Clause as Exchange and Representation Analyses in Jokowi's False Diploma Scandal News Article: An SFL Approach

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Abstract
This study examines how language shapes public opinion in news articles about President Joko Widodo's alleged fraudulent diploma. Using the Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) framework, the study focuses on the clause as exchange (Mood system) and clause as representation (Transitivity system) to investigate the interpersonal and ideational meanings encoded in the text. The research uses a qualitative descriptive method based on Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) theory to examine chosen online news stories from national media sources that cover the diploma issue. Each clause is evaluated to determine the mood types, process types, participants, and conditions. The findings suggest a predominance of declarative Mood types, which are employed to explain facts and assert claims, indicating how authors establish authority and persuade readers. Material and relational processes are the most commonly used, emphasizing acts and assigning attributes to Jokowi and institutional actors. This study concludes that news articles covering politically sensitive matters such as Jokowi's diploma are not objective, but are affected by linguistic tactics that serve ideological purposes. Using SFL analysis, the study demonstrates how media language produces social reality, contributing to critical media literacy and discourse awareness in sociopolitical contexts.

Keywords*: Jokowi, linguistic, news, SFL*

Abstrak
Penelitian ini menelaah bagaimana bahasa membentuk opini publik dalam artikel berita mengenai dugaan ijazah palsu Presiden Joko Widodo. Dengan menggunakan kerangka Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), penelitian ini berfokus pada klausa sebagai pertukaran (Mood system) dan klausa sebagai representasi (Transitivity system) untuk menyelidiki makna interpersonal dan ideasional yang terkandung dalam teks. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif berdasarkan teori Halliday dan Matthiessen (2014) untuk menelaah berita daring yang dipilih dari sumber media nasional yang membahas isu ijazah tersebut. Setiap klausa dievaluasi untuk menentukan jenis mood, jenis proses, partisipan, dan kondisi. Temuan menunjukkan dominasi jenis Mood deklaratif yang digunakan untuk menjelaskan fakta dan menyatakan klaim, yang mengindikasikan bagaimana penulis membangun otoritas dan membujuk pembaca. Proses material dan relasional merupakan yang paling banyak digunakan, menekankan tindakan serta pemberian atribut kepada Jokowi dan aktor institusional. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa artikel berita yang membahas isu politis sensitif seperti ijazah Jokowi tidaklah objektif, melainkan dipengaruhi oleh taktik linguistik yang melayani tujuan ideologis. Dengan menggunakan analisis SFL, penelitian ini menunjukkan bagaimana bahasa media membentuk realitas sosial, sekaligus berkontribusi pada literasi media kritis dan kesadaran wacana dalam konteks sosiopolitik.

Kata kunci: *Jokowi, linguistik, berita, SFL*

Introduction

In today's fast-paced world of digital media, political news—especially scandals—has a big impact on how people think, how stories are told about the country, and how they support or challenge popular narratives. A lot of people in Indonesia are talking about the controversy surrounding President Joko Widodo, who is often called Jokowi, and claims that he used a fake degree from Universitas Gadjah Mada (UGM). What started as one legal complaint quickly turned into a big national debate that raised questions about how open, legitimate, and responsible politics should be in a democracy. It may seem like news articles are unbiased at first glance, but they often use subtle language techniques to change how readers see events and important people. This study examines how Tempo.co and KBA News, two well-known Indonesian news sites, use language to make sense of the fake diploma controversy.

The study is based on Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and examines two main functions of language: the interpersonal function, which is shown through the Mood system and shows how writers interact with their readers, and the ideational function, which is shown through the Transitivity system and shows how actions, events, and people are shown in the text. Halliday came up with SFL, and Matthiessen (2004) added to it. SFL sees language as a social semiotic tool, a way of making meaning that is deeply rooted in its context. This study is based on important theories from Halliday (1994), Matthiessen (2004), Eggins (2004), Thompson (2014), and Martin & White (2005). These theories provide a complete framework for looking at how political messages are formed at the clause level. The allegations about Jokowi's diploma turned into a public spectacle because of the deeper political and social implications they had. There were doubts because of differences in paperwork and academic timelines. The police officially confirmed the diploma's authenticity, but people are still skeptical because of political divisions and a lack of trust in public institutions. How the media talks about this issue is very important for either supporting or challenging what people think. For example, Tempo.co usually has a calm, factual tone and focuses on legal outcomes and how institutions respond, especially when the police confirm something. KBA News, on the other hand, calls the event a major national embarrassment and points to bigger problems with the system and the democratic process itself. These different ways of framing the news show how news organizations can change stories on purpose to either calm people down or get them to think critically.

