

Sarcasm in Indonesian Television Reality Comedy Show, Lapor Pak!

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Abstract: *The objectives of this research are to examine the forms, methods, and functions of sarcasm in the Indonesian TV reality comedy show Lapor Pak!. This research is qualitative and descriptive. This research is qualitative and descriptive. The sample of this research sarcastic dialogues from selected episodes. The data were gathered by observing episodes and identifying sarcasm based on using Elisabeth Champ's (2011) study and were analysed using content analysis. The findings shows that illocutionary and lexical sarcasm are the most common, serving humor and social criticism*

INTRODUCTION

Language is essentially the starting point for human to build a connection. Through language, we can express our thoughts, from ideas and data to personal feelings, as explained by Pasaribu et al., (2020, pp. 12–18). However, the role of language goes beyond which is also marks how a society views itself and how relationships between individuals are built.

With the development of mass media, particularly radio and television, the way we use language has been driven by changes. Television has a significant influence in shaping how people perceive things and the words they use. Rahmanadji, (2007, pp. 213–221) noted that the emergence of various entertainment programs on television, particularly reality comedies, indicates that people are increasingly seeking spaces to laugh and relieve stress. Humor does indeed serve as entertainment, a means of learning, and even social criticism. However, the powerful influence of media often has other consequences, affecting word choice in the public sphere, which can sometimes loosen or even decline in quality. Afrinda, (2016, pp. 61–71) points out that excessively free expression can open up space for harsher language to emerge and circulate widely.

(Asher & Lascarides, 1998, pp. 239) claimed that pragmatics offers a framework for examining the intricacies of meaning in communication. Pragmatics is the examination of language within its context. It emphasizes how speakers communicate their intended meanings and how listeners interpret those messages through their situational and cultural understanding. Pragmatics studies speech acts, which are actions performed through language such, as requesting, promising or criticizing. An important aspect of pragmatics is the management of relationships. This is frequently explored via concepts of politeness and impoliteness. Politeness is considered a method to express concern for others "face" meaning their self-presentation (Yule, 1996). In contrast, impoliteness refers to a negative attitude toward certain behaviors in specific situations. It often involves the careful use of face-threatening acts (FTAs) to cause social conflict or, importantly for this study, to create humor (Culpeper, J. (2011).

A frequent and understated type of impoliteness in humor is sarcasm. In (Keraf, 1991), sarcasm originates, from the Greek term sarcasmos, which stems from sarcasmos signifying "to

flesh." It represents a kind of irony characterized by its biting nature. According to (Al-Daher et al., 2022, pp. 162–175), This is a type of irony employed to ridicule or express disdain typically, through remarks that seem neutral or favorable at first glance but possess an underlying harsh or unfavorable connotation. Although its usage may breach communication ethics. "Provoke conflict" (Anshari & Hafiz, 2018, pp. 184–196), it is also acknowledged as a rhetorical device and "the pinnacle of intelligence" that can enhance creativity and act as a tactical means for subtle judgment, in media and political propaganda.

The examination of these occurrences within the media is thoroughly documented. Reality TV especially serves as a resource for linguistic research because it displays spontaneous natural speech by everyday individuals delivering a level of genuineness according to (Aslama & Pantti, 2012) (Previous research has effectively applied pragmatic theories to humor studies, such as using Culpeper's (1996) impoliteness framework to analyze stand-up comedy by John Mulaney (Arllivia & Sembodo, 2024, pp. 63–72) and the Indonesian program *Stand-up Comedy Academy* (Yuanita, 2019) Other studies have focused on politeness strategies in advice-giving and other speech acts across different cultures in (Alabdali, 2025, pp. 61–80).

However, a clear research gap persists. There is a scarcity of pragmatic research that specifically targets the unique confluence of the *reality* format and *comedic* structure in highly popular Indonesian programs like *Lapor Pak!*. Furthermore, while (Brown & Levinson, 1987) model is predominant, there have been calls for the application of other pioneering frameworks, such as Leech's (Leech, 1983) politeness principles, in diverse cultural contexts (Al-Duleimi et al., 2016, pp. 262–270)

This study aims to analyze sarcastic comedy from the Indonesian comedy-based television series, *Lapor Pak!*. The subject of this research analysis is a TV show that features dialogue between actors in a humorous context that reflects Indonesian culture, which often values subtlety and harmony in dialogue. This context raises tensions about how sarcasm can offend individuals, even though the dialogue is in the form of a comedic reality. This study focuses on the following questions to determine the extent to which language can be accepted by individuals without offending them:

1. What are the main linguistic forms and characteristics of sarcastic comments in the TV show *Lapor Pak!*?
2. What methods are used to express sarcasm?
3. What is the primary function of these comments?

By answering these questions, this research will advance the field of media pragmatics and discourse. This research offers an analysis of the role of sarcasm in a specific non-Western hybrid television genre. The results will shed light on the interaction patterns between cultural communication norms and the use of intentionally offensive language for entertainment purposes. Furthermore, this research will explore the significance and underutilized perspectives within the framework of contemporary Indonesian popular culture.

