

IMPLICIT SARCASM AND IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION IN THE SEABLINGS VS KNETZ CONFLICT ON X: A PRAGMASEMANTIC STUDY

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Abstract

This study examines the use of implicit sarcasm in digital interactions between SEablings and Knetz on platform X through a pragmasemantic perspective. The research aims to identify the types and patterns of implicit sarcasm, analyze sarcastic meanings through conversational implicature based on Grice's theory, and explore how sarcasm contributes to identity construction in online conflict. This study employed a qualitative descriptive method using documentation techniques. The data consisted of posts, comments, and replies collected through screenshots from platform X related to the SEablings and Knetz conflict. The data were analyzed interpretatively by categorizing sarcasm types, identifying violations of Gricean maxims, and examining identity functions within ingroup and outgroup interactions. The findings revealed that implicit sarcasm and irony were the most dominant forms used in the interactions. Most sarcastic expressions relied on conversational implicature and frequently violated the maxim of quality to convey indirect criticism and mockery. In addition, sarcasm functioned as a linguistic strategy for attacking opposing groups, reinforcing solidarity, and negotiating social identity in digital communication. The study concludes that implicit sarcasm plays a significant role in shaping communication patterns and identity construction within online intercultural conflict.

Keywords: pragmasemantics; implicit sarcasm; conversational implicature; social identity; digital discourse.

INTRODUCTION

Language meaning cannot be fully understood solely from its literal form, but must also consider contextual and social dimensions. This perspective is reflected in the pragmasemantic approach, which combines semantics as the study of literal meaning and pragmatics as the study of meaning in context. Through this integration, language is not only seen as a system of signs but also as a dynamic tool for conveying implied meanings in real

communication, particularly in non-literal expressions such as sarcasm (Sykora et al., 2020). In the digital era, communication has increasingly shifted to social media platforms such as X (formerly Twitter), where users from different cultural and social backgrounds interact instantly (Berger, 2017). While this platform facilitates global communication, it also creates spaces for digital conflict, especially in the form of online debates and fan wars. In such interactions, users tend to employ indirect language strategies, particularly sarcasm, to express criticism, ridicule opposing groups, and convey meanings that are not explicitly stated (Eslen-Ziya, 2022; FUBARA, 2020).

This study aims to investigate the use of implicit sarcasm in digital interactions between SEAbings and Knetz on platform X, particularly within the context of online discourse and conflict. The research focuses on identifying the types and linguistic patterns of implicit sarcasm employed by both groups in their online communication. Furthermore, this study seeks to analyze how implicit sarcasm is interpreted through conversational implicature based on Grice's Cooperative Principle theory, especially in understanding the implied meanings behind sarcastic expressions that are not directly stated. In addition, the study examines how the use of implicit sarcasm contributes to the construction, reinforcement, and negotiation of group identity, particularly in shaping ingroup and outgroup dynamics within digital conflicts. Through this analysis, the research intends to provide a deeper understanding of the relationship between language use, implied meaning, and identity construction in online interactions between fandom communities.

Pragmasemantics is an interdisciplinary approach that combines the study of semantics and pragmatics to understand how meaning is constructed in language. Semantics focuses on the literal meaning of words and sentences, while pragmatics examines how meaning is shaped by context, speaker intention, and situational factors (Herring, Stein, & Virtanen, 2017). In real communication, meaning is rarely derived from linguistic forms alone, as it often depends on implicit cues and shared knowledge between speakers and listeners (Sosiana, 2026). Through a pragmasemantic perspective, language is viewed as a dynamic system in which meaning is negotiated rather than fixed. This approach is particularly relevant in analyzing non-literal expressions such as sarcasm, where the intended meaning differs from the literal one. By integrating semantic and pragmatic analysis, researchers can better understand how speakers convey implied meanings and how these meanings are interpreted in specific communicative contexts. Therefore, pragmasemantics provides a comprehensive framework for examining how language functions in complex interactions, especially in digital communication (Maharani & Denpasar-Bali Indonesia, 2025).

