

Detecting Linguistic Characteristics of Political Disinformation in Indonesian Social Media: Insights From Systemic Functional Linguistics

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Abstract—This study examines the linguistic features of political disinformation on Indonesian social media during the 2024 presidential election using Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). The study employed a qualitative descriptive method, collecting data from Twitter (now X) and Instagram posts related to the 2024 Indonesian presidential election, focusing on posts containing clear evidence of disinformation. The analysis mapped the lexicogrammatical features of disinformation at three levels: ideational, interpersonal, and textual metafunctions to explain how these features shape the overall discourse. The study reveals frequent use of Material and Relational processes to misrepresent political figures, while Verbal processes distort statements through selective quoting. Attitude, engagement, and graduation features are also prominent, with disinformation posts expressing strong negative judgments about political opponents. Engagement techniques, such as selective citation and heteroglossia, create an illusion of balanced argument, while graduation features amplify emotional intensity through exaggerated language and forceful assertions. Disinformation posts rely on declarative clauses, rhetorical questions, and high modality to present falsehoods as factual, while causal conjunctions and marked themes enhance the coherence of biased narratives. The study underscores the need for a metalinguistic approach to social media literacy, equipping users with tools to critically analyze disinformation.

Index Terms—disinformation, social media, systemic functional linguistics

I. INTRODUCTION

This study is motivated by the increasing influence of social media as a source of information in public communication, impacting various aspects of life. In Indonesia, it is not uncommon for legal violations and other social issues to gain attention from relevant authorities only after they have gone viral and received significant public pressure. According to data from katadata.co.id, as of January 2024, there were 139 million social media accounts in Indonesia, representing 49.9% of the country's population (Annur, 2024). This extensive use makes social media a fertile ground for disinformation. One of the most impacted areas is politics (Edgerly & Thorson, 2020), particularly during elections. Instead of receiving political education, clarity on work programs, and accurate candidate track records, the public is often caught up in politics of ridicule, populism, and the spread of fake news (Hameleers & van der Meer, 2020; Kubin & von Sikorski, 2021). This frequently leads to the spread of biased or inaccurate information, fueling incitement and hate speech, which manipulates public sentiment and creating divisions in society, solely to serve political gain and electability (Sugiono, 2020).

UNESCO states that disinformation is false or misleading information deliberately intended to deceive (Ireton & Posetti, 2018; Lebernegg et al., 2024). The ease with which disinformation spreads and is believed by the public in Indonesia is partly due to the population's unfamiliarity with differing opinions and healthy democratic practices. Additionally, low reading interest and literacy skills make people less likely to thoroughly read data, verify information, and seek independent references. The public also struggles to distinguish between arguments and facts, opinions, sentiments, and hoaxes. The ability to critically evaluate information, or information literacy, particularly in the political realm related to state policies that affect all citizens, is essential to be disseminated and taught to the public (Dame Adjin-Tetty, 2022; Khan & Idris, 2019).

Negative campaigns against political opponents through disinformation on social media are not new in Indonesia. This phenomenon has been widespread, for example, in the Indonesian presidential elections of 2014 and 2019, the Jakarta governor election in 2017 (Iswatiningsih et al., 2019), and the Indonesian presidential election in 2024. They were all escalated because of the use of political buzzer. In the context of social media and political campaigns, a

“buzzer” refers to an individual or entity hired to manipulate online conversations and influence public opinion. They often use tactics such as spreading disinformation, amplifying false narratives, and engaging in coordinated online activities to sway the perceptions and behaviours of the public.

Some studies have found that social media users tend to be influenced by and spread disinformation when the content is novel and emotionally triggering (Kozyreva et al., 2023). Emotions also have a greater impact on social media users’ decisions than exposure to facts, programs, or constructive criticism (Steinert et al., 2022; Vosoughi et al., 2018; Weeks, 2015). Conversely, content laden with disinformation and propaganda often manipulates users’ feelings and emotions by using tactics such as out-of-context videos, framing, misleading images, or provocative headlines that often do not represent the actual events.

One way to detect negative and harmful narratives, such as disinformation is through linguistic analysis. Previous studies, using lexical and stylistic approaches, have identified characteristics such as the use of emotionally charged language, subjectivity, informal language, and excessive punctuation (Lebernegg et al., 2024; Nefedova & Samkova, 2019). However, these studies have limited data and do not fully consider the potential lexical and grammatical features that shape disinformation. Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), particularly the concept of metafunctions, offers a comprehensive perspective by viewing language as a social semiotic system that both constructs and reconstructs context. In this perspective, various lexical choices, stylistics, and grammar (lexicogrammar) can direct viewpoints and shape the ideology of the text (Dunmire, 2012; Marshall & Bowcher, 2006).

