

## Covid-19 Hoaxes in Virtual Media: Perlocutionary Effects in Cyber-Pragmatic Perspective

R. Kunjana Rahardi

Sanata Dharma University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

kunjana@usd.ac.id

### Abstract

*This research focuses on the perlocutionary effects of Covid-19 hoaxes in virtual media platforms. The objects of the research are the perlocutionary effects of Covid-19 hoaxes. The research data included locutions pertaining to Covid-19 hoaxes and their perlocutionary effects on the readers. The substantial research data sources were the excerpts of headlines in the social media which contain the perlocutionary effects of Covid-19 hoaxes. The locational data source was the social media, particularly Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. The data were collected using the observation method, especially uninvolved interview. The techniques employed were recording and note-taking. The data was validated theoretically by conforming to the existing relevant theories. The data was also validated by experts in pragmatics and its virtual phenomena. The next step was data analysis. The analysis method applied in this research was the distributional analysis employing the immediate constituent analysis. In addition, the extra-lingual identity method was applied. The research found that there were eight perlocutionary effects of Covid-19 hoaxes, in that the Covid-19 hoaxes aimed to (1) deceive the public, (2) disseminate misinformation, (3) suggest the public with inaccurate information, (4) incite civil unrest, (5) raise public suspicion, (6) raise public rumors, (7) mislead the public with inaccurate information, and (8) spread hoaxes among the public. The research is expected to raise the community's critical awareness of the negative impact of Covid-19 hoaxes on people's minds and behaviours.*

**Keywords:** perlocutionary effects, Covid-19 hoaxes, cyberpragmatics

### Introduction

The spread of Covid-19 in Indonesia since March 2019 has hurt the social economic, cultural, and political life. As of May 17 2020, the number of number of people tested positive for coronavirus in Indonesia reached 17,514 people. Out of these, 4,129 patients have recovered, and 1,148 patients died. *Worldometer* recorded the top three countries with the highest cases of coronavirus infection, namely the United States, Russia, and Spain respectively. The number of positive cases increased phenomenally and drastically within days. Meanwhile, WHO announced that we must make peace with the coronavirus since it is predicted that the virus will linger on for years before any vaccine is invented to battle it. The Joko Widodo administration also declared the same thing that we must live in peace with Covid-19. Otherwise, the people will suffer from the severe economic impacts on their livelihood.

The people's social life will be deeply affected by the Covid-19. In other words, it is important to raise the awareness of each and every member of the society to resume working, heeding the safety and health protocols prescribed by the government and health officials. Every citizen must live healthily, peacefully, and collaboratively with other fellow citizens in order to fight against the spread of Covid-19. Mutual cooperation and collaboration among the people in the past months has proven to decrease positive cases and to increase resilience amidst the prolonged pandemic. In the social and cultural perspective, particularly in terms of language, language must be used properly according to its proper function and use [1]. Unfortunately, on 18 April 2020, the Minister of

Communication and Information found 554 Covid-19-related hoaxes spread across digital platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Youtube.

Out of 893 cases of hoax being followed up, the remaining 316 cases were to be followed up. It was reported that 89 people were declared as suspects by the Police, and 14 people were arrested and 17 people were processed. Whoever engages in any conduct with intent to convey, forward, and disseminate false or misleading information in social media platforms would constitute a violation of chapters in the Criminal Codes and could be subjected to a maximum of six (6) years in prison and a maximum fine of Rp.1 billion. Despite the threat, Covid-19 hoaxes are still spreading uncontrollably. The threat of imprisonment and fine is clear for the offenders, but the hoax producers seem to be undeterred by the threat.

## Literature Review

Linguistically, Covid-19 hoaxes are manifestation of language malfunction [2]. Essentially, as the means to develop the mind and to establish communication with other people, language has been misused as the means to create and disseminate hoaxes. Hoax can be defined as fake news or false information. The truth being upheld through language is twisted and manipulated by the hoax producers to stir trouble and wreak havoc through the use of provocative headlines, distorted titles, and other violation of language use [3].

