



Narrative Language and Digital Literacy Around the World: Helping Clinicians Know What to Do

Child Language Committee Online Composium
October, 2021

Teaching Adolescents Who Struggle with Language How to Identify Fake News in Digital Environments

Dr. Barbara J. Ehren
Email: Barbara.Ehren@gmail.com

Student Success Initiatives
Anna Maria, FL, USA

Outcomes

- Discuss the problem of fake news and its impact on society.
- Analyze criteria for evaluating credibility of digital sources.
- Evaluate scaffolding techniques for adolescents who struggle with language.
- Identify resources for evaluating credibility of digital information.

Defining Fake News

Applicable Domains

Digital Literacy *

Informational Literacy

Media Literacy

*A wholistic approach to cultivating skills to allow people to participate meaningfully in online communities, interpret the changing digital landscape, understand the relationships between systemic –isms and information, and unlock the power of digital tools for good.

Collins (2021)

Definition: “Disinformation and hoaxes published on websites for political purposes or to drive web traffic and the incorrect information being passed along by social media.” The Macquarie Dictionary

What makes a news story fake?

1. It can't be verified

A fake news article may or may not have links in it tracing its sources; if it does, these links may not lead to articles outside of the site's domain or may not contain information pertinent to the article topic.

2. Fake news appeals to emotion

Fake news plays on your feelings - it makes you angry or happy or scared. This is to ensure you won't do anything as pesky as fact-checking.

3. Authors usually aren't experts

Most authors aren't even journalists, but paid trolls.

4. It can't be found anywhere else

If you look up the main idea of a fake news article, you might not find any other news outlet (real or not) reporting on the issue.

5. Fake news comes from fake sites

Did your article come from abcnews.com.co? Or mercola.com? Realnewsrightnow.com? These and a host of other URLs are fake news sites.

<https://iue.libguides.com/fakenews>

What makes real news real?

1. Real news is presented by real news sources. Check your news source for a code of ethics or a mission statement

2. Real news is written by reporters with degrees in journalism and, often, in the fields in which they write

3. The primary goal of real news is to inform. If you're mad, scared, furious or anxious, you will want to investigate the article's claims further

4. Real news can be verified. You should be able to find reports, statistics and other real news articles that support what you're reading.

Important Concept

News does not always fit neatly into one of two buckets: real or fake. It is often more nuanced.

Categories of Fake News

- CATEGORY 1: Fake, false, or regularly misleading websites that are shared on Facebook and social media. Some of these websites may rely on “outrage” by using distorted headlines and decontextualized or dubious information in order to generate likes, shares, and profits.
- CATEGORY 2: Websites that may circulate misleading and/or potentially unreliable information
- CATEGORY 3: Websites which sometimes use clickbait-y headlines and social media descriptions
- CATEGORY 4: Satire/comedy sites, which can offer important critical commentary on politics and society, but have the potential to be shared as actual/literal news

No single topic falls under a single category, Some articles fall under more than one category

Example:

- False or misleading medical news may be entirely fabricated (Category 1)
- May intentionally misinterpret facts or misrepresent data (Category 2)
- May be accurate or partially accurate but use an alarmist title to get your attention (Category 3)
- May be a critique on modern medical practice (Category 4)

Melissa Zimdars, Merrimack College

https://docs.google.com/document/d/10eA5-mCZLSS4MQY5QGb5ewC3VAL6pLkT53V_81ZyitM/preview

Understanding the Problem

Why is Fake News Such a Problem

- **You deserve the truth.** You are smart enough to make up your own mind - as long as you have the real facts in front of you. You have every right to be insulted when you read fake news, because you are in essence being treated like an idiot.
- **Fake news destroys your credibility.** If your arguments are built on bad information, it will be much more difficult for people to believe you in the future.
- **Fake news can hurt you, and a lot of other people.** Purveyors of fake and misleading medical advice like Mercola.com and NaturalNews.com help perpetuate myths like [HIV and AIDS aren't related](#), or that [vaccines cause autism](#). These sites are heavily visited and their lies are dangerous.
- **Real news can benefit you.** If you want to buy stock in a company, you want to read accurate articles about that company so you can invest wisely. If you are planning on voting in an election, you want to read as much accurate information on a candidate so you can vote for the person who best represents your ideas and beliefs. Fake news will not help you make money or make the world a better place, but real news can.

from <http://iue.libguides.com/fakenews>

Children's Digital Access

- Teams of the EU Kids Online network collaborated between autumn 2017 and summer 2019 to conduct a major survey of 25,101 children in 19 European countries.
- For most children across Europe, smartphones are now the preferred means of going online. This often means that they have ‘anywhere, anytime’ connectivity, with the majority of children reporting using their smartphones daily or almost all the time.
Smahel, Machackova, Mascheroni, Dedkova, Staksrud, Ólafsson, Livingstone, & Hasebrink (2020).