In SFL, language is analyzed and understood based on its contextual use, considering three simultaneous variables: Field, Tenor, and Mode. Field relates to the content or subject matter of the communication, Tenor focuses on the nature of the relationship between the participants, and Mode addresses the manner or medium of communication. Together, these contextual factors create meaning, which is expressed through the lexicogrammar. These meanings, referred to as metafunctions, are categorized into three types: ideational, interpersonal, and textual (Halliday, 1978; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Experiential metafunction deals with how language represents experiences, ideas, and real-world phenomena in grammar especially through actions (verbs) and participants (nouns). Interpersonal metafunction centres on the interactive role of language, namely how individuals use language to build connections, convey attitudes, and express intentions by examining the role of Mood, Modality (varying levels of certainty or obligation), and evaluative language (Appraisal) (Martin & White, 2005). The third is the textual metafunction, which deals with how information is structured and organized within a clause. It encompasses the theme-rheme structure (how a message is introduced and developed), the focus of information (what is highlighted as important), and the use of cohesive devices (such as conjunctions and reference words) to ensure the text flows logically and coherently.

Previous studies on the application of SFL to analyze various discourses have generally been limited to individual texts and have not fully mapped out what is happening on social media (Ayomi, 2021a, 2021b, 2022; Ayomi et al., 2023). These studies also do not provide recommendations on how SFL can assist users and support social media information literacy. The novelty of this research lies in exploring the application of SFL, particularly lexicogrammatical features that serve as markers of disinformation, so that it can be developed into an innovative guide and learning model for information literacy on social media. The purpose of this research is to explore how lexicogrammatical components at the three levels of meaning (experiential, interpersonal, and textual) are utilized to construct the values and messages within social media content. Additionally, the study aims to identify the distinguishing lexicogrammatical features in social media content related to politics that are indicative of disinformation.

II. METHOD

The research employed a qualitative descriptive method, focusing on data collection from social media platforms Twitter (now X) and Instagram, following Anghel (2021) and Sloan and Quan-Haase (2016). These platforms were chosen due to their strong popularity and informational content, while Facebook was excluded for its declining popularity among younger users, and TikTok was omitted due to its more personal and creative nature. Posts were filtered using the keywords *pemilu* [election], *KPU* (name of Indonesia General Election Commission), and the names of three major presidential candidates, *Anies*, *Prabowo*, and *Ganjar* to ensure the content was politically relevant and focused on the 2024 Indonesian presidential election. The data included two posts for each keyword from Twitter and Instagram. Only posts that demonstrated clear evidence of disinformation, defined as deliberately false or misleading information, were included. This was determined through in-depth reading and contextual analysis of the posts, verifying the accuracy of the claims against credible sources and fact-checking reports (Sloan & Quan-Haase, 2016). Later, the posts were transcribed and annotated based on the category of lexicogrammatical features. A detailed analysis was conducted to map the lexicogrammatical features of disinformation and misinformation content at three levels: ideational, interpersonal, and textual metafunctions. Critical discourse analysis was used to explain how these features contribute to the overall discourse and to develop a framework for detecting negative content based on SFL.

III. RESULT

A. Ideational Metafunction

The ideational metafunction focuses on how language represents experiences, with meaning primarily formed through the interaction of Participants and Processes in clauses.

(a). *Participant*

Participants refer to the entities involved in the processes described in the text. These entities can be human or non-human, such as concepts, organizations, political candidates, or grammatical metaphors. Their roles reveal the relationships and power dynamics that are being constructed within the narrative.

TABLE 1
TYPE OF PARTICIPANTS

Participant	Subcategory	Most Frequent Entries
Human	Pronoun	<i>kita</i> [we], <i>saya</i> [I], <i>gue</i> [I], <i>ane</i> [I], <i>dia</i> [he].
	Proper Names	<i>Anies</i> , <i>Prabowo</i> , <i>Ganjar</i> , <i>Gibran</i>
	Collective People	<i>rakyat</i> [people], <i>orang</i> [person], <i>warga Jakarta</i> [people of Jakarta], <i>Gubernur Jakarta</i> [Jakarta Governor], <i>pendukung Prabowo</i> [Prabowo supporter], <i>pendukung 02</i> [02 supporter], <i>Bapak Ibu sekalian</i> [ladies and gentlemen].
	Parts of the Human body	<i>mulutnya</i> [his mouth]
	Institutions	<i>KPU</i> [General Election Commission], <i>pemerintah</i> [government/authorities], <i>penguasa</i> [ruler], <i>Gubernur Jakarta</i> [Jakarta Governor], <i>Presiden</i> [President], <i>Capres</i> [presidential candidate], <i>negara</i> [nation].
Non-Human	Entities	<i>Server KPU</i> [KPU Server], <i>Sirekap</i> [Sirekap (Election Recapitulation System)], <i>Pemilu</i> [Election], <i>data negara</i> [national data], <i>laporan masyarakat</i> [public reports], <i>polusi</i> [pollution], <i>Angin</i> [wind], <i>udara</i> [air].
	Proper Names	<i>Indonesia</i> , <i>Cina</i> [China], <i>Jakarta</i> , <i>TPS</i> [polling station]
	Grammatical Metaphors	<i>Coblosan</i> [voting], <i>kedaulatan rakyat</i> [people's sovereignty], <i>kecurangan</i> [election fraud], <i>standar keamanan</i> [safety standards], <i>kemenangan Prabowo</i> [Prabowo's win]