Essentially, a language must be used properly and correctly according to its noble purpose. Instead, the language is abused to create and spread hoaxes and false information, an act which betrays the purpose of a language [4]. The Indonesian language must be used by its speakers for noble purposes, such as to communicate ideas, to express feelings, to educate, to spread information, etc. However, some irresponsible people have used the language for vicious purposes through hoaxes, fake news, and false information to create social unrest. Linguists must not be apathetic with such reality. Linguists are the vanguard of language ennoblement effort on whose shoulders this responsibility rests [5]. It is for this purpose that the research was conducted.

The theoretical framework of this research is first of all the theory of speech acts. Austin (1962) states that speech acts are divided into three categories, namely locutionary act, illocutionary act, and perlocutionary act. Locutionary act is an act of saying something. Illocutionary act is an act of doing something; while the perlocutionary act is an act of affecting someone [6]. Other experts in speech acts are John Searle, Kreidle, and Holmes. However, their explanation will be discussed in another paper as it is not related to the focus of the current research. This research focuses on the perlocutionary effects of Covid-19 hoaxes.

Perlocutionary acts are intended to convey the effects of an headline. To illustrate, we can examine TV commercials. TV commercials are made to influence the viewers to buy the products being advertised. The way the viewers are influenced by the advertisements is related to perlocutionary acts. How someone is persuaded to buy a certain product, i.e. cosmetics, is related to the perlocutionary acts in pragmatics. The same thing applies to the Covid-19 hoaxes. How far the hoax influences or affects the social media users is the question that pragmatics seeks to answer.

Pragmatics is the branch of linguistics that studies the speaker meaning [7]. The speaker meaning is often understood as the pragmatic meaning. Pragmatic meaning is often contrasted with the semantic meaning in that the pragmatic meaning deals with the external aspects of meaning, while the semantic meaning deals with the internal aspects of meaning. Therefore, meaning in pragmatics is triadic, while meaning in semantics is dyadic. In the field of semiotics, semantic meaning is dyadic, having two dimensions,

namely the signifier and the signified [8]. In pragmatics, the two dimensions are acknowledged in addition to one other aspect, namely the external contexts. The omission of contexts in pragmatics will result in misinterpretation of the headline meaning. The reason is that the ambiguity in expressing the meaning cannot be solved. Therefore, the ambiguity in pragmatics does not occur thanks to the external contexts [9].

The external contexts in the current pragmatics are related with the digital technology in the industrial revolution 4.0. In the internet era, the external contexts in pragmatics are virtual in nature. In other words, the external contexts can be divided into two, namely conventional and virtual external contexts [10]. The elements in the virtual external contexts are not significantly different from the elements in the conventional external contexts. The distinguishing factors are the aspects in each element of the contexts. To illustrate, the elements of speaker and hearer, or participants. Aspects in the participants are different from the aspects of participants in the past, such as age, gender, ethnicity, which are believed to determine the speaker meaning in the conventional external context [11]. However, in the virtual external contexts, such aspects are no longer important.

Through social media, people can interact globally. We can communicate with people from the other end of the globe. In social media pragmatics, such virtual aspects are more important than conventional aspects [12]. In the virtual external contexts, people may not need to see face-to-face. The other elements of contexts that draw the differences between the conventional and virtual contexts are the concepts of place and time. Conventionally, people are tied to the concepts of place and time, but virtually, communication is not limited to space and time anymore. Someone can freely speak and communicate anytime, because time is no longer a constraint. People can meet anywhere because virtually people can meet easily [13]. Thus, the interpretation of meaning must consider the shifts of contexts as mentioned earlier.

