

ESL95: Misinformation and Biases Infect Social Media, Both Intentionally and Accidentally

Noun Clauses Stating Positions using THAT ANSWERS

Read the following paragraphs from the article. Find the noun clauses. How are they being used in each case? What verbs do they follow?

- Be careful - THAT does not always mark a noun clause. Remember that a noun clause occurs after a verb. Also notice that there are no commas used with this type of dependent clause. Adjective clauses come after nouns.

1. It's not surprising that there's so much disinformation published: Spam and online fraud are lucrative for criminals, and government and political propaganda yield both partisan and financial benefits. But the fact that low-credibility content spreads so quickly and easily suggests that people and the algorithms behind social media platforms are vulnerable to manipulation.
2. Cognitive biases originate in the way the brain processes the information that every person encounters every day. The brain can deal with only a finite amount of information, and too many incoming stimuli can cause information overload. That (DEMONSTRATIVE PRONOUN) in itself has serious implications for the quality of information on social media. We have found that steep competition for users' limited attention means that some ideas go viral despite their low quality – even when people prefer to share high-quality content.
3. In fact, in our research we have found that it is possible to determine the political leanings of a Twitter user by simply looking at the partisan preferences of their friends. Our analysis of the structure of these partisan communication networks found that social networks are particularly efficient at disseminating information – accurate or not – when they are closely tied together and disconnected from other parts of society.

4. Our own research shows that social media platforms expose users to a less diverse set of sources than do non-social media sites like Wikipedia. Because this is at the level of a whole platform, not of a single user, we call this the homogeneity bias.

5. Another important ingredient of social media is information that is trending on the platform, according to what is getting the most clicks. We call this popularity bias, because we have found that an algorithm designed to promote popular content may negatively affect the overall quality of information on the platform. This also feeds into existing cognitive bias, reinforcing what appears to be popular irrespective of its quality.