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Cyberpragmatic Analysis of Illocutionary Acts and Communicative Functions in Sarcastic Instagram Comments on Zara Adhisty

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ABSTRACT

Sarcasm in social-media interaction is pragmatically significant because its meaning cannot always be interpreted from literal verbal content alone, particularly when contextual and digital resources contribute to meaning construction. This study aimed to identify the types of illocutionary acts and the predominant communicative functions realized in sarcastic Instagram comments on Zara Adhisty from a cyberpragmatic perspective. A descriptive qualitative design was employed using 42 comments purposively selected from six Instagram posts. The data were analyzed using (Searle, 1969, 1979) classification of illocutionary acts and (Jakobson, 1960) communicative functions, while contextual information and digital resources were considered in interpreting sarcastic meaning. The result showed three types of illocutionary acts. The dominant acts were assertive acts with 23 comments (54.76%), expressive acts with 11 comments (26.19%) and directive acts with 8 comments (19.05%). Three major types of communicative functions, including emotive (18 comments, 42.86%), referential (15 comments, 35.71%) and conative (9 comments, 21.43%) were also identified in the study. These findings show that illocutionary force and communicative function are related but are different dimensions of sarcastic digital discourse. They also emphasize the importance of taking verbal expressions, digital cues, and socio-contextual information together when interpreting sarcasm in online communication. Further research on the topic might include the analysis of a larger sample with multiple raters in order to ensure higher inter-rater reliability.

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1. Introduction

Language serves not only to transmit information but also to perform social actions, build relationships, express attitudes, and communicate social values. Through language, people can make claims, express feelings, give orders, criticize others, and manage their relationships (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969, 1979). Public reactions are often expressed through judgment, disagreement, criticism, and emotional responses when public figures or institutions are perceived to act against widely held social (Abdul & Idrees, 2025; Alshakhanbeh & Alghazo, 2022; Clara et al., 2026). The development of digital technology has further changed these patterns of interaction by extending communication from face-to-face settings to computer-mediated communication through digital platforms (Clara et al., 2026; Irawati et al., 2023). Among these, Instagram has become an interesting platform that allows the public to view, deliberate, participate and critique public figures and current issues through posts, reels and comment sections (Ahmadi F et al., 2024; Nawakwulan et al., 2026)

However, unlike physical interactions, discussion in such comment sections takes place in textual form and does not involve vocal intonation, body language or facial expression (Nawakwulan et al., 2026). Users tend to use various techniques when commenting on issues that they feel do not conform to the existing socio-cultural values. While some might directly state their disapproval, others may indirectly use figurative language and sarcasm, as a way of ridiculing or lampooning the target of their comments, with an aim to mocking or expressing disdain for what they say or do (Abdul & Idrees, 2025; Fimulkillah et al., 2026; Irawati et al., 2023; Putra et al., 2024).

A relevant example of this phenomenon can be found in the comments section of Indonesian actress Zara Adhisty's Instagram account: *Bangga begitu?* 'Proud of that?' (Data 1). In example of the code (1), the commenter uses a short question whose literal form asks whether the addressee is proud. In the context of the controversy surrounding Zara Adhisty's personal life, particularly her maternal status and marriage, however, the question does not seek information. Pragmatically, the utterance establishes an ironic contrast between literal question and disapproval one which brings up the notion of pride to question it. The example describes that sarcastic meaning often refers on contextual details that is not available in the literal wording alone.

From a pragmatic perspective, a key feature of sarcasm is the difference between the literal meaning of an utterance and the attitude or evaluation intended by the speaker. Sarcasm can implicitly express a negative evaluation through an expression that appears positive, harmless, or neutral (Dynel, 2020; Palaniammal & Anandababu, 2023). In digital discourse, netizen giving comment by use contextual and visual signals like capital words to establish the words, repeated punctuation marks, casual spelling, slang, laughter indicators, rhetorical questions and emojis such as 😂, 😭, ◎, (Abdul & Idrees, 2025; Alshakhanbeh & Alghazo, 2022; Fadilah & Agus Wijayanto, 2024). However, these cues do not automatically show sarcasm. Their pragmatic function depends on how they relate the verbal expressions used and the broader context of the discourse.