This research focuses on the perlocutionary effects of Covid-19 hoaxes in the social media platforms. The research is important to raise people's critical awareness of media literacy [14]. The research results will inform the society of the negative perlocutionary acts. Therefore, the society must be vigilant of the Covid-19 hoaxes as they negatively affect the people's critical awareness. The more people are easily steered by the hoaxes, the more dangerous the Covid-19 hoaxes are for our lives. Therefore, it is important to raise critical awareness in dealing with the rampant spread of Covid-19 hoaxes in the digital era. Social media can be harnessed to the benefit of the people to communicate and interact with fellow human beings, instead of being abused to create hoax and fake news.

## **Methodology**

Research Methodology determines the success of the research. Therefore, research methodology must be planned well before being executed in order to yield optimum results. The research is a descriptive qualitative, not a confirmative nor grounded research [15]. The research object is the perlocutionary effects of Covid-19 hoaxes. The research data is the perlocutionary effects of Covid-19 locutions. The research substantive data source is the excerpts of headlines found in the social media, which contain the perlocutionary effects of Covid-19 hoaxes.

The locational data source is the social media, especially Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter [16]. The data was collected through the observation method, especially the uninvolved interview. The techniques used were the recording and note-taking techniques. Further, the data was validated theoretically by confirming with the existing relevant theories. In addition to theoretical validation, the data was also validated to the experts in pragmatics and its virtual phenomena. The validation was done after the data were classified and typified properly [17].

The next step was to analyze the data. The analysis method was the distributional analysis employing the immediate constituent analysis. In addition to the distributional method, the extra-lingual identity method was applied [18]. The analysis results were reported by applying the method of informal presentation.

## Research Findings and Discussion

### Research Findings

The research yielded eight perlocutionary effects of Covid-19 hoaxes with very limited data. The eight perlocutionary effects of Covid-19 hoaxes aim to: (1) deceive the public, (2) disseminate misinformation, (3) suggest the public with inaccurate information, (4) incite civil unrest, (5) raise public suspicion, (6) raise public rumors, (7) mislead the public with inaccurate information, and (8) spread hoaxes among the public. The following table shows the findings in detail.

**Table 1. Perlocutionary Effects of Covid-19 Hoaxes**

Perlocutionary Effects of Hoaxes	Data Sources	Data Coding
Perlocutionary Effect to Deceive the Public	<i>Israel telah Menyembuhkan Pasien Virus Corona Baru di Tiongkok dengan Vaksin yang Mereka Kembangkan</i> [Israel cured coronavirus patients in China using the vaccine they developed] <a href="https://twitter.com/AFPperiksafakta/status/1230415574653489152?s=20">https://twitter.com/AFPperiksafakta/status/1230415574653489152?s=20</a>	Covid-19 Hoax Data 1
Perlocutionary Effect to disseminate misinformation	<i>Ada 40.000 TKA yang Bekerja di Kawasan Industri di Morowali</i> [40,000 migrant workers working in Morowali industrial area] <a href="https://twitter.com/AFPperiksafakta/status/1245602917966471168?s=20">https://twitter.com/AFPperiksafakta/status/1245602917966471168?s=20</a>	Covid-19 Hoax Data 2
Perlocutionary Effect to suggest the public with inaccurate information	<i>Orang-Orang Tiongkok Masuk Islam Karena karena Takut Virus Corona</i> [Chinese people embraced Islam for fear of Coronavirus] <a href="https://twitter.com/AFPperiksafakta/status/1230811076150751232?s=20">https://twitter.com/AFPperiksafakta/status/1230811076150751232?s=20</a>	Covid-19 Hoax Data 3
Perlocutionary Effect to incite civil unrest	<i>Imbauan Puasa Selama 7 Hari pada Ramadan Tahun ini Karena Virus Corona COVID-19</i> [Seven-Day-Fasting called for to combat coronavirus] <a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/B_RbZg4l8F2/?utm_source=ig_web_button_share_sheet">https://www.instagram.com/p/B_RbZg4l8F2/?utm_source=ig_web_button_share_sheet</a>	Covid-19 Hoax Data 4
Perlocutionary Effect to raise public suspicion	<i>Ulama di Windusari Dijemput Paksa karena Terkait Corona</i> [Clerics in Windusari Taken to Police Custody for Alleged Coronavirus Case] <a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/CAKvIRdIlyW/?utm_source=ig_web_button_share_sheet">https://www.instagram.com/p/CAKvIRdIlyW/?utm_source=ig_web_button_share_sheet</a>	Covid-19 Hoax Data 5

