

SARCASTIC LANGUAGE STYLE IN STUDENT COMMUNICATION INTERACTIONS AT SMPN 9 TEGAL AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR INDONESIAN LANGUAGE LEARNING

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Abstract

This research is motivated by the use of satirical language style in student communication, which not only serves as a form of expression but also has the potential to influence the school's social environment. This study aims to describe the types and factors influencing the use of sarcastic satirical language style in student communication interactions at SMPN 9 Tegal, as well as its implications for Indonesian Language learning. The research uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive method. The research data consists of spoken utterances containing sarcastic language style. Data collection was carried out using listening and recording techniques, non-participatory observation (SBLC), and documentation. Data analysis was conducted using the pragmatic identity method. The results revealed 5 utterances explicitly classified as sarcastic language style. The use of sarcastic utterances is characterized by harsh, degrading, and direct offensive diction. Based on the analysis, emotional factors serve as the primary trigger for sarcasm, followed by relational closeness, communication situation, language habits, and school communication culture. These findings are expected to enrich sociolinguistic studies and be implemented in the Anecdotal Text learning material for Phase E (Grade X Senior High School) to equip students with a pragmatic understanding of the boundary between constructive criticism and verbal bullying.

Keywords: *language style; satire; sarcasm; sociolinguistics; Indonesian language learning;*

INTRODUCTION

Language plays a crucial role in human life as it is used to convey information, express feelings, and establish social relationships. According to Chaer (2014), language is an arbitrary vocal symbol system used by members of a social group to cooperate, interact, and identify themselves. In an educational environment, language serves not only as a medium for delivering instructional material but also as a tool for shaping students' character, social attitudes, and overall capabilities. The diversity of language use is influenced by various factors. One linguistic phenomenon frequently encountered in student communication is the use of satirical language style. According to Gorys Keraf (2019), language style is a distinctive way of expressing thoughts through language that reflects the soul and personality of the writer or speaker. Satirical language style is used to convey criticism or censure indirectly. Keraf also explains that satirical language style is divided into several forms, namely irony, cynicism, and sarcasm.

One of the most frequently used and sharpest forms of satirical language style is sarcasm. Sarcasm is used to express anger, disappointment, insult, and other negative emotions openly. The use of satirical language among adolescents does not occur by chance; rather, it is significantly influenced by various social factors, such as peer pressure, communication culture, and emotional conditions (Sundari et al., 2025). In student interactions, sarcasm can function as a means of fostering intimacy or social dominance; however, if not understood properly, it can trigger verbal bullying (Maalikh et al., 2024).

The phenomenon of sarcastic language style usage is found not only in daily life but also frequently appears in student communication at school, such as at SMPN 9 Tegal. The use of sarcasm is interesting to study because of its impact on students' social relationships. Therefore, this study aims to describe the forms of sarcastic language style and the factors influencing its use in student communication at SMPN 9 Tegal, as well as its implications for Indonesian Language learning

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach to analyze the sarcastic language style in the communication interactions of students at SMPN 9 Tegal. This approach was selected to gain a deep understanding and provide a detailed description of language usage phenomena based on the context and meaning of utterances within natural communication settings (Sanjaya, 2016:60).

The data sources for this research were students engaged in daily communication interactions within the environment of SMPN 9 Tegal. The data consists of spoken excerpts (words, phrases, sentences, or dialogues) containing sarcastic language style. Data collection took place from July 13 to July 17, 2026. Data was gathered using listening and recording techniques, the Simak Bebas Libat Cakap (SBLC) technique (non-participatory observation), and documentation. Through the SBLC technique, the researcher acted as a passive observer so that the collected data remained natural.

Data analysis was conducted using the pragmatic identity method with an interactive analysis model. The analytical stages involved data reduction (selecting and filtering sarcastic utterances), descriptive data presentation, and drawing conclusions. The findings are presented descriptively using an informal method through systematic narrative descriptions accompanied by conversational excerpts.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the data collection and reduction process, the research focused on 5 utterances containing a sarcastic language style. According to Keraf (2019), sarcasm is the sharpest form of satire because it utilizes expressions intended to openly mock, insult, or ridicule using negative and harsh words.

Sarcasm features sharp, harsh, and often hurtful expressions designed to criticize, mock, or convey disagreement to the interlocutor. Unlike subtle irony, sarcasm uses explicit diction that has a high potential to trigger conflict if delivered out of context (Purwanti & Yufarlina, 2025).