RESEARCH METHODS

To explore sarcasm in the *Lapor Pak!* show, this study used a descriptive qualitative method. This approach helps in understanding the show's social environment, identifying and classifying data, and explaining the phenomenon based on Elisabeth Camp's (2012) theory of sarcasm. The research process included watching episodes of *Lapor Pak!*, spotting instances of sarcasm, and categorizing them according to Camp's four types: proportional sarcasm, lexical sarcasm, like-prefixed sarcasm, and illocutionary sarcasm. The data was then analyzed through content analysis to understand how often each type of sarcasm appeared and its practical role within the show.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Findings Based on the review of dialogues from the Lapor Pak! show, several examples of sarcasm were found and grouped according to Elisabeth Camp's (2012) typology. The findings reveal a strategic use of different sarcasm types to achieve comedic and critical effects. The distribution is presented in the table below.

Table 1. Types of Sarcasm in Lapor Pak! Dialogue Samples

| No | Sarcasm Type | Amount | Percentage |
|----|-----------------------|----------|-------------|
| 1 | Illocutionary Sarcasm | 2 | 40% |
| 2 | Lexical Sarcasm | 2 | 40% |
| 3 | Propositional Sarcasm | 1 | 20% |
| 4 | Like-Prefixed Sarcasm | 0 | 0% |
| | Total | 5 | 100% |

1. Illocutionary Sarcasm

Illocutionary Sarcasm was a prominent type in the data. According to Camp (2012), this is a "complete illocutionary action directed by the valid speech of the connected discourse," where the speaker uses a specific speech act (like giving praise or stating a fact) to perform a completely opposite action (like mocking or criticizing). It is most powerful when it contrasts the actual situation with the sardonic statement.

- **Data 1:**
 - **Surya:** "Lemas banget ya, kayanya tekanan darahnya 20/20 itu." (He looks so weak, I think his blood pressure is 20/20.)
 - **Context:** Said while looking at Fajar Sadboy, who is known for his always-sad and weak aura, including crying and being lethargic.
- **Data 2:**
 - **Andika:** "Kita sepele ajalah." (Let's just take it lightly.)
 - **Context:** Said while discussing a plan to raid a suspected online gambling den, a serious crime.

In Data 1, Surya performs the speech act of a *diagnosis* ("his blood pressure is 20/20"). However, a blood pressure of 20/20 is medically impossible and indicates no pressure or activity, which hyperbolically contrasts with the normal 120/80. The true illocutionary force is not to inform but to *mock* and exaggerate Fajar Sadboy's "lemas" (weak) image. This aligns with Camp's (2012) view that illocutionary sarcasm uses a full illocutionary act to contrast the actual situation, embedding a mocking attitude within a seemingly factual statement. Recent research on impoliteness in comedy demonstrates that such illocutionary strategies are central to creating humorous effects while simultaneously performing social critique (Talebzadeh & Khazraie, 2023).

In Data 2, Andika performs the speech act of *suggesting a strategy* ("let's take it lightly"). However, given the serious context of a police raid, this suggestion is absurd and irresponsible. The true force is not to propose a valid plan but to *satirize* a lazy or unprofessional attitude towards law enforcement. The humor and criticism arise from the stark contrast between the serious action required and the nonchalant speech act performed, which fits Camp's (2012) description of a statement contrasting the "actual situation." Studies on satirical comedy have shown that such pragmatic inversions are essential tools for social commentary through entertainment media (Ghaiedi Karimi et al., 2021).

2. Lexical Sarcasm

Lexical Sarcasm was equally frequent. This type involves a "lexically focused pragmatic

approach" where a specific word or phrase is used to imply the opposite idea (Camp, 2012). The targeted expressions often have positive values but are used to convey a negative meaning.

- **Data 3:**
 - **Kiky:** "Yeee 5 juta Cuma untuk gaya hidup." (Yeee, 5 million is *just* for lifestyle.)
 - **Context:** Responding to Andhika, who complains about having only 3 million left to live on after spending 5 million on paddle, golf, and other luxuries.
- **Data 4:**
 - **Herjunot Ali (Tersangka):** "Mas, emang sejak kapan APBN buat rakyat?" (Bro, since when is the State Budget [APBN] for the people?)
 - **Context:** A suspect in a corruption case says this to an official questioning the use of state funds.

In Data 3, the lexical sarcasm hinges on the word "*Cuma*" (just/only). Kiky does not mean that 5 million is a small amount for lifestyle expenses. On the contrary, she implies that 5 million is a *very large and irresponsible* amount to spend on hobbies while complaining about poverty. The word "*Cuma*" is inverted to mean "a huge sum," directly criticizing Andhika's hedonistic priorities. This is a clear example of Camp's (2012) lexical sarcasm, where a targeted expression is used to imply the opposite idea. Research on Indonesian stand-up comedy has demonstrated that lexical manipulation is a preferred strategy in Indonesian comedic discourse due to its cultural acceptability and effectiveness in conveying critique without direct confrontation (Afidah & Wahyudi, 2021).