Media and Information Literacy (MIL)

- Finland is the most resistant nation to fake news.
- Finns of all ages are able to detect false information.

Lessenski (2019)

Judging Credibility of Online Information –Stanford Study

- 7,800 middle school, high school and college students in 12 states of the USA were asked to evaluate the information presented in tweets, comments and articles.
- According to researchers. 80% of the students displayed a "stunning and dismaying consistency" in their responses,
 - failing to tell fake accounts from real ones, activist groups from neutral sources and ads from articles.
 - tending to credulously accept information as presented even without supporting evidence or citations.

McGrew, Breakstone, Ortega, Smith, & Wineburg, (2018)

Specific Concern for Adolescents

1. Their news consumption mainly takes place on the internet and especially on social media,
2. Adolescents have the highest chances of being exposed to fake news because it is on these platforms that these stories are posted and, at times, go viral.

Vissenberg & d'Haenens (2020)

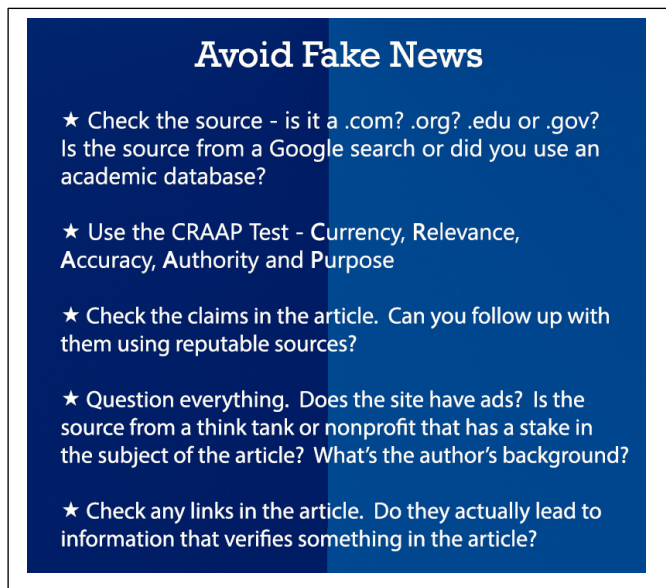
Adolescents Who Struggle with Language

- May not generalize learning from one experience to another.
- May need more scaffolding than received in secondary classrooms.
- May need more work on language underpinnings to analyze digital information.
e.g. vocabulary

Evaluating News in Digital Environments



From International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA): <http://blogs.ifla.org/lpa/files/2017/01/How-to-Spot-Fake-News.pdf>



<https://iue.libguides.com/fakenews>



<https://www.wnycstudios.org/podcasts/otm/articles/breaking-news-consumers-handbook-pdf>

Questions to Ask

- Why was this made?
- What does this want me to do?
- How does this make me feel and how do my emotions interpretation of this?
- What values, information, and points of view are overt? Implied?
- What is missing from this message?
- How might different people interpret this message differently?
- Is this fact, opinion, or something else?

<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/education>

Six Criteria to Evaluate a Website

| | |
|-------------|--|
| Authority | <p>Is it clear who is responsible for the contents of the page?</p> <p>Is there a way of verifying the legitimacy of the organization, group, company or individual?</p> <p>Is there any indication of the author's qualifications for writing on a particular topic?</p> <p>Is the information from sources known to be reliable?</p> |
| Accuracy | <p>Are the sources for factual information clearly listed so they can be verified in another source?</p> <p>Is the information free of grammatical, spelling, and other typographical errors?</p> |
| Objectivity | <p>Does the content appear to contain any evidence of bias?</p> <p>Is there a link to a page describing the goals or purpose of the sponsoring organization or company?</p> <p>If there is any advertising on the page, is it clearly differentiated from the informational content?</p> |
| Currency | <p>Are there dates on the page to indicate when the page was written, when the page was first placed on the Web, or when the page was last revised?</p> |
| Coverage | <p>Are these topics successfully addressed, with clearly presented arguments and adequate support to substantiate them?</p> <p>Does the work update other sources, substantiate other materials you have read, or add new information?</p> <p>Is the target audience identified and appropriate for your needs?</p> |
| Appearance | <p>Does the site look well organized?</p> <p>Do the links work?</p> <p>Does the site appear well maintained?</p> |

