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CRITICAL LITERACY ANALYSIS OF POWER REPRESENTATION IN FOLKATIVE'S INSTAGRAM HEADLINES AND CAPTIONS

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Abstract

Social media platforms such as Instagram have transformed the way information is consumed, blending news, culture, entertainment, and personal content within multimodal environments. This study examines how power is represented in social media texts using Janks' Critical Literacy Framework, particularly its power dimension. The study focuses on Folkative (@folkative), an Indonesian Instagram account covering creative culture, lifestyle, and social issues. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, the study analyzed the headlines and captions of the ten most-liked posts published in August 2026, selected from 113 posts. The analysis was operationalized through three categories: emphasis, positioning, and representation. The findings showed that power was represented through the foregrounding of particular people, events, experiences, and issues, the positioning of readers toward particular perspectives, and the representation of people and issues in specific ways. Headlines primarily established the focus of each post, while captions either provided additional contextual information or reinforced the topic through emotional expressions. The findings demonstrate how examining power in social media texts can contribute to critical literacy by encouraging readers to recognize how textual choices make particular perspectives more visible and shape the interpretation of social media content.
Keywords: Critical Literacy, Power, Folkative, Instagram, Social Media

Introduction

Social media has transformed information consumption into a space where news, popular culture, entertainment, and personal content blend seamlessly. On Instagram, users frequently encounter news mixed with advertising and entertainment, making content boundaries less distinct (Swart & Broersma, 2024) and requiring critical strategies to access, evaluate, and engage with information (Swart, 2023). Consequently, effective social media use demands more than basic access; users must critically examine how information is constructed, presented, and circulated.

This shift highlights the importance of critical literacy in digital environments. Viewing texts as social practices rather than neutral containers, critical literacy interrogates how meanings, perspectives, and power relations are constructed through linguistic and multimodal choices. Studies have shown that social media users employ critical digital literacy and verification strategies when evaluating digital texts rather than passively accepting online information (Selnes, 2024; Silvhiany et al., 2021). Thus, critical literacy provides a way to examine not only how users evaluate information but also how meanings and perspectives are constructed within social media texts.

A key theoretical lens for examining language and social power is Janks' (2010) Critical Literacy Framework. Although the framework encompasses four interrelated orientations, namely domination/power, access, diversity, and design/redesign (Janks, 2000, 2010), this study focuses

specifically on the power dimension. In social media, content creators make continuous choices regarding what to emphasize and how to present people, events, and issues. A power-oriented critical approach asks what is foregrounded, whose perspectives become prominent, and how linguistic choices position issues. Examining power thus makes the relationship between textual choices and perspectives visible to readers.

Previous studies have explored critical thinking, self-representation, and news evaluation on Instagram (Swart, 2023; Swart & Broersma, 2024; Undrum et al., 2025; Zalani & Yousofi, 2024). However, previous research has largely focused on how users evaluate, interpret, or produce social media content, rather than on how power is constructed within the textual content itself. In particular, limited attention has been given to the construction of power through the interaction between headlines and captions in Indonesian Instagram accounts. This gap indicates a need to examine how textual choices in social media content can foreground particular perspectives and representations.

To address this gap, this study examines Folkative (@folkative), a prominent Indonesian Instagram account covering creative culture, lifestyle, and social issues. Folkative combines Indonesian-language headlines with English-language captions, providing a distinctive textual context for examining power across two parts of the same social media post. The data consist of the headlines and captions from the ten most-liked posts published in August 2026, selected from 113 posts based on their number of likes. Grounded in Janks' power dimension, this study investigates how power is represented in Folkative's Instagram headlines and captions and how the analysis of power contributes to understanding critical literacy in social media.

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design to examine the representation of power in social media texts. The study applied Janks' Critical Literacy Framework, particularly the power dimension, as the analytical framework. The data were obtained from the official Instagram account of Folkative (@folkative), an Indonesian social media account that describes itself as "a one doorway to explore Indonesia's creative culture." The account publishes various types of content, including cultural, entertainment, social, lifestyle, public-figure, and other contemporary issues.