Non-human entities appear most frequently in the data, consisting of vocabulary related to the election process, government accountability, and institutions like *KPU*, *Server*, and *Sirekap*. Participants can also take the form of grammatical metaphors (GM), particularly through the nominalization of processes (e.g., “election”, “recapitulation”, “security”), which is a feature of technical and formal writing (Liardét & Black, 2020). These nominalized elements can then function as participants in the clause, allowing for more abstract and condensed ways of representing actions or qualities, making it seem like a more detached phenomenon rather than a deliberate act (Halliday & Matthiessen, 1999).

Human participants, particularly the presidential candidates, are frequently mentioned by name or in reference to their roles in government institutions or the election process, such as *Prabowo*, *Anies*, *Ganjar*, as well as titles like *Gubernur Jakarta* [Jakarta Governor] or *Capres* [presidential candidate], or by their assigned numbers in the election (e.g., *01*, *02*, etc.). Institutions are also considered human participants, as they are viewed as collective entities often represented by an individual in charge. Human participants are the more active entities in the process, typically acting as the Actor, Sayer, or Carrier who initiates or performs an action, or as the Recipient, who receives something as a result of the action (Sari et al., 2024). Examples of this can be seen in the data below.

1. *Namun Prabowo berusaha mendekatkan Israel dengan Indonesia. Sudah ada hubungan rahasia dengan intelijen dan militer Israel, dimana peralatan dan pelatihan intelijen diberikan, dan Prabowo mulai menjalin komunikasi dengan Donald Trump dan kemudian Joe Biden untuk menyatukan kedua negara (Indonesia dan Israel)*

[However, Prabowo is trying to bring Israel closer to Indonesia. There was already a secret relationship with Israeli intelligence and military, where intelligence equipment and training were provided, and Prabowo began to establish communication with Donald Trump and then Joe Biden to unite the two countries (Indonesia and Israel)]

2. *Ketika ditanya tentang polusi udara di Jakarta terburuk nomor satu di-dunia, jawaban Anies sungguh mencengangkan bagaimana tidak? Kok bisa ya orang kayak gini mau jadi presiden?*

[When asked about air pollution in Jakarta being the number one worst in the world, Anies' answer was truly appalling, how could it not be? How can someone like this want to be president?]

3. *Akhirnya KPU mengakui sirekap di luar negeri dikelola oleh China melalui ALIBABA.*

[Finally, the KPU admitted that overseas located Sirekap was managed by China through ALIBABA.]

In Excerpt 1, Prabowo, as one of the presidential candidates and the Indonesian Minister of Defense, is portrayed as the Actor performing the activity of “bringing closer” Indonesia and Israel through connections with the United States and intelligence operations. However, Indonesia's policy refuses to recognize Israel as a sovereign nation and condemns its expansion into Palestinian land. The main participant in the second sentence is *jawaban Anies* [Anies' answer]. Anies, as one of the candidates, was previously referred to in the preceding clause as *orang kayak gini* [someone like this]. By using this phrase, the speaker deliberately distances themselves from Anies, implying negative judgment. This phrasing allows the speaker to avoid directly mentioning Anies by name, opting instead for a more generic and somewhat dismissive reference. Such deictic phrasing depersonalizes Anies, suggesting that his actions or qualities are undesirable or unworthy, without explicitly stating what makes him “like this”.

The participant in Excerpt 4 is a government institution, the *Komisi Pemilihan Umum* (KPU) [General Election Commission], which is portrayed as a human entity capable of answering and taking specific actions. In this instance,

the KPU is accused of admitting that the server storing election data is located overseas and managed by China, posing a threat to national security.

The third-person pronouns “he”, “they” or “it” are used to track participants throughout the text. The writer also uses first-person pronouns like *saya*, *aku* [I], and some informal ethnic variants like *gue* and *ane* to express their thoughts and feelings on an issue, aiming to persuade others to agree with their argument. One interesting aspect of pronoun usage is the distinction between the first-person plural inclusive *kita* [we] and exclusive *kami* [we], along with their counterpart *mereka* [they]. In disinformation posts, writers often use “we” and “they” as powerful tools to create a division between the “in-group,” representing the speaker’s claimed group that shares the same position, stance, and ideology, and the “out-group,” the opponent group with conflicting views. The “we” group is always portrayed as righteous and superior, while “they” are framed as the source of problems—the villains.