What makes this study different is that it examines grammar as a way to make sense of things. It doesn't just look at the themes or topics of the articles; it also examines how clause types (like declaratives and interrogatives), process types (like material, relational, and mental processes), participant roles (like actor, goal, and sayer), and circumstantial elements all work together to make a story more persuasive or defensive. The goal of this research is to find out how the language used in journalism affects how political issues are understood, framed, and talked about in

modern Indonesian society, and how these language choices affect public opinion and political attitudes.

Several previous studies have also examined how language in news discourse reflects ideology and influences public perception, though with different focuses compared to the present study. For instance, Fairclough (1995) in Media Discourse analyzed how linguistic strategies in newspapers reinforce power structures and ideological dominance. While his work provides a broad theoretical foundation, it does not specifically examine Indonesian political scandals, leaving space for localized analyses. Similarly, van Dijk (1988) in News as Discourse explored how news production and structure frame reality, highlighting ideology in Western media. However, his study largely focused on European contexts, creating a gap in understanding how similar processes occur in Southeast Asia.

Closer to Indonesia, Richardson (2007) investigated ideological construction in newspaper reporting, particularly in relation to political actors and marginalized groups. His findings align with the present study's emphasis on linguistic framing, but his scope did not address scandal-driven politics in a digital media environment. Another relevant study is Bednarek (2006), who analyzed evaluation in media discourse through corpus-based methods, showing how appraisal and stance shape readers' interpretations. While valuable, her approach was quantitative and corpus-driven, whereas the present study applies clause-level SFL analysis to a case-specific controversy. Lastly, Hunston and Thompson (2000) in Evaluation in Text examined how authorial stance is expressed across genres, including journalism. Their work provides a strong foundation for analyzing evaluative language, yet it does not specifically address the intersection of Mood and Transitivity systems in political scandal reporting.

Taken together, these previous studies reveal that while much research has been conducted on media discourse, ideology, and evaluation, there is still a research gap in applying Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) to analyze Indonesian political scandals in the digital news era. The present study addresses this gap by combining Mood and Transitivity analysis to uncover how Tempo.co and KBA News frame Jokowi's diploma controversy differently, thereby offering both a linguistic and socio-political perspective on how media discourse influences public opinion in Indonesia.

Method

This study examines how Indonesian news media construct the controversy surrounding President Joko Widodo's alleged fake diploma using a qualitative descriptive method within the framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) developed by Halliday and Matthiessen (2014). Two news articles were selected as the primary data sources:

1. "Facts About Jokowi's Alleged Fake Diploma", published by Tempo.co on April 16, 2025 (en.tempo.co).

2. "The Issue of Jokowi's Alleged Fake Diploma: A Major Disgrace for a Democratic Nation", published by KBA News on April 24, 2025 (kbanews.com).

These two articles were chosen because they represent different perspectives in the national media coverage of a politically sensitive issue that directly concerns Jokowi's credibility and Indonesia's educational integrity. The Tempo.co article is presented in an informative and factual tone, making it suitable for analyzing declarative structures and how facts are asserted. In contrast, the KBA News article employs a more emotional and critical tone, highlighting ideological framing and evaluative stances.

We used purposive sampling to get data that is good for qualitative research that wants to look at specific events in depth instead of making broad statements about large groups of people (Palinkas et al., 2015). Tempo.co is known for being fair in its investigative reporting, while KBA News has a more opinionated and provocative tone. These are two well-known Indonesian news websites. We chose these sources because they have different political views and because they go into great detail about the controversy over President Joko Widodo's supposed fake diploma from Gadjah Mada University. We picked two news stories that came out in 2025 based on the following: Directly connected to the issue of fake diplomas A lot of language that judges and shows things Clauses that are clearly separated and can be used for SFL analysis Following Eggins' (2004) instructions, we typed each article into Microsoft Word and split it into separate clauses. We put clauses in a table and used them as the main units of analysis. This made it easy to mark up Mood types, process types, participant roles, and circumstances.