Perlocutionary Effect to raise public rumors	<i>Pesan Berantai Warga Taman Raya Tahap V Batam Zona Merah</i> [Chained Messages among Residents of Taman Raya Tahap V on Red-Zone Batam] <a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/CADHpeUFS9H/?utm_source=ig_web_button_share_sheet">https://www.instagram.com/p/CADHpeUFS9H/?utm_source=ig_web_button_share_sheet</a>	Covid-19 Hoax Data 6
Perlocutionary Effect to mislead the public with inaccurate information	<i>Warga Dibolehkan Mudik oleh Kemenhub, Aturannya Keluar Kemarin Sore</i> [Ministry of Transportation issued a permission for the people to have Eid al-Fitr exodus yesterday] <a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/B_4xPtoFqW-/?utm_source=ig_web_button_share_sheet">https://www.instagram.com/p/B_4xPtoFqW-/?utm_source=ig_web_button_share_sheet</a>	Covid-19 Hoax Data 7
Perlocutionary Effect to spread hoaxes among the public	<i>Satgas Covid-19 Kabupaten Pangkep Melakukan Semprot Jemaah Tarawih di Masjid</i> [Covid-19 Task Force in Pangkep Regency Sprayed the Congregation of the Mosque] <a href="https://www.instagram.com/p/B_4Rx41IfAM/?utm_source=ig_web_button_share_sheet">https://www.instagram.com/p/B_4Rx41IfAM/?utm_source=ig_web_button_share_sheet</a>	Covid-19 Hoax Data 8

## Discussion

In this discussion, the research results on the perlocutionary effects of Covid-19 hoaxes presented in Table 1 will be explicated and interpreted one by one. The discussion deals with how each hoax is identified and of the perlocutionary effects of the Covid-19 hoaxes in terms of pragmatics, particularly cyberpragmatics. It is expected to build the society's critical awareness through the analysis and interpretation of perlocutionary effects of Covid-19 hoaxes. In the future, the public will be more resilient in dealing with hoaxes in social media.

### Perlocutionary Effect to Deceive the Public

The first perlocutionary act in this research aims to deceive the public. The effect can be seen in the Covid-19 Hoax Data 1. The public deception can be seen clearly in the headline: “*Israel telah Menyembuhkan Pasien Virus Corona Baru di Tiongkok dengan Vaksin yang Mereka Kembangkan* [Israel cured coronavirus patients in China using the vaccine they developed]. The perlocutionary effect can be drawn from the virtual external context [19], especially those delivered by WHO that there is no “specific cure” to “prevent or cure” the coronavirus disease. However, WHO is currently “coordinating efforts with various partners to develop and evaluate medicines to treat COVID-19.” Such a hoax aims to deceive the public by delivering inaccurate information to mislead the public perception. The misled public perception will result in unfavorable social conditions.

In the context of linguistics, using the language to lie is the betrayal of the essential nature of the language itself. The essential function of language is being distorted which results in the disharmonious social relation [20]. The language uses provocative words which can be seen in the following excerpt.