Sarcasm is commonly regarded as a form of verbal irony in which the speaker expresses meaning indirectly, often with the intention of criticizing or mocking someone (Dynel, 2018). It typically involves a contrast between what is said and what is actually meant. While irony can be used in various contexts, sarcasm is often associated with negative or critical intentions, making it a powerful rhetorical device in communication (Sosiana, 2026). Conversational implicature, introduced by H. P. Grice, refers to the process through which

speakers convey meanings that are not explicitly stated but can be inferred by listeners. Grice argues that communication is guided by the Cooperative Principle, which assumes that participants in a conversation cooperate to achieve effective communication. This principle is further explained through four conversational maxims: quality, quantity, relevance, and manner (Sitorus et al., 2025). In practice, speakers may intentionally violate these maxims to convey indirect meanings. For instance, in sarcastic expressions, the maxim of quality is often flouted because the speaker says something that is not literally true. However, instead of causing misunderstanding, this violation allows listeners to infer the intended meaning through context. Conversational implicature plays a crucial role in interpreting sarcasm, as it helps explain how listeners understand meanings that go beyond literal expressions. Thus, Grice's theory provides an essential framework for analyzing how implicit meanings are constructed and interpreted in communication (Maharani, 2025).

One of the most visible examples of this phenomenon can be found in the ongoing conflict between Knetz (Korean netizens) and SEAbings (Southeast Asian netizens). In these interactions, sarcasm is frequently used to construct and negotiate identity, where language becomes a tool to differentiate between ingroup and outgroup. Through sarcastic expressions, users not only communicate ideas but also reinforce group solidarity and challenge opposing identities (Eslen-Ziya, 2022; Matamoros-Fernández & Farkas, 2021).

Previous studies have explored sarcasm in digital communication from different perspectives. A study by (Matamoros-Fernández & Farkas, 2021) examines sarcasm in online memes and identifies its linguistic forms as well as its function as a medium for humorous criticism. However, the study mainly focuses on structural aspects of sarcasm and does not deeply analyze its role in identity construction within interactive conflict. Similarly, (FUBARA, 2020) investigates sarcasm in media discourse, emphasizing how audiences interpret sarcastic messages in mediated communication. While this study provides insights into interpretation, it does not explore how sarcasm is actively produced and used in real-time digital interaction. In addition, (Rahma et al., 2024) analyzes sarcasm in social media as an expression of users' attitudes and emotions. Although the study highlights the communicative function of sarcasm, it remains limited in examining the relationship between implicature, language use, and identity construction in cross-cultural digital conflicts.

Based on this gap, the present study focuses on implicit sarcasm in the conflict between SEAbings and Knetz on platform X. This research aims to identify the types and patterns of implicit sarcasm used in digital interaction, analyze how sarcastic meanings are interpreted through conversational implicature based on Grice's theory, and examine how sarcasm contributes to the construction and negotiation of ingroup and outgroup identity. Since sarcastic expressions frequently involve deviations from conversational norms, this study also investigates how users infer implied meanings through contextual cues and shared understanding in online communication.

This study offers a different perspective from previous research by combining pragmasemantic analysis, conversational implicature, and social identity construction within a specific cross-cultural digital conflict. Unlike earlier studies that mainly focused on the structural or interpretative aspects of sarcasm, this research emphasizes how implicit sarcasm functions simultaneously as a linguistic strategy and a social practice in online interaction. By examining the SEAbings and Knetz conflict, this study contributes to the development of pragmasemantic studies and enriches the understanding of how meaning, context, and identity interact in digital discourse. Furthermore, the findings are expected to provide insights into digital communication practices and encourage greater awareness of implied meanings and identity negotiation in social media environments (FUBARA, 2020; Matamoros-Fernández & Farkas, 2021; Rahma et al., 2024).

METHODS

Research Design

This study applies a qualitative descriptive approach to examine the use of implicit sarcasm in digital interactions between SEAbings and Knetz on platform X (formerly Twitter). This approach is considered appropriate because the study focuses on interpreting language phenomena, particularly implied meanings, contextual language use, and identity construction in online communication. Rather than relying on numerical data, qualitative descriptive research emphasizes an in-depth understanding of how sarcastic expressions are produced and interpreted within naturally occurring digital interactions.

