

Sarcasm in netizens' comments on news of public figure Jule's Infidelity on tiktok: a semantic study

Ahmad Renal Zailani¹, Erwin Salpa Riansi², Agus Iryana³

^{1, 2, 3} Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa University

¹ 2222210048@untirta.ac.id, ² salpariansierwin@untirta.ac.id, ³ agus.iryana@untirta.ac.id

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Abstract

This study examines the use of sarcasm in netizens' comments on TikTok news reports concerning the alleged affair of public figure Jule. The topic is significant due to the growing prevalence of sarcastic language on social media as a medium for expressing emotions, criticism, and social judgment. This research employed a qualitative descriptive approach. The data consisted of sarcastic comments collected from five TikTok accounts: @officialrcti, @urgenz.id, @sctv, @garuda.siwa.infot, and @ikut.rumpi. Data were gathered through observation and note-taking techniques and analyzed using the pragmatic identity method with the determinant element sorting technique. The findings revealed 53 instances of sarcasm, comprising 5 naming sarcasms, 18 trait sarcasms, 10 lexical sarcasms, 9 like-prefixed sarcasms, and 11 illocutionary sarcasms. Trait sarcasm was the most dominant form, reflecting netizens' tendency to assign negative characteristics to the reported individuals. The sarcastic expressions conveyed emotive and connotative meanings, including anger, disappointment, insults, and social criticism. These findings indicate that social media serves not only as a communication platform but also as a space for emotional expression and social evaluation within digital society.

Keywords: semantics, sarcasm, emotive meaning, netizens' comments, TikTok

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INTRODUCTION

Language plays a fundamental role in human life as the primary medium for conveying ideas, feelings, and information. Through language, individuals establish social relationships, express opinions, and communicate attitudes toward various social phenomena. As communication technology develops, the use of language has expanded beyond face-to-face interactions into digital environments, particularly social media platforms. According to Dalman (2016), language is a system of arbitrary sound symbols produced by human speech organs to facilitate communication. Therefore, language is not only a tool for transmitting information but also a means of expressing emotions and personal evaluations.

One of the most prominent functions of language in digital communication is the emotive function. Rosidin (2015) states that language enables speakers to express emotions such as happiness, anger, disappointment, fear, and frustration. In social media interactions, users frequently employ language to express spontaneous emotional reactions toward public events and issues. Alwasilah (2012) further argues that language allows speakers to perform various social roles flexibly. However, in digital spaces, this flexibility often leads to unrestricted forms of expression, including the use of harsh, critical, and offensive language.

Among the various forms of expressive language, sarcasm has become increasingly visible in online communication. Tarigan (2013) defines sarcasm as a figure of speech characterized by sharp ridicule, mockery, and expressions intended to hurt or criticize others. Sarcasm is not merely a linguistic device but also a reflection of strong evaluative attitudes toward specific individuals or situations. As a form of figurative language, sarcasm contains meanings that go beyond literal interpretation and often conveys implicit criticism, contempt, or social judgment (Nurgiyantoro, 2010). In the context of social media, sarcasm frequently functions as a vehicle for expressing anger, disappointment, and dissatisfaction.

The rapid growth of social media has significantly influenced contemporary language practices. Platforms such as TikTok provide users with opportunities to share content and engage in discussions through comment sections. These comment spaces often become arenas for public debate where users freely express their opinions, criticisms, and emotional responses. Sukmawati (2023) notes that TikTok serves as a broad platform for the emergence of sarcastic expressions because of its interactive nature and high level of user participation. The open structure of comment sections allows netizens to communicate without direct face-to-face interaction, increasing the likelihood of sarcastic and confrontational language use.

The phenomenon of sarcasm on social media has attracted scholarly and public attention. A report published by RRI.co.id (2025) discussing research in the *Journal of Communication and Business* revealed that many members of Generation Z perceive sarcasm on TikTok as acceptable, provided that it does not constitute destructive personal attacks. Sarcasm is often regarded as a means of attracting attention, increasing engagement, and expressing personal identity. Nevertheless, excessive use of sarcasm may contribute to hostility and weaken the culture of politeness that has traditionally characterized Indonesian communication practices. Furthermore, concerns regarding ambiguous and potentially harmful language use on social media have prompted discussions about the implementation of the Electronic Information and Transactions Law (ITE Law), highlighting the social and legal implications of online communication.

One issue that generated extensive public discussion on TikTok involved allegations of an affair concerning the public figure Jule. Videos and news-related content discussing this issue attracted substantial attention from netizens and generated numerous comments containing sarcastic expressions. Many users employed sarcasm to criticize, ridicule, and evaluate the individuals involved. Consequently, the comment sections evolved beyond spaces for information exchange and became arenas for moral judgment and emotional expression. This phenomenon demonstrates how digital communication facilitates the construction of social evaluations through language.

Several previous studies have investigated sarcasm in social media contexts. Pratama (2023) identified several forms of sarcasm, including naming sarcasm, trait sarcasm, lexical sarcasm, like-prefixed sarcasm, and illocutionary sarcasm in Instagram comments. Prahmana (2023) examined sarcasm in TikTok comments and found various illocutionary functions, such as assertive, expressive, and commissive acts. Similarly, Halifah (2024) reported the presence of propositional, lexical, and illocutionary sarcasm across different social media platforms. Although these studies contribute significantly to the understanding of sarcasm in digital communication, they primarily focus on general social media interactions and do not specifically examine sarcasm within comment sections responding to public controversies involving public figures.