Due to the reliance on the digital environment, a cyberpragmatic lens is appropriate to investigate this study. Cyberpragmatic analyze how pragmatic meaning is formed and interpreted based on the context of internet-mediated interaction, where language usage interconnects with contextual information and available resources (Yus, 2011). This is how cyberpragmatic provides the contextual perspective from which current study explain how the meaning in sarcastic is produced and perceived in Instagram comments (Fatmawati & Ningsih, 2024; Yusuf & Firdhani Resha, 2025).

Despite these contributions, an analytical gap remains in the existing literature. Previous studies have largely examined sarcasm as a strategy of criticism, impoliteness, humour, or negative evaluation, or have focused on identifying particular speech-act categories in online communication. To the authors' knowledge, the studies reviewed above have given comparatively limited attention to distinguishing the illocutionary act performed by a commenter from the predominant communicative function of the same sarcastic utterance. This distinction is important because, for example, a comment may perform an assertive act while simultaneously containing strong emotional or audience-oriented features. Treating illocutionary force and communicative orientation as interchangeable may therefore overlook part of the pragmatic complexity of online sarcastic discourse.

A further contextual gap concerns the kind of issue that triggers sarcastic commentary. Much of the previous research has focused on political discourse, government policies, general online interactions, and viral TikTok content (Abdul & Idrees, 2025; Alshakhanbeh & Alghazo, 2022; Fimulkillah et al., 2026; Irawati et al., 2023). Although celebrity-centered Instagram interaction has also been studied (Aporbo, 2023; Fadilah & Wijayanto, 2024), limited attention appears to have been given to the pragmatic use of sarcasm in the personal Instagram space of an Indonesian public figure involved in a sensitive socio-cultural controversy concerning maternal status and marriage. Within this controversy, cinematic intertextuality, such as references to the film Dua Garis Biru, is treated as one contextual resource rather than as the main analytical focus of the study.

To address these gaps, this study combines Searle's classification of illocutionary acts with Jakobson's communicative functions within a cyberpragmatic perspective. This analytical combination makes it possible to explain both what communicative act commenters perform through their sarcastic utterances and which communicative orientation is predominantly foregrounded in the same utterances.

Accordingly, this study investigates what types of illocutionary acts are realized in sarcastic Instagram comments on Zara Adhisty and what communicative functions are predominantly realized in these sarcastic comments. The analysis is limited to selected sarcastic comments related to the public controversy surrounding Zara Adhisty and does not attempt to determine the truth of the commenters' moral judgments or to evaluate the personal conduct of the public figure involved.

By distinguishing illocutionary force from communicative orientation within one framework, the study contributes to research in pragmatics, cyberpragmatics, and digital discourse. To be more concrete, the study will contribute to further research on the role of sarcasm in Instagram comments as a way of expressing claims, evaluations, and attempts to persuade one's interlocutors with the use of various communicative orientations.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Framework

Based on the viewpoint of speech act theory, Sarcasm involves more than a difference between literal meaning and intended meaning. In addition, it has certain communiting abilities. Searle (1979) highlights five categories of illocutionary acts, include assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations. Where in the communicative intent, sarcastic remarks on Instagram that might involve a variety of illocutionary activities, such as presenting as judgement as a statement to make a fact, expressing disappointed emotion, or even mockery by trying to convince other users, depending on the communicative purpose. Considering the variety of functions that sarcasm can serve, it would be misleading to try and

classify sarcastic comments within one particular category of illocutionary acts (Ahmadi F et al., 2024; Aporbo, 2023).

Illocutionary force, however, does not necessarily explain the main communicative orientation of an utterance. For this reason, the present study also refers to Jakobson (1960) communicative functions. Jakobson defines six functions of language, among them the referential, emotive, conative, phatic, metalingual, and poetic functions. The referential function is geared towards the context being commented on, the emotive function emphasizes the speaker's attitude or reaction, and the conative function is directed towards the addressee. Several functions may occur within the same message, although one may become more prominent than the others.

