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# The Language Ideology Behind the Screen: Increasing Users' Awareness of Social Media Disinformation

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**Abstract**

In recent decades, university students and others have been constantly exposed to information spreading through social media platforms. This information is often false, deliberately misleading people for personal, financial, and political gains. This study aims to assess university students' ability to detect disinformation on social media and raise their awareness of fake news, providing them with relevant fact-checking skills. By examining how students understand and interact with language ideology on social media platforms, this research uncovers implicit beliefs and values influencing the creation and spread of disinformation. It analyzes how linguistic features and communication strategies contribute to false information dissemination. Results from experimental groups showed that students improved their knowledge and enhanced their skills after participating in workshops. The study investigates mechanisms through which language shapes perceptions and influences beliefs, highlighting the need for increased social media literacy and critical thinking to address the disinformation landscape. This study employs a mixed-methods approach, including surveys, pre-tests, post-tests, and SPSS software for content analysis of social media interactions



**About the Journal**

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## 1. Introduction

In today's fast-paced world, students are globally immersed in informational, cultural, political, and advanced digital social media transformations. Disinformation has a long history dating back at least a century. It has become a serious threat to individuals in the modern era (Ruffo et al., 2021). Advanced technology and linguistic features of social media texts seem to influence public opinions worldwide. Although social media channels have some benefits for humanity, they also negatively affect people's lives. For example, clickbait, a type of fake news designed to attract viewers' attention, often misleads people (Collins et al., 2021). Thus, social media platforms have become a powerful tool for disseminating disinformation. For that reason, adult university learners are bombarded repeatedly with information through digital tools, mainly Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok.

The spread of information is often ideologically driven through intentional language use on social media, encompassing semiotics, vocabulary, and grammar. This serves three main purposes: persuasion, deception, and dissemination of information, whether true or false (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017). Language ideology involves using language to provoke emotionally charged responses and manipulate people, often including semantics, ambiguous terms, and various dialects. There is a relationship between language and ideology, which is interconnected; therefore, they often appear together in studies related to sociolinguistic areas. Kress (2009) has explored linguistic ideology in combination with semiotics to comprehend and convince viewers. For instance, how images, words, and structural style create further influence on social media users. According to Woolard (2020), language ideologies are "sets of beliefs about language articulated by users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure" (Woolard, 2020, p. 3). In a study carried out by Baptista et al. (2021), they found that consumers of social media are associated with ideological doctrines, which considerably influence the dissemination of falsehoods on social media platforms. Undeniably, language ideologies play an essential role in many aspects of life, such as political debates and religious discussions.

Researchers believe that social media users are often influenced by cynical posts (Bowyer and Kahne, 2019). People, including learners at college, are more likely to follow ideologically aligned information disseminated through digital platforms, even if it is forged. A recent study has revealed that the vast majority of university students are reliant on receiving news through social media, whether it is true or fake. Evidence shows that it is about two-thirds of US students check and receive news from social media (Bode and Vraga, 2018; Ruffo et al., 2021). Thus, information from social media has become an interesting issue among researchers and a concern for all social media users, as most individuals globally receive news and information through platforms like Facebook and Instagram. Several researchers have termed fake news as "misinformation" and "disinformation", which are used interchangeably (Karlova et al., 2013; Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017; Posadas-Durán et al., 2019; Pérez-Escolare et al., 2021; Ruffo et al., 2021; Soetekouw and Angelopoulos, 2024). However, there is a difference between the aforementioned terms.

The present study aims to increase the level of awareness among Kurdish university students about disinformation, exploring ways to distinguish between real and fake news and how to face it. Training university undergraduates to differentiate between falsehoods, facts, opinions, and hate speech is essential. It should be pointed out that developing social media literacy skills is vital for students to critically assess social media content, enhancing users' ability to counter hate speech and avoid disseminating false news. This research emphasizes more on enhancing media users' skills, emphasizing the importance of enabling them to differentiate types of fake news, with a particular emphasis on disinformation.

### 1.1 Statement of the Problem

This research addresses a significant gap: while social media instruments for many people are considered a reliable resource, they are also rife with untruth that can deeply impact an individual's

understanding of the world. Most often, the language used on these platforms is ideologically driven, employing specific rhetorical strategies to influence perceptions and behaviors of the social media users. Despite growing recognition of this issue, there remains a considerable gap in accepting how language ideologies shape the creation and dissemination of disinformation, and how people, more specifically, students at the higher education level, can interpret and react to these messages that they encounter on social media platforms.