#### Covid-19 Hoax Data 1

**Israel telah Menyembuhkan Pasien Virus Corona Baru di Tiongkok dengan Vaksin yang Mereka Kembangkan** [Israel cures coronavirus patients in China using the vaccine they developed]

<https://twitter.com/AFPperiksafakta/status/1230415574653489152?s=20>

**Context:** An account @AFPperiksafakta tweeted on February 20, 2020 that news had been circulating on Facebook that an Israeli medical doctor had cured a coronavirus patient in China with a new vaccine. The fact is that the World Health Organization said that there was no “specific cure” to “prevent or cure” the coronavirus disease. However, WHO is currently “coordinating efforts with various partners to develop and evaluate medicines to treat COVID-19.” According to Jerusalem Post, the Israeli humanitarian non-governmental organization, IsraAID, sent shipments of medical supplies from Tel Aviv to China in early February to assist China who was battling the spread of the coronavirus.

### **Perlocutionary Effect to Disseminate Misinformation**

Further, the second perlocutionary effect of hoaxes is to disseminate misinformation. In the Covid-19 Hoax Data 2, false information was disseminated in the social media: ‘*Ada 40.000 TKA yang Bekerja di Kawasan Industri di Morowali*. [40,000 migrant workers working in Morowali industrial areas].’ Such misinformation was conveyed with the intent to ignite public sentiment. The hoax producers intentionally tweeted the false information in order to provoke public sentiment [21]. The end goal was definitely to create disharmonious social relationship among the people in the community. In the Covid-19 pandemic, the words “foreign migrant workers” are very sensitive. When the number of unemployment in Indonesia is skyrocketing due to massive lay-offs, the news regarding foreign migrant workers filling the jobs in Indonesia may anger the laid-off workers.

The Indonesian language is not placed in its noble position when it is used to spread hoax and misinformation. The Indonesian language will be ennobled when it is used by the speakers, both in Indonesia and overseas, according to its purpose and function. On the other hand, using the Indonesian language to spread false information to stir civil unrest is the manifestation of language malfunction [22]. Language is not functioned as it should be which results in social unrest and disorder. The linguists are expected to play their roles in preventing this from happening. The following headline illustrates the point.

#### **Covid-19 Hoax Data 2**

**Ada 40.000 TKA yang Bekerja di Kawasan Industri di Morowali** [40,000 migrant workers working in Morowali industrial areas]

<https://twitter.com/AFPperiksafakta/status/1245602917966471168?s=20>

**Context:** A photo and a caption circulated in Twitter on February 4, 2020 that 40,000 migrant workers from China arrived at the industrial areas of Morowali Regency, Central Sulawesi. According to the Twitter account @AFPperiksafakta reported on April 1, 2020 that it was a hoax. As a matter of fact, only 5,000 workers came from China, while 38,000 others were Indonesian domestic workers.

### **Perlocutionary Effect to Suggest the Public with Inaccurate Information**

Using inaccurate information, or false information, is very effective to suggest the public. This will work effectively when the false information is associated with ethnic sentiments. In the excerpt in Covid-19 Hoax Data 3, the highly sensitive headline says: *Orang-Orang Tiongkok Masuk Islam Karena karena Takut Virus Corona* [Chinese people embraced Islam for fear of Coronavirus]. Of course, the reality is not the same as the hoax. The information was misleading and inaccurate. The Indonesian language is the national,

uniting, and official language of Indonesia. It should not be used to spread hoax and false information.

In terms of language use and function, the use of language to disseminate false information and to suggest the public using provocative language is clearly an example of language malfunction [23]. The essential function of a language to develop mind, build cooperation with others, and communicate ideas is violated in the following hoax-laden headline. The following excerpt is an example of language malfunction.

### **Covid-19 Hoax Data 3**

**Orang-Orang Tiongkok Masuk Islam Karena karena Takut Virus Corona**  
[Chinese people embraced Islam for fear of Coronavirus]

<https://twitter.com/AFPperiksafakta/status/1230811076150751232?s=20>

**Context:** A captioned video circulated in Facebook on February 16, 2020 reporting that Chinese people embraced Islam because they believed that the new strain of coronavirus would not befall upon the Muslims. However, @AFPperiksafakta confirmed on February 21, 2020 that the news was a hoax. The video was about the group of people embracing Islam in Saudi Arabia, in May 2019, long before the coronavirus outbreak in Wuhan, China, at the end of 2019.

