who is also a presidential candidate in the 2017 election. One of the characteristics of verifier accounts on social media is the use of clearly visible correction signs, such as in Data-09, using a red cross in the text of the information stated to be false or incorrect. In his post, Marine Le Pen raises the issue of national insecurity caused by massive and unregulated immigration issues. This fake news is succinctly and efficiently refuted by the Twitter account of the French immigration agency.

Data-09 (Source: Twitter, accessed on June 9, 2021)

Another form of verification is the correction of a visual or image that conveys an incorrect message. Visually, this correction post is marked with red writing on the verified photo or image in the form of the words *faux* (false) or *infox* (fake news), as can be seen in Data-10.

Data-10 (Source: Twitter, accessed on June 9, 2021)
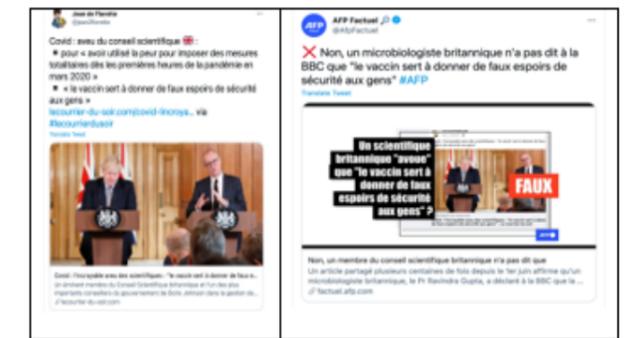
Data-10 confirms at once two aspects, namely text and photos, by placing a red cross on the text and the words *faux* in red on the verified photo. Photo illustrations provide additional literacy that the narrative presented at the meeting in the picture does not match the actual facts. The debunked fake news post states, "British microbiologists say that vaccines give people false hope of giving people a sense of security". This is verified by the French state news media AFP on its Twitter account and is declared fake news.

Another form of literacy from the same Twitter account, AFP, provides digital literacy by including official news with more valid references in the form of additional links in the post. It can be seen in Data-11 regarding the official statement from the Indian government about the Covid-19 variant that attacked India and claimed many victims in June 2021.

**Data-11** (Source: Twitter, accessed on June 9, 2021)

Data-11 shows that the verification post visually only puts a red cross in the text, then adds an additional official news link. However, the attached photo is not marked with any markings, only written at the bottom of the official affirmation from the Indian government, which does not deny the existence of certain types of Covid-19 virus variants in the country. This verification text refutes the fake news discussed in Data-02, which includes morphologically using emoticons excessively, and there are spelling errors in their writing. In general, fake news verifier accounts on social media give obvious signals and attract attention to verification posts, as seen in Data-12.

Data-12 (Source: Twitter, accessed on June 10, 2021)

Data-13 (Source: Facebook, accessed on 10 June 2021)
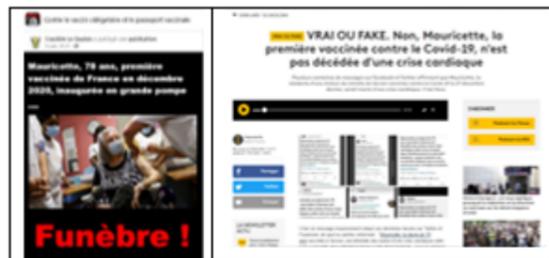
Another form of posting fake news verification is in Data-13 in the form of a separate news site that provides a more comprehensive narrative of fake news that is discussed and becomes a social discourse. An example of the case in Data-13 is Mauricette, the first senior to receive the Covid-19 vaccine in France. This first vaccine event is widely broadcast in various French media, with the aim of socializing the vaccine to the public. However, after some time, there is news reported that 78-year-old Mauricette died in December 2020 from a vaccine. This is a polemic and is believed by many people who are basically not sure about the effectiveness of vaccines that have not been clinically tested perfectly, and the time period for a vaccine is relatively short.