Previous studies of online sarcasm can be grouped into several related areas. One group of studies has focused on how sarcasm is recognised and interpreted in social media texts. Through computational viewpoint, Palaniammal & Anandababu (2023) developed a neural network model designed in purpose to recognize sarcasm through social media. Considering sarcasm as a textual phenomenon that can be detected automatically by the network. On the other viewpoint of practical, Nawakwulan et al. (2026) Investigated the misreading about sarcasm in Instagram discourse and discovered that lacking non-verbal signals, taking things literally, and variation of the knowledge background could lead to confusion. Likewise, the study of emojis has explored their pragmatic roles and their function in purpose to interpreting sarcasm (Alharbi & Mahzari, 2023; Cui, 2022; Grover & Banati, 2022; Weissman, 2022; Zeng, 2023). Overall, those studies conclude that sarcasm is understood through textual, contextual, and non-verbal signals, yet the studies focus primarily on identify and interpret sarcasm itself. Instead of evaluative roles it plays in public discourse, a topic which explored by the subsequent set of studies.

Another group of studies has examined sarcasm as a form of criticism and evaluation in public and political digital discourse. Alshakhanbeh & Alghazo (2022) analyzed criticism strategies directed toward government policies on Facebook and Twitter and found sarcasm to be the most frequent indirect criticism strategy in their data. Irawati et al. (2023) examined issues of sarcasm and impoliteness in comments under Ganjar Pranowo's Instagram post and identified several features of the comments that the users employed to express their sarcastic criticism, namely, profanity, capitalization, excessive punctuation, and inappropriate name-calling. Clara et al. (2026) studied the use of speech acts in Instagram comments under the posts of Indonesian politicians and found that expressive acts were the most frequent type of speech act, followed by directives and assertives. By contrast, Abdul & Idrees (2025) stressed that social media users may combine various speech acts with the help of emojis, rhetorical questions, punctuations, and other resources to convey their meaning, criticism, and take a stance. Aporbo (2023) and Ahmadi F et al. (2024) likewise examined speech acts in Instagram comments on celebrity and public issues. Fadilah & Wijayanto (2024) , Armanda (2024), Sufi Ariasy & Malikussaleh (2026) and Ayu et al. (2025) also examined sarcastic expressions in Instagram comments across different public and celebrity-centered contexts.

A third area of research concerns sarcasm, social criticism, and popular digital culture. Fimulkillah et al. (2026), for example, examined Generation Z comments on viral TikTok issues and found that online comments may function as social criticism, satire, and resistance. Together with the studies discussed above, this finding indicates that sarcasm is commonly used to express criticism and evaluation in computer-mediated communication, although these studies approach the issue from different theoretical and methodological perspectives.

3. Method

3.1 Research Design and Data Collection

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design to analyze sarcastic expressions, illocutionary acts, and communicative functions in Instagram comments. The qualitative approach was selected to provide an in-depth interpretation of linguistic phenomena in their natural context (Creswell, 2018). Particularly how sarcastic meanings are constructed and how they realize different illocutionary acts and communicative functions in digitally mediated interaction.

The data were collected from the comment sections of six posts published on Zara Adhisty's personal Instagram account (@zaraadhsty) consisting of five regular posts and one Instagram Reel. The posts were purposively selected because their comment sections contained public responses related to speculation surrounding the controversy discussed by Instagram users. The individual Instagram comment served as the unit of analysis.

The comments were also selected purposively according to the research focus. Comments were included when they were relevant to the controversy, contained sufficient linguistic and contextual information for pragmatic interpretation, and met the operational criteria for sarcasm described below. Sarcasm was identified when the contextual meaning conveyed a mocking or negative evaluation that could not be fully explained by the literal wording alone. The identification considered contextual incongruity, exaggeration, rhetorical form, intertextual references, and digital cues such as emojis, laughter markers, capitalization, punctuation, slang, and informal spelling. No single linguistic or digital feature was treated as sufficient evidence of sarcasm in isolation. This consideration of contextual and digital cues is consistent with previous studies of sarcasm and pragmatic interpretation in social media discourse (Armanda, 2024; Ayu et al., 2025; Fadilah & Wijayanto, 2024; Sufi Ariasy & Malikussaleh, 2026)

Comments consisting only of tagging, unrelated interaction, spam, or expressions that did not provide sufficient contextual evidence for pragmatic analysis were excluded. The selected data consisted of 4 comments from the first post, 16 from the second post, 2 from the third post, 2 from the fourth post, 9 from the fifth post, and 9 from the Instagram Reel, resulting in 42 comments in total. The collected comments were documented in a coding table and anonymized to protect the identities of individual users.

