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Satire Language Style in Netizen Memes Against the Indonesian House of Representatives on Platform X as Social Criticism: Pragmatic Studies

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Abstract

The development of social media has encouraged the emergence of various forms of social criticism, including increasingly creative ones, such as memes that combine visual and verbal elements. In the context of demonstrations against the 2025 DPR RI policy on platform X, memes are a means many people use to convey criticism indirectly through satirical language. This phenomenon shows a shift in the form of social criticism communication from conventional verbal expressions to multimodal digital discourses that rely on linguistic strategies and pragmatic contexts. This study aims to analyze the style of satirical language as a form of social criticism in netizens' memes against the House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia on platform X, using a pragmatic approach that combines pragmatic and stylistic studies, focusing on pragmatic aspects such as speech acts and situational context. Data were analyzed using qualitative descriptive methods collected through the free and capable engagement listening technique, analyzed by the referential matching method, and presented formally and informally. In this study, several memes were found that use elements of language style, such as sarcasm, irony, and metaphor, to convey social criticism subtly yet sharply, and how pragmatic contexts, such as speech and implication, strengthen satirical messages in digital discourse. The results showed that memes employ various satirical language styles, especially sarcasm, irony, metaphors, and hyperbole, to convey criticism implicitly yet sharply. Pragmatically, the meme contains expressive, representative, and directive speech, as well as unconventional implications that reinforce the message of criticism of the House of Representatives' policies and behavior. In addition, the combination of visual and verbal elements in memes has proven effective in conveying social criticism by attracting attention, making it easier to understand, and expanding the audience's reach. This research contributes to the development of pragmatic studies on digital discourse and provides an understanding of the role of memes as a medium of social criticism in contemporary social communication.

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INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology has brought major changes to the communication patterns of modern society, not only accelerating the dissemination of information but also shaping the way people think and interact. In this context, language plays an important role as the main medium for expressing ideas in the digital space. The development of social media then expanded the space for the use of language, not only as a means of conveying information, but also as a means of social, cultural, and political expression (Yoseppin et al., 2025). Social media is now not only a space for personal interaction but also an arena for public discussion, where people form opinions, express criticism, and respond to socio-political issues. Various platforms such as X, Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook allow users to express their thoughts, emotions, and attitudes more freely. However, freedom of expression in the digital space is often accompanied by a shift in language ethics, the emergence of a more confrontational style of communication, and the development of various critical language strategies, including sarcasm (Ramadhan & Muchamad, 2023).

Platforms that are often used by the Indonesian people, one of which is X. This platform functions as a medium for conveying information as well as a space for expression through text, images, and voice messages that can be shared with individuals and the public (Fadhilah, 2024). Platform X is also known as a microblogging-based social media that allows users to create and access short messages of up to 280 characters, known as tweets (Fitrianto & Editya, 2024). Platform X was initiated by Elon Musk on January 31, 2022 (Pradipa et al., 2024). In 2023, the number of X users reached more than 372 million monthly active users, with the United States being the country with the most users, at around 64.9 million (Tanjung et al., 2024). Quoting the opinions expressed by Ramadhan & Muchamad (2023) which states that Platform X offers a feature that lets users message each other and reply to comments on others' posts, indicating that the space for expression is wide open. However, this freedom is still limited by constitutionally protected rules, such as in Article 28E paragraph (3), so it must be accompanied by moral responsibility and legal awareness so as not to cause misuse of information or violations of digital communication ethics.

The issue that triggered public attention on platform X in 2025 was a demonstration of rejection of the policies of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia which took place in various regions of Indonesia on

August 25, 2025. The issue has sparked criticism of government policies. Some social media users expressed their criticism in sarcastic memes. Sarcasm is a style of sarcasm that contains sharp criticism, ridicule, or ridicule to convey rejection or disapproval of a certain object (Suryaningsih, 2021). In the context of digital communication, sarcasm serves as a rhetorical strategy to convey criticism implicitly but powerfully. Speech can show that the language style of sarcasm serves not only as an emotional expression, but also as a rhetorical device that plays a role in representing the dynamics of power relations between speakers (Madinah et al., 2026). The use of sarcasm on social media is interesting because it does not always appear in direct verbal speech but is often expressed through multimodal constructions, such as memes.