This research intends to explore the language ideologies embedded in social media, and it measures its influence on adults at higher education institutions. It seeks ways to raise individuals' awareness, thereby equipping undergraduates with the higher critical skills necessary to navigate the digital information landscape. By observing the linguistic strategies used on social media platforms and analyzing students' responses, this study will contribute to the growth of educational interventions that promote critical media literacy. The objectives of this study are to increase students' language awareness in differentiating facts from opinions, precisely to:

1. Understand how linguistic ideologies influence students' perceptions and beliefs.
2. Develop and implement educational strategies to enhance students' critical language awareness of social media disinformation.

This paper is divided into four sections: introduction and theoretical background, literature review, methodology, and results of data analysis, followed by a discussion of the study findings. The conclusion summarizes the main points, alongside limitations, conclusions, and implications.

## 2. Literature Review

This section addresses the roots of the most relevant studies that have been addressed by previous researchers about the language commonly used on social media called 'disinformation, fake news, and misinformation'.

### 2.1 Theoretical Background

The term "fake news" gained popularity in the 2016 US presidential elections and the 2017 UK referendum (Rashkin et al., 2017; Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017; Di Domenico et al., 2021). Since 2016-2017, verifying information has become increasingly important. The modern understanding of "fake news" has become more common since 2016 (Li & Su, 2020). The Oxford Dictionary added the term 'fake news' in 2017, describing it as any news that could be biased, misleading, or fabricated. Research has found that people disseminate fake news primarily to influence political opinions, especially during elections. Furthermore, Buchanan and Benson (2019) identified several forms of fake news, including misinformation and disinformation, categorized into various styles such as propagation, clickbait, satire, and hoaxes. Disinformation is defined as deliberately false information propagated through peer-to-peer communication, created and shared to cause harm or for political, personal, and financial gain. Mahyoob et al. (2020) defined fake news as purposefully fabricated to deceive individuals, noting that it often uses reported speech, passive voice, exaggerated words, superlatives, excessive emotional phrases, and adverbs, while real news tends to use proper nouns and pronouns. Greive & Woodfield (2023) have divided fake news into honest and dishonest. Honest news means the information is completely true, while misinformation occurs when a journalist makes an error unintentionally, but dishonest fake news is disinformation such as edition, omission, and lies, which reporters believe the information to be untrue. Nevertheless, some researchers from different angles categorized fake news into different categories, namely the mis- and disinformation, as illustrated in Figure 1:

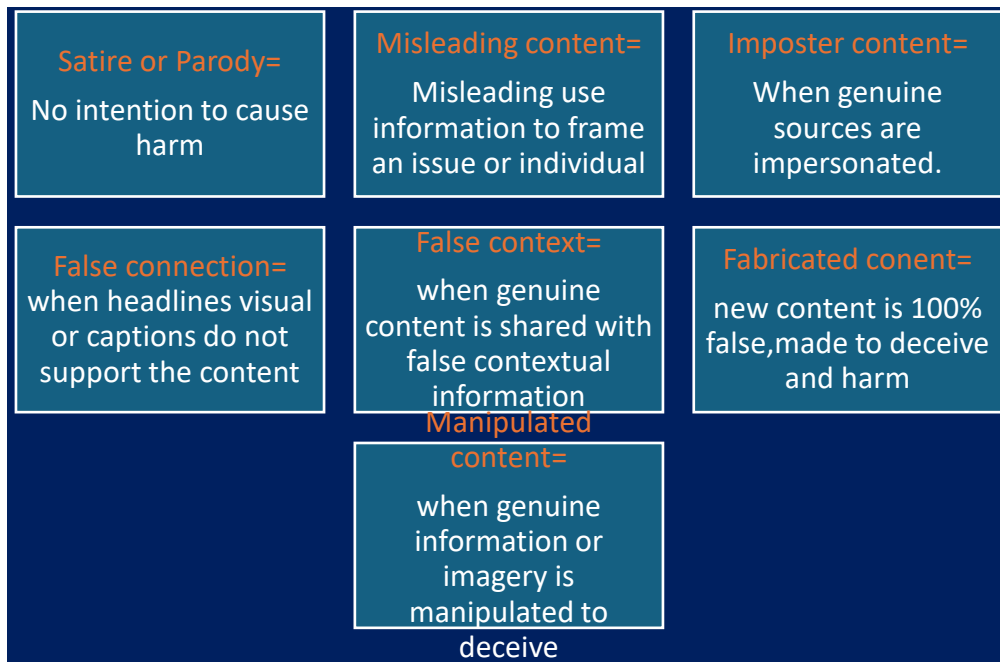


Figure 1: Seven types of Mis-and disinformation taken and adapted from Wardle & Derakhshan (2017)

Although various typology of fake news was highlighted, there is no generally agreed-upon definition of fake news. Most researchers define it as material designed to deceive readers, alter their attitudes, and increase readership, with the ultimate goal of changing audience behavior (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017; Di Domenico et al., 2021; Ruffo et al., 2021; Pérez-Escalare et al., 2021; Aïmeur et al., 2023). Indeed, social media has rapidly flourished worldwide, enhancing communication channels and facilitating connectivity. These platforms play a significant role in spreading information extremely quickly, regardless of its veracity.

