ATLANTIS
PRESS

Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research, volume 302
2nd International Conference on Culture and Language in Southeast Asia (ICCLAS 2018)

The Language of Hoax:
Explosive Growth of Fake News
in the Biggest Muslim Society

M. Agus Suriadi
English Letters Department
Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University
Jakarta, Indonesia
magussuriadi@uinjkt.ac.id

Abstract—Social media has grown rapidly and automatically allows new types of interactions. As a result, people are polarized into those who use social media positively or negatively. Such an interesting topic attracted the author to conduct a research aiming to find out how people convey hoaxes through sentences and how hoaxes affect their communication interaction. This qualitative research adopted a formal search to tract, report, and measure the impact of hoaxes. The data of the research consisted of words, phrases, clauses, or sentences obtained through browsing the social media, such as face book, twitter, Instagram, and WhatsApp. All data then were analyzed qualitatively to identify hoaxes in accordance with the topics of their communication in the social media in January-July 2018. The study revealed that hoaxes were mostly expressed in assertive or declarative sentences, however some others used imperative and subjective (optative) sentences. The hoax sentences are easily found in everyday communication topics, such as civil servant formation, prostitution, figures, health, security, volcano eruption, and credit card offer. While, the social media the people used to share their hoaxes covered Facebook, twitter, Instagram, and WhatsApp as they were easily accessed. Intentionally, they used hoax sentences to inform, persuade, frighten, and even emotionally to touch the readers so that they would be provoked to do chaos endangering the national integration. Therefore, it would be necessary for the government to issue regulations or policies that reduce the negative impacts hoax sentences in the social media.

Keywords—hoax, kind of sentences, author purposes, social media, information discovery

I. INTRODUCTION

As a growing country, Indonesia is the biggest Muslim Society in the world which faces many problems relating to the social challenges especially in creating or consumption of hoax. Hoax is information that is not true, however it is made as if it were true [1, pp. 191–213]. It is not the same as rumours, which is classified as information among people that are not rigidly constrained by objective and impersonal standards of truth, and in which the essential principle involves the tendencies to blow down and assimilate into personal and cultural contexts [2, p. 2].

From year to year, the users of the internet in Indonesia are growing rapidly. In the last few years, the online world of Indonesia is growing rapidly. Every year, internet and Social Media users even increased in number. Survey conducted by the Indonesia's Internet Service Providers Association (IISPA) throughout 2016 found that 132.7 million people of Indonesia have been connected to the internet [3, p. 94]. If we compare to other countries in the world, it is quite large especially if it is compared with the number of residents in each European country [4, p. 10]. The number is still lower than the number of internet users in Indonesia.

Hoax is misguided and categorized as dangerous information because it misleads human perception by passing false information as truth [5]. Hoax is able to influence many people by tarnishing an image and credibility. That is why hoax, although it is only for jokes, is forbidden to be shared.

Hoax is different from rumors that do not originate from a particular news article [6]. It can be defined as claims of fact about people, groups, events, and institutions that is difficult to be proven. It moves from one person to another, and hence has no credibility because there is no evidence available to support it. However, many people seem to believe it.

Social media is a three-part media, namely information infrastructure, tools used to produce, and distribute meditate content. Media content can be personal messages, news, ideas, and products. Cultural digital products are related to who produce and consume it. They can be individuals, organizations, and industries [7, pp. 383–404].

Social media has different structures from other media in terms of platforms. The study about social media has been done by many researchers. The first one discussed about "fake news" in the election of President of the USA in 2016. The result showed that 62 % of US adults acquired news from social media. Fake news was more widely shared on Facebook than from popular mainstream news. The most discussed fake news stories tended to favour Donald Trump over Hillary Clinton [6]. The second one discussed about the way hoax spread across social media. Hoax has become a case study on paper and has been proven as having a large population scope in five to six tweeting steps and it also has a potentially larger exponential [2]. The last study discussed about several implications of online activities and public relations related to hoax. It provides how strategic traditional activities have adapted to the internet activities. It also presents hoax as a viable, though potentially unethical, strategy to motivate action. The impact showed that social media hijacking and dismissing cannot be changed [8].