Forms of Sarcastic Language Style

In student communication at SMPN 9 Tegal, sarcasm generally arises when the speaker feels deeply annoyed by a peer's behavior or when communication occurs within a joking context that has become habitual within a friendship circle. Below is the analysis of the sarcastic data found:

- Context:** Spoken to a friend referring to their physical appearance.
Utterance: "Si genong mukanya jelek banget." ("*Genong's face is so ugly.*") *Analysis:* This utterance falls under the category of sarcastic language style. Literally, the sentence expresses a negative judgment on the interlocutor's physical appearance. The speaker does not intend to offer constructive criticism, but rather directly mocks and demeans the interlocutor's appearance (body shaming). The phrase "*mukanya jelek banget*" ("face is so ugly") is an explicit insult reflecting negative emotions.
- Context:** Spoken when a student refuses to be placed in the same class with a specific peer.
Utterance: "Moh sekelas sama orang itu, anaknya kaya gitu." ("*I don't want to be in the same class as that person, that kid is like that.*")
Analysis: This utterance is categorized as sarcasm because the speaker directly expresses dislike accompanied by a degrading statement about the peer. The firm refusal ("*moh sekelas*" / "don't want to be in the same class") and negative assessment ("*anaknya kaya gitu*" / "that kid is like that") are conveyed without softening expressions, demonstrating negative sentiment that can hurt the peer's feelings.
- Context:** Spoken to a friend using their name followed by a profanity.
Utterance: "Sini kamu Hilman tai." ("*Come here, Hilman, you shit.*")
Analysis: This utterance contains explicit profanity directed straight at the interlocutor. The use of vulgar words indicates that the speaker is no longer merely making a sarcastic remark, but purely hurling an insult. Its pragmatic meaning reflects an outburst of extreme anger or frustration regarding the interlocutor's actions.
- Context:** Delivered to a group member who is passive in doing group work.
Utterance: "Kalogak niat ngerjain tugas kelompok minimal mikir jawaban." ("*If you don't intend to work on the group project, at least think of an answer.*")
Analysis: This utterance is classified as sarcasm because the speaker directly condemns the peer's behavior with sharp words. Although it does not contain explicit profanity, it carries harsh criticism by attacking the work ethic and responsibility of the passive group member.
- Context:** Spoken out of frustration toward a peer who refuses to think or participate in group work.
Utterance: "Otakmu loh dipakai, jangan hanya untuk pajangan." ("*Use your brain, don't just keep it for display.*")
Analysis: This utterance explicitly attacks the interlocutor's personal capability. The metaphor "*jangan hanya untuk pajangan*" ("don't just keep it for display") amplifies the mocking effect and insults the interlocutor's intelligence. The impact of this utterance carries strong potential to cause embarrassment or interpersonal conflict among students.
- Context:** Spoken by a student to a friend who arrives just as the class lesson is about to end.
Utterance: "Rajin sekali kamu, datangnya pas bel pulang." ("*How diligent you are, arriving right when the dismissal bell rings.*")
- Context:** Spoken to a classmate who did not do any of the assignments given by the teacher.
Utterance: "Hebat ya, tugasmu kosong semua." ("*Great job, your assignment is completely blank.*")
- Context:** Spoken when a friend cheats and copies identical answers from a desk partner. *Utterance:*

"Pintar sekali kamu, sampai jawabannya mirip semua denganku." (*"You are so smart, to the point that all your answers are identical to mine."*)

9. **Context:** Spoken during group competition practice when a member is not taking it seriously.
Utterance: "Terimakasih ya gara-gara kamu kelompok kita jadi kalah." (*"Thank you, because of you our group lost."*)
10. **Context:** Spoken when classmates are being noisy, risking disturbing the neighboring class.
Utterance: "Bagus sekali kelas jadi rame gara-gara kamu." (*"Wonderful, the class became noisy because of you."*)

Factors Influencing the Use of Sarcastic Language Style

The use of sarcastic language style by students at SMPN 9 Tegal is influenced by a combination of psychological, social, and situational factors, including:

1. **Emotional Factors:** Emotional factors are a primary cause of sarcasm in student communication. When students experience negative emotions—such as anger, annoyance, disappointment, offense, or frustration—they tend to express these feelings through sharp and hurtful statements. For instance, when a group member fails to contribute, another student might vent by saying, *"Great job, you're just riding on our names."* Sarcasm serves as a medium to release emotions while delivering indirect criticism. Consequently, the speaker's emotional state heavily influences their choice of words and language style.
2. **Relational Closeness Among Students:** Social closeness between the speaker and listener plays a significant role in how sarcasm is used. In close-knit peer groups (often called "circles"), sarcastic remarks are frequently viewed as a mark of intimacy, humor, or playful banter. Group members understand each other's characters and habits, so harsh-sounding words are not always interpreted as insults. However, if the same remarks are directed at acquaintances or individuals outside the circle, sarcasm can lead to misunderstandings, conflict, and hurt feelings. Thus, relational closeness dictates whether sarcastic communication is acceptable or offensive.
3. **Communication Situation:** Situational context strongly influences the occurrence of sarcasm. Students tend to use sarcasm in informal settings, such as recess, group discussions, extracurricular activities, or hanging out away from teacher supervision. In these relaxed environments, students feel free to express opinions, jokes, and satire. Conversely, in formal settings—such as during active classroom instruction or when addressing teachers—students select their words more carefully to adhere to politeness norms and school rules.
4. **Language Habits:** Linguistic habits developed through peer circles and social media influence students' adoption of sarcasm. Today, social media platforms are filled with satirical content, mockery, and sarcastic humor used for entertainment. Continuous exposure leads students to normalize sarcastic language. These habits naturally spill over into daily interactions at school, causing students to use sarcastic utterances without realizing their potential negative impact on others.
5. **Communication Culture:** The communication culture within the school environment also fosters sarcasm. At SMPN 9 Tegal, students commonly blend Indonesian with local languages, specifically the Tegal dialect of Javanese. This mix creates a distinct, informal, and intimate style of interaction. Within this culture, satirical or sarcastic expressions are often viewed as a normal part of peer dialogue, allowing sarcasm to emerge naturally in everyday conversations.
6. **Family Environment:** The family environment is where students first learn language and communication patterns. The communication styles practiced by parents and family members shape a child's linguistic habits early on. Students raised in homes that emphasize polite communication tend to interact respectfully at school. Conversely, children exposed to rough or harsh language at home are more likely to carry those habits into the school environment.
7. **Speaker's Personality:** Individual personality traits influence how sarcasm is utilized. Each student possesses a unique character that shapes their communication style. Extroverted, humorous, and sociable students are more likely to use satire or sarcasm as lighthearted banter to break the ice. On the other hand, quieter, cautious, or sensitive students generally prefer direct and polite communication. These character differences result in varied uses of sarcasm across the school population.

IMPLICATIONS FOR INDONESIAN LANGUAGE LEARNING

The phenomenon of student sarcasm in real-world interactions carries important pedagogical implications for Indonesian Language education at the high school level, particularly within the Merdeka Curriculum for Phase E (Grade X) on Anecdotal Texts. The Learning Outcomes (*Capaian Pembelajaran*) for this topic emphasize the ability to deliver criticism politely and creatively (criticizing through humor or a smile).

Authentic data on student sarcasm can be integrated by teachers as contextual teaching materials. Students can analyze and differentiate between constructive criticism (via gentle irony or humor) and harmful speech (sarcasm or verbal bullying). By examining the sharp diction of sarcasm, students can be guided to refine such statements into polite anecdotal texts. This aligns with language learning goals: advancing cognitive and linguistic skills while nurturing character, emotional intelligence, and preventing verbal bullying in schools.

CONCLUSION

The study at SMPN 9 Tegal reveals that students actively use sarcastic language style in their daily interactions. Sarcasm is characterized by harsh, derogatory, and explicitly aggressive expressions (such as body shaming, profanity, blunt rejections, and intelligence-insulting metaphors). Its use is driven by negative emotions, peer intimacy that blurs politeness boundaries, informal settings, and habits reinforced by social media and local speech culture.

These findings offer valuable pedagogical insights for Indonesian Language instruction. The phenomenon can serve as a contextual foundation for teaching Anecdotal Texts. By reflecting on their own speech habits, students learn to navigate pragmatic nuances, distinguish polite criticism from verbal bullying, and build communicative competence that is critical, ethical, and conducive to a positive school environment.

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