### **Perlocutionary Effect to Raise Civil Unrest**

The goal of hoax is to cause civil unrest, social chaos, anarchy, angry and agitated mobs rallying on the streets. Slanders and false news regarding religions can be very sensitive. It is important to be careful of some sensitive issues to prevent them from escalating uncontrollably. In the following excerpt of headline from Covid-19 Data Hoax 4, false information can create social chaos. The headline is *Imbauan Puasa Selama 7 Hari pada Ramadan Tahun ini Karena Virus Corona COVID-19* [Seven-Day-Fasting called for to combat coronavirus].

Truncated or misconstrued information is potential to create civil unrest, especially during the uncertain and prolonged pandemic and constant psychological pressure of living in isolation and boredom. Language is supposed to be used for noble purposes, instead of being used to stimulate civil disorder [24]. The following data illustrates the use of the Indonesian language to raise civil unrest.

### **Data 4 Hoaks Covid-19**

**Imbauan Puasa Selama 7 Hari pada Ramadan Tahun ini Karena Virus Corona COVID-19** [Seven-Day-Fasting called for to combat coronavirus]

[https://www.instagram.com/p/B\\_RbZg4l8F2/?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_button\\_share\\_sheet](https://www.instagram.com/p/B_RbZg4l8F2/?utm_source=ig_web_button_share_sheet)

**Context:** The Instagram from Liputan6.com on April 21, 2020 reported a hoax from a Facebook account on April 20, 2020 on the call for fasting seven days in Ramadhan to combat the coronavirus disease (COVID-19). Based on the investigation, the Indonesian Ulema Council did not confirm any Islamic institutions abroad calling for a seven-day fast to combat coronavirus.

### **Perlocutionary Effect to Incite Public Suspicion**

It is easy to raise public suspicion through hoax, disinformation, and false news. In order to create a good civil society, hoaxes must be combated because it can divide and poison the people's minds. In the following excerpt, the fake news lies in the statement: *'Ulama di Windusari Dijemput Paksa karena Terkait Corona* [Cleric in Windusari Taken to Police Custody for Alleged Coronavirus Case]. The news was twisted far from the reality. In other words, the news had been manipulated to raise public suspicion through fake news circulating in the social media.

The Indonesian language has been abused to spread hoax and create public suspicion, instead of being used to communicate ideas and build the society [25]. The full hoax can be seen in the following excerpt.

#### **Covid-19 Hoax Data 5**

**Ulama di Windusari Dijemput Paksa karena Terkait Corona** Clerics in Windusari Taken to Police Custody for Alleged Coronavirus Case]

[https://www.instagram.com/p/CAKvIRdlyW/?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_button\\_share\\_sheet](https://www.instagram.com/p/CAKvIRdlyW/?utm_source=ig_web_button_share_sheet)

**Context:** On May 14, 2020, an Instagram post by Turnbackhoax.com reported a hoax circulating via Siti Zhulaikha's Facebook account dated May 9, 2020 regarding a Muslim cleric in Windusari, Magelang, who was taken into police custody. The cleric, who was the leader of a Muslim boarding school was "abducted" because he was suspected to have been tested positive for coronavirus. After fact-checking, Tribarta News released a report entitled: "The Police Denied the Rumor of Muslim Cleric Abduction due to Alleged Coronavirus infection." The Police Chief of Windusari Sub-district Police Station stated on May 8, 2020 that they had taken the cleric and two other men into custody with their consent. The medical workers picked them up wearing personal protective equipment because the patients were coronavirus positive.