The data collection was limited to posts published during August 2026. A total of 113 posts were identified during the selected period. From these posts, ten posts with the highest numbers of likes were selected as the research data. The number of likes was used solely as the criterion for selecting the posts and was not treated as an analytical variable. For each selected post, the researchers documented the publication date, headline, caption, and number of likes. The unit of analysis consisted of the headline and caption of each selected post, while visual elements, comments, follower interactions, and likes were not included in the textual analysis.

The collected data were analyzed using the power dimension of Janks' Critical Literacy Framework. The researchers first read the headlines and captions of the ten selected posts to identify the main issues, people, groups, and perspectives presented in each text. Based on Janks' conceptualization of power, the analysis was operationalized through three categories: emphasis, positioning, and representation. The texts were examined to identify what information,

people, events, or issues were foregrounded (emphasis), how readers were guided toward particular viewpoints (positioning), and how people, events, or issues were portrayed (representation). Attention was also given to perspectives that were less foregrounded in the texts. The findings from the ten posts were then compared to identify recurring patterns in the construction of power. Finally, the identified patterns were interpreted in relation to critical literacy to examine how analyzing power in social media texts can contribute to a more critical understanding of social media content.

Results and discussion

Results

The study analyzed ten Instagram posts published by Folkative during August 2026. A total of 113 posts were identified during the selected period, and ten posts with the highest numbers of likes were selected as the research data. The number of likes was used only as the selection criterion and was not included as an analytical variable. The analysis focused on the headlines and captions of the selected posts. Visual elements, comments, follower interactions, and likes were not included in the textual analysis.

Table 1. Selected Folkative Instagram Posts Published in August 2026

No.	Date	Headline	Likes	Caption
1	4 August 2026	"Bonceng tiga pake motor beat mungkin tidak akan terulang kembali, tapi sll ada cerita disetiap kilometernya."	475K	"😭😭😭😭😭😭👊👊👊👊👊👊"
2	7 August 2026	"Momen pas suami Nikita Willy menjadi Imam Salat Jumat di Masjid Al Ikhlas Kanada."	479K	"A truly inspiring moment as Indra Prawan led the inaugural Friday prayer at Al Ikhlas Centre Mosque in Edmonton, serving as the imam for Ustadz Fatih Karim and the rest of the congregation. This historic prayer was part of the inauguration of the first Indonesian mosque in Western Canada, marking a meaningful milestone for the Indonesian Muslim community and a proud moment for Indonesians abroad. ♡ID"
3	9 August 2026	"Hidup se dar der dor ini trnyata baru sadar kalo uda jarang foto walaupun uda pake outfit	484K	"😭😭😭😭😭😭👊👊👊👊👊👊"

		cakep, jarang up story meskipun kita lagi jalan-jalan."		
4	17 August 2026	"Cicit keponakan dr W.R Soepratman nyanyikan Indonesia Raya versi asli tahun 1928."	489K	"Musician and singer Antea Putri Turk, the great-great-granddaughter of W.R. Soepratman's sibling, has performed an authentic rendition of "Indonesia Raya" based on its original 1928 lyrics and musical score. In a video uploaded to TikTok account at/endangturk204, Antea sings all three stanzas of the national anthem while playing the violin, preserving the version that predates the various arrangements introduced over the years. "Indonesia Raya" was first introduced by W.R. Soepratman at the Second Youth Congress on October 28, 1928, and later became one of the most significant symbols of Indonesia's national identity. Antea's performance has given people a glimpse into how the anthem was originally sung nearly a century ago. ♡♡IDID"
5	19 August 2026	"Studi: Gen Z makin prioritaskan masa depan sblm mereka menjalin hubungan yg serius."	468K	"For Gen Z, building financial stability and a strong foundation for the future is increasingly taking priority over making major life decisions, including marriage. According to Deloitte's 2026 Gen Z and Millennial Survey, 55% of Gen Z respondents said they have delayed major life decisions — such as getting married, starting a family, launching a business, or pursuing further education — because of financial concerns. The global survey, which covered more than 23,000 Gen Z and millennial respondents across 44 countries, highlights how financial security is shaping the way younger generations approach major milestones. Rather than rushing to settle down, many Gen Zs appear to be taking their time to build stability first. 🔥🔥"
6	24 August 2026	"Bocah berusia 2 tahun meninggal krn kedinginan di Pengungsian Gempa di NTT."	700K	"A 2-year-old child reportedly died while staying at an evacuation shelter in Nagekeo, East Nusa Tenggara (NTT), following the recent earthquake. According to the Ministry of Health, the child's death was linked to exposure to cold temperatures while at the evacuation site. The incident highlights