Data Source

The data of this study consist of textual interactions collected from posts, comments, and replies on platform X related to the conflict between SEAbings and Knetz. The data are naturally occurring digital conversations, allowing the study to reflect authentic patterns of communication in social media discourse. The selected utterances contain sarcastic expressions that indicate implicit meaning, conversational implicature, identity positioning, and ingroup–outgroup interaction.

Research Instrument

In qualitative research, the researcher acts as the primary instrument in collecting, selecting, categorizing, and interpreting the data. The analysis is guided by several theoretical frameworks, including the theory of conversational implicature proposed by Grice, the classification of sarcasm types, and the concept of social identity in sociolinguistics. These frameworks are used to identify sarcastic utterances, interpret implied meanings, and analyze how language is used to construct social identity within digital conflict.

Data Collection Technique

The data were collected using documentation techniques. The researcher captured screenshots of relevant interactions on platform X that contain sarcastic expressions related to the conflict between SEAbings and Knetz. After the screenshots were collected, the researcher selected utterances that were relevant to the research focus. The selected data

were then organized into a data tabulation table based on several analytical categories, including types of sarcasm, conversational implicature, violations of Gricean maxims, identity function, and ingroup or outgroup target.

Data Analysis Technique

The data were analyzed using an interpretative qualitative approach. Each utterance was examined to identify its implicit meaning through the framework of conversational implicature. The researcher also analyzed how sarcastic expressions violate conversational maxims and how these expressions function in constructing and negotiating social identity in digital interaction. The findings were presented in the form of data tabulation and further explained descriptively in the discussion section to provide a comprehensive understanding of the role of implicit sarcasm in online conflict.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The findings of this study are derived from the analysis of utterances collected from platform X (formerly Twitter), particularly those related to the conflict between SEAbings and Knetz. The data consist of various sarcastic expressions produced in digital interactions, which are then systematically organized into a data tabulation table.

In analyzing the data, several aspects are considered. First, the study identifies the types of sarcasm found in the utterances, including irony, metaphor, hyperbole, direct sarcasm, implicit sarcasm, and visual sarcasm. Second, the analysis examines the forms of conversational implicature based on Grice's theory, focusing on how meanings are conveyed indirectly. In relation to this, the study also identifies the violations of Gricean maxims, namely quality, quantity, relevance, and manner, which play a significant role in producing sarcastic meaning.

Furthermore, each utterance is analyzed based on its target, whether it is directed toward the ingroup or the outgroup, in order to understand how language is used to construct social boundaries. The study also explores how identity is constructed through language use, particularly how sarcasm functions as a tool to attack, defend, or reinforce group identity. In addition, the meaning and function of each sarcastic expression are interpreted to reveal its communicative purpose within the interaction.

All of these analytical aspects are summarized and presented in the following data tabulation table.

Table 1. data tabulation/data findings:

No.	Utterance	conversational implicature	violations of Gricean maxims	Target Ingroup/ Outgroup	Identity Functions	Types of Sarcasm					
						Irony	Metaphor	Hyperbole	direct	Implicit	Visual
.1	"parents can upgrade their faces, but the kid's DNA stays original"	Sarcasm to Korean plastic surgery	Quality	Knetz (outgroup)	Attack (physical)	✓	✓	×	×	✓	✓
.2	"Islam is not a religion but a system"	Offensively criticizing culture/religion	Relevance+ quality	SEA (Ingroup)	Attack (ideology)	×	×	×	✓	✓	×
.3	"CCP out islam out"	Rejection of certain groups	Manner	Outgroup	Exclusion	×	×	✓	✓	×	×
.4	"Indonesia kepala geng SEAbblings"	Depicting SEA as a group	Quantity	Ingroup	Solidarity	✓	×	×	×	✓	×
.5	"raja playing victim"	Accusing Knetz of being manipulative	Quality	Outgroup	Othering	✓	×	×	✓	✓	×
.6	"gak suka makan plastic"	Sarcasm to Korean consumer culture	Quality	Outgroup	Cultural attack	✓	✓	×	✓	×	×
.7	"Plastic face vs original face"	Korea considered unnatural	Quality	Outgroup	Identity attack	✓	✓	×	×	✓	✓
.8	"South Koreans can't defend their country.."	Belittling the country's capabilities	Relevance	Outgroup	National attack	×	×	✓	✓	×	×
.9	"poor and uneducated countries"	Belittling SEA	Quality	Ingroup	Inferior labeling	×	×	✓	✓	×	×
.10	"Knetz sokongong"	Criticizing the attitude of Korean netizens	Manner	Outgroup	Resistance	✓	×	×	✓	✓	×
.11	"muka plastic otak isi tai"	Insulting physical & intellectual traits	Quality	Outgroup	Dehumanization	×	✓	✓	✓	×	×