Memes are a form of visual communication that combines elements of images, text, humor, irony, and cultural symbols to convey a specific meaning (Pratamanti et al., 2021). In the political context, memes have emerged as an effective medium of criticism because they can convey social resistance in a concise, creative, and easily disseminated manner. In the context of the policy demonstration by the House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia, memes are widely used by the public to voice dissatisfaction, satirize government policies, and build symbolic resistance through humor. In this case, memes act not only as a medium of individual expression but also as a collective discursive space that allows their users to express protests or dissatisfaction without immediate risk. This phenomenon shows how memes can strengthen social control through decentralized collective supervision, i.e. norms are strengthened or changed through the active participation of the community (Wahyudi, 2025). However, despite the growing phenomenon of political memes and sarcasm on social media, studies that specifically address the construction of sarcasm in political memes on platform X remain relatively limited.

Previous research has focused more on sarcasm in social media comments, hate speech, or analysis of language styles in digital texts in general (Suryaningsih, 2021). While research on memes tends to center on semiotic, humor, and visual representation approaches (Pratamanti et al., 2021). There have not been many studies that specifically examine the form, function, and meaning of sarcasm in political memes using a pragmatistic approach, especially on the issue of policy demonstrations of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia on platform X. This condition shows that there is a

research *gap* which is an important basis for this research. The urgency of this research lies in two aspects. First, academically, this research is important for expanding the study of pragmatism in the context of digital discourse, especially regarding political memes as a form of contemporary communication. Second, socially, this research is important to understand how society builds criticism of power through language strategies in the digital space. This understanding is relevant because today's digital communication not only shapes public opinion, but also affects democratic culture, digital literacy, and public communication ethics.

The pragmatic approach was chosen because it can study language not only in terms of stylistic form but also in terms of pragmatic functions and the context of its use. Pragmatism is an interdisciplinary study between stylistics and pragmatics that examines the relationship between language style choices and speech intent in certain social contexts (Ramadhan & Muchamad, 2023). The novelty of this research lies in its pragmatic focus on the use of sarcasm in memes related to the 2025 DPR RI policy demonstration on platform X. Unlike previous research that tends to examine sarcasm in comments or memes through a semiotic perspective, this study seeks to integrate the analysis of forms of sarcasm, pragmatic functions, and the meaning of social criticism built through memes as digital discourse. This research was conducted to uncover how sarcasm is constructed in political memes on platform X, how the function of social criticism is constructed through linguistic strategies, and how the meanings of criticism are understood in the context of contemporary digital discourse.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a theoretical and methodological approach. Theoretically, this study uses a pragmatic approach to examine the form of satirical language style, pragmatic function, and the meaning of social criticism in netizens' memes related to the House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia on platform X. Pragmatism is an interdisciplinary study between pragmatics and stylistics that is used to analyze the relationship between language choice and speech intent in certain social contexts (Nurhadi, 2022). Methodologically, this study uses a qualitative descriptive approach. This approach is used to describe data in depth based on the context, meaning, and linguistic function contained in the meme (Damayanti et al., 2023).

The research data consist of fragments of verbal discourse and visual elements in memes that

employ satirical language as social criticism. The source of research data is operationally narrowed to netizens' meme uploads on platform X that discuss demonstrations and criticism of the policies of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia at the August 25, 2025 demonstration. The research data was in the form of 30 memes that were selected as research samples from the results of the search for uploads using the keywords DPR RI, DPR demo, DPR criticism, DPR memes, and #PeringatanDarurat. Data selection was carried out by *purposive sampling*. According to Kiareni et al. (2024) *Purposive sampling* is a sample determination technique that is carried out based on certain considerations, namely selecting respondents who meet the research criteria, in this case netizens who are active on the social media platform, so that the data obtained is more relevant to the research purpose.