Social media has become a primary source of information in the 21st century, offering a convenient method for exchanging messages, attitudes, and opinions. The language of social media influences people's perceptions and beliefs, often using emotional appeals to create fear and empathy, repeating messages frequently, and using vague language linked to highly valued content without providing evidence (Karlova et al., 2013). A study was conducted by Tsapro & Gryshchenko (2021) in Portugal about how students would be able to spot the language of fake news by using linguistic strategies. Their study revealed that it is about 75% of respondents successfully identified fake texts, demonstrating that careful reading and attention to linguistic features can help detect disinformation. Another study was conducted by Pérez-Escalare et al. (2021) to see how fact-checking skills assist learners in distinguishing facts from opinions. The results of their study showed that students significantly increase their language awareness after being provided with the right skills to differentiate between the fakeness and trueness of information. The study also found that 60% of the global population uses social media, with American youth engaging for an average of 2.30 hours on a daily basis. Moreover, Reem (2022) showed that in her study, social media usage increases individuals' exposure to news, particularly during political or economic crises.

The ample evidence from prior studies shows that there are factors that impact people's increasing awareness of social media disinformation. For example, Li and Su (2020) found that demographic factors influence vulnerability to fake news, with older and less educated persons more likely to believe and disseminate false information. Also, Baptista et al. (2021) and Saeed (2024) revealed that political ideology significantly influences the dissemination of disinformation, with ideologically aligned people more willing to share untrue information. Hence, it is evident that the

educational policy makers underscore the importance of media literacy education and critical thinking skills in fighting the dissemination of fake news on social media platforms. Educating and training courses can improve individuals' ability to spot fake news quickly and easily.

## **2.2 Theoretical Framework**

This research is based on the theory of multimedia semiotics, which is used to analyze various social semiotics posted or shared on digital social media platforms. The onset of social media introduced semiotics as a platform for obtaining information. The first quarter of the 21st century has been characterized by an abundance of remixed images, writings, sounds, speech, 3D objects, and deep fakes (Kress, 2009). Research showed that the analysis of multimedia texts is regarded as a comprehensive theory (Kawa & Talib, 2020). Analytically, this sort of theory reveals the different kinds of modes utilized on social media for both persuasive communication and information sharing. It serves as the framework for a thorough understanding of the fake news languages, combining multiple modes to create meaning as it relates to social media platforms.

Consequently, by exploring various communication modes, such as text and images, the study facilitates easier access to information and helps distinguish between real and fake content. The theory highlights the areas of recognition of true and false information, which often exploits multiple channels at the same time to maximize its persuasive impact. Through the analysis of different modes, including visual texts, researchers gain a deeper understanding of how misinformation is socially constructed and disseminated through social media (Posadas-Durán et al., 2019; Li & Su, 2020). These modes considerably shake the perception of disinformation on social media, employing persuasive and emotional channels to appeal to specific beliefs. This makes the information more convincing through spoken, written, lexical, and grammatical classifications (Halliday, 2024). Indeed, the multifaceted approach of social media semiotic theory provides a comprehensive framework for knowing and analyzing the complex landscape of social media disinformation.

## **3. Methodology and Data Collection**

This study utilizes both qualitative and quantitative methods for data collection. This section outlines the constructed items and methods employed for data analysis. It details the tools implemented to determine the reliability of each item presented, followed by the statistical description, procedures, and data gathering requirements.

### **3.1. Research Design**

Data were collected over three months following the administration of a survey questionnaire and a series of workshops targeting a controlled focus group. In addition to employing questionnaires for data collection, pre-tests and post-tests were conducted to verify the hypotheses. The target population comprised undergraduate students from three different universities, such as Erbil Polytechnic University, Soran University, and Salahaddin University in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, representing various academic levels and cities. A total of 126 students were selected as participants, taking into account their gender, but not their socioeconomic backgrounds. Ethical consent forms were distributed to and signed by the students before their inclusion in the study, ensuring their agreement to participate in this research project.