.12	<i>"lebih elastis ya"</i>	Sarcasm to plastic surgery	Quality	Outgroup	Mocking	✓	✓	×	×	✓	×
.13	<i>"at least we don't steal ideas like kimchi"</i>	Attacking claims of Korean culture	Relevance	Outgroup	Cultural defense	✓	×	×	✓	✓	×
.14	<i>"orang Korea percaya yesus kulit putih"</i>	Criticism of stereotypes	Quality	Outgroup	Ideological critique	✓	×	×	✓	✓	×
.15	<i>"ini bukan stereotip"</i>	Justifying attacks	Manner	Ingroup	Legitimization	✓	×	×	✓	✓	×
.16	<i>"SEABlinds not wrapped in plastics"</i>	SEA is more 'natural'	Quality	Outgroup	Ingroup pride	✓	✓	×	×	✓	×
.17	<i>"jangan buang plastic sembarangan"</i>	Sarcasm of "plastic face"	Relevance	Outgroup	Humor attack	✓	✓	×	×	✓	×
.18	<i>"ngatain orang indo jelek kek monyet"</i>	Criticism of racism towards Indonesia	Quality	Knetz	Resistance	✓	✓	×	✓	✓	×
.19	<i>"coba katain ini... dijamin mempan"</i>	Counterattack strategy	Relevance	Knetz	Attack	✓	×	✓	✓	✓	×
.20	<i>"presiden lu noh zionis"</i>	Attacking national politics	Quality	Knetz	Attack (ideologi)	×	×	✓	✓	×	×
.21	<i>"UMR lu noh kecil"</i>	Belittling the economy	Quality	Knetz	Attack (ekonomi)	×	×	✓	✓	×	×
.22	<i>"paspor sama mata uang lu lemah"</i>	Country not strong globally	Quality	Knetz	Attack (nasional)	×	×	✓	✓	×	×
.23	<i>"yaah kasian WNI"</i>	Mockery (not really sympathy)	Quality	SEA	Irony attack	✓	×	×	×	✓	×
.24	<i>"Kita bagi shift ribut"</i>	Conflict used as a backup	Quality	Ingroup	Solidarity	✓	×	✓	×	✓	×
.25	<i>"knetz lumutan plstik"</i>	Korea = unnatural (plastic surgery)	Quality	Knetz	Attack (fisik)	✓	✓	×	✓	✓	×
.26	<i>"negara mati lampu"</i>	Indonesia considered backward	Quality	SEA	Attack (nasional)	×	×	✓	✓	×	×