<https://lib.nmu.edu/help/resource-guides/subject-guide/evaluating-internet-sources>

Working with Adolescents Who Struggle with Language

Intervention Principles

- Identify language and related cognitive underpinnings that are central to the steps of identifying fake news.
- Think of the underpinnings mostly as co-requisites rather than as prerequisites.
- There are many elements (steps) to identify fake news. Practice with individual steps may be needed before the student can integrate all the components. E.g. the Proquest Research Guide Worksheet.
- After teaching individual components be sure to teach students how to put all the steps together (as in following a checklist).
- Employ the evidence-based methodology: describe, model, practice, generalize.

Language and Related Cognitive Underpinnings – Examples

- Identify fact and fiction
- Understand vocabulary used in media
- Synthesize information to form a main message
- Formulate inferences from stated ideas
- Decipher a writer's perspective

How to Identify Fake News in 10 Steps

Beware fake or misleading news.
Be skeptical. Ask Questions.
Verify.
It's up to you.



Select "Yes" or "No" to the following questions. The more thumbs-down icons you select, the more likely the news article is fake.

1. Do a Visual Assessment

Assess the overall design. Fake news sites often look amateurish, have lots of annoying ads, and use altered or stolen images.

Overall, does the news article and website seem high quality?

Yes No

2. Identify the News Outlet

The Wall Street Journal and CNN are examples of news outlets. If you haven't heard of the news outlet, search online for more information.

Is the news outlet well known, well respected, and trustworthy?

Yes No

3. Check the Web Domain

Many fake news URLs look odd or end with ".com.co" or ".lo" (e.g., abcnews.com.co) to mimic legitimate news sites.

Does the URL seem legitimate?

Yes No

4. Check the "About Us" Section

Trustworthy news outlets usually include detailed background information, policy statements, and email contacts in the "About/About Us" section.

Does the site provide detailed background information and contacts?

Yes No

5. Identify the Author

Fake news articles often don't include author names. If included, search the author's name online to see if he or she is well known and respected.

Does the article have a trusted author?

Yes No

6. Identify the Central Message

Read the article carefully. Fake news articles often push one viewpoint, have an angry tone, or make outrageous claims.

Does the article seem fair, balanced, and reasonable?

Yes No

7. Assess Spelling, Grammar, and Punctuation

If the article has misspelled words, words in ALL CAPS, poor grammar, or lots of "!!!!," it's probably unreliable.

Does the article have proper spelling, grammar, and punctuation?

Yes No

8. Analyze Sources and Quotes

Consider the article's sources and who is quoted. Fake news articles often cite anonymous sources, unreliable sources, or no sources at all.

Does the article include and identify reliable sources?

Yes No

9. Find Other Articles

Search the internet for more articles on the same topic. If you can't find any, chances are the story is fake.

Are there multiple articles by other news outlets on this topic?

Yes No

10. Turn to Fact Checkers

FactCheck.org, Snopes.com, PolitiFact.com are widely trusted fact-checking websites.

Do the fact checkers say the news story is true?

Yes No



Based on your research, do you think the article is more likely to be true or false? Explain.

ProQuest Guided Research products equip students to learn information literacy skills. Free trials are available.

Caution:
May not
be
simply
Yes or
No

Using the ProQuest Guided Research Worksheet with Adolescents Who Struggle with Language