In Data 4, the phrase "*buat rakyat*" (for the people) is the target. The corrupt suspect does not genuinely believe the state budget is not for the people. Instead, he uses this statement to cynically *insinuate* that corruption is so systemic that the ideal of a budget "for the people" is a fiction. The lexical phrase "*buat rakyat*" is inverted to mean "for the elites" or "for corrupt officials," making it a powerful and cynical form of lexical sarcasm that critiques the system, fitting the pattern where an utterance with a positive surface meaning carries a negative value. Studies on political satire in comedy have shown that such lexical inversions are particularly effective in conveying systemic critiques while maintaining entertainment value (Septyanasari & Hartati, 2024).

3. Propositional Sarcasm

This type was present once. Propositional Sarcasm is "the clearest sort of sarcasm" where the speaker states a proposition that is the direct opposite of the truth or the intended meaning (Camp, 2012). It concentrates on sarcastic remarks that show the inverse of the truth.

- **Data 5:**
 - **Wendy:** "Lah kan gaji lu 8 juta." (But your salary is 8 million.)
 - **Context:** Said after Andhika lamented having only 3 million to survive on in Jakarta, having spent the other 5 million on luxury hobbies.

Wendy's statement, "Lah kan gaji lu 8 juta," is a factual claim. However, within this context, it is said sarcastically. Andhika pretends his salary is only 3 million, conveniently ignoring the 5 million he has already spent. Wendy's comment highlights an obvious and overlooked fact, mocking the absurdity and flawed reasoning of Andhika's complaint. The sarcasm arises from using a true statement to expose the false basis of Andhika's story. As Camp (2012) notes, propositional sarcasm can be clear and straightforward. In this case, it contradicts the implied victimhood in Andhika's speech. Studies on humor in family discourse demonstrate that propositional sarcasm serves important social functions by exposing logical inconsistencies while maintaining relational bonds through humor (Osisanwo et al., 2024).

The analysis of five data points from Lapor Pak! shows a clever use of sarcasm for humor

and social critique, consistent with the types defined by Camp (2012).

- Illocutionary Sarcasm mocks character traits and ridicules unprofessional attitudes through opposing speech acts. Studies on impoliteness in comedy demonstrate that illocutionary strategies are particularly effective in creating entertaining impoliteness that serves both aesthetic and social functions (Ghaiedi Karimi et al., 2021).
- Lexical Sarcasm critiques financial irresponsibility and shows cynicism toward political systems by twisting the meanings of specific words or phrases. Research on Indonesian comedy indicates that lexical-level humor is culturally preferred as it allows for indirect criticism that aligns with Indonesian communication norms emphasizing harmony and face-saving (Afidah & Wahyudi, 2021).
- Propositional Sarcasm directly addresses logical errors by stating a fact that goes against the speaker's implied narrative. Contemporary pragmatic research highlights that propositional sarcasm functions through violation of Grice's Maxim of Quality, creating humor through the recognition of deliberate untruthfulness (AL Anssari & Hadi, 2021).

The lack of Like-Prefixed Sarcasm in this sample suggests that *Lapor Pak!* prefers sarcasm that is more integrated into the speech or vocabulary. Overall, sarcasm in *Lapor Pak!* serves as a key element of its comedic style, enabling it to critique social behaviors ranging from personal indulgence to institutional corruption. Studies on humor in television discourse confirm that such strategic deployment of sarcasm allows comedy programs to navigate between entertainment and social critique effectively (Osisanwo et al., 2024).

CONCLUSION

This research examined sarcasm in the Indonesian reality comedy show *Lapor Pak!* using Elisabeth Camp's framework, revealing that Illocutionary Sarcasm and Lexical Sarcasm dominate with 40% each, while Propositional Sarcasm comprises 20% and Like-Prefixed Sarcasm is absent. Sarcasm operates through three mechanisms: illocutionary acts contradicting situational reality, lexical inversions where positive terms convey negative meanings, and propositional statements exposing logical inconsistencies. The show strategically violates Grice's Cooperative Principle, particularly the Maxims of Quality and Relation, employing impoliteness strategies to generate humor while maintaining entertainment acceptability. Sarcasm serves interconnected functions of creating humor through contextual contradictions, enabling social criticism from personal irresponsibility to systemic corruption, and developing distinctive character personas. The predominance of illocutionary and lexical sarcasm, alongside the absence of like-prefixed forms, reflects Indonesian cultural preferences for indirect yet impactful communication and comedic subtlety. Through pragmatically sophisticated and linguistically varied sarcasm, *Lapor Pak!* successfully balances entertainment with cultural critique, confirming sarcasm's role as both a humor mechanism and cultural benchmark in contemporary Indonesian media discourse.

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