The creators of the post also position themselves as representing the Indonesian people, assuming the reader’s alignment with their perspective. This can be seen in the following excerpt:

4. *Semua harus dukung 02 sesuai arahan. Jadi kesimpulannya adalah: Pemilu 2024 adalah rakyat melawan penguasa. Jan sampai penguasa terus mencekik rakyat dgn berbagai UU dan pajak. Saatnya rakyat kembali berdaulat dan bermartabat.*

Kawal dan menangkan AMIN.

#AniesPresiden

[Everyone must support 02 as instructed. So, the conclusion is: the 2024 election is the people against the authorities. Don’t let the authorities continue to strangle the people with various laws and taxes. It’s time for the people to be sovereign and dignified again.

Guard and win AMIN.

#AniesForPresident]

The Excerpt above alleges that the candidates 02, Prabowo-Gibran, have mobilized village officials, the police, and the military to secure their victory. Prabowo-Gibran is portrayed as an extension of the current government due to Gibran being the son of the incumbent president and Prabowo’s position as the Minister of Defense. Additionally, their campaign promises to continue the policies of the current administration. The use of the word *semua* [everyone] suggests a systematic effort to pressure all voters into supporting 02, further discrediting the Prabowo-Gibran side. In Excerpt 4, the writer uses the word *rakyat* [the people] to represent the side with which he aligns, implying that the ruling authorities do not represent the people’s interests but rather act as an oppressive force. This narrative frames the situation as a conflict between the people and the authorities (the Prabowo-Gibran side), fostering distrust toward the government.

(b). *Process*

Another important part of a clause is the Process. Most of the processes that occur on social media can be categorized as Material, Relational, Mental, and Verbal.

TABLE 2
TYPE OF PROCESS

Type of process	Number	Example
Material	114	<i>Mengalahkan</i> [beat], <i>menyelesaikan</i> [finish], <i>menggelembungkan</i> [mark up]
Relational	104	<i>adalah</i> [to be], <i>memiliki</i> [have]
Mental	34	<i>bingung</i> [confused], <i>pikir</i> [think], <i>muak</i> [disgusted]
Verbal	32	<i>bilang</i> [say], <i>ngomong</i> [tell], <i>menyatakan</i> [state], <i>melaporkan</i> [report]
Behavioral	4	<i>Menangis</i> [cry], <i>menatap</i> [stare], <i>fokus</i> [focus]
Existential	3	<i>ada</i> [exist]

The Material process involves actions and events. Since the post primarily focuses on what is happening and what participants are doing, this process becomes the most dominant. It is through this process that the writer explains the events, often providing the most crucial information, where disinformation can be identified. The language used is frequently intense and emotional, as seen in Excerpt 4, with words like *melawan* [fight against], *mencekik* [strangle], and *berdaulat* [sovereign].

The next process is the Relational process, in which the writer defines, evaluates, and explains the characteristics of the participants being discussed.

5. *Kita pernah punya pemimpin orang sejenius Habibie, a world class engineer, orang yg bisa bikin rupiah dari 16.000 ke 6.500. Hari ini kita dikasih Gibran, mas-mas jawa biasa, IPK 2,3 dari jurusan gampang di kampus jelek, mantan pedagang martabak yg ga laku. We’re screwed.*

[We once had a leader as genius as Habibie, a world class engineer, a person who could make the rupiah go from 16,000 to 6,500. Today we are given Gibran, an ordinary Javanese man, 2.3 GPA from an easy major on a bad campus, a former food retailer who didn't sell well. We're screwed.]

Excerpt 5 consists of seven clauses with ellipted subjects and Relational processes. The author uses these Relational clauses to compare the qualities of two individuals: former Vice President and President, Habibie, and Gibran, the newly elected Vice President. Initially, the author glorifies Habibie, renowned for his intelligence, and then shifts focus

to Gibran, emphasizing his low GPA, attendance at less prestigious universities, and failed business ventures to underscore Gibran's perceived incompetence. While it is true that Habibie was an intelligent engineer, attributing the decline in the dollar exchange rate solely to his efforts oversimplifies the situation, ignoring the broader context of that time. This creates an unfair comparison and fosters unrealistic expectations. It distorts public perception of Gibran, whose potential and track record are dismissed in favour of highlighting only his shortcomings. This form of "cherry-picking" introduces bias and misperceptions on social media, where some figures are glorified while others have their character attacked.

Another significant process is the verbal process, which involves the act of conveying information. The posts often quote statements from various sources. Disinformation typically arises in the content of these quoted statements, either because the speaker never actually said what is claimed or because the statement is selectively quoted, taken out of context, and thereby distorting its original meaning.