| Steps Listed | Scaffolding Suggestions |
|---|--|
| <p>1. Do a Visual Assessment</p> <p>Assess the overall design. Fake news sites often look amateurish, have lots of annoying ads, and use altered or stolen images.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Note the look of the site. Describe visual features with appropriate words. Define the features that make an ad annoying Locate original source of an image in order to check its authenticity. |
| <p>Overall, does the news article and website seem high quality?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> List positive and negatives. Draw a conclusion. |
| <p>2. Identify the News Outlet</p> <p>The Wall Street Journal and CNN are examples of news outlets. If you haven't heard of the news outlet, search online for more information.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify names of credible news outlets in your country. Give students experiences with those outlets. |
| <p>Is the news outlet well known, well respected, and trustworthy?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify evidence of familiarity, respect and trustworthiness. (Look to journalists' organizations.) |
| <p>3. Check the Web Domain</p> <p>Many fake news URLs look odd or end with ".com.co" or ".lo" (e.g., abcnews.com.co) to mimic legitimate news sites.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Locate urls on a web page. Analyze features of the address, looking for .co or .lo at the end. |
| <p>Does the URL seem legitimate?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> List evidence for legitimacy. |
| <p>4. Check the "About Us" Section</p> <p>Trustworthy news outlets usually include detailed background information, policy statements, and email contacts in the "About/About Us" section.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> List the kinds of details provided. Identify what you would like to know but could not find. |
| <p>Does the site provide detailed background information and contacts?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summarize the kinds of details provided and decide if it is sufficient. (Based on legitimate sites analyzed.) |
| <p>5. Identify the Author</p> <p>Fake news articles often don't include author names. If included, search the author's name online to see if he or she is well known and respected.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> State the author's name. Look up the author on the Internet to see what other things he or she has written or said. Find articles written about the author. |
| <p>Does the article have a trusted author?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Based on what you found, say whether this is a trusted author. |
| <p>6. Identify the Central Message</p> <p>Read the article carefully. Fake news articles often push one viewpoint, have an angry tone, or make outrageous claims.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> List the important details in this article. Synthesize the information in the article and report the major message the author is trying to communicate. Identify the author's viewpoint. Is he trying to sell you on an idea? Is he qualified to do that? List words that communicate emotion. Identify any claim that seems ridiculous. |
| <p>Does the article seem fair, balanced, and reasonable?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyze the author's believability. Are his arguments sound? Does he back up his claims? |
| <p>7. Assess Spelling, Grammar, and Punctuation</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scan for CAPS and !!!!! Use spellcheck to review words |

| | |
|--|---|
| If the article has misspelled words, words in ALL CAPS, poor grammar, or lots of "!!!!," it's probably unreliable. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify poor grammar in examples |
| Does the article have proper spelling, grammar, and punctuation? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Count number of errors or problems |
| 8. Analyze Sources and Quotes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> List names of people quoted. (No sources= red flag) Look up names of sources on the Internet. Who are they? What are their credentials? Are credentials appropriate for the topic? What else have they said? |
| Consider the article's sources and who is quoted. Fake news articles often cite anonymous sources, unreliable sources, or no sources at all. | |
| Does the article include and identify reliable sources? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summarize source information. |
| 9. Find Other Articles | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify different ways to search for articles on the internet (search terms). |
| Search the internet for more articles on the same topic. If you can't find any, chances are the story is fake. | |
| Are there multiple articles by other news outlets on this topic? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Count number of other articles found. State whether the content was similar or not? |
| 10. Turn to Fact Checkers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Select a fact checking source. Evaluate what the source says about the information you are assessing. Separate elements that are factual from those that are fake within the same source. |
| FactCheck.org, Snopes.com, PolitiFact.com are widely trusted fact-checking websites. | |
| Do the fact checkers say the news story is true? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Say whether the fact checker thinks the story is factual as a whole. Are some parts true? |
| Based on your research, do you think the article is more likely to be true or false? Explain. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summarize information from the 10 factors. Draw a conclusion about the article. |

Information Literacy Vocabulary -Examples

| | |
|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| amateurish | Implied |
| anonymous | legitimate/legitimacy |
| authentic/authenticity | mimic |
| arguments | outlet |
| believability | overt |
| claims | outrageous |
| credentials | trustworthy/trustworthiness |
| credible/credibility | unreliable |
| disinformation | synthesize |
| hoax | viewpoint |
| familiarity | widely |

Resources

- Melissa Zimdars, Merrimack College, False, Misleading, Clickbait-y, and/or Satirical “News” Sources
 - Tips for analyzing news sources
 - OpenSources Steps for Analyzing Websites
 - [Website Labels for OpenSources.](#)
 - [Working Website List for OpenSources](#)

https://docs.google.com/document/d/10eA5mCZLSS4MQY5QG5ewC3VAL6pLkT53V_81ZyitM/preview

Media Bias / Fact Check

- Currently 4000+ media sources and journalists listed in the database

<https://mediabiasfactcheck.com>



- Enables users to share examples of contemporary propaganda for educational purposes using crowdsourcing. Anyone can upload an example of propaganda and comment on it, considering its potential impact on public opinion.

