



## The Language of Fact-Checking: Critical Literacy Practices in Indonesian News Portals

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**Abstract,** *In the digital age, information travels quickly, which has made it easier to learn new things but also made it easier for false information to spread. In Indonesia, fact-checking efforts by online news sites like Kompas, Tempo, and Liputan6 have become very important in dealing with this problem. This study examines the linguistic and discursive strategies utilized in fact-checking articles published from 2022 to 2024 to foster critical literacy among readers. Utilizing the principles of Critical Literacy and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the study examines five fact-checking texts addressing political, health, and social matters. The results show that all the articles follow the same story structure: they start with claims, then go into detail about the investigations, present evidence, and give final judgments. At the micro level, hedges, boosters, and evidential markers are used on purpose to change how certain and credible something is. At the meso level, discourse structures and intertextual references bolster institutional authority, whereas at the macro level, fact-checking serves as an educational instrument that promotes critical and contemplative reading habits. Overall, the study shows that fact-checking serves two purposes in Indonesia: it helps people check the accuracy of information and it helps people build their resistance to false information.*

**Keywords:** *critical literacy, discourse analysis, evidentiality, fact-checking, Indonesian media*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid flow of information in the digital era brings a dual consequence, on the one hand, it expands access to knowledge, yet on the other, it accelerates the spread of disinformation. In Indonesia, this phenomenon is particularly pronounced due to the extensive use of social media and online news portals as the public's primary sources of daily information (Lim, 2020). Several major news organizations work with fact-checking groups to publish clarification articles that aim to break down false stories and make sure that information is accurate (Tapsell, 2021). In this way, fact-checking is both a strategic way to learn about the media and a place where language is created that has social and political meaning (Wardle, 2020).

Even though it's becoming more important, there isn't much research on fact-checking in Indonesia. A significant portion of the current scholarship has concentrated on sociological dimensions, including the relationship between hoaxes and political polarization or the COVID-19 pandemic (Chua & Banerjee, 2021). Other research has looked into how well fact-checking works to make people less likely to believe false information (Walter, 2021). But not many studies have looked into the language used in fact-checking articles and how it helps readers become more critical readers. This gap is especially important because the words used

to deny false claims, organize evidence, and assert authority are very important in shaping how society thinks about information (Luke, 2019). Fact-checking outputs available in English or translated from Indonesian news portals, which are often made for audiences in more than one country, show even more clearly that there is no research (Marchal, 2022).

This study utilizes a dataset comprising five fact-checking articles published from 2023 to 2024 by five prominent news portals: Kompas.com (English Edition), Tempo.co (English Edition), Liputan6.com (Fact Check Desk), Turnbackhoax.id (Mafindo), and CekFakta.com. The articles cover politics, health, disasters, and other social issues. For instance, they talk about a presidential candidate's claims that free rice is being given out (Kompas.com, 2023), rumors that the COVID-19 vaccine will be banned (Tempo.co, 2023), an old tsunami video being shown as a new event (Liputan6.com, 2024), and predictions of an earthquake in Jakarta (CekFakta.com, 2023). The selection of this dataset aims to provide a balanced overview of topic variation and the linguistic strategies utilized in fact-checking practices.

This study is grounded in two primary frameworks that constitute its theoretical foundation. The first is critical literacy, which says that readers should not only understand what they read but also what ideas, power dynamics, and interests are behind it (Luke, 2019). This viewpoint is essential as fact-checking not only conveys information but also formulates narratives of credibility and authority. The second framework is Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which examines how language functions in constructing social realities (Fairclough, 2018). By combining these points of view, the study aims to find out what language tools news portals use to check facts and how these tools might improve critical literacy in Indonesia (Medina Serrano et al., 2023).

Guided by these frameworks, the research is designed to describe the linguistic strategies found in fact-checking texts, analyze their contribution to critical literacy practices, and explore their pedagogical implications for media literacy in Indonesia. In doing so, the study aims to enrich theoretical discussions of critical literacy while offering practical insights for journalists, educators, and policymakers seeking to enhance public resilience in the face of disinformation flows (Pennycook & Rand, 2021).