Data collection uses the method of watching with basic tapping techniques and advanced techniques in the form of free involvement, proficiency and recording techniques. The Free Listening Technique (SBLT) and the recording technique are used because the researcher acts as a passive observer, not directly involved in the production of the data sources (Budiarti, 2022). The researcher listened to meme uploads that met the criteria, documented the data, and then recorded fragments of discourse that contained satire elements as social criticism. The data were analyzed using the referential matching method with the Determinant Element Sorting (PUP) technique and the Equalizing Comparative Connection Technique (HBS). This sorting process uses a determining tool in the form of the researcher's mental ability to distinguish and determine the elements that are considered important to be analyzed (Ayu et al., 2024). The analysis was carried out through the process of data reduction and classification based on the form of satire, followed by the identification of pragmatic elements in the form of speech and implications, then the interpretation of the communicative function of satire as social criticism to the drawing of conclusions based on the pattern of findings.

The presentation of data analysis results was processed by two techniques, namely (1) formal presentation techniques and (2) informal presentation techniques. Formal presentation techniques typically use media such as tables, graphs, diagrams, or statistical figures to present patterns or data findings. Meanwhile, informal presentation techniques rely on explanations or descriptions in ordinary language or descriptive narratives. Formal methods are applied by utilizing specific symbols, signs, and symbols, such as

parentheses or other notation to clarify patterns or structures found in the data. Meanwhile, the informal method is used to convey findings descriptively, using simple, easy-to-understand narrative language.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Netizen memes on platform X related to the House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia (DPR RI) employ various satirical styles to express social criticism. The forms of satire found include sarcasm, irony, metaphors, and hyperbole packaged through a combination of verbal and visual elements.



Figure 1. Netizen Meme for the House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia

Pragmatically, the use of diction such as "rat", "common man", and symbolic comparisons such as "knees" and "head" contain unconventional implications that imply disappointment, dissatisfaction, and innuendo towards the policies and attitudes of the people's representatives. The dominant speech acts are expressive, representative, and directive which function to convey evaluation, innuendo, and moral urgency indirectly. Pragmatically, the meme contains expressive speech with the function of satirical illocution with the intention of the speaker so that his speech is interpreted as an evaluation of what is mentioned in the speech (Rustono & Fakhrudin, 2024). The speaker did not directly make accusations, but used innuendo and dark humor to express disappointment and dissatisfaction with the condition of the government and law enforcement officials. The conversation that emerged left the impression that the state was controlled by "rats" (corruptors) protected by the system or apparatus, raising rhetorical questions about the dependence of these corruptors on state assets. This act of speech then causes a perlocus effect, which arouses the reader's social awareness to think critically about the phenomenon of legal injustice.

The above meme falls into unconventional implications because its meaning cannot be obtained only from the literal meaning of the word "rat" or "country". The word "rat" refers to corrupt officials who abuse power. The implications that emerge are evaluative and sarcastic with the intention that the state is considered incapable or reluctant to control corruptors because these corruptors have become part of the power structure (suits and ties). These findings are in line with research Putra et al. (2023) and A. D. Putri & Fauzi (2025) which states that memes contain humor disseminated digitally, can spread messages and criticism, and can package messages that seem distorted to sway opinions. This meme is an effective form of pragmatic communication because it combines satirical language strategies with a depth of pragmatic meaning to convey a message that is striking but still within the corridor of digital humor. As a "weapon" of civil society, this satire allows people to express their anxiety about the inequality of the system subtly but still has a sharp impact in the public sphere.