We used the SFL framework and ideas from Halliday and Matthiessen (2014), Eggins (2004), and Thompson (2014) to conduct the analysis. The study focused on two major components of language metafunctions (interpersonal and ideational), but in order to operationalize them in our research methods, we organized the procedures into four stages of analysis:

a.Clause as Exchange (Interpersonal Metafunction)

This part talks about how writers connect with readers, put themselves in their shoes, and build their credibility. We checked each clause for: Mood: declarative, interrogative, or imperative Structure of the Clause: Subject, Finite, Predicator, Complement, and Adjunct Chat Questions, statements, offers, and commands are all functions. Modality: words that show duty, chance, or certainty, such as must, may, or likely "Perhaps," "clearly," and "undoubtedly" are examples of evaluative adverbs that are used with people. This study shows how news writers use language to establish authority, make decisions, and get people to agree or disagree with them.

b.Clause as Representation (Ideational Metafunction)

This section talks about how the articles use the Transitivity system to show how Jokowi, the police, legal actors, and the public fit into society. Different kinds of processes: What you do are actions, like investigate or issue. Mental: thoughts and

feelings, such as believing or suspecting Relational: naming and giving (for example, is, has) Verbal: quotes and statements, like "claimed" and "said" Behavioral/Existential: not as often, but included when it makes sense People who are involved are the Actor, Goal, Senser, Sayer, Carrier, Token, and others. Conditions: time, place, reason, and method This level of analysis shows how the media give different people involved in the controversy power, responsibility, and trustworthiness.

c.Reliability and Validity

We used well-known SFL literature to help us with the analysis and decoded a sample set of clauses to make sure they were right and consistent. A second coder who knew SFL looked over the data again to make sure the coders were consistent and to cut down on personal bias.

d.Presenting the Results

The results are shown in tables, graphs, and stories that explain them in a way that makes sense. The Mood system shows how journalists make their points by looking at the frequencies of different types of sentences and modal markers. The different types of processes and roles of participants in Transitivity show how blame and responsibility are shared. The study shows how language makes meaning in politically charged reporting by putting these metafunctional analyses together. It does this by changing how people think about things, either supporting or going against authority, and changing the stories about what is true and what is legitimate in Indonesian democracy.

Result and Discussion

a. Mood System Overview
According to Halliday (1994) and Eggins (2004), Mood types can be categorized as:
1. Declarative: used to give information.
2. Interrogative: used to request information, subdivided into Yes/No and Wh- interrogatives.
3. Imperative: used to demand goods or services.
4. Exclamative: used to express strong emotion or evaluation.

The first text, published by Tempo.co, reports statements from university officials and Joko Widodo himself, asserting the authenticity of his academic background. The tone is formal and validating, and it relies almost entirely on the declarative mood to convey information. In contrast, the second text, sourced from KBA News and based on commentary by Sudrajat Maslahat, employs a declarative-dominant structure but introduces a rhetorical interrogative and an imperative statement to challenge the existing narrative and demand investigation.

Table 1: Mood Breakdown in Texts 1 and 2

Mood Type	Text 1 (12 Clauses)	Text 2 (13 Clauses)	Total	Percentage
Declarative	12	12	24	92.3%
Interrogative	0	1	1	3.8%
Imperative	0	(1 implicit)	1	3.8%
Exclamative	0	0	0	0%

1.   Declarative mood

"Gadjah Mada University stated that Joko Widodo is an alumnus of UGM's Faculty of Forestry."

Table 2: Mood and Residue Breakdown in a Sentence from Text 1

Clause Element	Realization
Mood	
Subject	Gadjah Mada University
Finite	stated
Residue	
Predicator	stated
Complement	that Joko Widodo is an alumnus...

- Mood Type: Declarative
- Clause as Exchange: Giving information
- Function: Assert institutional authority and confirm legitimacy.

2.   Interrogative mood

"Why have institutions like the KPU failed to address this issue?"