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Critical Literacy as a Lens for Social Meaning**

Critical literacy views reading as a social practice that requires the interrogation of ideology, power relations, and hidden interests embedded in language (Luke, 2019). This perspective goes beyond mere decoding skills; it underscores the ways media texts construct

discourses of legitimacy and authority deciding who is granted a voice, who becomes a source, and how audiences are guided to either accept or doubt certain claims (Janks, 2018; Pennycook & Rand, 2021). Critical literacy clarifies the emotional and cognitive processes of readers during fact-checking, encompassing anxiety when confronted with conflicting information, the demand for explicit evidence, and the tendency to rely on sources perceived as "authoritative" (Pennycook & Rand, 2021). Research on digital literacy in Indonesia indicates that readers frequently encounter a conflict between the need for swift information access and the imperative of verification, underscoring the importance of critical literacy to avert individuals from becoming passive consumers of information (Lim, 2020; Hardianti, 2024).

Moreover, critical literacy emphasizes its educational dimension: fact-checking texts function not only as rectifications of claims but also as tools for teaching verification methods (mediation). This could mean giving the names of the sources, showing how to check the information, or adding metadata (Tapsell, 2021; Westlund, 2024). Fact-checking is a way to teach people in public that makes reading texts more like exercises than just making decisions.

### **Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA): Language as a Social and Political Tool**

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) gives us the tools we need to figure out how lexical, syntactic, and rhetorical structures create social meaning and keep power dynamics going (Fairclough, 2018). This methodology is particularly advantageous for analyzing fact-checking, where verification methods intersect with framing techniques: headlines, leads, citation selections, epistemic modality, and evidence positioning collectively shape the interpretation of claims (Ma, 2022). CDA permits analysis at two levels: (a) micro, encompassing lexical selections, evidential indicators, and hedging/boosting mechanisms that alter individual perceptions; and (b) macro, involving frames, intertextuality, and institutional positioning that disseminate discourse and authority.

The use of CDA in vaccine and COVID-19 research shows that epistemic markers and sourcing practices are not just stylistic choices; they are rhetorical strategies with political consequences that affect how people trust and act (Ma, 2022; Medina Serrano et al., 2023). Research on fact-checking content in Indonesia (e.g., Rahmawan et al., 2023; 2024) indicates that fact-checking organizations utilize a blend of technical and rhetorical strategies to establish credibility.

### **Evidentiality and Epistemic Modality: Markers of Evidence and Certainty in Verification Texts**

Evidentiality (indicating sources of knowledge) and epistemic modality (indicating levels of certainty) are linguistic concepts that are directly applicable to fact-checking

methodologies. Both show how writers give credit to sources and show how sure they are of a claim (Aikhenvald, 2004; Zhang, 2023). Recent media research indicates that variations in evidential markers (e.g., “according to X,” “reported by,” “appears to”) and epistemic modal verbs (e.g., may, might, clearly) influence how readers assess credibility and adopt critical perspectives (Wu, 2024; Zhang, 2023). In the realm of fact-checking, meticulous scrutiny of evidentiality elucidates whether fact-checkers furnish primary documents, cite experts, or merely allude to “official sources” without precise identification, and how these methodologies affect readers' capacity for additional verification (Westlund, 2024; Rahmawan, 2024).

Evidential markers often function as strategies for mitigation or reinforcement. The writer is being careful and isn't sure when they use words like “appears” or “reported.” When they use words like “clearly” or “undeniably,” they are stronger in their rejection of claims. These options are not neutral; they affect how readers feel, including their confidence, doubt, and even frustration, and they affect whether claims are accepted or challenged (Pennycook & Rand, 2021; Ma, 2022).

### **Comparison of Approaches and Theoretical Framework Selection**

The three frameworks above complement one another while highlighting different aspects. Critical literacy focuses on readers' experiences how texts teach, influence attitudes, and foster critical capacity. CDA provides detailed tools for mapping linguistic practices and discourse structures that produce those effects. Evidentiality and epistemic modality illuminate the micro-linguistic mechanisms that mediate perceptions of evidence and certainty.

If the aim is to understand how language in fact-checking texts shapes readers' literacy practices their experiences, interpretations, and critical positioning then combining Critical Literacy and CDA, with specific attention to evidential and epistemic markers at the micro level, offers the most productive approach. This choice is both conceptual and practical: Critical Literacy provides the normative and pedagogical orientation (why texts matter to readers), while CDA supplies a methodological basis for examining how these orientations are realized linguistically. Evidentiality, in turn, offers a concrete analytic tool (what is marked, how frequently, and with what pragmatic effect) that bridges micro-level analysis and broader critical literacy.