The modes in information discovery activities via the internet can be classified into four. The first is undirected viewing. In this case, a person searches information without having certain purpose in his mind. The overall objective is to seek information as widely as possible from various sources of information provided and obtained. Then it is filtered according to their wishes. The second is conditioned

viewing. Here, someone has already known the topics and types of information to look for. This mode directionally has started. The third is informal search. In this mode, someone has knowledge of the topic to be searched. So, the search for information through the internet is only done to update the information and understand current topic. In this type of information, seekers already know the limitations of the extent to which a person will do the mode. But it has limitation in the effort and time that are used. Because basically they only want to determine the action or response to its needs. The last is formal search, by using this mode a person prepares time and effort to search for specific information or topics specifically in accordance with his needs. The purpose of the search is to gather detailed information in order to obtain a solution or a decision of a problem at hand [9]. More specifically, the study tried to answer what topics were commonly discussed on hoaxes (Q1); what kinds of sentences were commonly utilized to express hoaxes (Q2); what purposes were intended by the authors in conveying hoaxes (Q3); and how hoax information affect people in the real live as a nation.

II. THEORETICAL REVIEW

The behaviour of hoax spreading over the internet is strongly influenced by both individual and group newsmakers, from low to high educated, and well-structured. It shows that there is a difference between someone who has a special skill in using search engines with people who are new or novice in using search engines [10]. They are distinguished by the experience they have. Individuals who have more experience in using search engines, will tend to be more systematic in searching than those with little experience (novice).

Hoax is increasingly difficult to be prevented although until 2016 the government had blocked 700 thousand sites, but every day hoax news continues to emerge. In January 2017 the government of Indonesia has blocked 11 sites containing negative content, but the blockage case did not reach the court [11]. Some cases in Indonesia related news hoax have taken their toll, one of which was about kidnapping of children which spread in some social media and cause people to be more suspicious to strangers.

A. Kinds of sentences

Sentences are a group of word that is commonly used to convey verbal information with any purposes such as to say something, to ask something, or to tell somebody to do something [12, pp. 287–293]. It gives enough information for anyone to construct a complete idea in his mind of the message that is being communicated to receiver.

This kind of sentences can be classified into five sentences[13]. *The first* is assertive sentence. This sentence is used by speakers to make simple assertions or statements. For example: the monument is high or the kids are playing in the yard. Assertive also can be said as declarative sentences which may be positive or negative. A sentence giving a positive or affirmative sense is called affirmative sentences. For example: milk is good for our health or I have been to Bali. *The second one* is interrogative sentences. It is used to ask some questions from the speaker to the hearer or receiver. For example: why are you crying or where are you from. The third is imperative sentences. The sentence is used to express some orders, commands, requests, advice, proposals or

suggestions, for example: Put the report on my desk (as an order), Please forgive me (as a request), be more diligent (as an advice), you better cross that way (as a suggestion). *The fourth* is exclamatory sentences. It is commonly used to express some strong feelings or emotions such as joy, sorrow, regret, surprise, wonder. For example: what a lucky guy you are. *The last* is optative sentences. It used to express an ardent wish, prayer, and curse. For the example: May God bless you or may health always be with you.