3.2 Research Instruments

The researchers served as the primary instrument for collecting, identifying, coding, and interpreting the data. They utilized a coding table to systematize the selected comments according to the following framework: Searle (1969, 1979) theory of illocutionary acts and Jakobson's (1960) theory of communicative functions. The former was employed to classify the comments into five categories of illocutionary acts and the latter into six communicative functions. In addition, the coding process also included the analyses of the contextual incongruity, cinematic intertextuality such as references to Dua Garis Biru, and digital features of the comment such as capitalization, punctuation, slang, abbreviations, and emojis.

3.3 Data Analysis

The data were analyzed qualitatively through several stages. First, sarcastic expressions were identified based on the criteria described in the Research Design section. Second, the comments were classified according to Searle (1969, 1979) five categories of illocutionary acts such as assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declarations. Third, all six

communicative functions proposed by Jakobson (1960) were considered during the analysis. When more than one function was observable in a comment, the predominant function was determined according to the primary function of the communication. The referential function was identified when the message was primarily oriented toward the context or situation being discussed; the emotive function was identified when the message foregrounded the commenter's attitude or emotional stance; and the conative function was identified when the message was primarily directed toward influencing or addressing another user or audience. Fourth, the coded comments were interpreted in relation to their surrounding cyberpragmatic context to explain how illocutionary force, communicative orientation, and sarcastic meaning interacted within the comments. Descriptive frequencies and percentages were calculated to display category distributions, while the main interpretation was qualitative.

4. Results

The 42 Instagram comments were analysed using two classifications, presented separately because they examine different aspects of an utterance: Searle's illocutionary acts and Jakobson's communicative functions.

4.1 Illocutionary Acts

The analysis identified three types of illocutionary acts in the 42 Instagram comments: assertive, expressive, and directive. The distribution is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Frequency of Illocutionary Acts

No	Illocutionary Act	Frequency	%
1	Assertive	23	54,76
2	Expressive	11	26.19
3	Directive	8	19.05
	Total	**42**	**100**

Source: Authors' analysis of the 42 Instagram comments.

As shown in Table 1, assertive acts were the most frequent (23 comments, 54.76%), followed by expressive (11, 26.19%) and directive acts (8, 19.05%). No commissive or declarative acts were identified.

4.2 Communicative Functions

The same 42 comments were then classified by communicative function; Table 2 shows the three functions identified.

Table 2. Frequency of Communicative Functions

No	Communicative Function	Frequency	%
1	Emotive	18	42.86
2	Referential	15	35.71
3	Conative	9	21.43
	Total	**42**	**100**

Source: Authors' analysis of the 42 Instagram comments.

As shown in Table 2, the emotive function was the most frequent (18 comments, 42.86%), followed by the referential (15, 35.71%) and conative functions (9, 21.43%). No phatic,

metalingual, or poetic function was predominant.

5. Discussion

The findings show that sarcastic commentary in the analyzed Instagram dataset operates through more than one pragmatic dimension. The two categories should not be treated as corresponding pairs because Searle's classification identifies the type of act performed by the commenter, while Jakobson's classification identifies the communicative functions highlighted in the message (Jakobson, 1960; Searle, 1969). The distributions in Tables 1 and 2 confirm this distinction. Each of the 42 comments received one illocutionary act and one predominant communicative function, but the totals are different: assertive acts (23) outnumber the referential function (15), expressive acts (11) are fewer than the emotive function (18), and directive acts (8) are fewer than the conative function (9). The two classifications cannot be mapped one-to-one because of the unequal totals; at least eight assertive comments, for example, must have been categorized under an emotive or conative instead of a referential one.

This distinction is especially relevant in digitally mediated communication, as pragmatic interpretations are not made on the basis of the verbal content alone. Features such as emojis, laughter markers, informal spelling, rhetorical questions, and other features specific to the platform, may contribute to the interpretation of stance and nonliteral meaning, when they are combined with the surrounding linguistic and social context (Alharbi & Mahzari, 2023; Cui, 2022; Fatmawati & Ningsih, 2024; Grover & Banati, 2022; Weissman, 2022; Zeng, 2023).