Based on this research gap, the present study investigates the realization of sarcasm in netizens' comments on TikTok news reports concerning the alleged affair of the public figure Jule. Specifically, the study aims to identify and describe the forms of sarcasm used by netizens and to analyze the meanings conveyed through these sarcastic expressions. By examining both the structural forms and semantic meanings of sarcasm, this research is expected to contribute to semantic studies and provide a deeper understanding of language use, emotional expression, and social evaluation in contemporary digital communication.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach to investigate the realization of sarcasm in netizens' comments on TikTok news reports concerning the alleged affair of the public figure Jule. A qualitative approach was selected because the study focused on describing and interpreting linguistic phenomena in their natural context rather than testing hypotheses or measuring variables statistically (Djasudarma, 2010; Sudaryanto, 2015). The data consisted of netizens' comments containing sarcastic expressions collected from five TikTok accounts: @officialrcti, @urgenz.id, @sctv_, @garuda.siwa.infot, and @ikut.rumpi. Data were gathered using observation and note-taking techniques. The researcher observed comment sections related to the news reports, identified comments containing sarcastic language, and recorded the relevant data for further analysis. Data analysis was conducted using the pragmatic identity method (*metode padan pragmatis*) proposed by Sudaryanto (2015). This method was chosen because the interpretation of sarcasm requires consideration of contextual factors beyond linguistic forms. The analysis began with the Determining Element Sorting Technique (*Teknik Pilah Unsur Penentu/PUP*) to classify linguistic units containing sarcasm. Subsequently, contextual analysis was applied to identify the forms of sarcasm based on Tarigan's classification and to interpret their meanings from a semantic perspective, particularly emotive and connotative meanings. The findings were presented using an informal descriptive method. Selected comments were described and interpreted narratively by considering their linguistic forms, contextual meanings, and communicative functions within digital interactions on TikTok.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This study identified 53 sarcastic expressions in netizens' comments on TikTok news reports concerning the alleged affair of the public figure Jule. Based on Tarigan's classification, the data were categorized into five types of sarcasm: naming sarcasm, trait sarcasm, lexical sarcasm, like-prefixed sarcasm, and illocutionary sarcasm. The distribution of the identified sarcasm types is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of Sarcasm Types in TikTok Comments

Type of Sarcasm	Frequency
Naming Sarcasm	5
Trait Sarcasm	18
Lexical Sarcasm	10
Like-Prefixed Sarcasm	9
Illocutionary Sarcasm	11
Total	53

As shown in Table 1, trait sarcasm was the most dominant category, accounting for 18 of the 53 identified sarcastic expressions. This finding indicates that netizens tended to assign negative personal characteristics to the individuals involved in the reported controversy. Meanwhile, naming sarcasm was the least frequent category, with only five occurrences.

The analysis further revealed that sarcastic expressions were realized in the form of words, phrases, clauses, and complete sentences. In terms of meaning, the sarcastic utterances predominantly conveyed emotive and connotative meanings. These meanings reflected anger, disappointment, ridicule, mockery, and social criticism expressed by netizens toward the individuals discussed in the news reports.

Discussion

The findings indicate that sarcasm is a prominent linguistic strategy used by netizens when responding to controversial issues on social media. The predominance of trait sarcasm suggests that users frequently express criticism by attaching negative attributes to the individuals involved rather than merely commenting on the reported events. Such expressions function as a form of social evaluation and moral judgment within digital communication.

The presence of all five categories of sarcasm demonstrates the diversity of sarcastic language employed by TikTok users. This finding supports Tarigan's theory that sarcasm may be realized through various linguistic forms, ranging from direct naming and lexical choices to more complex illocutionary expressions. The use of these forms enables users to intensify criticism and communicate negative attitudes more effectively.

From a semantic perspective, the identified sarcastic expressions contained emotive and connotative meanings. Emotive meanings reflected the speakers' emotional responses, such as anger, frustration, disappointment, and resentment. Connotative meanings emerged through words and expressions that carried evaluative implications beyond their literal meanings. These findings indicate that sarcasm serves not only as a rhetorical device but also as a medium through which users express personal emotions and social criticism.

Furthermore, the findings reveal that TikTok comment sections function not only as spaces for information exchange but also as arenas for emotional expression and public evaluation. The extensive use of sarcasm demonstrates how digital communication allows individuals to articulate opinions, construct social judgments, and respond collectively to issues that attract public attention. Therefore, understanding sarcastic language in online interactions is important for examining contemporary communication practices and their implications for language politeness in digital environments.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussion, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. The study identified 53 sarcastic expressions in netizens' comments on TikTok news reports concerning the alleged affair of the public figure Jule.
2. The sarcastic expressions consisted of 5 naming sarcasms, 18 trait sarcasms, 10 lexical sarcasms, 9 like-prefixed sarcasms, and 11 illocutionary sarcasms.
3. Trait sarcasm was the most dominant category, indicating that netizens frequently expressed criticism through negative character attributions toward the individuals involved in the controversy.
4. The sarcastic expressions conveyed emotive and connotative meanings, representing anger, disappointment, ridicule, mockery, and social criticism.

5. The findings demonstrate that TikTok comment sections function not only as communication spaces but also as arenas for emotional expression and social evaluation in digital society.

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