Recent scholarship supports this combined framework. Analyses of MAFINDO's content (Rahmawan et al., 2023; 2024) highlight the need for detailed linguistic scrutiny to evaluate verification effectiveness. Comparative studies of fact-checking across countries also emphasize the cultural dimension of discourse, which requires contextual approaches such as CDA integrated with critical literacy (Marchal, 2022; Westlund, 2024).

### **Conceptual Framework: Theoretical Position and Analytical Orientation**

This study approaches fact-checking texts as socio-linguistic practices with pedagogical potential: texts do not merely deliver verdicts but also model literacy strategies for readers. The analysis will proceed across three interconnected levels:

1. Micro level (linguistic devices): focus on evidential markers, epistemic modal verbs, hedges/boosters, verbs of authority (claim, assert, confirm), and rhetorical devices shaping certainty. Unit of analysis: verdict and explanation sentences/paragraphs, applying evidentiality and epistemic modality theories.
2. Meso level (discourse structure): examination of framing, intertextuality (who is quoted and how), and evidence sequencing/prioritization. Unit of analysis: article structure (headline, lead, body, conclusion), guided by CDA to map discourse distribution.
3. Macro level (literacy practices and reader experience): exploration of how linguistic devices and discourse structures translate into readers' critical literacy practices, such as independent verification, skeptical or trusting attitudes, and subsequent actions (e.g., reporting or sharing with corrections). Unit of analysis: reader interviews and comments, interpreted through the lens of critical literacy.

This framework treats texts and reader experiences as relational rather than separate variables. Linguistic changes (e.g., more explicit evidential markers) are assumed to enhance critical literacy, while weaker forms (e.g., vague references) are associated with weaker literacy practices. The analysis is iterative: micro-level findings (frequency and function of markers) are compared with qualitative data (interviews, comments) to construct an interpretive narrative of how fact-checking functions or fails to function as public education.

In conclusion, combining Critical Literacy and CDA, with analytical focus on evidentiality and epistemic modality, provides a robust theoretical foundation for addressing research questions on linguistic strategies and the role of fact-checking texts in fostering readers' critical literacy. This framework enables a nuanced reading that captures reader experience, institutional discourse dynamics, and micro-level linguistic tactics shaping social literacy practices within Indonesia's digital media environment.

## **3. METHOD**

### **Research Approach**

This study employs a qualitative approach with a case study design. The case study method was chosen because the research centers on analyzing linguistic strategies in fact-checking articles published by Indonesian online news portals. Such an approach allows the

researcher to explore in depth the phenomenon of language use and its connection to critical literacy practices within the digital media context (Yin, 2018).

### **Data Sources and Research Context**

The data consist of 5 fact-checking articles in English, published between 2022 and 2024 by Indonesian news portals such as Kompas, Tempo, and Liputan6. The articles were selected using purposive sampling based on the following criteria: (1) the article contains a claim subjected to verification, (2) it is written or translated into English, and (3) it addresses one of three key issues politics, health, or disasters. The research context is situated within Indonesian digital media, which is increasingly significant in the global information ecosystem.

### **Data Collection Techniques**

Data were collected through document analysis. Each article was downloaded and coded according to linguistic categories, including hedges, boosters, evidential markers, and framing strategies. Metadata such as publication date, publishing portal, and thematic focus were also recorded to support the analysis.

### **Data Analysis**

The data were analyzed using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and thematic analysis (Fairclough, 2013; Braun & Clarke, 2019). The analytical process involved several stages:

1. Repeated reading of the articles to gain a comprehensive understanding of their context and structure.
2. Identifying linguistic strategies employed, such as modality, evidentiality, and framing.
3. Coding these findings into thematic categories.
4. Interpreting the data through the theoretical frameworks of critical literacy, CDA, and framing to explain how language shapes readers' critical literacy practices.

### **Validity and Trustworthiness**

The credibility of the findings was maintained through theoretical triangulation, drawing on multiple frameworks such as critical literacy, CDA, and evidentiality. An audit trail of systematic notes was kept throughout the analysis process to ensure transparency. Dependability was reinforced by applying consistent and rigorous analytical procedures, while confirmability was strengthened through the researcher's reflexive engagement with the interpretations, allowing the analysis to remain traceable and accountable.

### **Research Ethics**

As this study is based entirely on publicly available documents and does not involve human participants, ethical considerations focus on the responsible use of data. Sources are clearly cited, and the original content of the articles is not altered. The researcher ensures that

all interpretations are presented within an academic framework and do not cause harm to any institutions or individuals.

