BEHAVIOR OF LANGUAGE STUDENTS TOWARDS EXAMINING INFORMATION ONLINE

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ABSTRACT: This research examined the behaviors of language students towards examining information online. A mixed method design was used and an unstructured openended question was also constructed to gather data from the 86 participants from Isabela State University San Mariano Campus. Hence, the thematic approach was also used in this study. The researchers initially planned a platform to gather and collect data to create themes and to analyze the main point of the chosen respondents. The study findings confirmed two themes; report fake news and validate information online. It shows that most of the language students are knowledgeable enough to assess information online to minimize spreading fake news on various platforms. Based on the results of this study, it revealed that students are carefully analyzing the information. It also shows that most of the students tend to analyze facts of the information that they obtained online. Furthermore, because of the proliferation of fake news on the internet, students become more cautious through evaluating the information that they gained from the internet.

Keywords: Information online, behavior, fake news, reliability and credibility

I. Introduction

Social media platforms are the most popular and widely used applications used on the Internet (Kemp 2017). Online information is the information obtained through internet sources. Most students are proficient at locating information but often have difficulty understanding citations, synthesizing, and evaluating online information (Ross, Fosmire, M., Wertz, Cardella, &Purzer, 2011). Online information spread rapidly across the country, and no one could stop it. As we live in the 21st century, the technology that can control the lives of individuals is constantly evolving. Almost all student teachers were enthusiastic

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about technology. But while they know how to work, that doesn't mean they are all literate in utilizing social media platforms. Language students' behavior when assessing information on the Internet has different perspectives and knowledge. Students at Isabella State University in San Mariano had easy access to trusted or untrusted information using the Internet and social media platforms. Due to the abundance of information online, many students will inevitably want to believe and find it challenging to identify the right and wrong information.

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Professor Beth Hewitt considers it pertinent to educate children from the earliest age (Tickle, 2018). To have been more conscious of the information online when they interacted with their social media websites. Because, "It has never been more important for young people to develop their critical thinking, news knowledge, and the skills to discern lies from the truth, especially on their social networks," as James Harding, BBC's Director of News and Current Affairs, says (Cooke, 2017). Being unaware of social media activities, language students couldn't even examine the information they share, view, and click as long as they are convinced and catch their attention and interest.

Students or teenagers involve themselves in unethical and anti-social activities on social media portals, share fake material and different types of posts harmful to the country's national dignity and foreign relationship (Chhetry, 2017). However, information-sharing by social-network users can violate privacy (Garg & Camp, 2015) and security (Benson, Saridakis & Tennakoon, 2015). Thus, many education students couldn't understand the information well. Still, they kept sharing information with unknown sources and linked in, which is why they would cause infringement. It is therefore essential to study people's use of online social networks, especially where users are non-specialists in security and privacy, to reduce such violations (Garg & Camp, 2015)

Students are more confident in documenting and citing references but have more problems with information gathering and then evaluating (Hill, Best, & Dalessio, 2012). Insubstantial, there are some that they would have to be more careful on their actions in terms of manipulating information online because this would reflect themselves through what they had done. Although the public has different characteristics and is not entirely naive, nor are these news items as powerful, as Badillo (2019, p. 31) explains, it is evident that "the lack of formal or informal education processes in the use of new media" is affecting our perception of their effects: "Schools are vital in helping children, and young people effectively discern the truth when they seek information and news online" (Goldberg, 2017, p. 436). To develop their capabilities in discern things, they must be guided by their parents, teacher, and other experts, for them to analyze and understand the importance of being knowledgeable in using social media platforms and also being critical in assessing information online.

This study aimed to investigate the behaviors of language education students towards examining information online. Specifically, the following research questions were addressed:

- 1. How do language students assess various information on different social media platforms?
- 2. How language students apply information online in their daily lives?
- 3. How do language students react on the fake information they encounter online?

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II. Methodology

Participants

The participants of this study were composed of 86 students who are currently studying at Isabela Sate University – San Mariano Campus Major in English. In this study, the researchers used purposive sampling method. According to Tuner D.P (2020), Purposive sampling is where a researcher select a sample based on their knowledge about the study and population.