				the difficult conditions faced by residents forced to stay in temporary shelters, especially children and other vulnerable groups, as they cope with the aftermath of the disaster. 💔🪖”
7	25 August 2026	“Tahun ini gue ketemu diri gue yang paling capek, but at the same time, gue ketemu diri gue yang ‘paling kuat’ juga.”	468K	“ 😭😭😭😭😭😭💔💔💔💔💔”
8	25 August 2026	“Normalisasikan orang2 yg lagi take a break dari dunia, yg tiba2 ngilang dr sosmed, slow respon / gamau diajak nongkrong, some people just need time to recharge biar bisa jalanin hidup kayak biasa.”	444K	“😊😊😊😊😊😊🙏🙏🙏🙏🙏🙏”
9	26 August 2026	“Pesan menyentuh Koko sang Gorilla sblm ia meninggal, utk manusia: Pulihkan Bumi.”	519K	“Koko, a western lowland gorilla, became one of the most famous gorillas in the world for her ability to communicate using sign language. Koko was born on July 4, 1971, at the San Francisco Zoo in the United States. At around one year old, she began learning sign language under the guidance of researcher Francine “Penny” Patterson through the Koko Project. According to The Gorilla Foundation, Koko learned more than 1,000 signs and understood around 2,000 spoken English words. 💔💔💔”
10	28 August 2026	“Tahun depan, Gen Z pertama yg lahir tahun	459K	“A friendly reminder: the first wave of Gen Z, those born in 1997, will turn 30 next year. Tag your friend who’s already getting old too.

		1997 bakalan berusia 30 tahun.”		😭😭😭😭😭😭😭😭👊👊👊👊👊👊”

Table 1 presents the ten selected posts according to their publication dates, headlines, likes, and captions. The number of likes ranged from 444K to 700K. The highest number of likes was recorded for the post published on 24 August 2026, while the lowest was recorded for the post published on 25 August 2026. The selected posts covered personal experiences, religious events, social media habits, Indonesian cultural heritage, Gen Z, natural disasters, personal well-being, environmental issues, and age-related topics.

The headlines and captions were then analyzed using three operational categories based on the power dimension of Janks' Critical Literacy Framework: emphasis, positioning, and representation. Emphasis refers to what is highlighted or foregrounded in the text, positioning refers to the perspective through which the reader is guided to view the issue, and representation refers to how people, issues, or events are presented. These categories were applied separately to the headlines and captions because the two textual components presented different amounts and types of information.

Table 2. Power Analysis of Folkative Instagram Headlines

No.	Original Headline	Emphasis	Positioning	Representation
1	“Bonceng tiga pake motor beat mungkin tidak akan terulang kembali, tapi sll ada cerita disetiap kilometernya.”	The experience of riding three people on a motorcycle and the memories associated with the journey.	The experience is positioned as a meaningful and memorable past experience.	An everyday experience is represented as nostalgic and relatable.
2	“Momen pas suami Nikita Willy menjadi Imam Salat Jumat di Masjid Al Ikhlas Kanada.”	Indra Prawan as the imam and the Friday prayer at Masjid Al Ikhlas in Canada.	The event is positioned as a notable moment involving a public figure and a Muslim community.	Indra Prawan and the Indonesian Muslim community are represented positively.
3	“Hidup se dar der dor ini trnyata baru sadar kalo uda jarang foto walaupun uda pake outfit cakep, jarang up story meskipun kita lagi jalan-jalan.”	The busy lifestyle and the reduced frequency of taking photos and posting stories.	Reduced social media activity is positioned as part of changing everyday habits.	Social media users are represented as people whose online activity may decrease despite being socially active offline.