Figure 2. Netizen Meme for the House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia

Memes in the form of a photo of a billboard that is used as a response in account X. A large *billboard* installed in a public space is most likely installed by student groups or activists. The billboard explicitly criticizes policymakers (including the House under discussion) for making decisions based on vested interests or obedience, rather than common sense, sound judgment, or conscience.

The meme explicitly uses a satirical style, leading to satire and sarcasm as social criticism. In this case, it is in line with the findings (Kurniawan, 2025; Rahma & Marzuqi, 2025), Satire in entertainment media is not just an aesthetic language, but a strategic means of forming opinions, conveying criticism, and encouraging social change that can reflect the cultural values, views, and emotions of its users. *Knees again, Knees again, When is the head used?* The meme uses sarcasm to satirize the government, criticizing representatives who are temporarily dismissed for

3 months yet still receive benefits. In this case, the decision is considered light and contradictory because they still get financial rights in the form of allowances.

The representation of speech in the above sentence is a representative speech act because the news states the fact that the member of the House of Representatives was temporarily dismissed but still received permission and expressive speech that expresses the expression of netizens' dislike of the people's representative and the act of directive speech because the phrase *knee again when the head is used* has the function of threatening to rule/urge the audience, in this case the House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia, to act more rationally and use common sense rather than using power solely on the knee or unilateral actions. This is an expression of dissatisfaction. The above memes fall into the unconventional category because their meanings arise from the context of conversation or speech, and are not determined by the conventional meanings of the words used. The meaning of "knees" and "heads" in this phrase cannot be understood from their literal meaning alone. This means that the news is highly dependent on the context of social criticism of the sanctions of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia which is considered infirm.



Figure 3. Netizen Meme for the House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia

The meme uploaded on account X is a satire and criticism of the issue of increasing DPR allowances, which has an impact on the state budget, triggering a strong reaction from the lower social groups (workers and STM children) who feel disadvantaged, showing how this issue touches the layers of society that feel the most affected by economic policies. *Remember! In your meager wealth, there are the rights of officials.* The meme's language is satirical, targeting the government. The meme's diction parodies associating morality or religion with the obligation to perform charity (zakat). The use of the word "little" exaggerates the level of greed of officials to the extent that they seem to be entitled to the minimum wealth

belonging to the people. In this case, it aligns with the research by S. D. Putri et al. (2022), which states that social criticism is a tool of social control over the running of government, divided into two: persuasive and coercive. The meme above is a persuasive social control that invites and guides, shaping the site's special form within the meme environment (Rogers & Giorgi, 2024). The above meme falls into the unconventional implication category because its meaning is inferred from its satirical style. The meaning is not about the obligation to pay officials, but rather about criticism that officials have taken away the living space of small people.



Figure 4. Netizen Meme for the House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia

This statement was made by Deddy Sitorus on a television show, comparing the salaries or allowances of members of the House of Representatives with the income of workers or ordinary people, which is often called UMR/UMP. Deddy Sitorus has clarified that the video is an old cut that was republished. He emphasized that the real context is that the salaries of members of the House of Representatives should be with officials of high state institutions who are equal, not with workers who boast about UMR, because it is an unequal and unfair comparison. The meme explicitly uses satirical language, leading to sarcasm as a form of social critique.

You have lost your logic! Do not Compare Us With The Common People (Deddy Sitorus - PDIP)

This sentence is a sarcastic language style because it uses words that mock or hurt. The diction of "logical deviation" directly attacks the interlocutor's thinking ability. The diction of "us vs the common people" creates a style of hyperbole and comparison language that positions the speaker (Deddy Sitorus, a member of the DPR/PDIP) as a class that is much superior to the people. The diction of "common people" is a diction that is condescending and distant and shows arrogance. The speech is a form of sarcasm that

attacks authority by reinforcing the politician's status as the subject of ridicule (irony), implying that they are arrogant/not ordinary human beings (in a negative sense). With a sarcastic tone and a humorous style, the sentence conveys a social critique of injustice in the workplace, where dedication and work results are not always proportional to the income received. This is in line with research Aprilia et al. (2025) which states that social criticism is a form of oral and written communication that contains assessments, suggestions, or satire on things that are contrary to norms or values that are still valid in society in a better direction. In this case, memes become a medium in social criticism that can be a tool for social movements in shaping opinions (Dwivedi, 2023).