B. The author purposes

In every single text there will always be found some purposes from the author or named as the author's purposes. The purpose may be to amuse the reader, to persuade the reader, to inform the reader, or to satirize a condition[14]. It is because the author writes some texts by using one of four general purposes in their mind. The purposes can be classified into: *The first* is to entertain the reader. In this, the aim is to entertain the readers so they feel comfortable and want to keep on reading what the author says. This paper is generally in the form of narrative which means the news is not really happening. Writings like this can be found in writing in the form of historical fiction. *Second* is has the aim to inform the readers. At this point, the author wants to provide information to the reader without any expectation of any feedback. Because the author voluntarily wants to inform the reader, both the needy and the unnecessary. This paper is commonly presented in descriptive, coherent, and detailed way. *The third* has the aim to persuade the readers. At this point, after reading the text, the readers may be affected by what has been informed to them. It happens because actually the author expects feedback in the form of reaction to the information. This type can commonly be found in the brochure or other text that has an economic purpose. *The fourth* aims to teach the readers. At this point, the author wants to take the reader towards the information conveyed. This type can generally be found in the form of articles, non-fiction stories, and how to do somethings or procedures. *Number five* aims to scare you. At this point, the author's wants the readers to be frightened. Commonly the reader are against information whose probabilities are still far away, but by providing tense information, the readers feel worried. The last aims to emotionally touch the readers. At this point the author wants to touch the readers feeling. However generally in the social media it is used to get a lot of likes, shares, views, or subscribers. With those, the author then will use get some economic benefit from sponsors.

III. METHOD

The research made use of a qualitative method employing the formal search to track, report, and measure the impact of hoaxes in the people real lives in accordance with specific issues or problems have been formulated [9]. The main data of the research were hoaxes conceptualized as distorted signals uncorrelated with the truth. I utilized a web browsing and a database of related news stories that were categorized as hoaxes by leading fact-checking websites in 2018. The data then were placed on tables of topic that were commonly discussed in social media based on the consumption of hoaxes for six months in January to July 2018. Lastly, the data were qualitatively analysed in terms of sentence types expressing hoaxes, the social media where hoaxes were found, their impacts on people real lives, and the authors' purposes.

IV. FINDINDS AND DISCUSSION

As the information that cannot be proven, a hoax can be used as a weapon in political purposes. Here, hoax is consciously produced to attack political rival. In India, an engineer was killed because of a hoax. Indonesia, as the biggest Muslim society, also faces disintegrative polarities that need to be anticipated. In Indonesia besides the existence of people who make and consume hoaxes, there is also growing number of forums or communities which are against hoax and make it as their "enemy".

During January to July, 2018, we have observed in social media, information that was viral and cannot be validated by doing formal search. The data during this period shows as follows
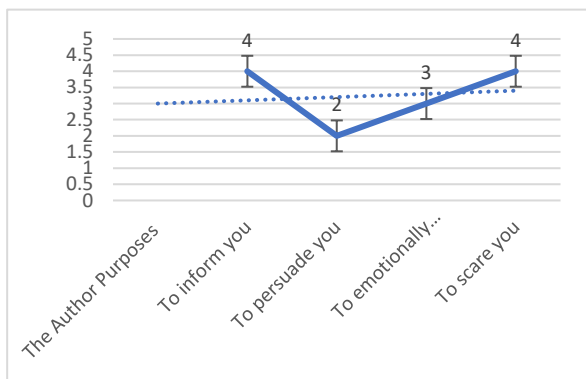

Fig. 1 The author's purposes

After tabulating the data based on the author purposes as seen on Figure 1, it is found that the author wanted to provide information to the readers to be popular or viral. It was made because they did not voluntarily want to share any information but to get some benefits from it. Their motive was temporarily to get view, like, and share. Other purposes included persuading the readers to be affected by what is informed to them. Generally, it has an economic motive.

The next purpose was that the author wanted to emotionally touch the reader by making condolences news and using two famous figures in Indonesia. For example, he wanted to attract the readers with a terrorism case of Ba'asyir. The last is that the hoax maker wanted to scare people about national security, like the threat of terrorism. Besides, the he wanted the people to feel insecure to the condition after Surabaya bomb. However, this has been clarified by the head of Public Relations of Polda Metro Jaya, the Grand Commissioner, Raden Prabowo Argo Yuwono at the office as a hoax [15].