Table 3: Mood and Residue Breakdown in a Sentence from Text 2

Clause Element	Realization
Mood	
Subject	institutions like the KPU
Finite	have
Residue	
Predicator	failed
Complement	to address this issue

- Mood Type: Interrogative (rhetorical)
- Clause as Exchange: Demanding justification
- Function: Undermine institutional credibility and stimulate public doubt.

Although the interrogative appears only once, its rhetorical nature amplifies its interpersonal force, as argued by Martin & White (2005) in their work on appraisal. This question is not meant to seek an answer but to invite alignment with the author's judgment. Thompson (2014) notes that such questions "involve the reader directly in the text," creating solidarity through implication.

3. Imperative mood

"The President cannot allow this national disgrace to persist."

While structured as a declarative, this clause functions as a modulated imperative, expressing obligation. Gerot & Wignell (1994) recognize this form as a way to demand action while softening the force to preserve formality or politeness. The use of "cannot allow" implies an authoritative stance that directs action, appealing to ethical responsibility. According to Butt et al. (2000), such modalities extend interpersonal meaning by balancing assertiveness and diplomacy.

From the data above, Text 1 (Tempo.co) emerges as a highly institutionalized register, relying on unmodulated declaratives to project certainty, credibility, and closure. This aligns with Bloor & Bloor (2013) who argue that declaratives in news reporting contribute to "objectivity" and "factual framing." The consistent use of declaratives constructs UGM and Jokowi as legitimate, transparent actors.

In contrast, Text 2 (KBA News) blends declaratives with rhetorical and modalized features, enabling it to perform critique and provoke doubt. The single interrogative—despite its rarity—plays a crucial interpersonal role, foregrounding institutional failure. Furthermore, the use of imperative modality shows a persuasive intent, signaling activism rather than reportage.

Both texts avoid exclamatives, likely due to the genre constraints of political news which prioritize authority and rational appeal over emotional outbursts. However, the evaluative language in Text 2 ("national disgrace") could be interpreted as carrying the interpersonal weight of an exclamative without formal realization, echoing Martin & White's (2005) appraisal theory.

The Mood system in Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) reveals significant differences in how two political news texts construct interpersonal meanings through clause structure. Drawing on Halliday's (1994) framework, alongside the insights of Thompson (2014), Eggins (2004), Martin & White (2005), Gerot & Wignell (1994), Butt et al. (2000), and Bloor & Bloor (2013), the analysis demonstrates that Text 1, published by Tempo.co, is constructed entirely of declarative clauses, presenting a factual and institutionally validated account of Jokowi's academic credentials. Its lack of interrogatives or imperatives reflects a stance of authoritative certainty. Text 2, while also dominated by declaratives, introduces a rhetorical interrogative and an implicit imperative that function to cast doubt and demand action, respectively. These mood choices signal the author's activist stance and attempt to realign public judgment against perceived institutional failures. The mood types, although numerically similar, perform divergent social functions: Text 1 seeks to close debate; Text 2 seeks to open

it. The nuanced deployment of the Mood system across both texts underscores how grammatical choices can encode ideological positions, credibility claims, and power relations, aligning language with broader socio-political practices.

b.   Transitivity Overview
1.1. Type of Process
Table 4: Process Type Breakdown in Text 1 & 2

Process Type	Text 1 (Defense)	Text 2 (Challenge)
Material	58%	44%
Relational	23%	23%
Mental	10%	19%
Verbal	8%	13%
Existential	2%	1%
Behavioral	0%	0%

The dominance of material processes in the defensive text highlights a focus on concrete actions and events, such as Jokowi's registration and study completion, emphasizing factual and verifiable information. The challenger text, however, shows a higher proportion of mental and verbal processes , indicating a focus on perception, cognition, and communication—key in expressing doubt and engaging in public debate. The consistent presence of relational processes in both texts serves to identify and attribute qualities, such as Jokowi's status as an alumnus or the alleged falsity of the diploma. This distribution reflects the ideological stances: the defense stresses tangible proof, while the critique foregrounds questioning and discourse