The anti-vaccine movement itself actually exists long before the Covid-19 pandemic hit the world, including in France. In the early days of the pandemic, there are groups of French people who, from the start, have doubts, do not believe in the existence of this virus, and think it is just a common cold. Social discourse that doubted the dangers of the Covid-19 virus then rolls and develops in many discussion groups on social

media. Then with the many fake news circulating, conspiracy theories also develop, also known as conspiracy theories in France. This social discourse aggressively voices certain world views contrary to reality and facts. Often, the discourse that develops is also propaganda material that is disseminated through various platforms on social media. As of July 2021, the Digital Forensic Research Lab analysis has released data that the number of accounts in France using the anti-vaccine hashtag is the highest in the world, as can be seen in Figure 3.
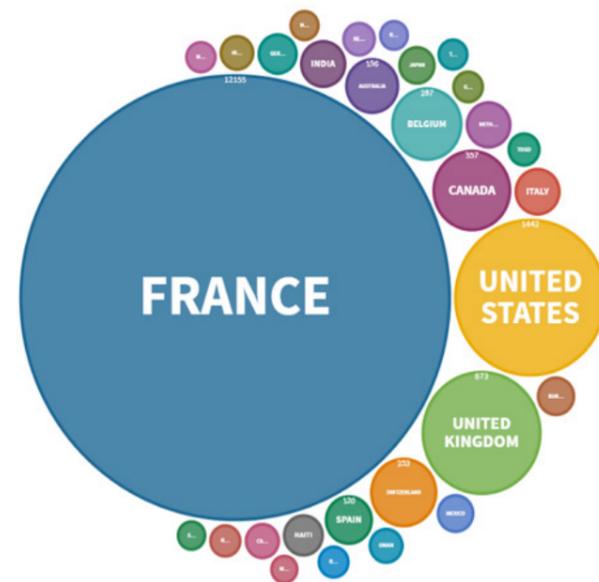

Figure 2 Bubble Graphic Tweets using Anti-Vaccine Hashtag for the period 7-14 July 2021
Source: (@DFRLab, 2021)

The bubble graphic data in Figure 2 questions the effectiveness of efforts to fight fake news with digital media literacy that has been driven since 2017 in France. It turns out that this one effort alone is not enough to defuse fake news and allow the public to fully cooperate to receive a free vaccine from the French government. A tougher effort is then taken by the French government by requiring a Sanitaire Pass (vaccine certificate and/or negative PCR test result) as a condition to be able to access public facilities, such as restaurants, cafes, shopping centers, and public transportation modes. Government employees and medical personnel who have not been vaccinated will not be paid their salaries starting November 15, 2021.

The third part of the discussion is the social practices related to fake news discourse in France. Social discourse is closely related to changes or movements in the society that are the result of social practice. There are a lot of social practices related to various issues in society that come from the social discourse being discussed through social media, such as religious issues, racism, health trends, and so on. One of the examples is what is happening in France at

this time; there are several social practices during the pandemic.

The French government regulation regarding the application of Pass Sanitaire has become a social discourse that is growing rapidly in society during the pandemic. This obligation is considered a dictatorial act and contrary to the French State's principle, which upholds freedom with the state motto: *Liberté, Egalité et Fraternité* (Freedom, Equality and Fraternity). Starting from a discourse circulating in the community through social media, resistance to this regulation then manifested in the form of demonstrations in various cities in France which took place every week since mid-2021. Figure 3 shows one of the demonstrations in Paris on September 4, 2021, attended by 140.000 people.

Figure 3 Anti-Vaccine Demonstrations in Paris Every Saturday

Although there have been many protests against the Pass Sanitaire policy, the number of the French population that has received the vaccine is relatively good at 70% in September 2021, according to data from the official Covid tracker website in France https://covidtracker.fr/vaccintracker/. Social practices that can be found in the community exposed to fake news are not only in the form of resistance to things considered government propaganda but also invitations to avoid mainstream media. It can be seen in Data-14.