6. *Anies menyebut udara dan angin tak punya KTP sehingga tak hanya diam di satu tempat.*

[Anies said that air and wind don't have ID cards so they don't just stay in one place']

In the quote above, Anies Baswedan's statement, "air and wind don't have ID cards, so they don't just stay in one place," was cut short, omitting his clarification afterward. This omission can lead to misinterpretation and disinformation by oversimplifying or distorting his message. For example, the quote might create the impression that Anies is avoiding the issue of air pollution by shifting blame or evading responsibility for the local government's role in managing pollution, particularly in Jakarta, where he served as governor. Simplifying someone's intent through selective quoting like this often elicits emotional reactions and triggers criticism, without providing a full explanation of the scientific complexities of air movement and its relationship to pollution in Jakarta.

B. Interpersonal Metafunction

(a). Mood and Modality

Mood and modality are interpersonal metalanguage features frequently used to build trust in disinformation shared on social media. Below are the types of Mood found in the data.

TABLE 3
TYPE OF MOOD

Mood System	Number
Indicative- Declarative:	235
Indicative-Interrogative	52
Imperative	39
Minor Clauses	8 (exclamation)

From the data obtained, the declarative mode is the most dominant. This is expected, as the nature of the text is to provide statements or information. Disinformation is often presented directly as a statement to make it appear factual and credible, encouraging the audience to believe it immediately. The interrogative mode is also frequently found in posts containing disinformation. However, the questions posed are typically rhetorical rather than genuine inquiries. This mode is used to steer netizens toward specific thought processes, aiming to provoke feelings of doubt, anger, or fear. This can be seen in the following example:

7. *Bagaimana pemilu mau jujur, jika data negara di kelola negara lain? China ikut campur urusan pemilu 2024, inikah yang kalian banggakan pendukung 02? menang dengan hasil kecurangan.*

[How can elections be honest if state data is managed by another country? China is interfering in the 2024 election, is this what you 02 supporters are proud of? win by the outcome of cheating.]

The rhetorical question above assumes that honest and fair elections cannot occur if foreign parties manage the data. Rather than encouraging critical thinking, the question reinforces the author's viewpoint, making readers more confident in the validity of that assumption. This is further emphasized by follow-up questions aimed at supporters of candidate 02, using an accusatory tone that implies those voting for candidate 02 are complicit in the deception. The goal is to provoke a defensive or embarrassed reaction from these supporters, without providing any concrete evidence. The use of interrogative language is deliberately manipulated to trigger emotional responses rather than promote logical reasoning.

While less common than interrogative forms, directives and exclamative modes each play distinct roles in communication. Directives, often presented as commands, challenges, invitations, or suggestions, are designed to elicit an emotional response from the audience, urging them to act and thereby increasing the pressure to engage. Exclamative modes, on the other hand, express strong emotions, often highlighting the purpose of the post (frequently through hashtags) to promote a sense of connection and involvement among the audience.

8. *Saatnya rakyat kembali berdaulat dan bermartabat.*

Kawal dan menangkan AMIN.

#AniesPresiden

[It's time for the people to regain sovereignty and dignity.

Support and win AMIN.

#AniesForPresident]

9. *Lihat.. betapa jahatnya kelakuan pendukung Prabowo+Israel ini.*

#AsalBukanPrabowo

[Look. how wicked the behavior of Prabowo+Israel's supporters is.

#AnyoneButPrabowo]

The directive *Kawal dan menangkan Amin* [support and win Amin] in Excerpt 8 is a call to action, urging the public to actively support and ensure Amin’s success in the election. The use of this command evokes a sense of pride, hope, and justice, encouraging enthusiasm among the audience. It makes the reader feel like they are part of a larger, more noble cause. In contrast, the directive *Lihat* [Look] in Excerpt 9 invites the audience to engage both mentally and emotionally in rejecting the target group. This is followed by an exclamation condemning the actions of Prabowo and his supporters of Israel, reinforcing the audience’s sense of moral superiority over the opposing group.

In SFL, modalities are linguistic tools used by speakers to express their stance on a statement in terms of certainty, possibility, necessity, or obligation. In posts containing misinformation, markers that express doubt or uncertainty (known as low epistemic modality), such as hedges like “maybe”, are rarely used. Instead, misinformation is typically presented directly and with confidence, omitting any disclaimers. The dominant modalities in these posts are deontic modalities, which convey a sense of necessity or obligation.

10. *Katanya cerdas BLA BLA, harusnya taat aturan kan.*

[They say he’s smart, BLA BLA, he **should** follow the rules.]

11. *Semua harus dukung 02 sesuai arahan.*

[Everyone **must** support 02 as instructed.]