4	“Cicit keponakan dr W.R Soepratman nyanyikan Indonesia Raya versi asli tahun 1928.”	Antea Putri Turk’s connection to W.R. Soepratman and the original 1928 version of “Indonesia Raya.”	The performance is positioned in relation to Indonesian historical and national heritage.	The performance is represented as connected to cultural and national heritage.
5	“Studi: Gen Z makin prioritaskan masa depan sblm mereka menjalin hubungan yg serius.”	Gen Z’s future and their priorities before entering serious relationships.	Gen Z is positioned as prioritizing the future before serious relationships.	Gen Z is represented as careful and future-oriented in making major life decisions.
6	“Bocah berusia 2 tahun meninggal krn kedinginan di Pengungsian Gempa di NTT.”	The death of a two-year-old child and the cold conditions at an earthquake evacuation shelter.	Attention is directed toward the condition of disaster victims, particularly a young child.	Children affected by disasters are represented as vulnerable individuals.
7	“Tahun ini gue ketemu diri gue yang paling capek, but at the same time, gue ketemu diri gue yang ‘paling kuat’ juga.”	The contrast between being “paling capek” and “paling kuat.”	Exhaustion and strength are positioned as two experiences that can exist at the same time.	A person experiencing exhaustion is represented as still being strong.
8	“Normalisasikan orang2 yg lagi take a break dari dunia, yg tiba2 ngilang dr sosmed, slow respon / gamau diajak nongkrong, some people just need time to recharge biar bisa jalanin hidup kayak biasa.”	Taking a break, disappearing from social media, responding slowly, and needing time to recharge.	Taking distance from social media and social activities is positioned as something that should be normalized.	People who take breaks are represented as individuals who need time to recover.
9	“Pesan menyentuh	Koko, her	Koko is	Koko is

	Koko sang Gorilla sblm ia meninggal, utk manusia: Pulihkan Bumi."	message to humans, and the statement "Pulihkan Bumi."	positioned as a figure whose message is directed toward humans and environmental awareness.	represented as a meaningful figure associated with an environmental message.
10	"Tahun depan, Gen Z pertama yg lahir tahun 1997 bakalan berusia 30 tahun."	The first generation of Gen Z born in 1997 and their upcoming age of 30.	Turning 30 is positioned as a relatable and humorous age milestone.	The first wave of Gen Z is represented as approaching a new stage of adulthood.

Table 2 shows that the headlines foregrounded different people, experiences, events, and social issues. The positioning of the headlines varied across the selected posts, including nostalgic, positive, relatable, serious, supportive, and humorous presentations. The representations also included everyday experiences, public figures, Gen Z, disaster victims, cultural heritage, personal resilience, social media users, and environmental concerns.

Table 3. Power Analysis of Folkative Instagram Captions

No.	Original Caption	Emphasis	Positioning	Representation
1	"😭😭😭😭😭😭👊👊👊👊👊👊"	The emotional response expressed through the emojis.	The caption positions the content through an emotional reaction.	The topic is represented through an emotional response rather than additional information.
2	"A truly inspiring moment as Indra Prawan led the inaugural Friday prayer at Al Ikhlas Centre Mosque in Edmonton, serving as the imam for Ustadz Fatih Karim and the rest of the congregation. This historic prayer was part of the inauguration of the first Indonesian mosque in Western Canada, marking a meaningful milestone for the Indonesian Muslim community and a proud moment for Indonesians abroad. ♡ID"	The inaugural Friday prayer, the first Indonesian mosque in Western Canada, and its significance for the	The event is positioned as inspiring, historic, meaningful, and a source of pride.	Indra Prawan and the Indonesian Muslim community are represented positively through the religious and community event.