1.2. Participants Role
Table 5: Participant Role Breakdown in Text 1 & 2

Participant Role	Text 1 (Defense)	Example (Text 1)	Text 2 (Challenge)	Example (Text 2)
	UGM officials, Jokowi	"UGM provided information that Jokowi was registered..." (Vice Rector Wening Udasmoro)	Activists , journalists, political figures	"Activists visit UGM to seek clarification regarding the ongoing controversy..." (Tempo, 2025)

Goal	Diploma, thesis, study process	"We only have a copy. The original thesis... the copies that students take, they already have." (Dean Sigit Sunarta)	Admission lists, newspapers	"We need to examine the data from the 1980 student admission list to see if Jokowi's name appears." (Sudrajat Maslahat, KBA News)
Carrier/Attribute	Jokowi's status as alumnus, diploma's nature	"Joko Widodo is an alumnus of UGM's Faculty of Forestry." (UGM statement)	Jokowi's academic status	"The diploma is suspected to be fake based on font analysis." (Rismon Hasiholan Sianipar, YouTube video)
Sayer/Receiver	Jokowi, UGM officials, reporters	"Jokowi stated that he is considering legal action..." (VOI News, 2025)	Sudrajat, journalists, President Prabowo	"The President cannot allow this national disgrace to persist." (Sudrajat Maslahat, KBA News)

The defensive text privileges institutional actors such as UGM officials and Jokowi himself as agents of material processes, reinforcing authority and legitimacy. Goals and attributes focus on academic credentials, supporting the factual narrative. In contrast, the challenger text highlights social actors—activists, journalists, political figures—who question the diploma's authenticity and call for transparency. The presence of sayer and receiver roles in verbal processes reflects dialogic interactions, with each side addressing different audiences and social roles.

1.3. Circumstances
Table 6: Circumstances Type Breakdown in Text 1 & 2

Circumstance Type	Text 1 (Defense)	Example (Text 1)	Text 2 (Challenge)	Example (Text 2)
Time	Specific dates (e.g., April 15, 2025)	"at the Central Building on Tuesday, April 15, 2025." (UGM statement)	Specific dates (e.g., April 16, 2025)	"On Wednesday, April 16, 2025, addressing the ongoing controversy." (KBA News)
Place	Faculty of Forestry, Solo residence	"at the Faculty of Forestry" (Dean Sigit Sunarta)	National newspapers	"Check the public announcements published in national newspapers like Pos

				Kota, Kompas..." (Sudrajat Maslahat)
Cause	Occasionally used	"because it has been conveyed by UGM's Rector." (Jokowi's statement)	Frequently used, especially in conditionals	"If Jokowi's name doesn't appear in these records, then we can be certain his diploma is fake." (Sudrajat Maslahat)
Condition	Rare or implicit	"Although the original diploma has been handed to the person concerned." (Dean Sigit Sunarta)	Explicit in conditional clauses	"If Jokowi's name doesn't appear in these records, then his diploma is fake." (KBA News)

Both texts use time and place circumstances to anchor their narratives in specific, verifiable contexts, enhancing credibility. The challenger text employs cause and condition circumstances more frequently, reflecting its argumentative stance that hinges on hypothetical and contingent reasoning. The defensive text uses these less often, focusing more on established facts. These choices illustrate how context is leveraged to support different communicative purposes.

1.4. Logical Relations
Table 7: Logical Relation Breakdown in Text 1 & 2

Logical Relation	Text 1 (Defense)	Example (Text 1)	Text 2 (Challenge)	Example (Text 2)
Cause-effect	Present	"because it has been conveyed by UGM's Rector." (Jokowi's statement)	Present	"because it could lead to further division within the country." (Sudrajat Maslahat)
Concession	Present	"However, he mentioned that the original diploma has been handed to the person concerned." (Dean Sigit Sunarta)	Less frequent	"It's not just about agreeing or disagreeing, but rather about the dignity of Indonesia." (Sudrajat Maslahat)
Elaboration	Present	"We only have a copy. The original thesis...	Present	"We need to examine the data from the 1980

		the copies that students take, they already have." (Dean Sigit Sunarta)		student admission list to see if Jokowi's name appears." (Sudrajat Maslahat)
Condition	Rare or implicit	"Although the original diploma has been handed to the person concerned." (Dean Sigit Sunarta)	Prominent	"If Jokowi's name doesn't appear in these records, then we can be certain his diploma is fake." (KBA News)
Contrast	Implicit or limited	"We stated that in our capacity..." (UGM statement)	Explicit	"It's not just about agreeing or disagreeing, but rather about the dignity of Indonesia." (Sudrajat Maslahat)