5.1 Assertive Illocutionary Acts and Referential Function

Assertive acts, the most frequent category, suggest that sarcasm in the present dataset is often expressed through claims and interpretations rather than only through direct emotional reactions or commands.

Data 2 and 3 are discussed as representative instances in which an assertive illocutionary act is realized through a predominantly referential function.

Data 2

Tebakan netizen selalu benar dan gossip adalah fakta yang tertunda tinggal nunggu waktu aja untuk membuktikannya haha😂😂😂

"Netizens' guesses are always right, and gossip is a delayed fact'—it's only a matter of time, haha 😂😂😂"

Data 2 is classified as an assertive speech act because the main communicative act is the presentation of proposition of claims about earlier public speculation. The commenter first states that *"tebakan netizen selalu benar"* ('netizens' guesses are always right') and then presents *"gosip adalah fakta yang tertunda"* ('gossip is a delayed fact') as another claim. The final expression, *"tinggal nunggu waktu aja untuk membuktikannya"*, develops the same idea by predicting that later events will eventually provide confirmation of the gossip. The commenter presents an interpretation of the controversy as if it were something that could be taken as being the case. This fits with Searle's description of assertives as acts that commit the speaker, in varying degrees, to the truth of the proposition expressed (Searle, 1979). This classification does not imply that the researcher agrees with the claims; the analysis concerns the illocutionary force with which the propositions are presented, not their truth (Searle, 1969).

From Jakobson's perspective, Data 2 is classified as referential because the function of the message is toward the controversy itself, specifically the relationship between previous public speculation, circulating gossip, and what the commenter sees as later confirmation. The

central of the message concerns what the commenter claims about the situation rather than on directly expressing a personal feeling or telling other users what to do.

The sarcastic effect is strengthened by the expressions *"selalu benar"* ('always right') and *"gosip adalah fakta yang tertunda"* ('gossip is a delayed fact'), These expressions turn wide generalizations into statements that are presented almost like reliable principles. The laughter marker and emojis further support the mocking tone of the utterance, but are treated as pragmatic cues, not as another communicative function.

Data 3

Kalo artis hamidun ok2 aja guys beda kalo rakyat biasa pasti hura hara sekampung 🤣🤣🤣

"If a celebrity has a premarital pregnancy, it's no big deal, guys. But if an ordinary person gets pregnant before marriage, the whole village will be in an uproar 🤣🤣🤣"

Data 3 is also classified as an assertive speech act, although the proposition is constructed through a contrastive social comparison. The utterance contrasts the perceived social response toward a celebrity with the response expected toward an ordinary person: *"kalo artis … ok2 aja"* is opposed to *"kalo rakyat biasa pasti hura hara sekampung."* The illocutionary point is therefore primarily to present an interpretation of social treatment rather than to require the audience to perform an action. The evaluative and critical nature of the comment does not by itself make the utterance an expressive. Searle's classification is determined primarily by the illocutionary point of an utterance rather than simply by whether evaluative language is present.

Data 3 is classified as referential because its primary communicative orientation is toward the social situation being discussed: the perceived difference between the treatment of celebrities and ordinary people. The semantic center of the utterance lies in this comparison rather than in a direct expression of the commenter's psychological state or an instruction to the audience. The address term "guys" and the laughing emojis do not change this classification: they mark audience address and mocking tone, while the content remains centered on the comparison between celebrities and ordinary people.

The sarcasm is realized through the exaggerated opposition between *"ok2 aja"* ('it is simply treated as okay') and *"pasti hura hara sekampung"* ('there would definitely be an uproar throughout the whole neighborhood'). The extreme contrast does not merely describe two responses but ridicules what the commenter perceives as an inconsistent social standard. The lexical intensifier *"pasti"* further strengthens the categorical presentation of this contrast, while the laughing emojis reinforce its mocking delivery. These findings support Abdul & Idrees (2025), who found that social-media users combine assertive forms with rhetorical questions, emojis, and punctuation to construct a stance; the present study extends this to celebrity-centered Instagram discourse.