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Instruments

This study used online survey questionnaires as the main instrument to gather all the data needed. The questionnaires are subdivided into three categories. The first category seeks to determine how the language students assess the information on different social media platforms. The second part determines how the languages student apply information online. And the last part determines how language students react on the fake information they encounter online

Cronbach alpha is used to determine if the questions are liable or not. The following results and interpretation of the test were presented below.

| Survey Questionnaire | Cronbach's Alpha | Internal Consistency |
|---|------------------|-----------------------------|
| Behavior of language students in assessing the information online. | 0.92 | Excellent |
| Behavior of language students in applying information online in daily lives. | 0.91 | Excellent |

The researcher used 4 points Likert scale to identify the language students' behavior towards information. It includes the weight, the mean range, and adjectival rating to get the specific responses from the respondents.

| Weight | Mean Range | Adjectival Rating |
|--------|------------|-------------------|
| 4 | 3.51-4.50 | Always |
| 3 | 2.51-3.50 | Often |
| 2 | 1.51-2.50 | Sometimes |
| 1 | 1.0-1.50 | Never |

Procedure

This research was conducted during the first semester of the school year 2021-2022. This was accomplished through collecting and analyzing the answer of the selected respondents. In addition, the researchers used a survey questionnaire in gathering the data which is divided into two categories; structured and unstructured questions are made through

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using Google form. To reach the respondents, the survey questionnaire was disseminated online by the use of messenger considering the current situation in collecting data. The researchers used a laptop and a cellphone to obtain the data, then, the respondents were given enough time to respond to the survey questions. Wherein the survey focused on the "Behavior of Language Student towards Examining Information Online". After the survey has been completed, the researchers collected the results from both quantitative and qualitative. After that, the researchers tallied the result and interpreted it.

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III. Result

Behavior of language students in assessing the information online

The first determinant of response was the behavior of languages students in assessing the information on different social media platforms. The table below shows the result of 4 point Likert scale and an analysis and interpretation of the data gathered.

Table 1. Behavior of language students in assessing information on different social media platforms

| Indicator | Weighted Mean | Adjectival Rating Often |
|--|------------------|-------------------------------|
| Carefully analyzing information online to combat fake news | 2.96 | |
| Distinguishing right content from false information | 2.99 | Often |
| Identify which online information are legally reuse. | 2.79 | Often |
| Determine who owns the information and ideas on the internet. | 2.98 | Often |
| Scanning/Skimming a web page to get to the key relevant information quickly. | 2.94 | Often |
| Organizing and filtering a large number of search results. | 2.71 | Often |
| Identifying trustworthy sources found on the internet. When looking for information on the internet, don't | 3.04 | Often |
| limit with one source. | 2.94 | Often |
| Looking for reliable source online to verify information. | 3.6 | Always |
| Scrutinized the logical sequence and consistency of the information | 2.89 | Often |
| Overall | 2.93 | Often |

The data above shows the overall result of the survey that acquired 2.93 weighted mean that determines the behavior of the language students in assessing information on different social media platforms which the overall result of the adjectival rating was "often".



The indicator above, "Looking for reliable source online to verify information," obtained the highest mean with a total of 3.6. Followed by "Identifying trustworthy sources found on the internet," indicator which got a 3.04 weighted mean. The third indicator, "Distinguishing right content from false information," got a 2.99 weighted mean. Meanwhile, the fourth indicator, "Determine who owns the information and ideas on the internet," got a 2.98 weighted mean. The findings further indicate that indicator marked as fifth "Carefully analyzing information online to combat fake news," obtained 2.96. Followed by the two indicators which marked as six, "Scanning/Skimming a web page to get to the key relevant information quickly," and "When looking for information on the internet, don't limit with one source," both acquired 2.94 weighted mean. The indicator that marked as seventh "Scrutinized the logical sequence and consistency of the information," got a 2.89 weighted mean. While the indicator that marked as eighth "Identify which online information are legally reuse," acquired a 2.79 weighted mean. The indicator that marked as last "Organizing and filtering a large number of search results," is mere 2.71 weighted mean.

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Behavior of language students in applying information online in daily lives

The second determinant of response was the behavior of language students in applying information online in their daily lives. The table below shows the result of 4 point Likert scale and analysis and interpretation of the data gathered.