### **3.2. Research Questions**

In this study, the participants were asked two main questions mentioned below:

1. To what extent did university students' awareness increase about fact-checking skills in detecting disinformation and distinguishing facts from opinions after participating in a series of workshops?
2. To what extent are Kurdish undergraduate students aware of language ideology being used on social media?

### 3.3. Hypotheses

In this paper, two null hypotheses have been proposed as follows:

Null 1: Students have awareness of distinguishing between factual language and opinions used in social media.

Null 2: Students' awareness of social media disinformation will not increase after participating in a series of workshops.

### 3.4. Research Aims

The research has three main aims as follows:

1. Assist students in understanding the language characteristics of fake news;
2. Help students differentiate between real and fake news;
3. Enhance students' comprehension of the biases and ideological underpinnings in the language used.

By achieving the aforementioned objectives, the study intends to improve students' critical thinking skills and social media literacy, enabling them to navigate the complex landscape of social media information more effectively.

### 3.5. Questionnaires

In this empirical research article, the experimental data was collected, coded, and then placed into the computer for analysis by the SPSS statistical software program. In the mathematical description, tables have been statistically analyzed in a reliable and transparent manner. In this study, descriptive statistics such as the T-test were adopted since they cope with rates and means for each variable.

In Section A of the participants' questionnaire survey, the items ranged from 1 to 4, mainly asking about the students' range of age, level of study, gender and residence, while in Section B-11 questions related to utilization of social media were asked to determine students' level of awareness of the language of fake news. For instance, 'What sort of social media platforms do you frequently use? For this question, students were given five options such as Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Telegram, and TikTok.

In Section C-10, statements were utilized to examine the most frequent language variables being used on social media. Items were designed to measure students' awareness of the language of fake news and their ability to spot false information. The format of a typical five-level Likert scale was used for the study (Always = 5, Often = 4, Sometimes = 3, Rarely = 2, Never = 1). The cutting-edge version of SPSS has been used to draw conclusions from the sample about the participants, such as Cross-tabulation: frequency, percentages, testing of correlation, and a T-test was used.

## 4. Data Analysis and Results

This section presents the demographic information of the students, including age, gender, level of study, and residence. These variables were included to examine how these attributes affect social media usage and belief in disinformation, as presented in the table below. The age range of participants in this research paper is 18-35+ years old. About 67.7% of students were aged 18-23, while only 4% were 35 or older. This range may be due to variations in participant selection.

Approximately 30% of the students who participated in the study were aged 23-28. Regarding the level of study, participants (49%) were in their second year at university. Conversely, only 11% of students were in their fourth year. About 45% of students were in their first year, and 15% were in their third year.

In terms of gender, approximately 58% of participants were female, and 42% were male. This means that there were more female than male participants in the study. However, this ratio does not significantly influence the overall results of the study. Concerning residential areas, participants were asked to indicate where they live. The data showed that about 55% live in major cities, 17% in towns, and 28% in villages. It is clear that most of the university students in this study reside in large cities, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary of Section A of the Students' Biography Questionnaire

Variable		Frequency	Percent
Age	18-23	84	67.7
	23-28	35	28.2
	35+	5	4.00
Level of study	year1	45	36.3
	year2	48	38.7
	year3	19	15.3
	year4	12	9.7
Gender	male	52	41.9
	female	72	58.1
Residence	city	68	54.8
	town	21	16.9
	village	35	28.2

University students were also asked about their frequency of social media platform usage and reasons for using them (see section B, items 1, 2, and 3). The data revealed that about 92% of students use social media platforms, while only 8.1% do not use them at all. When asked which social media platforms they use frequently, the results show that the vast majority of students use Facebook (51%), followed by Instagram (34%), with only 4% using LinkedIn. It is clear that Facebook and Instagram are commonly used among students, while other platforms are less likely to be used.

Participants were also asked about the purpose of their social media use. In this regard, various responses were varied. Approximately 40% reported using social media for different purposes such as leisure, business, education, and obtaining news. More specifically:

- 27% use it for education
- 23% use it for leisure
- 10% use it for business purposes
- 11% use it for obtaining news

According to the respondents, social media tools can be used for various purposes among Kurdish university students.

Question 4 was asked to see where students obtain news. Results revealed that it is 79% of students replied that they gain news from social media, and only 4% from radio channels, but 17% obtain news from television. Question 5 was asked to see how often the participants utilize social media per day; the average was 4.9 hours. The result is astonishing; it seems that students are either addicted or they have plenty of free time while they are at university. Students were also asked whether they have the capability to distinguish between real and fake news. The data showed that 49% them responded "Yes", it is only 11% students replied "No", and 41% replied "sometimes". The results of this part of the study contradict what students have been tested on to differentiate between real and fake news, as well as the ability to identify false information.