At the level of overall speech-act distribution, however, the present result contrasts with Clara et al. (2026), whose analysis of 200 Instagram comments concerning Indonesian government issues found expressive speech acts to be the dominant category. The contrast suggests that the pragmatic realization of negative digital discourse is context-sensitive. In the present celebrity-centered dataset, users more frequently construct sarcastic claims and interpretations, whereas the government-related corpus examined by Clara et al. foregrounded direct expressions of negative emotion.

5.2 Expressive Illocutionary Acts and Emotive Function

Expressive acts (11 comments) and the emotive function (18 comments) derive from

separate classifications, so they do not indicate a fixed pairing. Data 1 is discussed as a representative case in which an expressive act is accompanied by a predominantly emotive orientation. The two categories are closely related but theoretically distinct. Searle (1979) defines the illocutionary point of expressives as the expression of a psychological state concerning a state of affairs specified in the propositional content. Jakobson (1960), meanwhile, defines the emotive function in terms of the message's orientation toward the addresser and the expression of the speaker's attitude.

Data 1
Bangga begitu?
"Is that something to be proud of?"

Data 1 is classified as an expressive speech act because, in its contextual use, the utterance primarily conveys a negative evaluative attitude toward the addressee, rather than actually seeking information. Literally, *"Bangga begitu?"* ('Proud of that?') takes the form of a question and can function as a question seeking confirmation. However, the utterance does not seek information; it conveys disapproval of the behaviour being commented on. The interrogative form of *"Bangga begitu?"* does not determine its pragmatic function, since sentence form and illocutionary force are distinct (Searle, 1969).

A genuine question would normally require an informational response, but in Data 1 there is no clear indication that the commenter requires one. Its primary meaning makes more sense when interpreted as an indirect expression of criticism or disagreement. Searle's discussion of indirect speech acts supports the possibility that the literal form of an utterance does not fully capture its intended pragmatic meaning, since the speaker may perform additional illocutionary acts through sentences whose surface form conventionally implies other acts (Searle, 1979). The negative attitude is not stated directly (e.g., "I am disappointed") but conveyed indirectly through a rhetorical question.

Data 1 is classified as emotive because the primary orientation of the message is toward the commenter's evaluative stance. In this datum, the brief rhetorical question does not primarily provide information about the controversy or instruct the audience to perform an action. Instead, it foregrounds the commenter's disapproving reaction toward the behavior being evaluated.

The interrogative form establishes indirectness, not sarcasm by itself. The sarcastic effect is more plausibly associated with the contextual incongruity of asking whether the target is "proud" in a situation where pride is implicitly treated as inappropriate. The question therefore does not neutrally inquire about pride; it invokes the possibility of pride in order to challenge or ridicule it.

Consistent with Clara et al. (2026), who linked expressive acts to anger, disappointment, sarcasm, mockery, and insults, the present findings show the importance of expressive acts for conveying negative social evaluation, although these acts are not dominant in this corpus. In line with Abdul & Idrees (2025), the rhetorical question in Data 1 shows that stance is built through combined linguistic resources. The present study adds a distinction: Searle's expressive category identifies the act performed, whereas Jakobson's emotive function identifies the message's orientation toward the addresser.

5.3 Directive Speech Acts and Conative Function

Although directive acts (8 comments) and the conative function (9 comments) are the least frequent categories, they are important because they show that some commenters move

beyond interpreting or evaluating the controversy and attempt to regulate how other users should respond to it. Data 4 is discussed as a representative case in which directive illocutionary force coincides with a predominantly conative orientation.

Searle (1979) explains that the utterance of orders, requests, and similar directives is that the speaker tries to get the hearer to do something. Jakobson (1960), on the other hand, defines the conative function through its orientation toward the addressee and identifies the vocative and the imperative are its most typical grammatical realizations.

Data 4

Cancel culture sih, jangan normalisasi hamil diluar nikah, jangan mau jadi pengikut setan

"Cancel culture, then. Don't normalize premarital pregnancy, and don't become followers of Satan."