#### **Perlocutionary Effect to Raise Public Rumors**

False information, rumors, and unconfirmed news are often fabricated to create hoaxes. Unlike unconfirmed information which can be disseminated from irresponsible sources, valid news is usually confirmed and reliable, which is not easy to be fabricated. In principles, news should be clear. Vague and biased news is easy to be fabricated into hoaxes for public consumption. In Covid-19 Hoax Data 6, the headline *Pesan Berantai Warga Taman Raya Tahap V Batam Zona Merah* [Chained Messages among Residents of Taman Raya Tahap V on Red-Zone Batam] circulated in the social media. This news was unclear and based on rumors. It is easy for hoax spreaders to fabricate this type of news to raise public anxiety.

Improper language use will only result in language malfunction. The language is not used for noble purposes which result in the abuse of the Indonesian language [26]. In the language perspective, the creation and dissemination of hoax as in Hoax data 6 is categorized as the abuse of language and thus strays from the efforts to ennoble the Indonesian language.

#### **Covid-19 Hoax Data 6**

**Pesan Berantai Warga Taman Raya Tahap V Batam Zona Merah** [Chained Messages among Residents of Taman Raya Tahap V on Red-Zone Batam]

[https://www.instagram.com/p/CADHpeUFS9H/?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_button\\_share\\_sheet](https://www.instagram.com/p/CADHpeUFS9H/?utm_source=ig_web_button_share_sheet)

**Context:** The Instagram of Turnbackhoax.com on May 11, 2020 posted a hoax from the instant messaging application chain messages among the residents in Taman Raya tahap V that Batam was declared a red zone. However, in batamclick.com, the head of Batam Kota Sub-district confirmed that one person was tested positive for coronavirus and was hospitalized, while 150 others were declared non-reactive. This statement was corroborated by the Head of Health Office of Batam City, Didi Kusmarjadi who stated that after a mosque caretaker was tested positive for coronavirus and declared as the 34<sup>th</sup> patient in Batam, the medical team did some screening tests and tracing closest contacts in Taman Raya Area, Batam City. On May 9, 2020, 19 people who had contacted the COVID-19 patient were tested negative for COVID-19. An area is



declared as a red zone when the infection is uncontrollable. In the red zone, all activities in schools, offices, places of worship, and travel agencies will be stopped and the large scale social restrictions (PSBB) and/or lockdown is applied. The fact is that Batam has not applied PSBB.

### **Perlocutionary Effect to Mislead the Public with Inaccurate Information**

The perlocutionary effect of inaccurate information is the public being misled to believe in false information. The public opinion is led and directed toward the wrong conclusion. When hoaxes go viral, the false information is disseminated uncontrollably where truth is not checked and rechecked. People will believe in the hoaxes and accept them as true without critical assessment. This is dangerous for the community. The COVID-19 Data Hoax 7 shows that inaccurate information can mislead the public, as shown in the following headline: “*Warga Dibolehkan Mudik oleh Kemenhub, Aturannya Keluar Kemarin Sore*” [Ministry of Transportation issued a permission for the people to have Eid al-Fitr exodus yesterday].

The use of language to mislead the public is obviously against the true purpose of language itself. Language was invented for a noble cause and the essence of language is as a means of communication [27]. Language is not meant to be used to divide people and to mislead them. Language is a tool to seek the truth and to spread truth in academic settings. The following excerpt shows how the language is used to mislead the public.

#### **Covid-19 Hoax Data 7**

**Warga Dibolehkan Mudik oleh Kemenhub, Aturannya Keluar Kemarin Sore**  
[Ministry of Transportation issued a permission for the people to have Eid al-Fitr exodus yesterday]

[https://www.instagram.com/p/B\\_4xPtoFqW-/?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_button\\_share\\_sheet](https://www.instagram.com/p/B_4xPtoFqW-/?utm_source=ig_web_button_share_sheet)