Regarding item 7, participants were asked if they believe what is presented on social media. The data showed that 70% replied "No," 24% said "Yes," and only 6% believed texts that are published on social media platforms. For question 8, most participants (61%) felt happy when encountering any piece of information on social media, regardless of its veracity, while 31% did not feel happy about what was presented. This clearly indicates that students regularly use social media tools for entertainment.

Question 9 asked whether students were convinced by the semiotics used on social media. The data showed that 59% sometimes and 30.5% always were convinced, but 14.5% were not persuaded when receiving news via social media. While question 10 asked if they use fact-checking tools to verify information, 66.9% of students reported using fact-checking, 26.6% do not use it, and 6.5% sometimes use it. However, after conducting a pre-test, the majority of participants lacked knowledge of fact-checking. Participants were also asked if they were aware of disinformation spreading via social media. The results showed that it is 46% participants are aware of it, while 41% were somewhat aware, but only 12% were not aware of disinformation spreading on social media, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Summary of Section B of the Participants' Questionnaire on Using Social Media

Variable		Frequency	Percent
B1	Yes	114	91.9
	No	10	8.1
B2	Facebook	63	50.8
	Instagram	42	33.9
	LinkedIn	5	4.0
	Telegram	8	6.5
	Tiktok	6	4.8
B3	wasting time	28	22.6
	Business	10	8.1
	Education	33	26.6
	Obtaining news	11	8.9
	for all of them	42	33.9
B4	TV	21	16.9
	radio station	5	4.0
	social media	98	79.0
B6	yes	61	49.2
	No	11	8.9
	sometimes	52	41.9
B7	yes	30	24.2
	No	87	70.2
	sometimes	7	5.6
B8	yes	75	60.5

	No	38	30.6
	sometimes	11	8.9
B9	yes	33	26.6
	No	18	14.5
	sometimes	73	58.9
B10	yes	83	66.9
	No	33	26.6
	sometimes	8	6.5
B11	yes	58	46.8
	No	15	12.1
	sometimes	51	41.1

The researcher was also interested in understanding participants' awareness of the language used in fake news on social media. In section C of the questionnaire, 10 separate items were presented using a five-point Likert scale. The results are shown in Table 3 below:

Table:3 The summary of students 'level of awareness of the language of social media'

Variable		Frequency	Percent
C1	Never	7	5.6
	Rarely	8	6.5
	Sometimes	58	46.8
	Often	27	21.8
	Always	24	19.4
C2	Never	7	5.6
	Rarely	10	8.1
	Sometimes	50	40.3
	Often	36	29.0
	Always	21	16.9
C3	Never	27	21.8
	Rarely	23	18.5
	Sometimes	44	35.5
	Often	16	12.9
	Always	14	11.3
C4	Never	6	4.8
	Rarely	17	13.7
	Sometimes	54	43.5
	Often	35	28.2
	Always	12	9.7
C5	Never	9	7.3
	Rarely	17	13.7
	Sometimes	50	40.3
	Often	33	26.6
	Always	15	12.1
C6	Never	9	7.3
	Rarely	20	16.1
	Sometimes	48	38.7
	Often	27	21.8
	Always	20	16.1
C7	Never	7	5.6
	Rarely	14	11.3
	Sometimes	48	38.7
	Often	21	16.9

	Always	34	27.4
C8	Never	10	8.1
	Rarely	13	10.5
	Sometimes	45	36.3
	Often	26	21.0
C9	Never	6	4.8
	Rarely	14	11.3
	Sometimes	35	28.2
	Often	34	27.4
	Always	35	28.2
C10	Never	3	2.4
	Rarely	13	10.5
	Sometimes	44	35.5
	Often	36	29.0
	Always	28	22.6

Results from Section C, Item 1 in Table 3 revealed varying levels of awareness regarding language used on social media. The data showed that 5.6% never and 6.8% rarely accept news from social media, while 47% sometimes, 22% often, and 19.4% always accept news from social media. According to cross-tabulation statistics, the majority of participants sometimes accept the language of fake news on social media.

Regarding awareness of language features used on social media, 5.6% are never aware and 8.1% are rarely aware of it, while 40% are sometimes aware, 29% are often aware, and 6.6% are always aware. For item 3, nearly 36% of participants sometimes think their beliefs are shaped by social media information, while 21.8% rarely think so. Statistical calculations suggest that participants generally believe personal beliefs are shaped by social media.