Data-14 (Source: Twitter, accessed on June 12, 2021)

Le vaccin «PFIZER biontech» causerait des maladies neuro dégénératives qui endommageraient le cerveau🧠à long terme comme la maladie d'Alzheimer et de Lou Gehrig😵😷selon rapport médical ! Vos merdias📺n'ont parleront pas bien sûr🤣👎! #NonAuPassVaccinal

Translation:
The vaccine «PFIZER biontech» causes neurodegenerative diseases that damage the brain in the long term such as Alzheimer's disease and Lou Gehrig's according to medical reports ! Your media won't talk about it of course ! #NoPassVaccine

The text in Data-14 provokes fear about the effects of vaccines that are not accompanied by

reliable reference sources. Then to make it look as if the information is a hidden secret, it is said that it is not discussed by "your media," which refers to the mainstream media that is generally accessed by the public. Even deliberately, the vocabulary "*merdia*" (*merdias* is plural) used is a play by combining the words "*merde*" (swearing - damn/shit) and "media". The mockery of media categorized as mainstream by using the term "merdia" is often found in posts identified as fake news, such as the following Data-15.

Data-15 (Source: facebook, accessed on June 17, 2021)

The post in Data-15 shows a photo of a young woman and a bottle of vaccine as an illustration. The fake news text in this data tells about a young girl named Camilla, aged 18, who died after being vaccinated against the anti-Covid. Texts like this often provoke distrust of the mainstream media, which is considered to have lied by giving the reason for this girl's death. She dies because of a hereditary disease she has suffered for a long time. This news is entitled "*Merdias Mensonges*" (media lies) and contains allegations of conspiracy between the media and the pharmaceutical industry and manipulation of news to the public. This fake news does not include valid evidence or facts against her accusations, such as official reports of the cause of Camilla's death from the hospital or expert testimony.

McIntyre (2018) has stated that in the post-truth era, facts and truth are no longer important. The

public is more likely to prioritize emotions and how they are believed and felt in accordance with their preferred ideology (Bakir & McStay, 2018). Some social media audiences who read this post will accept it in its entirety and consider it the truth because it is in accordance with what they believe in through the news that has been consumed so far. Without realizing it, social practices like this are directed in such a way by social media algorithms (Shu et al., 2020). Human habits in surfing on social media, such as pressing the like button, sharing links or information, and commenting on certain issues, are all well recorded and taken into account by algorithmic data. Furthermore, on social media pages, the news or posts that appear are in line with the habits that people often do and the discourse they prefer. This has proven to further sharpen polarization and differences in society. The polarization and differences lead to certain social practices and social changes.

CONCLUSIONS

Through the discussion, it can be seen the use of a social discourse approach with a critical sociolinguistic perspective in analyzing the phenomenon of fake news. The three perspectives of critical discourse, namely language practice, discourse practice, and social practice, can show the relationship between social discourse texts and social phenomena found related to fake news, which often has the potential to provoke social problems. From the language practice, the analysis of verified text forms as fake news shows a tendency to (1) use insufficient or excessive and inappropriate punctuation marks; (2) excessive use of emoticons; (3) selection of provocative lexical types; (4) orthography errors (writing spelling). At the syntactic level, many of the fake news texts analyzed in this research have characteristics of (1) conjugation errors, (2) use of imperative sentences, and (3) omission of the subject of the sentence. The collected French fake news texts often refer to unclear sources and the use of impersonal pronouns or subjects that do not refer to a clear person or group. In addition, semantically, a lot of persuasive and provocative sentences are found intended to provoke emotions, generate hatred, and often take advantage of racist and religious sentiments.

The diffusion chain of this kind of fake news text through social media has generated a certain impact in French society, for example, in recently the anti-vaccine movement. It could provoke many other social or political movements, as also seen in Indonesia. Social media, as the main medium of contemporary society today, requires better technical tools to reduce the impact of social polarization and misinformation. Digital media literacy efforts alone have proven insufficient to stem fake news and protect the public from the adverse effects of misinformation.

Crucial social issues in fake news, such as those related to health, religious security guarantees, and racism, need special attention in handling. This

is necessary considering that it is related to the issue of the right to life which is very basic for humans everywhere on this earth, especially during a pandemic when human being requires the correct information to survive. The research in the French context shows the specific domaine as the result of media literacy; journalism of verification. For further research, it could be developed in Indonesia and supported by better technical tools. This could be a way to reduce the negative impact of fake news.

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