.27	" <i>ko masih niat di x?</i> "	Underestimating technological capabilities	Relevance	SEA	Mocking	✓	×	×	✓	✓	×
.28	" <i>indonesia mana ada film terkenal</i> "	Indonesia has no global	Quality	SEA	Attack (budaya)	×	×	✓	✓	×	×
.29	" <i>Korupsi sampe gak mungkin maju</i> "	achievements Negative generalization	Quality	SEA	Dehumanization	×	×	✓	✓	×	×
.30	" <i>natural double eyelid</i> "	Emphasizing authenticity vs plastic surgery	Quality	Knetz	Identity defense	✓	✓	×	×	✓	✓
.31	" <i>too poor to buy a house in korea</i> "	Indonesia considered poor	Quality	SEA	Attack (ekonomi)	×	×	✓	✓	×	×
.32	" <i>no wonder suicide rate is high</i> "	Korea considered to have high life pressure	Quality	Knetz	Attack (sosial)	✓	×	✓	✓	×	×
.33	" <i>no one wants to have kids</i> "	Korea is experiencing a social crisis/ Demographics	Quality	Knetz	Attack (demografi)	×	×	✓	✓	×	×
.34	<i>Emoji monyet</i>	Equating SEA with monkeys (dehumanization)	Quality	SEA	Dehumanization	✓	✓	×	×	✓	✓
.35	" <i>can't you speak english pleaseu</i> "	Degrading the efficacy of language	Manner	SEA	Lingustic attack	✓	×	×	✓	✓	×
.36	" <i>wkwkwk wanjeng</i> "	Mocking/laughing at opponents	Relevance	Outgroup	Mocking/solidarity	✓	×	×	✓	✓	×
.37	" <i>just use translation software,no big deal</i> "	Underestimating the difficulties of communion	Quality	SEA	Subtle superiority	✓	×	×	✓	✓	×
.38	" <i>your voices sound so nice</i> "	Can be subtly (condescending)	Quality	SEA	Soft stereotyping	✓	×	×	✓	✓	×
.39	" <i>what's wrong with speaking your native language?</i> "	Veiled criticism of language use	Relevance	SEA	Ideological stance	✓	×	×	✓	✓	×

The findings presented in Table 1 show that irony is one of the most dominant forms of sarcasm used in the conflict between SEAbings and Knetz on platform X. The ironic expressions appear in various functions such as physical attacks, cultural criticism, resistance, solidarity, mockery, and ideological criticism. Several utterances such as “parents can upgrade their faces, but the kid’s DNA stays original,” “Plastic face vs original face,” *“lebih elastis ya,”* “SEAbings not wrapped in plastics,” *“knetz lumutan plastik,”* and “natural double eyelid” indirectly criticize Korean plastic surgery culture by contrasting “natural” and “artificial” appearance. In addition, irony is also used to criticize attitudes and ideology through utterances such as “raja playing victim,” *“Knetz sokongong,”* “orang Korea percaya yesus kulit putih,” and *“ini bukan stereotip.”* Some ironic utterances function as resistance and counterattack, including “ngatain orang indo jelek kek monyet,” “coba katin ini... *dijamin mempan,*” and *“yaah kasian WNI.”* Meanwhile, solidarity is reflected in utterances such as “Indonesia kepala geng SEAbings” and *“Kita bagi shift ribut.”* Irony also appears in language-related criticism through expressions such as “can’t you speak english *pleaseu,*” “just use translation software, no big deal,” “your voices sound so nice,” and “what’s wrong with speaking your native language?”. Overall, the ironic utterances in the data mostly contain indirect criticism and implied mockery rather than direct literal meaning.

The data also reveal that metaphor is frequently used to strengthen sarcastic meaning in the interactions between SEAbings and Knetz. Metaphorical expressions appear in several utterances such as “parents can upgrade their faces, but the kid’s DNA stays original,” *“gak suka makan plastic,”* “Plastic face vs original face,” *“muka plastic otak isi tai,”* *“lebih elastis ya,”* “SEAbings not wrapped in plastics,” *“jangan buang plastic sembarangan,”* *“ngatain orang indo jelek kek monyet,”* *“knetz lumutan plastik,”* “natural double eyelid,” and the use of *“Emoji monyet.”* Most of these metaphors are related to physical appearance and identity, particularly through the repeated use of the word “plastic,” which symbolically represents artificiality and unnaturalness associated with Korean plastic surgery culture. In utterances such as “Plastic face vs original face,” “SEAbings not wrapped in plastics,” and “natural double eyelid,” metaphor is used to contrast “natural” and “artificial” identity. Meanwhile, utterances such as *“muka plastic otak isi tai”* and *“Emoji monyet”* function as dehumanizing metaphors that insult physical and intellectual traits. The metaphor in *“ngatain orang indo jelek kek monyet”* also reflects racist comparison directed toward Indonesians. These findings indicate that metaphor is not only used for humor or mockery, but also as a linguistic strategy to attack identity, criticize appearance, and reinforce negative stereotypes toward opposing groups.