The analysis also shows the information that had been viral on social media [9]. There were twenty (20) topics had been collected. However, during the period of research, job vacancy on civil servant sector, popular figure, and politics are dominant topics discussed by the social media users. The determination of civil servant identification number and the job vacancy formation about civil servant of 2018 were found to be hoaxes. The news on the demise of two figures namely Abu Bakar Ba'asyair in jail BJ Habibie were hoax news used to attract readers. Other hoaxes were about the invitation of sex party in Bandung, Mandiri credit card offer, IMEI of cellular phone, *2019 Ganti Presiden* poster, etc. that were also viral. All of that information was categorized as hoaxes

because they passed false information as a truth. That information also has been validated by the person in charge as a hoax. The topics of hoaxes are found on Figure 2 below.
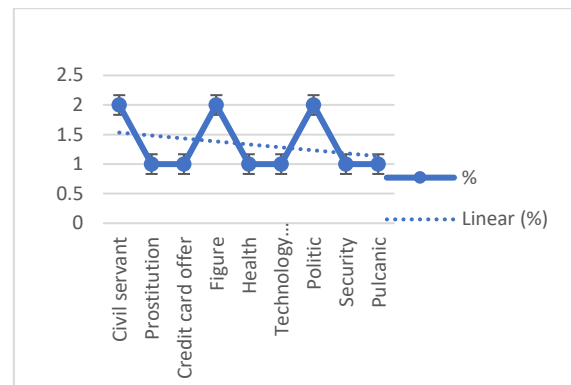

Fig. 2 Topics of Hoaxes

For the information of civil servant, the maker used the Ministry of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform as a media to persuade the readers with the formation of civil servant formation or vacancy. This information was clarified by the person in charge as a hoax. "We reiterate that it is not true. Do not get fooled by hoaxes," said the head of Legal, Communications and Public Information Agency of the Ministry, Herman Suryatman in Jakarta, July 24, 2018 [16]. For two information on the demise of public figure, the maker used former president Habibie and terrorism prisoner Abu Bakar Ba'asyir.

If the data are classified linguistically, there will be three kinds of sentences found, assertive, imperative, and optative as seen on Figure 3. The assertive uses the words or expression, like to follow up, a girl passed away after, the invitation of declaration, the report of, and the eruption made; the imperative sentences used the phrases, like enjoy, hurry up, the information coming from intelligent, the information coming from, be careful; and the optative sentences used the phrases like he has passed away.
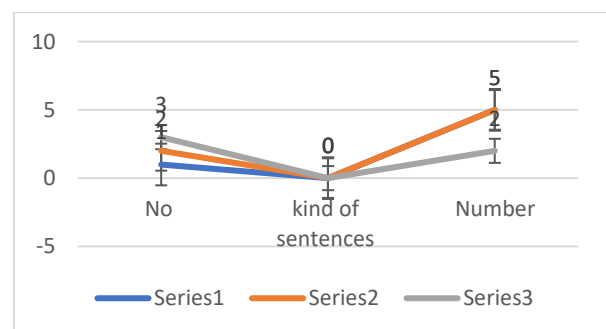

Fig. 3 Kinds of Sentences

Reading the hoax sentences, the people were affected positively or negatively. As the object of hoax, the people needed to clarify information to anticipate a negative perception distrusting an organization. In economic sector, the hoax of prostitution by using a name of Bakery in Bandung affected to the decrease of turnover the bakery products. The spreading of hoaxes on certain malls or stores triggered the people as the customers not to go there for some

time. In security topic, the hoax created the worries of people in doing their activities. The hoax on the news of the demise of a person brought about inconvenience and sadness for the family relatives. Therefore, the people should be wise readers to see all hoaxes of the viral news.