#### 4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

##### Summary of Claims & Verdicts

Article	Claim (Brief)	Verdict	Evidence / Reason cited in the article
Tempo — “Keliru, Video Badai Hancurkan Israel setelah Menyerang Palestina pada Oktober 2023”	The video claims to show a storm destroying Israel after attacking Palestine (Oct 2023).	False (Hoax).	Tempo’s team used InVid + reverse image search (Google/Yandex). They found clips came from old footage: Hurricane Matthew (Florida, Oct 2016), Typhoon Doksuri (Fujian, July 2023), and other fragments from a previous YouTube channel → the viral video is a montage of older clips (edited manipulation).
Tempo — “Keliru, 74 Persen Orang Meninggal Akibat Vaksin Covid-19”	Claim: 74% of sudden deaths were caused by the COVID-19 vaccine; vaccines cause blood clotting and DNA damage.	False (Hoax)	Tempo cross-checked open sources and statements from health authorities (ONS, CDC, FDA, EMA, NIH, Johns Hopkins). Official reports found no causal link between vaccines and sudden deaths; blood clots linked to vaccines are extremely rare; mRNA cannot alter DNA. Conclusion: the claim is

Liputan6 — “Kumpulan Hoaks Seputar Pilkada 2024, Simak Biar Tak Terpengaruh”	Several claims: (a) MUI advised not to vote for candidates supported by Jokowi; (b) photo of alleged vote-buying in Southeast Sulawesi/South Sulawesi; (c) poster claiming Anies’ support gave Pramono–Rano 28.4%.	False / Misleading (Hoax for each listed claim).	not supported by scientific evidence. Liputan6 traced each claim: no official statement from MUI, the envelope photo lacked clear context, the digital poster was manipulative — all disproved through verification and source confirmation. The article presented a list of hoaxes and clarifications for each case.
Kompas — “[HOAKS] Kisah Pasangan Menghilang di Gurun Arizona”	Claim: narrative of a couple, Mariana Ortega & Iván Duarte, disappearing and later found tied to cacti, with gruesome images attached.	Hoax	Kompas used Hive Moderation (AI detection) → the image showed 99.9% probability of being AI-generated. No official reports of missing persons with those names in Arizona. The article concluded this was a recurring fictional narrative produced/modified with AI.
Liputan6 — “Cek Fakta: Tidak Benar Foto — Prabowo Pilih Anies Baswedan Jadi	Claim: a photo shows Prabowo appointing Anies as KPK Chairman.	False (Hoax / Misleading).	Liputan6 verified the photo → identical to the April 24, 2024 plenary session of the KPU announcing the elected

Ketua KPK”

President & Vice  
President (Prabowo &  
Anies), not a KPK event.  
The KPK Chairman at that  
time was still Setyo  
Budiyanto. The photo was  
contextually misattributed.

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## CDA Analysis

### 1. *Micro Level (linguistic devices)*

At the micro level, all five articles employ **hedges, boosters, evidential markers, verbs of authority, and rhetorical devices** to shape certainty.

#### a) **Tempo (Israel & Vaccine):**

- Hedges: “*disebut*”, “*klaim*”, “*dinyatakan*” → signaling distance from the hoax.
- Boosters: “*jelas keliru*”, “*tidak ada bukti ilmiah*”.
- Evidentials: international authorities such as **ONS, CDC, FDA, EMA, NIH, Johns Hopkins**.
- Verbs of authority: “*menemukan*”, “*membuktikan*”, “*menyebutkan*”

#### b) **Liputan6 (Pilkada & Prabowo–Anies):**

- Hedges: “*diunggah di media sosial*”, “*diklaim*”.
- Boosters in verdicts: “*tidak benar*”, “*terbukti hoaks*”.
- Evidentials: statements from **Kapolres, KPU**, and other outlets (**Detik.com, RakyatPriangan**).
- Framing: strong visual markers such as banners **SALAH, FALSE**, and *Cek Fakta*.

#### c) **Kompas (Arizona):**

- Hedges: “*narasi itu hoaks*”, “*diceritakan...*”.
- Evidentials: **Hive Moderation AI detection (99.9%)**.
- Boosters: “*terbukti merupakan konten manipulatif*”.
- Narrative rhetoric: fictional style (“*gurun menelan bulat-bulat rahasia*”) contrasted with factual verification.