For item C4, students were asked if they critically evaluate information received via social media. Results showed that 4.8% never do, 13.7% rarely do, 36% sometimes do, 28% often do, and 9.7% always critically evaluate information from social media. Item 5 asked if ideological polarization from social media makes people more defenseless and exposed to disinformation. It is 7.3% reported never, 13.7% rarely, 26% sometimes, 21% often, and 12.1% always. The majority of students agreed that ideological polarization from social media increases vulnerability to disinformation. For item C6, regarding the influence of words and grammatical elements on social media, 39% reported sometimes, 22% often, 7.3% never, and 16% rarely being influenced.

Item 7 showed that 39% sometimes and 27% always feel that the posts they like and comment on align with their views ideologically, while 5.6% never and 11% rarely feel this way. For item 8, 36% sometimes and 21% often reported that fake news improves consumers' knowledge of product brands, while 8% rarely and 10% sometimes disagreed. Item 9 revealed that 28.2% sometimes and 28.2% always are convinced that information is true and like it, while 5% never and 11% rarely are convinced. Lastly, for item 10, 39% sometimes and 29% often reported having the cognitive skill and ability for fact-checking media, while 2% rarely and 11% never have these skills. An independent-sample T-test was used to compare the participants' scores based on focused group and control group experiments, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: T-test used compares Students' Mean score to compare pre-test and post-test of students' awareness of language used on Social media.

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	D.Pre.test1	3.38	24	2.667	0.544
	post.test1	7.88	24	1.513	0.309
Pair 2	D.pre.test2	3.50	24	4.764	0.972
	post.test2	8.08	24	1.586	0.324

The mean score for pre-test 1 is 3.38 with a standard deviation of 2.66, while the mean score for post-test 1 is 7.88 (standard deviation not provided). As is apparent from the data above, the mean score increased after conducting the post-test. A t-test was implemented to determine if there is any significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores, as shown in Table 5.

Table 5: T-test used to compare the Results of the Pre-test and Post-test after conducting a series of workshops on students' raising awareness on Fake news

<b>Paired Samples Test</b>									
							t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
							Lower	Upper	
Pair 1	D.Pre.test1 - post.test1	-4.500	2.432	0.496	-5.527	-3.473	-9.066	23	0.000
Pair 2	D.pre.test2 - post.test2	-4.583	4.763	0.972	-6.595	-2.572	-4.714	23	0.000

As shown in the t-test results above, the t-value is -9.066, and the p-value is 0.000, which is less than the Cronbach's alpha of 0.05 ( $t = -9.066, p = 0.000 \leq \alpha = 0.05$ ). This indicates a significant difference in students' performance between the pre-test and post-test. As evident from Table 4, the average mean score for students in the pre-test is 3.38. After conducting a series of workshops to raise students' awareness in differentiating fake news from real news, facts from opinions, and reality from fiction, the mean score of the students increased significantly to 7.88.

According to the statistical analysis, there is a significant difference in scores between the pre-test and post-test, indicating an increase in students' awareness. Tables 4 and 5 suggest a very significant difference in students' level of awareness regarding the use of fact-checking and their ability to recognize the language of fake news used on social media.

## 5. Results and Discussion

This section discusses the results obtained from the questionnaire, experimental groups, the pre-test, and the post-test. The pre-test was conducted with all participants before the intervention and

treatment began, while the post-test was conducted with a smaller number of students after the treatment.

To answer the first research question, "To what extent did university students' awareness of fact-checking skills in detecting disinformation and distinguishing facts from opinions increase after participating in a series of workshops?", results show that students' awareness who participated in a series of workshops about skills for detecting fake news significantly improved, as reported in Tables 4 and 5. Regarding the second research question, "To what extent are Kurdish undergraduate students aware of language ideology being used in social media disinformation?", the results from Table 3, Section C, items 2, 3, 5, and 7 indicate that participants are rarely or sometimes aware of ideology being used on social media.

Evidence from this study shows that first and second-year Kurdish university students may have insufficient skills to critically differentiate between disinformation, facts, opinions, and fiction, as they lack adequate knowledge of fact-checking skills, as stated in Table 3. The findings suggest that participants had difficulties in differentiating false information from true information posted on social media. Disinformation is often ideologically designed to evoke fear, hatred, and damage reputations. The findings of this study are consistent with the results of what Baptista et al. (2021) indicated in the literature.