Hyperbole is another dominant characteristic found in the data. Hyperbolic expressions appear in several utterances such as *“CCP out islam out,”* “South Koreans can’t defend their country,” “poor and uneducated countries,” *“muka plastic otak isi tai,”* *“coba katin ini... dijamin mempan,”* *“presiden lu noh zionis,”* *“UMR lu noh kecil,”* *“paspor sama mata*

uang lu lemah, “*Kita bagi shift ribut,*” “*negara mati lampu,*” “*indonesia mana ada film terkenal,*” “*Korupsi sampe gak mungkin maju,*” “*too poor to buy a house in korea,*” “*no wonder suicide rate is high,*” and “*no one wants to have kids.*” These utterances exaggerate social, political, economic, and national conditions in order to intensify ridicule toward the opposing group. Several hyperbolic utterances attack national identity and economic conditions, such as “*UMR lu noh kecil,*” “*paspor sama mata uang lu lemah,*” and “*negara mati lampu.*” Other utterances exaggerate social and demographic issues, including “*no wonder suicide rate is high*” and “*no one wants to have kids,*” which portray Korea as experiencing severe social pressure and demographic crisis. Hyperbole is also used to strengthen ideological and cultural attacks, as reflected in “*CCP out islam out*” and “*presiden lu noh zionis.*” Meanwhile, utterances such as “*indonesia mana ada film terkenal*” and “*Korupsi sampe gak mungkin maju*” overgeneralize national conditions in order to mock the opposing group. These findings indicate that hyperbole functions to amplify sarcastic meaning, create stronger emotional impact, and reinforce negative stereotypes toward ingroup and outgroup identities in digital interaction.

frequently found in the data, where users explicitly express criticism, mockery, or attacks toward the opposing group without relying heavily on hidden meaning. Direct sarcastic expressions appear in utterances such as “*Islam is not a religion but a system,*” “*CCP out islam out,*” “*raja playing victim,*” “*gak suka makan plastic,*” “*South Koreans can’t defend their country,*” “*poor and uneducated countries,*” “*Knetz sokongong,*” “*muka plastic otak isi tai,*” “*at least we don’t steal ideas like kimchi,*” “*orang Korea percaya yesus kulit putih,*” “*ini bukan stereotip,*” “*ngatain orang indo jelek kek monyet,*” “*coba katain ini... dijamin mempan,*” “*presiden lu noh zionis,*” “*UMR lu noh kecil,*” “*paspor sama mata uang lu lemah,*” “*knetz lumutan plastik,*” “*negara mati lampu,*” “*ko masih niat di x?*” “*indonesia mana ada film terkenal,*” “*Korupsi sampe gak mungkin maju,*” “*too poor to buy a house in korea,*” “*no wonder suicide rate is high,*” “*no one wants to have kids,*” “*can’t you speak english pleaseu,*” “*wkwkwk wanjeng,*” “*just use translation software, no big deal,*” “*your voices sound so nice,*” and “*what’s wrong with speaking your native language?*” These utterances openly attack physical appearance, ideology, economy, nationality, language ability, and social conditions. Unlike implicit sarcasm, the sarcastic intention in these utterances is expressed more directly and can be easily recognized by readers. The findings indicate that direct sarcasm is commonly used to intensify confrontation and express strong negative evaluation toward the opposing group in digital interaction.