The representation of speech in the sentence above is an expressive or evaluative speech act. The use of the diction of the common people as a marker of social status is often considered a betrayal of democratic and egalitarian principles. These words appear in the context of comparing the salaries/allowances of members of the House of Representatives to the income of the general public (such as UMR workers or laborers). This speech implies that members of the House of Representatives, or politicians, feel superior and hold higher ethical or logical standards than ordinary people. They do not deserve to be equated or judged by the same standards. It directly accuses the party and the politician concerned of double standards and harassment, thereby damaging their reputations. This meme is effective among netizens or the public who agree that the statement of "common people" by politicians is enlightening and unethical.



Figure 5. Netizen Meme for the House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia

The meme showing these two simple cartoon figures has been widely circulated on various social media platforms in response to the increasing public criticism of the House of Representatives in recent times, especially related to decisions that are considered not to reflect public common sense,

such as the polemic of allowances, policies that are considered hasty, to the rejection of public aspirations that encourage the emergence of a wave of demonstrations. In the meme, one figure holds a brain as if to give it, while another refuses, saying, "I am sorry, I do not need it, I am a member of the House of Representatives." This visual data shows a simple representation, namely the brain as a symbol of common sense, rationality, and intelligence, while the rejection of the brain by figures who claim to be members of the House of Representatives is interpreted as a rejection of logical thinking or critical thinking skills. The minimalist visual structure actually strengthens the criticism's message by focusing attention on the text as the punchline.

Stylistically, this meme is satire, as it clearly aims to mock and humiliate institutions or individuals highlighted by the public. Satire in memes emerges through the use of sarcasm, as in the statement "you do not need a brain," which is literally impossible but deliberately exaggerated to insinuate that the behavior or decision of the House of Representatives has recently been considered unreasonable. This sarcasm serves as a criticism strategy that makes the ruler seem stupid, irrational, or incompetent. In a pragmatic context, the implication is that the public considers the House of Representatives makes decisions that are not based on rational considerations or public interest, so the metaphor of rejecting the brain becomes a symbol of the absence of reason in the legislative process. This meme conveys the message that the illogical policy of the House of Representatives is not a coincidence, but something that has been "attached," to the point of being described as if common sense is not needed. Thus, this meme serves as social criticism in the form of political satire, using humor and hyperbole to express public dissatisfaction and disappointment with the performance of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia.

This is in line with research Hardiyanti et al. (2023) and Luthfi (2020) which states that the digital era uses social media to express criticism or stereotypes indirectly about events considered deviant and unnatural, thereby changing the situation through observation of the dynamics that unfold. The representation of speech in the sentence above is an expressive or evaluative speech act. The expressive speech in the meme can be seen in the brain image that shows disappointment and sharp criticism with the meaning of rejecting reason. The above meme falls into the category of unconventional implications because its meaning is inferred from its satirical style and can only be fully understood in relation to

the socio-political context. This can be interpreted through brain images which means the absence of reason.



Figure 6. Netizen Meme for the House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia

The meme above shows an image of school children playing with blocks. This meme is present as a form of social criticism in the midst of the polemic on the issue of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia which triggered a wave of public protests some time ago. In the meme, there is a simple conversation between students and teachers. The student said, "Why is it messy, ma'am?". Then, the teacher replied, "The toy?". Then the students answered again, "the country". This visual data shows the use of metaphors that portray the state as a "messy toy," treating political and administrative chaos as just the result of a child's negligence. In the analysis of the statement, the choice of the word was used to embarrass those who should be responsible for state order, including the House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia which is being highlighted due to decisions, policies, and allowances that trigger public distrust. Stylistically, this meme uses satire through a combination of sarcasm and condescending metaphor, equating state management with improper, playful activities.