12. *Itu fakta-fakta yang harus kita lawan gitu ya, karena kegagalan ini terlalu banyak*

[Those are the facts we **must** fight against, right, because there are too many irregularities].

In instances above, the word *harus* [must] shows high deontic modality, expressing a sense of responsibility, necessity, and expectation. It persuades the audience to obey specific rules or take specific actions, for instance supporting candidate 02 or rejecting certain “facts”. This form of communication is common in persuasive or manipulative rhetoric, particularly in disinformation, because it creates a strong sense of moral duty and emotional urgency in the listener, pushing them to behave in line with the speaker’s intentions.

(b). *Appraisal System*

1. *Attitude*

Language can be used to express how a writer feels about people, ideas, or events, on a scale of positive and negative polarity. Attitudes include three areas of meaning: affect, judgment, and appreciation. As shown in the table below, posts related to elections on social media in Indonesia are almost overwhelmingly negative, particularly in the subcategory of judgment. These posts often label others, especially political opponents, using various lexicogrammatical choices aimed at undermining their moral integrity and leadership abilities (Horner et al., 2021). Meanwhile, posts about the General Elections Commission (KPU) and the election process focus on accusations of fraud by the election organizers. The expressions of attitude found in the data are as follows:

TABLE 4
EXPRESSION OF ATTITUDE

Type of Attitude	Example
Affect (expression of emotions)	
Positive	<i>Bangga</i> [proud]
Negative	<i>Indonesia menangis</i> [Indonesia is crying], <i>marah</i> [angry], <i>muak</i> [disgusted], <i>sedih</i> [sad], <i>khawatir</i> [worried], <i>terkagum-kagum</i> [astonished (satirical positive)], <i>sabar</i> [patient], <i>ogah</i> [reluctant], <i>bingung</i> [confused], <i>kurang paham</i> [not understanding].
Judgement (evaluation of people and their behaviour)	
Positive	-
Negative	<i>kasihan</i> [pity], <i>licik</i> [cunning], <i>licin</i> [slick], <i>ga waras</i> [insane], <i>orang-orang kalah</i> [losers], <i>kualitasnya jauh dibawah Ganjar dan Anies</i> [far below the quality of Ganjar and Anies], <i>bingung jawab</i> [confused in answering], <i>linglung</i> [dazed], <i>pikun</i> [senile], <i>koncoism</i> [cronyism], <i>nepotisme</i> [nepotism], <i>fitnah</i> [slander], <i>mencengangkan</i> [dismaying], <i>terburuk</i> [the worst], <i>dzolim</i> [oppressive/unjust], <i>jahat</i> [evil], <i>loss lambene</i> [loose-lipped], <i>tidak menghargai orang</i> [disrespectful], <i>IPK 2,3</i> [GPA 2.3], <i>dagangan tidak laku</i> [not selling], <i>melawak</i> [joking around], <i>halu</i> [delusional].
Appreciation (evaluation of things)	
Positive	-
Negative	<i>curang</i> [cheating], <i>kotor</i> [dirty], <i>fiksi</i> [fiction], <i>aroma busuk</i> [foul smell], <i>korupsi</i> [corruption], <i>kebohongan</i> [lies], <i>kampus jelek</i> [bad university].

2. *Engagement*

The engagement system refers to how the writer manages voice, stance, and the opinions and perspectives of others in their posts. A text can be either monogloss, where authoritative statements are made without referencing or considering other voices, or heterogloss, where the opinions of others are included (Cao, 2023). The writer may choose

to align with or distance themselves from certain views by broadening engagement through acknowledging different perspectives or narrowing engagement through rebuttal or exclusion.

Most of the data containing disinformation utilizes heterogloss engagement, as it incorporates voices beyond the author's own, represented in various forms. Social media's multimedia technology enables authors to manage multiple voices on an issue in different ways, such as through tagging, hashtags, reposting videos and photos with comments and reviews, editing videos (e.g., stitching), adding captions, or responding to and quoting others' comments or posts, as illustrated in Figure 1 below:



Figure 1. Examples of Heteroglossic Text in Social Media

3. Graduation

Besides attitude and engagement, there is also the graduation system, which refers to linguistic resources used to adjust the intensity of an evaluation. It consists of two components: force and focus. Force pertains to how the writer increases or decreases the intensity of significance, urgency, or emotional charge in a message, both qualitatively and quantitatively. This can be achieved through the use of adverbs, exaggerated numbers, or emotionally impactful language. Focus, on the other hand, refers to the lexicogrammatical devices that regulate the degree of certainty in information, ranging from high certainty, with words like “definitely” or “exactly,” to low certainty, using hedges such as “maybe” or “probably”.