Implicit sarcasm is one of the most dominant forms found in the data because many utterances convey criticism indirectly through implied meaning rather than explicit insults. Implicit sarcastic expressions appear in utterances such as “*parents can upgrade their faces, but the kid’s DNA stays original,*” “*Islam is not a religion but a system,*” “*Indonesia kepala geng SEAbings,*” “*raja playing victim,*” “*Plastic face vs original face,*” “*Knetz sokongong,*” “*lebih elastis ya,*” “*at least we don’t steal ideas like kimchi,*” “*orang Korea*

percaya yesus kulit putih, “*ini bukan stereotip,*” “*SEAbings not wrapped in plastics,*” “*jangan buang plastic sembarangan,*” “*ngatain orang indo jelek kek monyet,*” “*coba katin ini... dijamin mempan,*” “*yaah kasian WNI,*” “*Kita bagi shift ribut,*” “*knetz lumutan plastik,*” “*ko masih niat di x?*” “*natural double eyelid,*” “*Emoji monyet,*” “*can’t you speak english pleaseu,*” “*wkwkwk wanjeng,*” “*just use translation software, no big deal,*” “*your voices sound so nice,*” and “*what’s wrong with speaking your native language?*” These utterances rely on contextual understanding and implied meaning to deliver criticism, mockery, resistance, and solidarity. Several utterances indirectly criticize Korean plastic surgery culture through expressions related to “*plastic*” and “*natural*” appearance, while others imply ideological, cultural, and linguistic criticism without directly stating the intended insult. The findings show that implicit sarcasm allows users to express negative evaluation in a subtler way while still maintaining strong sarcastic meaning in digital communication.

Visual sarcasm appears less frequently in the data compared to other forms of sarcasm, but it still plays an important role in strengthening sarcastic meaning in online interaction. Visual sarcastic expressions can be found in utterances such as “*parents can upgrade their faces, but the kid’s DNA stays original,*” “*Plastic face vs original face,*” “*natural double eyelid,*” and “*Emoji monyet.*” In these utterances, visual elements and imagery are used to support sarcastic meaning related to physical appearance and identity. The repeated references to “*plastic face*” and “*double eyelid*” create visual associations with cosmetic surgery and beauty standards, while “*Emoji monyet*” functions as a visual form of dehumanization directed toward SEA identity. These findings indicate that visual sarcasm strengthens ridicule and stereotyping because readers can easily imagine the implied visual representation behind the utterances.

From the perspective of conversational implicature, the findings demonstrate that sarcastic meanings are mostly understood indirectly through context. The utterances rely heavily on shared assumptions between users. For example, the statement “*yaah kasian WNI*” literally expresses sympathy, but contextually it functions as mockery rather than genuine concern. Similarly, “*your voices sound so nice*” appears positive on the surface level, but the implicature suggests condescending stereotyping. These findings confirm that sarcasm in digital interaction cannot be interpreted literally because the intended meaning often contrasts with the literal expression.

The analysis further shows that the maxim of quality is the most frequently violated conversational maxim. Most sarcastic utterances intentionally contain statements that are not fully true or realistic in order to create indirect criticism. Examples such as “*parents can upgrade their faces, but the kid’s DNA stays original,*” “*South Koreans can’t defend their country,*” and “*Korupsi sampe gak mungkin maju*” illustrate how users deliberately exaggerate or distort reality to produce sarcastic effects. The violation of the maxim of quality therefore becomes the primary strategy for constructing sarcasm in the interactions.

Besides quality, the maxim of relevance is also violated in several utterances. Expressions such as “at least we don’t steal ideas like kimchi,” “*jangan buang plastic sembarangan*,” and “what’s wrong with speaking your native language?” appear indirectly related to the conflict topic, yet they actually function as criticism toward culture, identity, or language attitudes. The sarcastic meaning emerges because the statements imply criticism beyond their literal relevance. In addition, violations of the maxim of manner are evident in utterances such as “*Knetz sokongong*” and “can’t you speak english *pleaseu*,” where ambiguity, informal spelling, and distorted expressions are used to mock the target group.

In terms of identity functions, the data reveal that sarcasm is predominantly used as a form of attack toward the outgroup. Many utterances target physical appearance, economy, culture, ideology, and nationality. Physical attacks can be seen in utterances such as “*muka plastic otak isi tai*,” “Plastic face vs original face,” and “*knetz lumutan plastik*.” Economic attacks appear in statements such as “*UMR lu noh kecil*” and “too poor to buy a house in korea.” Cultural and ideological attacks are reflected in expressions such as “Islam is not a religion but a system,” “at least we don’t steal ideas like kimchi,” and “*presiden lu noh zionis*.” These findings indicate that sarcasm becomes a tool for degrading and stereotyping opposing identities.