Based on the data analysis from Section B, Item 5, students at Kurdish universities spend approximately 5 hours per day on social media, comparable to students in the USA. This indicates that students worldwide are increasingly engaged with social media. Despite this high level of engagement, most students are skeptical about the information presented on these platforms. However, the results show that many students are influenced by various semiotic elements posted on social media. This underscores the importance of teaching critical thinking and media literacy skills to prevent students from being easily deceived, which can lead to societal misinformation.

The results of this study indicate that 47% of students believe the language used on social media is often intentionally misleading and serves political agendas or personal interests. Similarly, Rampersad & Althiyabi, 2020; Li & Su, 2020; Pérez-Escolare et al., 2021, as mentioned in the literature review, postulate that disinformation is intentionally used to deceive audiences, whether they are students or ordinary people.

According to the results and findings mentioned in previous works, social media contents matter. For example, any piece of text used on social media has purposes such as providing information, persuading target people, or entertaining. This is supported by the findings of this study. Language structures and word choices play a significant role in persuading individuals, with about 40% of students believing that the language of social media shapes people's perception.

Undeniably, in the era of advanced technology, students are constantly exposed to a vast array of information delivered through various channels of social media platforms. The issue of fake news continues to unfold, and it is an immense concern since social media's content is often understood and acceptable. To combat this, it is crucial for university students to learn fact-checking skills to distinguish between fake and real news.

Language ideology is not only used for political purposes but also for advertising and promotional marketing to manipulate people into buying goods. Hence, educating the younger generation to distinguish between facts and fiction is crucial. This education is vital for maintaining a society that is safe, particularly in today's fast-paced, interconnected world. In other words, education equips students with critical thinking skills and ethical awareness about disinformation. Therefore, now more than ever, raising awareness among students on social media disinformation can contribute to social stability and the well-being of their society.

## 6. Conclusion

This study has assessed Kurdish university students' perceptions of language used on social media and their level of understanding and evaluation of the information they encounter on social media platforms. Overall, students demonstrated some basic knowledge about cognitive skills in fact-checking media and the language of disinformation. After conducting a series of workshops, the

students' knowledge increased dramatically in using fact-checking tools, as evidenced by pre-test and post-test results. These tests were carried out to determine how students' cognitive skills and awareness of fake news language improved after participating in workshops on fact-checking, disinformation language, and distinguishing between facts, opinions, and fiction.

In response to Null Hypothesis 1 (Students have awareness in distinguishing between factual language and opinions used in social media), the results show that most students were not able to differentiate facts from opinions. Therefore, H1 is rejected. As for the Null Hypothesis (Students' awareness of social media disinformation will not increase after participating in a series of workshops), according to the results in Tables 4 and 5, the mean score of students increased; therefore, H2 is also rejected. Further, generally, the results of this study indicate that linguistic features, vocabulary, and lexical items play critical roles in persuasion and deception.

As disinformation is still an unresolved issue, this study recommends that the Ministry of Higher Education & Scientific Research, the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Culture should address the urgent need for designing educational approaches that can mitigate the impact of disinformation on young people's awareness of fake news language on social media platforms. Such initiatives will help students become more acquainted with the information they encounter, enabling them to critically evaluate information on social media. Therefore, teachers and academic leaders should prioritize addressing the spread of false information, especially among university students who frequently encounter disinformation on social media.

It would be vital to recommend a central strategy in this endeavor, equipping university students with the right skills to recognize disinformation and distinguish between untruth and truth, irrespective of their preexisting ideologies or biases. Furthermore, there is an urgent need for Higher Education to take action to reform curricula and add media literacy to raise student awareness. This could be done by developing an approach to combat misinformation, and students should be taught about the context, linguistic features, and ideologies used on social media for personal or political purposes from primary school onwards.

This study, however, has a few limitations. The sample size chosen is not sufficient for this empirical study; hence, a larger sample size from other universities could have been used. There was a lack of local studies and resources to compare the results with previous studies. The period allocated for conducting the series of workshops could have been extended to at least eight weeks.