<https://propaganda.mediaeducationlab.com/node/1>

• Australian Fact-Checking Sites

- [RMIT ABC Fact Check](#) Tests and adjudicates on the accuracy of claims made by politicians, public figures, advocacy groups and institutions engaged in public debate.
- [The Conversation FactCheck](#)

• International Fact-Checking Sites

- [Climate Change National Forum Fact Checker](#) Fact checks information specifically related to the science of climate change and related policy.
- [FactCheck.org](#) A project from the nonpartisan and nonprofit Annenberg Public Policy Center.
- [Hoaxy](#) From Indiana University, this site helps visualize the spread of fake news and hoaxes.
- [Politifact](#) Rates the accuracy of claims by elected officials and others who speak up in American politics.
- [Snopes.com](#) Researches and debunks myths, fake news, and rumors floating around on the internet.

• Fact-checking organizations

- [McGill Office for Science and Society](#) From McGill University. A weekly news feed debunking myths and fake news online.
- [The Poynter Institute](#) The Poynter Institute develops resources for journalists and writers, plus offers resources on fact checking and media literacy for the general public.
- [The News Literacy Project Facebook Page](#) A nonprofit whose purpose is to provide tools and resources to middle and high school students (and their classrooms) on media literacy

• BBC Teach

- News <https://www.bbc.com/news/topics/cjxv13v27dyt/fake-news>



- Fresh materials, a searchable archive of past materials, a semiprivate forum for professional discussions, a publishing platform, a teacher-training course and a new course-development template.
<https://digitalresource.center/splashpage>



- Nonprofit membership organization dedicated to advancing media literacy education in the United States.
- NewsGuard employs experienced journalists to assess the credibility and transparency of the most popular news and information websites in the U.S., United Kingdom, Germany, France and Italy.

<https://namle.net>



LEARNING FOR JUSTICE

- Free resources to educators—teachers, administrators, counselors and other practitioners—who work with children from kindergarten through high school. to supplement the curriculum, to inform their practices, and to create inclusive school communities.

<https://www.learningforjustice.org>



- Curriculum built around these questions: Who's behind the information. What is the evidence. What do other sources say?

<https://cor.stanford.edu>

References

- Bakir, V. & McStay, A. (2018). Fake news and the economy of emotions. *Digital Journalism*, 6:2, 154-175, DOI: [10.1080/21670811.2017.1345645](https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2017.1345645)
- Breakstone, J., Smith, M., Wineburg, S., Rapaport, A., Carle, J., Garland, M., & Saavedra, A. (2019). *Students' civic online reasoning: A national portrait*. Stanford History Education Group & Gibson Consulting. <https://purl.stanford.edu/gf151tb4868>
- Collins, C. (2021). Reimagining digital education to save ourselves. *Learning for Justice*, 1, 49-53.
- Jankowski, N. W. (2018) Researching fake news: A selective examination of empirical studies, *Javnost - The Public*, 25:1-2, 248-255, DOI: [10.1080/13183222.2018.1418964](https://doi.org/10.1080/13183222.2018.1418964)
- Lessenski, M. (2019). *Findings of the Media Literacy Index 2019 European Policies Initiative (EuPI) of the Open Society Institute – Sofia*. <https://osis.bg/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/MediaLiteracyIndex2019-ENG.pdf>
- McGrew, S., Breakstone, J., Ortega, T., Smith, M. & Wineburg, S. (2018) Can students evaluate online sources? learning from assessments of civic online reasoning, *Theory & Research in Social Education*, 46:2, 165-193, DOI: [10.1080/00933104.2017.1416320](https://doi.org/10.1080/00933104.2017.1416320)
- Smahel, D., Machackova, H., Mascheroni, G., Dedkova, L., Staksrud, E., Ólafsson, K., Livingstone, S., and Hasebrink, U. (2020). *EU kids online 2020: Survey results from 19 countries*. EU Kids Online. <https://doi.org/10.21953/lse.47fdeqj01ofo>
- Vissenberg, J., & d'Haenens, L. (2020). *Adolescents' heuristic credibility assessments of online news: Exploration of an emerging research agenda*. Presented at the Etnaal van de Communicatiewetenschap, Amsterdam, 06 Feb 2020-07 Feb 2020.

**Help turn the fake news trend by working
with adolescents who struggle with language.**