The graduation system is closely connected to other systems, such as the modality system and the intensity of language that shapes attitudes. In disinformation content on social media, users typically employ high levels of graduation in both force and focus. An example of increased force can be seen in Excerpt 2, with the statement “Jakarta being the number one worst in the world” and “Anies’ answer was truly appalling.” The use of phrases like “number one worst” and “truly appalling” amplifies the severity of Jakarta’s situation and contrasts it with the governor’s response, which is portrayed as irrational.

High focus is demonstrated by phrases like *ternyata* [it turns out] in Excerpt 17. In terms of focus, both high and low degrees are employed. Low focus is seen in Excerpt 13 with terms such as *mungkin* [maybe]. Graduation in disinformation content can also be enhanced through writing techniques like capital letters and exclamation marks, as shown in Excerpt 14.

13. *Tetapi jika ia menjadi presiden, ada ke mungkinan besar bahwa hubungan tersebut akan semakin dekat dan mungkin akan diresmikan.*

[But if he becomes president, there is a strong possibility that the relationship will become closer and maybe formalized.]

14. *SKENARIO PALING LICIK! CARA BELUT...LICIN!*

[The most cunning scenario, like an eel, slippery]

Unlike graduation by force, which is largely characterized by high-intensity expressions, disinformation posts also employ intermediate and low-intensity focus. Although these are not frequently found in the data, they serve as effective tools for spreading misleading or speculative claims. By framing statements as possibilities, they leave room for alternative interpretations. This makes disinformation more difficult to directly challenge, as it avoids making absolute or definitive assertions.

C. Textual Metafunction: Theme Structure

The unmarked Theme is dominant in the data, particularly in declarative clauses. The use of unmarked Themes, which is the most natural form of a clause, often gives a neutral impression, making the conveyed message seem purely informational. This can effectively disguise content that may be biased or misleading. An interesting finding is that disinformation posts tend to use informal language, which frequently results in ellipted participants and ungrammatical word order. This, in turn, increases the occurrence of marked Themes.

15. *Sering tanpa sadar dia suka lossssss lambene.*

[often without realizing, he speaks carelessly]

16. *Behind the scenes semua ini terjadi*

[Behind the scenes, all of this happened]

The phrases *sering tanpa sadar* [often without realizing] and “behind the scenes” are marked Topical Themes because they are circumstantial adjuncts (adverbial phrases) placed at the beginning of the sentence. In Excerpt 15, the Theme “often without realizing” is emphasized at the start of the clause, followed by information about how frequently Ganjar, the candidate being discussed, speaks carelessly. By providing just one example, where he is perceived as insulting someone’s profession, this content frames Ganjar as arrogant and disrespectful to others. A similar pattern occurs in Excerpt 16, which focuses on the phrase “behind the scenes”, emphasizing hidden manipulations and deceit taking place without the public’s awareness. Marked Themes are often used to draw attention to specific details, emotions, or perspectives. By placing evaluative, emotional, or emphasized information at the beginning of the clause, rather than the Subject, the audience becomes more focused on that information and perceives the following content through a framed perspective.

17. *Ternyata datanya sudah dibuat sehari sebelumnya tgl 13 Feb 2024*

[It turns out the data has been made a day before, 13 February 2024]

18. *dan server itu, mohon maaf, apakah betul-betul ada disitu?*

[And that server, excuse me, is it really there?]

Excerpt 17 provides an example of an Interpersonal Theme at the beginning of the clause. The word *ternyata* [it turns out] reflects the speaker’s attitude toward the following proposition, suggesting that they are revealing a previously unknown truth. This creates a sense of curiosity and trust from the audience, as they feel they are receiving new information. Meanwhile, Excerpt 18 begins with a Textual Theme, *dan* [and], which connects and elaborates on the information from the previous clauses. It is followed by the Interpersonal Theme *mohon maaf* [excuse me], and then an interrogative clause. The Interpersonal Theme serves as a polite opener before asking an accusatory question, softening the impact of the question so that it appears to seek clarification rather than place blame. This approach can elicit the audience’s sympathy and make them more receptive to the information provided.

Disinformation posts often use causal conjunctions as Themes to create an impression of certainty around their claims. When words like “because”, “therefore”, or “thus” are used, they imply that the following information is a logical conclusion or the result of prior events. Causal relationships are frequently emphasized in such posts, as negative campaigns often explain adverse outcomes as being the fault of the party under attack.

IV. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that the comprehensive application of SFL, through lexicogrammatical analysis of the three metafunctions, can effectively explain the characteristics of social media posts containing disinformation, particularly political disinformation in Indonesia. In the ideational metafunction, the study reveals that disinformation posts manipulate the forms and functions of Participants and Processes in clauses to misrepresent or distort information about political figures and events. Political figures are often thematically positioned as Actors or agents in problematic events and are described with specific traits or characteristics. This aligns with previous research that highlights how the personalization of political discourse is used to manipulate public opinion (Ardi et al., 2021; Iswatiningsih et al., 2019; Marcos-García et al., 2021). Additionally, the use of non-human Participants or grammatical metaphors, such as “election” or “fraud”, allows events to be abstracted in these posts.