		Indonesian Muslim community.		
3	“😭😭😭😭😭😭👊👊👊👊👊👊”	The emotional response expressed through the emojis.	The caption positions the content through an emotional reaction.	The topic is represented through an emotional response rather than additional information.
4	“Musician and singer Antea Putri Turk, the great-great-granddaughter of W.R. Soepratman’s sibling, has performed an authentic rendition of “Indonesia Raya” based on its original 1928 lyrics and musical score. In a video uploaded to TikTok account at/endangturk204, Antea sings all three stanzas of the national anthem while playing the violin, preserving the version that predates the various arrangements introduced over the years. “Indonesia Raya” was first introduced by W.R. Soepratman at the Second Youth Congress on October 28, 1928, and later became one of the most significant symbols of Indonesia’s national identity. Antea’s performance has given people a glimpse into how the anthem was originally sung nearly a century ago. ♡♡IDID”	Antea’s performance , the original 1928 lyrics and musical score, the three stanzas, and the historical background of “Indonesia Raya.”	The performanc e is positioned as an act of presenting and preserving an earlier version of the national anthem.	Antea’s performance is represented as connected to Indonesian history, culture, and national identity.
5	“For Gen Z, building financial stability and a strong foundation for the future is increasingly taking priority over making major life decisions, including marriage. According to Deloitte’s 2026 Gen Z and Millennial Survey, 55% of Gen Z respondents said they have delayed major life decisions — such as getting married, starting a family, launching a business, or pursuing further education — because of financial concerns. The global survey, which covered more than 23,000 Gen Z and millennial respondents across 44	Financial stability, future planning, major life decisions, and marriage among Gen Z.	Gen Z is positioned as taking time to build financial stability before making major life decisions.	Gen Z is represented as financially cautious and focused on future stability.

	countries, highlights how financial security is shaping the way younger generations approach major milestones. Rather than rushing to settle down, many Gen Zs appear to be taking their time to build stability first. 🔥🔥"			
6	"A 2-year-old child reportedly died while staying at an evacuation shelter in Nagekeo, East Nusa Tenggara (NTT), following the recent earthquake. According to the Ministry of Health, the child's death was linked to exposure to cold temperatures while at the evacuation site. The incident highlights the difficult conditions faced by residents forced to stay in temporary shelters, especially children and other vulnerable groups, as they cope with the aftermath of the disaster. 💔🥀"	The child's death, the evacuation shelter, cold temperatures, and the difficult conditions experienced by vulnerable groups.	The situation is positioned through the difficult conditions faced by disaster-affected residents.	Children and other disaster-affected groups are represented as vulnerable individuals in temporary shelters.
7	" 😭😭😭😭😭😭💔💔💔💔💔"	The emotional response expressed through the emojis.	The caption positions the content through a sympathetic and emotional reaction.	The topic is represented through sadness and emotional sympathy rather than additional information.
8	" 😊😊😊😊😊😊🙏🙏🙏🙏🙏🙏"	The positive and prayer-related emojis following the headline.	The caption positions the content through an affirmative and supportive response.	Taking a break is represented in a supportive and accepting tone.
9	"Koko, a western lowland gorilla, became one of the most famous gorillas in the world for her ability to communicate using sign language. Koko was born on July 4, 1971, at the San Francisco Zoo in the United States.	Koko's identity, her use of sign language, her	Koko is positioned as a notable gorilla	Koko is represented as an animal with significant

	At around one year old, she began learning sign language under the guidance of researcher Francine “Penny” Patterson through the Koko Project. According to The Gorilla Foundation, Koko learned more than 1,000 signs and understood around 2,000 spoken English words. 💔💔💔”	background, and her reported communication abilities.	because of her ability to communicate using sign language.	communicative abilities.
10	“A friendly reminder: the first wave of Gen Z, those born in 1997, will turn 30 next year. Tag your friend who’s already getting old too. 😭😭😭😭😭😭😭😭👊👊👊👊👊👊”	The first wave of Gen Z born in 1997 and the idea of turning 30.	Turning 30 is positioned through a humorous and relatable expression about getting older.	The first wave of Gen Z is represented as approaching 30 in a light-hearted way.