Table 2. Behavior of language students in applying information online in their daily lives

| Indicator | Weighted Mean | Adjectival Rating |
|--|---------------|----------------------|
| I always make sure that the information I have read online is verified before sharing it to someone. | 3.02 | Often |
| I used information online to enlighten my knowledge about different issues. | 3.06 | Often |
| I always make sure that the information I read online is still up-to-date and accurate before using it as reference in my study. | 3.08 | Often |
| I don't hesitate to report sources online who are posting fake news. | 3.06 | Often |
| I only use the information I obtain online for relevant purposes. | 2.6 | Often |
| I use information online to substantiate the knowledge that I have. | 2.85 | Often |
| I used information online to help us understand what is happening around the society. | 2.9 | Often |
| I encourage myself to filter the information that I read online. | 3.03 | Often |
| I don't usually believe in any information online unless it is verified by a credible source. | 2.88 | Often |
| I always check evidences presented in the information that was posted online. | 3.03 | Often |

Over All 2.95 Often

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The table above shows the behavior of language students in applying information online in their daily lives. The data above acquired an overall weighted mean of 2.95 which the overall result of the adjectival rating was "often."

The result revealed that the indicator "I always make sure that the information I read online is still up-to-date and accurate before using it as reference in my study." was the highest proportion with a total of 3.81 weighted mean. Followed by the two indicator "I used information online to enlighten my knowledge about different issues," and "I don't hesitate to report sources online who are posting fake news," which obtained a 3.06 weighted mean. The same with the two indicator that marked as third, "I encourage myself to filter the information that I read online," and "I always check evidences presented in the information that was posted online," both got a 3.03 weighted mean. The following indicator "I always make sure that the information I have read online is verified before sharing it to someone," marked as fourth got 3.02 weighted mean. Followed by the fifth indicator "I used information online to help us understand what is happening around the society," which got a 2.9 weighted mean. Moreover, the sixth indicator, "I don't usually believe in any information online unless it is verified by a credible source," obtaining a 2.88 weighted mean. Whereas the indicator that marked as seventh "I use information online to substantiate the knowledge that I have," acquired 2.85 weighted mean. Lastly, the indicator "I only use the information I obtain online for relevant purposes" acquired the lowest mean 2.6.

Strategies of language students in validating information online

The study's findings confirmed three themes: Report fake news, validate information, Ignore fake information. It answers one of the study's objectives, "How do language students react on the fake information they encounter online."

Theme 1: Report fake news

Mostly the participants' reaction to encountering fake information online, they are immediately reporting the source of information. According to one participant, "Check the source of information, and if it is fake, I will report it to stop spreading nonsense information" (P23). At some point of one of the respondents said, "When I saw it in any online platform, just report it and don't visit it anymore" (P20). Usually, they report fake information to stop the source from spreading nonsense content.

Moreover, other participants view that reporting the source of information will decrease the number of spreading fake information. In addition, it will minimize the victim of this fake news. One participant stated, "I give awareness to other people in social media that the news or information was fake. Sometimes I report that information, and as far as I can do, I will tell other people that there's no need to believe or react to it as it is fake" (P63).

Reporting the source of fake information is found helpful to language students. The participant stated, "We, social media users, will always encounter fake information online. It is inevitable for us to encounter this because of that unmannered individual who loves to spread fake information. I usually report the fake information and the account that posted it for the social media community guidelines to review that information, and warn and block the account, because we do not know how far the information goes and how many people will get fooled. I

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just felt bad because instead of spreading the good news, they chose to fool others. It is like spreading fakes is their happiness" (P65).

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Theme 2: Validate information

Validate sources is a passive help to persuade readers to believe in the information posted online. Some participants are usually validated information to avoid fake news. Students felt that assessing information is the key to determining whether the information is fake or real. As of participant explained, "I look for credible sources to know the truth, and I occasionally stick to or limit myself to a single source when gathering news or information online" (P4). "If I have read the information, I will check it first if it is fake or not, then, I will react the information regarding what I have read, and of course, if the information is fake, I will react like" (P11). "Fake information is very rampant today as of that I protect myself from it and make sure every information I read or encounter online is I always verify if it is true or not to avoid sharing fake information" (15). On the other hand, validating and evaluating information is one thing that can help students in getting accurate and authentic sources. According to one of them, "I am skeptical and choose to investigate potentially fake information before sharing it" (P9).

Additionally, it was revealed that students usually consult with their family members and are relatives before believing information online. One of the participants stated, "In this situation, I always inform my relatives and friends regarding this news for them to be aware and not easily deceived by it" (P13). Also, "To be sure that my relatives and friends are aware of this and are not easily deceived by it, I always inform them of it especially for those believing in wrong information or fake information in social media" (P26).