However, unlike previous research on media texts, which found that abstract entities are often used to obscure responsibility and avoid directly attributing negative actions to individuals (Fairclough, 1992), this study finds that the use of abstract entities and generalized vocabularies, such as “someone like this” or “this government body,” is not solely for concealing identities. Instead, it serves as a way to depersonalize specific figures and institutions, distancing the writer from the subject and amplifying the impression of dislike and disapproval. The study also identifies both personalization and depersonalization processes targeting figures or institutions.

Regarding the category of processes, and consistent with previous research on political texts in mass media and social media, Material processes are the most dominant, as they describe events and actions. This aligns with studies such as Ayomi et al. (2023), which found that disinformation often exaggerates political actions using emotionally charged lexical choices. However, this study shows that Relational processes play a crucial role in shaping public perceptions by attributing qualities, attributes, and moral judgments to certain figures. For example, candidates are evaluated through comparisons with past leaders or other political figures. These processes not only serve descriptive functions but also influence voter perceptions by positioning some figures as trustworthy and others as unworthy.

Additionally, the study shows that Verbal processes are used to quote statements directly or indirectly from political figures, consistent with previous research by Vosoughi et al. (2018), which found that false information often spreads by misrepresenting what public figures have said. However, this study also provides insights into how social media posts exploit Verbal processes through selective quoting and removing context. These distortions create disinformation that appears authentic because it is based on real statements, but they mislead the public by altering the original meaning.

The dominance of declarative clauses in this research reflects the common strategy of presenting disinformation as factual and authoritative (Lundgren & McMakin, 2013). However, this research highlights the importance of rhetorical questions and directives as tools for manipulating audience emotions. These interrogative and directive modes do not serve as genuine questions or invitations but instead work to plant specific assumptions in the minds of readers. Additionally, the absence of epistemic modality markers, such as hedging, aligns with research showing how disinformation conveys exaggerated certainty to manipulate trust. This study also finds that disinformation frequently employs high deontic modality (e.g., *must* or *supposed to*) to push the audience into taking action, adopting specific beliefs, or reinforcing their moral obligation not to support perceived negative parties (Freiling et al., 2023).

The analysis of the textual metafunction reveals a high frequency of marked Themes used to structure the flow of information in disinformation posts, which aligns with existing research on disinformation structuring (Farkas & Schou, 2020). However, this study provides deeper insights by showing how marked Themes, such as adverbial phrases placed at the beginning of sentences, are used to emphasize information that frames the narrative. This structural manipulation directs readers to focus on specific details that reinforce the disinformation narrative. Additionally, the frequent use of causal conjunctions presents biased information as logical and coherent conclusions.

In terms of lexicogrammatical features related to judgment and attitude expression in disinformation posts, this research, like earlier studies, finds that disinformation frequently focuses on negative evaluations, particularly concerning moral integrity and leadership ability. This aligns with previous findings on how political disinformation seeks to discredit opponents and create political divisions (Iswatiningsih et al., 2019; Kubin & von Sikorski, 2021). However, this study offers a more detailed analysis of how these negative evaluations are linguistically constructed through relational processes and marked themes, further intensifying negative public sentiment. The study also highlights that disinformation posts on social media often incorporate multiple voices, information, and references from various sources, creating the illusion of balance even when such balance does not exist. Additionally, this research observes how social media technology, through tagging, reposting, and quoting, facilitates the management of different voices to either reinforce or discredit specific perspectives.

V. CONCLUSION

Through an analysis of political posts on social media during Indonesia's 2024 presidential election, this study demonstrates how the application of SFL can reveal the linguistic strategies used to manipulate political discourse. These findings build upon and extend previous research on the language of disinformation, highlighting the need for a deeper metalinguistic approach to social media literacy. Such an approach would empower individuals not only to detect disinformation but also to critically analyze the language structures that enable manipulation. The study's results can inform the development of a social media information literacy framework that includes a metalinguistic component, equipping users with essential tools to identify and counter the manipulative language found in political disinformation. With this understanding, policymakers and media literacy advocates can create more effective strategies for critical media consumption, particularly in contexts where elections and political stability are at risk.

However, this study has some limitations. The data is limited to social media posts from Twitter and Instagram, focusing specifically on Indonesia's 2024 election. Future research could explore other platforms, such as TikTok, or investigate different political contexts to determine whether similar linguistic strategies are used elsewhere. Additionally, while this study offers a linguistic framework for identifying disinformation, it does not address the psychological or sociocultural factors that influence how individuals interpret and spread disinformation. Including these factors in future research would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of disinformation.

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