Table 3 shows that the captions differed in their amount and type of textual information. Captions 2, 4, 5, 6, 9, and 10 provided additional information related to the topics presented in their headlines. In contrast, Captions 1, 3, 7, and 8 mainly consisted of the expression emojis and therefore provided limited additional textual information. The captions presented the selected topics through emotional, supportive, factual, historical, and humorous forms of positioning.

Overall, the analysis identified emphasis, positioning, and representation across both headlines and captions. The headlines generally established the main focus of each post, while the captions either added information and context or expressed a brief emotional response. The findings also showed that the textual presentation of the selected posts varied according to the topics and the amount of information provided in each headline and caption.

Discussion

The main findings of this study showed that power in Folkative’s Instagram headlines and captions was represented through emphasis, positioning, and representation. The headline analysis showed that headlines primarily established the focus of each post by highlighting particular people, events, experiences, or issues, while certain lexical choices guided readers toward particular viewpoints. The caption analysis showed two main patterns: some captions expanded the information presented in the headlines, while others mainly reinforced topics through emotional responses. These findings answered the first research question by showing that power was represented through textual choices that made particular perspectives more visible. The findings also extend previous research on social media literacy by shifting attention from how users access and evaluate social media information to how power is constructed within the texts themselves. Swart (2023) found that young people use different strategies to access,

evaluate, and engage with news on social media, while Swart and Broersma (2024) showed that young people's perceptions of news on Instagram are shaped by the mixture of topics, genres, and tones found on the platform.

The findings also relate to Silvhiany et al. (2021), who found that EFL students could experience difficulties when critically evaluating online information, including Instagram content. However, the present study approached critical literacy from a different direction by examining the construction of power within social media texts, rather than measuring users' ability to evaluate information. This distinction contributes to understanding critical literacy because readers can examine what is emphasized, how they are positioned, and how people or issues are represented when encountering social media content. In line with Janks' (2010) view of the relationship between language and power, these questions encourage readers to recognize that texts are constructed through particular choices and perspectives rather than being completely neutral. Thus, the analysis of power contributes to critical literacy by helping readers become more aware of how social media language can shape their understanding of people, events, and issues.

A strength of this study was its separate examination of headlines and captions, which allowed their different textual functions to be identified. However, the use of ten highly liked posts from one month created a potential selection bias, because highly liked content may not represent Folkative's wider range of posts and may favor content that attracts greater audience engagement. The small sample also means that some patterns may have occurred by chance and should not be generalized to all Folkative content or Indonesian social media accounts. In addition, the study focused only on textual elements, so visual features and audience responses that could contribute to meaning-making were not examined. These limitations indicate that future research could use a larger and more varied sample, compare several social media accounts, and examine visual elements and audience comments. Such research could further investigate how textual and other social media elements interact in the construction of power and the development of critical literacy.

Conclusion

This study concluded that power in Folkative's Instagram headlines and captions was represented through emphasis, positioning, and representation. Headlines primarily established the focus of each post, while captions either expanded the information presented or reinforced the topic through emotional responses. These textual choices made particular perspectives, people, and issues more visible, showing that social media texts are not simply neutral presentations of information.

The findings also showed that examining power can contribute to critical literacy in social media. By asking what is emphasized, how readers are positioned, and how people or issues are represented, readers can become more aware of the perspectives constructed through social media language. Although the study was limited to ten highly liked posts from one month and focused only on textual elements, it provides a basis for further research using larger samples, different social media accounts, and additional elements such as visuals and audience comments.

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