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## تأيد لؤلؤزيای زمان له پشت شاشه دیجيتاله كانه وه: بهر زكر دنه وهی هوشيارى به كار هينته رانى توره كومه لايه تيبه كان له زانيارى ناراست

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### پوخته

له دهيهى رابردو وهه قوتاببيانى زانكو و كهسانى ديكهش بهر كه وتهيان له گهل زانيارى و بلاوكرا وهى پلاتفورمه كانى سؤشبال ميديادا ههيه. ههروهك دهزانين، ئەم زانياربيانه بهشيكى زوربان ناراستن و خهلك بؤ مه بهستى سياسى، دهستكهوتى كهسى ياخود دارايى، به لاريداده بن. ئامانجى ئەم تويزينه وهيه، ههلسهنگاندى تواناى قوتاببيانى زانكويه له دياريكردنى زانياربيه ههله كانى سؤشبال ميديا؛ ئەمهش له روانگهى ئايدولؤلؤزيای زمانى و پيدانى كارامهيهى و ههروهها هوشياركردنه وهى قوتاببيان، بؤ دياريكردنى ههوالى ساخته (زانيارى ناراست)، كه تواناى ههلسهنگاندى راستيه كانى پهيوهست بهم بابه ته دهستنيشاندهكات (تواناى ههلسهنگاندى راستيه دركپيكراره كانى بؤ دياريددهكات). بؤ ئەمهش پشتمان بهستوه به ليكولينه وه له چونه تى تيگه بيشتن و كارليككردنى قوتاببيان، به پيى ئايدولؤلؤزيای زمان، له سؤشبال ميديادا. له م تويزينه وهيه دا، ناراسته وخو ئەو بيروباوهر و به هايانه ئاشكرا دهكرين، كه كارىگه ريبان له سهر ههله بستن و بلاوكردنه وهى زانيارى ناراست ههيه. ئەم تويزينه وهيه رونيددهكات وه، كه چؤن ستراتيزه كانى پهيوهنديكردن و تايبه تمه ندييه كانى زمان، رؤلان له بلاوكردنه وهى زانيارى ناراست ههيه. ئەنجامه كان به پيى گروهه تاقيكارييه كان ئەوه دهخه نه پرو، كه قوتاببييه كان دواى به شداريكردن بيا له وؤركشوپه كاندا، زانيارى و ليها توييه كانيان باستر بووه.

ئەم تويزينه وهيه ليكولينه وه له و ميكانيزمه دهكات، كه له ريگاي زمانه وه تيروانينه كان دهستنيشاندهكات و كارىگه رى له سهر بيروباوهر په كان دروستدهكات؛ ههروهها ئاماژه بؤ بهر زكر دنه وهى ئاستى رؤشنيبرى و تواناى بيكر دنه وهى رهخه گرانه بؤ چاره سه ركردنى پيشاندانى زانيارى ناراست دهكات. ئەم تويزينه وهيه ريبازيكى تيگه له به كار دههينت؛ له وانهش راپرسى بيش تاقيكردنه وه و دواى تاقيكردنه وه؛ دواچار داتاكانيش به پروگرامى (SPSS) شيكاركراون.

**وشه سه ره كيبه كان:** زانيارى ناراست، سؤشبال ميديا، ئايدولؤلؤزيای زمان، قوتابى زانكو

## أيدولوجية اللغة وراء الشاشة الإلكترونية : زيادة وعي المستخدمين بالمعلومات المضللة على وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي

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### ملخص

في العقود الأخيرة، يتعرض طلاب الجامعات وغيرهم باستمرار للمعلومات المنتشرة عبر منصات التواصل الاجتماعي. غالباً ما تكون هذه المعلومات غير صحيحة وتضلل الأشخاص عمداً لتحقيق مكاسب شخصية ومالية وسياسية. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تقييم قدرة طلاب الجامعات على اكتشاف المعلومات المضللة على وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي وزيادة الوعي بالأخبار المزيفة، وتزويدهم بمهارات التحقق من الحقائق ذات الصلة. نتيجة فحص كيفية فهم الطلاب لأيدولوجية اللغة وتفاعلهم معها على وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي، يكشف هذا البحث عن المعتقدات والقيم الضمنية التي تؤثر على خلق ونشر المعلومات المضللة. ويحلل كيف تساهم الميزات اللغوية واستراتيجيات الاتصال في نشر المعلومات الغير صحيحة. أظهرت نتائج المجموعات التجريبية أن الطلاب قاموا بتحسين معارفهم ومهاراتهم بعد المشاركة في ورش العمل. تبحث الدراسة في الآليات التي من خلالها تشكل اللغة التصورات وتؤثر على المعتقدات، مما يسلب الضوء على الحاجة إلى زيادة المعرفة بوسائل التواصل الاجتماعي ومهارات التفكير النقدي لمعالجة مشهد المعلومات المضللة. تستخدم هذه الدراسة منهجاً مختلط الأساليب، بما في ذلك الدراسات الاستقصائية والاختبارات القبلية والاختبارات البعدية وبرنامج SPSS لتحليل محتوى تفاعلات وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** التضليل، وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي، الأيدولوجيا اللغوية، الطالب الجامعي