### 2. *Meso Level (discourse structure)*

All articles follow a standardized discourse structure:

- a) **Headline:** evaluative label (*Hoaks / Keliru / Tidak Benar*). → pre-frames readers’ interpretation.

- b) **Lead:** presenting the viral claim.
- c) **Body:** investigation and verification – sequence: claim → tracing sources/tools → cross-evidence.
- d) **Conclusion:** clear verdict with boosters + visual framing (e.g., *HOAKS*, *SALAH*).
- e) **Intertextuality:**
  - 1) Tempo → international media (Reuters, ONS).
  - 2) Kompas → AI detection (Hive Moderation).
  - 3) Liputan6 → domestic institutions (KPU, Kapolres) + other local media (Detik, RakyatPriangan).
- f) **Evidence sequencing:** claim presented first → investigation in the middle → verdict at the end → reflecting fact-checking standardization.

### 3. Macro Level (critical literacy practices)

On the macro level, the articles collectively position mainstream media as **guardians of truth** against disinformation.

- a) **Tempo (Israel & Vaccine):** strengthens *scientific literacy* by relying on global scientific authorities.
- b) **Liputan6 (Pilkada & Prabowo–Anies):** highlights *political literacy*, guiding readers to resist manipulation during elections.
- c) **Kompas (Arizona):** foregrounds *digital literacy*, particularly AI-based content detection.

#### Reader practices encouraged:

1. Skepticism: readers are discouraged from believing viral claims outright.
2. Independent verification: articles model fact-checking steps (reverse image search, AI detection, cross-media evidence).
3. Trust reinforcement: media verdicts guide readers toward reliable knowledge.

#### Combined Coding Scheme (Annotation)

Code	Description	Example (Original Quote)	Approx Frequency
HED	Hedge (markers of doubt/distance)	“klaim...”, “disebut...”, “dinyatakan...”	12
BOOST	Boost (certainty)	“jelas bukan...”,	9

	markers)	“terbukti...”, “tidak benar”	
EVID	Evidential markers (authority references)	“Menurut ONS...”, “Kapolres menyebut...”, “hasil AI detection”	18
FRM	Framing device	Headlines: <i>Hoaks / Keliru / Salah</i>	10
MULYI	Multimodal evidence	Screenshot video, banner HOAKS, hasil Google Image, Hive Moderation	14

### Multimodal Analysis

1. **Visuals** (screenshots, red *HOAKS* labels, banners) → semiotic reinforcement of verdicts.
2. **Cross-media references** (Detik, Reuters, RakyatPriangan) → transparency and intermedia credibility.
3. **AI detection (Kompas)** → innovative multimodal verification tool.

### Interpretive Synthesis

1. **Critical Literacy:** articles encourage readers to check context, sources, and authenticity before accepting claims.
2. **CDA:** epistemic progression observed – from hedged claims → evidential investigation → boosted certainty in verdicts.
3. **Framing:** hoaxes are framed as threats to public literacy and social stability; mainstream media frames itself as an epistemic authority.

### General Patterns Across 5 Articles

1. Shared narrative structure: claim → investigation → evidence → verdict.
2. Consistent linguistic strategies: hedges (distance), evidentials (authority), boosters (certainty).
3. Multimodal elements crucial for reinforcing trust in verification.
4. Intermedia collaboration enhances legitimacy.
5. Mainstream Indonesian media (Tempo, Kompas, Liputan6) actively cultivate *critical literacy* among readers.

## **DISCUSSION**

An analysis of five fact-checking articles published by Tempo, Kompas, and Liputan6 reveals a consistent pattern in the use of linguistic strategies, discourse structure, and multimodal devices to establish verification authority. These findings illustrate that fact-checking practices are not limited to refuting false claims, but also play an important role in shaping public critical literacy. The following is a more in-depth discussion at three levels of CDA analysis:

### **1. Micro Level (Linguistic Devices)**

At the linguistic level, there is consistency in the use of hedges, boosters, evidentials, and verbs of authority.