**Context:** On May 7, 2020, Turnbackhoax.com posted on Instagram that a hoax was spread by Delpa Putri SQwin. She posted an article from mediandaterkini(dot)blogspot.com on May 5, 2020, entitled *Warga Dibolehkan Mudik oleh Kemenhub, Aturannya Keluar Kemarin Sore* [Ministry of Transportation issued a permission for the people to have Eid al-Fitr exodus yesterday]. The fact-checking team from Tempo confirmed that the Head of the COVID-19 National Task Force for the Acceleration of COVID-19 Mitigation, Doni Monardo, and the spokesperson of the Ministry of Transportation, Adita Irawati, reaffirmed the ban of mudik (exodus). The article did not mention the lifting of the ban by the Ministry of Transportation. Instead, the article reported the ministry’s effort to regulate the people with urgent transportation needs during the travel ban.

### **Perlocutionary Effect to Disseminate Fake News to the Public**

Fake news, false information, hoaxes do not contribute positively to the public. Spreading hoaxes will result in public unrest. Public sentiment is easily provoked and agitated by fake news, false information, and hoaxes. In the following COVID-19 Hoax Data 8, the headline contained false information which is potential to destroy the community critical awareness [28]. Such false information must be restricted and debunked before misleading the public. The analysis of perlocutionary effects of hoaxes must be done as a concrete effort to raise the society’s critical awareness and to prevent them from being caught up in the drama and controlled by the hoax spreaders as the puppeteers.

The following excerpt shows fake news in social media with a headline *Satgas Covid-19 Kabupaten Pangkep Melakukan Semprot Jemaah Tarawih di Masjid* [COVID-19 Task Force in Pangkep Regency Sprayed the Congregation of the Mosque]. The news is

sensitive and potential to stimulate religious and racial conflicts. The news was spread to provoke the anger of the Muslims so that they could be mobilized to cause riots and mobs as expected by the hoax spreaders. Therefore, the community must be trained to exercise their critical awareness so that they would not be easily provoked and stimulated by fake news that are intended to cause social disruption.

### **Covid-19 Hoax Data 8**

**Satgas Covid-19 Kabupaten Pangkep Melakukan Semprot Jemaah Tarawih di Masjid** [COVID-19 Task Force in Pangkep Regency Sprayed the Congregation of the Mosque]

[https://www.instagram.com/p/B\\_4Rx41lfAM/?utm\\_source=ig\\_web\\_button\\_share\\_sheet](https://www.instagram.com/p/B_4Rx41lfAM/?utm_source=ig_web_button_share_sheet)

**Context:** An Instagram post circulated in the social media. It reported that the Task Force for COVID-19 Mitigation in Pangkep Regency sprayed the congregation who were praying *tarawih* in a mosque in Sanrangan, Pangkajene Sub-District, Pangkep Regency. Turnbackhoax.com checked the validity of the news and posted in Instagram on May 7, 2020, that the news was confirmed to be a hoax. As reported in Makassar.terkini.id., the police had arrested MH for spreading false news. The Head of Operational Department, Pangkep Regency Police Station, Kompol A Muhammad Zakir confirmed that the COVID-19 Task Force did not spray the mosque congregation as reported by MH in his social media. Zakir explained that the Task Force was socializing the spraying program to the residents. Task Forces from various institutions always put preventive measures first and the residents are recommended to be vigilant and wise in using social media.

## **Conclusion**

The research on perlocutionary effects of COVID-19 hoaxes has resulted in 8 findings, namely: (1) deceive the public, (2) disseminate misinformation, (3) suggest the public with inaccurate information, (4) incite civil unrest, (5) raise public suspicion, (6) raise public rumors, (7) mislead the public with inaccurate information, and (8) spread hoaxes among the public. The researcher is aware of the research limitation due to the limited data sources. When the data is abundant, more manifestations of perlocutionary effects of COVID-19 hoaxes can be found. In a bigger research scope, the research limitation will be overcome properly. It is recommended for future researchers to research similar issues in order to find solution to the rampant spread of hoaxes in the social media. The community's critical awareness will be built to create more mature and wise adults who deal with and combat hoaxes in social media through media literacy.

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