IV. Discussion

The findings of this study provide conclusive answers to the various study objectives. Firstly, the behavior of language students when evaluating online information. According to the survey, the overall mean for language students' behavior when evaluating information online was 2.93, indicating that students are evaluating information they gathered online. This demonstrates that students are not being deceived by the information they obtain online. Given the prevalence of fake news online, this is a valuable skill. According to Pennycook and Rand (2018), inaccurate beliefs endanger democracy, and fake news is a troubling and direct method of disseminating inaccurate beliefs via social media. As a result, fake news is prevalent on social media, where the majority of students spend an inordinate amount of time. As of January 2021, 80.7 percent of the Philippines' total population uses social media in their daily lives (Kemp, 2021). This demonstrates how vulnerable 80.7 percent of the population is to fake news. According to Maurer et al., 2018, warnings about the detrimental effects of online media on student learning have been issued. Online media has both positive and negative effects on students' learning. Students should evaluate and criticize information in order to avoid receiving incorrect information or making an information-gathering error. Frick (1991) argues that information evaluation is critical for individuals, educational institutions, and society as a whole. Evaluation is a vital life skill that serves as the foundation for lifelong learning. Additionally, Mislove et al., 2007 emphasize the importance of evaluation in decision-making and even in gathering information online to obtain accurate and valid sources.

Second, the language students' behavior when it comes to applying information in their daily lives. According to the survey, the overall mean for language students' behavior

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when it comes to applying information online 2.95, indicating that students are carefully analyzing and applying information . Apuke, O. D., and Iyendo, T. O. (2018) explained that the majority of prior research on the use of internet technology for educational purposes in contemporary educational settings in developing countries has focused primarily on its effect on academic performance, communication, and general educational purposes. This shows that students are utilizing the information they obtain online for educational and communication purposes. Information use is concerned with determining which sources of information people use and how they apply that information to make sense of their lives and situations. This use can be either instrumental or affective in terms of influencing how people feel. The term "information" refers to data that people use to make sense of the world. Klayman and Ha (1987) summarize that people gather information from a variety of sources in order to bolster their beliefs. Certain students apply information solely to bolster their ideas, knowledge, and beliefs. When utilizing information from the internet on a daily basis, it should be evaluated for its truthfulness, authenticity, validity, and credibility.

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Educational Implication

The research study revealed that language students examined the information they gathered online, and they applied it in their daily lives considering accuracy, reliability, and validity of information. Moreover, this study benefits the language students to avoid fake news or false information. In line with the data above, the following implications are offered.

- Integrate different activities or lessons in the curriculum to strengthen and widen the knowledge of students in relation to the process of evaluating and checking trusted website for reliable sources or information.
- Promote and improve students' digital literacy to be smart consumer of information online by teaching them the netiquette and proper way of assessing information.
- Students should be taught about the importance and value of knowing how to assess information. Teaching students how to do a fact- check will make them to have a good quality of information.

V. CONCLUSION

There is a lot of information available or can be found on the internet. It results in the different behavior of students in analyzing information obtained, read, or seen on the internet. Language students have different perspectives and knowledge in assessing information online. Many of them find it challenging to identify the reliability of gathered data. Some criticize the information they had seen on the internet before believing or even sharing it with others. However, there are still some who easily believe in every communication that they read on the internet without analyzing or examining whether it is factual information or not. The emergence of different social media platforms like Facebook, TikTok, and Instagram also affect how language Education students react to various information online. The information that Language students see and read on the internet affects their daily lives in how they are influenced by this information and by the people involved. There are also instances that they instantly give comments on various posts, especially on Facebook, without even finding the truth behind that issue or information. It is essential to know the different reactions or behavior of Language students in the information they see and read on the internet to examine whether they take the information wisely before making any judgment or drawing conclusions.

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This study finds that language students do not easily believe what they have seen on the internet. Based on the survey conducted, it appears that language students are making sure that the information they have seen on the internet is verified before sharing it with others to avoid spreading fake news. Also, this study determined that the language students will not hesitate to report a website if they encounter unverified information posted on that site. In addition, it appears that even though much fake news has spread online, more students are still carefully analyzing the information obtained and read on the internet. They are Language students trained to analyze data or information before sharing it with others. Though most of them know how to assess and classify information from not, it is still important to educate students on the proper behavior towards accessing information online. In this modern world where technology is a significant factor in evaluating obtained information online, it is essential to encourage students, especially language students, to be wise and vigilant in examining information before getting involved. It will help them avoid spreading fake news or information.

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