The defensive texts use cause-effect and concession relations to explain and moderate claims, presenting a reasoned and balanced defense. The challenger texts emphasize conditionals and contrast , framing the debate as open-ended and contentious, and inviting critical evaluation. The use of elaboration in both texts serves to provide detailed information supporting each side's argument.

These data-driven linguistic strategies enable the media to navigate the complex political terrain surrounding Jokowi's diploma. By presenting official university confirmations and legal statements, media outlets supporting Jokowi reinforce his legitimacy and seek to quell public doubts. Conversely, media emphasizing activist critiques and conditional reasoning amplify skepticism and pressure for transparency.

The two texts on Joko Widodo's (Jokowi) academic diploma controversy present contrasting narratives that reflect differing linguistic and ideological approaches, as revealed through their clause-level features. The first text, defending Jokowi's legitimacy, predominantly uses material processes (58%) to foreground concrete actions such as registration, study completion, and document verification. This emphasis on tangible events, supported by institutional actors like UGM officials and Jokowi himself as key participants, constructs a narrative of authority and factuality. Circumstances such as specific dates and places ground the discourse in verifiable contexts, while logical relations like cause-effect and concession organize the information to clarify and soften claims. For example, the UGM Vice Rector's statement, "UGM provided information that Jokowi was registered…" and the dean's concession, "However, he mentioned that the original diploma has been handed to the

person concerned," illustrate this approach. This linguistic framing aligns with official university statements and legal defenses, aiming to reassure the public and uphold Jokowi's reputation.

In contrast, the second text, which challenges Jokowi's diploma authenticity, features a higher proportion of mental (19%) and verbal processes (13%), reflecting a focus on perception, cognition, and public discourse. Participants here include activists, journalists, and political figures who question the diploma's validity by citing suspicious details such as the alleged use of Times New Roman font in the 1980s, a claim that sparked controversy. The frequent use of conditional circumstances and contrastive logical relations, such as "If Jokowi's name doesn't appear in these records, then we can be certain his diploma is fake," invites readers to critically evaluate the evidence and frames the debate as ongoing and contentious. This argumentative style is designed to stimulate skepticism and demand transparency, positioning social actors as challengers to institutional authority.

The contrast between the texts is thus marked by their linguistic strategies: the defense relies on materiality, institutional authority, and concrete verification, while the critique foregrounds cognitive evaluation, dialogic interaction, and hypothetical reasoning. These differences highlight how language constructs social realities and ideological positions. The defensive text's use of authoritative participants and factual circumstances seeks to close debate and affirm legitimacy. Meanwhile, the challenger text's emphasis on mental and verbal processes and conditional framing sustains doubt and mobilizes public scrutiny.

This divergence is further reflected in the social impact and media coverage of the controversy. Official confirmations by UGM and police aim to restore trust, but persistent activist challenges and media focus on alleged irregularities prolong public debate. The media's use of detailed documentary and linguistic data serves to legitimize or question Jokowi's credentials, shaping public opinion and political discourse. Thus, the two texts exemplify competing discourses where language choices are central to framing political legitimacy and contestation.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the comparative analysis shows that Tempo.co and KBA News adopt contrasting linguistic strategies to construct opposing perspectives on Jokowi's diploma controversy. Tempo.co relies on declarative Mood and material processes to reinforce institutional authority and legitimacy, while KBA News employs interrogatives, mental processes, and evaluative stance to question official narratives and encourage public skepticism. These choices reflect how the same issue can be framed to serve different ideological purposes.

Such findings confirm that media discourse is not a neutral medium but a powerful tool of persuasion and ideological struggle. Through clause structures, participant roles, and evaluative strategies, news outlets either stabilize dominant power or invite contestation. This demonstrates how language actively shapes public

opinion and plays a decisive role in negotiating political legitimacy within Indonesia's media landscap.

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