Pragmatically, the implication is that the country's condition results from leaders' mismanagement, not external factors. The answer to "the country" is not just a punchline, but a sharp criticism that the damage is the result of the actions or negligence of government institutions, especially the House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia, as a legislative institution, which is later seen as contributing to the chaos of public policy. Thus, this meme serves as a form of public protest through satire, using humor to offend, mock, and reveal dissatisfaction with the state of affairs and the behavior of the political elite. This is in line with the findings Munthe et al. (2026) which states that meme-based social criticism acts as a communication mechanism that combines visual creativity and emotional response to facilitate high resonance.

The representation of speech in the sentence above is an expressive or evaluative speech act. In the context of the meme above, students express their feelings or psychological attitudes towards a situation. In this case, the word "messy" expresses dissatisfaction, concern, or criticism. The use of the word "messy" is not just a physical description but a verdict that the country's current governance or situation is in a state of chaos, disorder, or crisis. The above meme falls into the unconventional implication because its meaning is inferred from the satirical language appropriate to the current political situation. The point is that the country is not doing well, and the "chaos" is already a concern at the basic education level.



Figure 7. Netizen Meme for the House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia

This meme is circulating in the "Joni and Poni" rubric, a political satire comic on social media X Indonesia. In this context, memes are visual representations of public disappointment with the policies of the House of Representatives, which represents the people. The visual data in the meme shows people jostling on seesaws that read "Structural Poverty". On the other hand, there is an image of two people on chairs, with an animation of the House of Representatives building, indicating that the people's representatives live in comfort. On the seats occupied by officials, the words "Tunjangan!" (Allowance!) were written, while they shouted "Merdeka!!" and "Sejahtera!!".

In a pragmatic study, the meme presents a kind of irony that comes through the contradiction between the reality experienced by the people and the welfare felt by the parliamentarians. Then, the officials' euphoric shouts insinuated that "Merdeka!!" and "Prosperous!!" were not meant to celebrate success in serving the people, but rather independence and welfare that benefited themselves. The implication was that the public widely opposed the DPR's policy. The words "Prosperous!!" and "Merdeka!!" have lost their original meanings for the community. Thus, this meme is a direct response to the phenomenon of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia, which is considered to have failed to

prioritize the needs of the people in its policies. This is in line with research Sabina et al. (2026) which states that memes, as symbolic resistance to unjust authorities during demonstrations, are an important means of communication and digital culture for expressing dissatisfaction, frustration, or protest without using direct or confrontational language. The representation of speech in the sentence above is an expressive or evaluative speech act because it expresses netizens' feelings and insinuates officials. In such contexts, "structural poverty" refers to social injustice, implying that the state or ruler is fully responsible for the poverty experienced by the lower classes.

CONCLUSION

The research, entitled Analysis of Satire Language Style in Netizens' Meme of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia on Platform X as Social Criticism: A Pragmatic Study, aims to analyze the use of satirical language in netizens' memes as a form of social criticism of the House of Representatives. The approach used is pragmatic, with qualitative descriptive research methods and data collection techniques based on free listening and note-taking, complemented by a referential matching method presented formally and informally.

The results of the study show that the memes posted on platform X by netizens responding to issues regarding the House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia use a satirical style to satirize the policies and government of the House of Representatives. This form of satire conveys social criticism. Overall, memes serve as an effective form of digital discourse to convey social criticism, combining linguistic and visual elements to channel the aspirations of the Indonesian people to the House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia. Pragmatically, expressive speech that evaluates the morality of officials and directives that urge behavior change through humor. As a suggestion, further research is needed to examine the legal impact and risks of criminalization of satire and sarcasm on social media, given the thin line between public criticism and defamation offenses under Indonesian law.

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