V. CONCLUSION

It is interesting to continue digging more information related to hoax. The data analyzed shows that the characteristic of hoax can linguistically be seen by using some language signals. The information can be considered as hoax if it uses the expression of "share it! or viral it!". It also can be seen when the account used the name "anonymous". To make it real or to convince the readers, it commonly uses "popular figures.' If we check it to the link, it can be found that the URL uses unrelated link to the information that has been shared. And also, if we want to validate it, the data cannot be verified. The narration of the information is also not comprehensive or to the point. It commonly uses long narration to convince the common readers as valid information. The narration also uses current terms but in fact they are used to attack or indicate hate and judgment. In some cases, there were also found, hoax using "from a friend" however the friend mentioned was not clear who they are. Hoaxes spread by deriving from rumors across social media, and it killed the human rights figures.

As the impact of hoax, it appears uncertain information and unsecure to the society to their activity. Combating hoaxes is not the duty of the government or the people who are in charge as executive, indicative, or legislative. People as citizens in developing country need to fight against it too. It can be done by not consuming hoax or at least not sharing it before we validate it. By doing that, as citizens we have contributed towards a better Indonesia. Life without hoax can make our nation to be more powerful and more developed. It also can contribute to the high competitiveness among the nations in the world, at least in ASIA.

REFERENCES

[1] S. K. Brem, J. Russell, and L. Weems, "Science on the Web: Student Evaluations of Scientific Arguments," *Lawrence Erlbaum Assoc. Inc*, pp. 191–213, 2001.

[2] H. Situngkir, "Spread of Hoax in Social Media," *SSRN Electron. J.*, 2011.

[3] D. Susilo and T. Dwi Putranto, "Indonesian Youth on Social Media: Study on Content Analysis," 2018.

[4] K. L. Kraemer, D. Ganley, and S. Dewan, "Across the digital divide: A cross-country multi-technology analysis of the determinants of IT penetration," *J. Assoc. Inf. Syst.*, 2005.

[5] Y. Y. Chen Yong, S. P. and A. Ishak, "Email Hoax Detection System Using Levenshtein Distance Method.," *J. Comput. Acad. Publ.*, vol. 9, 2014.

[6] H. Allcott and M. Gentzkow, "Social media and fake news in the 2016 election," *J. Econ. Perspect.*, no. 31(2), pp. 211–36, 2017.

[7] H. P.N and P. M.R, "American Behavioral Scientist," vol. 45 No. 3, pp. 383–404, 2012.

[8] S. R. Veil, J. Reno, R. Freihaut, and J. Oldham, "Online activists vs. Kraft foods: A case of social media hijacking," *Public Relat. Rev.*, vol. 41, no. 1, pp. 103–108, Mar. 2015.

[9] C. W. Choo, B. , Detlor, and D. Turnbull, "Information Seeking on the Web--An Integrated Model of Browsing and Searching.," 1999.

[10] A. W. Lazonder, H. J. Biemans, and I. G. Wopereis, "Differences between novice and experienced users in searching information on the World Wide Web. Journal of the American Society for Information Science," vol. 51(6), pp. 576–581, 2000.

[11] Tempo.co, "Sampai Desember 2016, Pemerintah Telah Blokir 800 Ribu Situs," 07-Jan-2017.

[12] L. Mehedy, S. N. Arifin, and M. Kaykobad, "Bangla syntax analysis: A comprehensive approach," in *Bangla syntax analysis: A comprehensive approach. , Dhaka, Bangladesh*, 2003, pp. 287–293.

[13] L. Zhang, R. Ghosh, M. Dekhil, M. Hsu, and B. Liu, "Combining Lexicon-based and Learning-based Methods for Twitter Sentiment Analysis," p. 9.

[14] C. Wallace, *Critical reading in language education*. Springer., 2003.

[15] Liputan6.com, "Polisi: Pesan Berantai Sebut Jakarta Rawan Bom Adalah Hoax," May 2018.

[16] "jangan terkecoh hoax penetapan formasi-tenaga honorer."