- a) Hedges such as *claims*, *referred to*, and *stated* are used at the beginning of articles. For example, Liputan6 wrote “*claims of riots in Kalimalang Bekasi.*” The use of this hedge shows the media's neutral position—not immediately confirming the claims circulating, but only quoting them for later verification.
- b) Boosters appear in the conclusion, for example Kompas writes “*the image has a 99.9 percent probability of being generated by AI*” or Tempo asserts “*clearly not new evidence*”. This language serves to remove reader doubt and position the media as the party that holds certainty.
- c) Evidentials become the dominant device. Articles quote official institutions (ONS, CDC, KPK, Police), international authorities (Reuters), and technology (Hive Moderation, Google Image reverse search). The presence of these evidentials confirms that the media's truth does not come from internal opinion, but from publicly recognized authorities.
- d) Verbs of authority such as *mentioning*, *asserting*, *refuting*, and *verifying* give the rhetorical effect that the media is carrying out its professional duties.

Thus, at the micro level, we can see how language is used to manage epistemic stance: from questionable claims to evidence-based certainty. This strategy is in line with Fairclough's (2013) theory of epistemic modality, which emphasizes that modality is the way language shapes ideological positions towards knowledge.

### **2. Meso Level (Discourse Structure and Discursive Practices)**

At the meso level, the structure of fact-checking articles shows a standard narrative pattern:

- a) Title → usually directly includes an evaluative label (e.g., “False,” “Hoax,” “Incorrect”).
- b) Claim description → explains what is circulating on social media or WhatsApp.
- c) Investigation → describes the verification process using tools and sources (intertextual references).
- d) Verdict → a definitive conclusion, often supported by visual banners such as WRONG or HOAX.

This structure demonstrates the standardization of journalistic practices in fact-checking, which shows **institutional formalization**.

Additionally, **intertextuality** is very prominent. Tempo quotes Reuters and ONS data; Kompas relies on Hive Moderation AI; Liputan6 refers to Detik.com or other local media. This shows that the authority of truth does not stand alone, but is built through networks between media and official institutions.

**Evidence sequencing** is also interesting: evidence is always presented before the verdict. This strategy makes readers feel involved in the investigation process, so that the final verdict appears logical and not just a one-sided claim from the media.

Within van Dijk's CDA framework, this shows the **practice of reproducing discursive** power, where mainstream media claim the highest epistemic position compared to social media accounts or individuals spreading hoaxes.

### 3. Macro Level (Critical Literacy Practices and Social Impact)

At the macro level, these language and discourse strategies lead to the formation of critical literacy in the public sphere.

First, the use of multimodality (screenshots, “HOAX/FALSE” banners, AI detection results, Google Image screenshots) serves as semiotic resources that reinforce the message. Without having to read long texts, readers can grasp the verdict from the visuals alone. This shows how digital literacy practices are now not only text-based, but also multimodal.

Second, this practice encourages a habit of verification. Readers are shown the fact-finding process transparently (for example, by displaying the reverse image search steps), so that they learn to do the same. In other words, fact-checking articles serve as pedagogical discourse that educates the audience.

Third, the media positions itself as the guardian of truth. Through a combination of language, evidence, and visuals, the media affirms its legitimacy as the authority that

defines truth versus lies. This also counteracts the threat of digital disinformation that can undermine public trust in democratic institutions.

Finally, this fact-checking practice shows that critical literacy is not only an individual skill, but also a social practice mediated by media institutions. By actively involving readers through linguistic, discursive, and visual evidence Indonesian media contributes to strengthening the public's critical thinking skills against the flow of hoaxes in the digital age.

## 5 CONCLUSION

This study found that fact-checking practices in Indonesian online media not only function as a mechanism for verifying information, but also as a discursive practice that strengthens media credibility while shaping readers' critical literacy. Through analysis of five articles from Tempo, Kompas, and Liputan6, it was found that linguistic strategies (modality, evidential markers, and lexical choices), discourse structure (claim–clarification–evidence–verdict), and intertextuality with external authorities were the main tools used in constructing narratives of truth.

At the micro level, language is used strategically to balance authority and caution. At the meso level, the text structure guides readers toward a systematic understanding of claims and evidence. Meanwhile, at the macro level, fact-checking contributes to improving critical literacy in society by encouraging readers to be more skeptical, reflective, and active in responding to digital information.

Thus, it can be concluded that fact-checking in Indonesian online media plays a dual role: as a form of journalistic responsibility in maintaining the accuracy of information and as a pedagogical instrument in shaping a culture of critical literacy in the digital public sphere. This role is increasingly important amid the rising tide of disinformation and political polarization, making fact-checking not only a tool for clarification, but also a means of building public trust in the media.

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