The data also demonstrate the presence of dehumanization within sarcastic discourse. Utterances such as “*muka plastic otak isi tai*” and the use of “*Emoji monyet*” reduce the target group into degrading representations. In the case of the monkey emoji, SEA identity is associated with animals, which functions as a racist and dehumanizing attack. This finding suggests that sarcasm in digital conflict can intensify hostility because it normalizes insulting and discriminatory expressions.

However, sarcasm is not only used offensively. Several utterances function to strengthen ingroup solidarity and collective identity. Expressions such as “*Indonesia kepala geng SEAbings*” and “*Kita bagi shift ribut*” portray SEAbings as a united group. In these examples, sarcasm creates a sense of belonging among members of the ingroup. The utterance “*Kita bagi shift ribut*” especially illustrates how online conflict is treated collectively and humorously, as if group members coordinate participation in digital arguments. Therefore, sarcasm also serves as a bonding mechanism within the ingroup.

Another important finding is the role of sarcasm as resistance. Some utterances appear as responses to previous attacks from opposing groups. For example, “*ngatain orang indo jelek kek monyet*” criticizes racist comments directed at Indonesians, while “*coba katain ini... dijamin mempan*” reflects a counterattack strategy. These expressions show that sarcasm is used defensively to respond to humiliation and protect group identity. Thus, sarcasm in the SEAbings and Knetz conflict does not only function as aggression but also as resistance against discrimination and stereotyping.

The findings also indicate that language becomes an important aspect of identity conflict. Utterances such as “can’t you speak english *pleaseu*,” “just use translation software, no big deal,” and “what’s wrong with speaking your native language?” reveal tensions related to language use in digital communication. These expressions contain sarcastic criticism regarding linguistic ability, language preference, and cultural superiority. In this context, language is not merely a communication tool but also a symbol of identity and power.

Overall, the findings confirm that sarcasm in the SEAbings and Knetz conflict functions as a complex communicative strategy. The sarcastic expressions identified in the data are strongly connected to conversational implicature, maxim violation, identity construction, stereotyping, solidarity, resistance, and digital aggression. Implicit sarcasm becomes dominant because it allows users to attack, mock, and criticize others indirectly while still maintaining humor and ambiguity. Therefore, sarcasm in this digital conflict is not simply humorous language, but a powerful social practice used to negotiate identity and power within online interaction.

CONCLUSION

This study reveals that implicit sarcasm in the interaction between SEAbings and Knetz on platform X appears in several distinct forms, including irony, metaphor, hyperbole, direct sarcasm, and visual expressions. Among these, implicit sarcasm and irony are the most frequently used, indicating a strong preference for indirect communication. These patterns demonstrate that sarcasm is not randomly used but follows certain linguistic tendencies, where users strategically employ non-literal language to express criticism, ridicule, or evaluation toward opposing groups.

In terms of interpretation, the findings show that implicit sarcasm is primarily understood through conversational implicature as proposed by Grice. Most sarcastic utterances involve the violation of conversational maxims, particularly the maxim of quality, where statements are intentionally not meant to be taken literally. Despite this, communication remains effective because participants rely on contextual clues, shared knowledge, and situational understanding to infer the intended meaning. This confirms that implicature plays a central role in interpreting sarcasm in digital communication.

Furthermore, implicit sarcasm plays a significant role in constructing and negotiating social identity within the digital conflict. The analysis indicates that sarcastic expressions are frequently used to differentiate between ingroup and outgroup, often through acts of attacking, stereotyping, or demeaning the opposing group. At the same time, sarcasm is also used to strengthen ingroup solidarity and express collective identity. The digital context further intensifies this process, as anonymity and rapid interaction encourage more frequent and aggressive use of sarcastic language.

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