Data 4 contains two explicit prohibitions: *"jangan normalisasi hamil di luar nikah"* ('do not normalize pregnancy outside marriage') and *"jangan mau jadi pengikut setan"* ('do not become followers of the devil'). The opening "Cancel culture *sih*" frames the comment evaluatively but is less explicit as a directive; the strongest evidence for directive force comes from the two prohibitions with *"jangan"*, which instruct the audience to refrain from particular actions.

From Searle's perspective, these prohibitions satisfy the central illocutionary point associated with directives because they function as attempts to get the addressees to refrain from certain actions. In Data 4, the desired response is expressed negatively: the audience is urged not to normalize the behavior being discussed and not to align themselves with the position condemned by the commenter.

From Jakobson's perspective, Data 4 is classified as conative because its primary communicative orientation is toward the addressees and the responses expected from them. Although Data 4 contains no explicit vocative, the two prohibitions introduced by *"jangan"* take the form of negative imperatives, which Jakobson (1960) identifies as one of the clearest grammatical realizations of the conative function. These prohibitions presuppose an addressed audience and direct that audience toward particular forms of behavior. The message is therefore organized around what other users are being told not to do.

The expression *"pengikut setan"* ('followers of the devil') is especially important to the pragmatic interpretation. Rather than functioning as a neutral description, the expression constructs an extremely negative characterization of those who are perceived as accepting or normalizing the behavior. The phrase therefore intensifies the directive by presenting the opposing position in an extreme and ridiculing form.

Within the cyberpragmatic context, this exaggeration supports a sarcastic interpretation because the comment does more than straightforwardly prohibit particular behavior. It caricatures the position of those being criticized by representing their acceptance of the situation through an extreme moral consequence. The disproportion between the actual act of accepting or normalizing the behavior and the characterization *"pengikut setan"* creates a hyperbolic incongruity that contributes to the mocking force of the comment. Thus, Data 4 is a directive–conative utterance whose sarcastic effect is supported by hyperbolic moral framing and contextual ridicule; *"pengikut setan"* is treated as the commenter's rhetorical framing, not as a characterization endorsed by the researcher.

These findings support the observation by Abdul & Idrees (2025) that digital discourse uses imperatives and other resources to position users and persuade audiences. It also matches what Fimulkillah et al. (2026) found that sarcasm and humour in comments can be more than entertainment; they are resources for social criticism, evaluation, satire and

resistance. The present study extends these findings by demonstrating that social evaluation can develop into an audience-oriented directive in which commenters attempt to regulate what others should accept, reject, or normalize.

This result can also be related to Alshakhanbeh & Alghazo (2022), who found sarcasm to be an important indirect criticism strategy in social-media discourse. The present findings support the broader role of sarcasm as criticism but add a different dimension: sarcastic evaluation is not always limited to criticizing its target; in some comments it is directed outward toward the wider online audience and used to encourage a particular social response.

Overall the results of this study show that the sarcasm that appears in the Instagram comments that were examined has at least three practical orientations: interpreting it as a claim, evaluating it from the speaker's viewpoint and controlling it for the audience. This corresponds with the research that demonstrates sarcasm found on social media to be a resource for criticizing, judging, persuading, mocking (Alshakhanbeh & Alghazo, 2022; Fadilah & Wijayanto, 2024; Fimulkillah et al., 2026; Irawati et al., 2023; Sufi Ariasy & Malikussaleh, 2026).

Although the use of sarcasm in Instagram comments has been investigated (Armanda, 2024; Ayu et al., 2025; Fadilah & Wijayanto, 2024; Irawati et al., 2023; Sufi Ariasy & Malikussaleh, 2026), the novelty of this paper is to distinguish the illocutionary act performed by the comment writer from the primary communicative orientation of the utterance and to interpret them within the framework of resources provided by the context of digitally mediated interaction. A particular comment can realize an act of stating while foregrounding the feelings of the comment writer or the addressee; therefore, the notions of illocutionary force and communicative orientation should not be conflated.

The cyberpragmatic approach recognizes the interplay between word-meanings, shared beliefs, and discourse resources specific to the chosen online environment, which contribute to the emergence of meanings in online interaction (Fatmawati & Ningsih, 2024; Yus, 2011). Therefore, emojis, laughter markers, spelling hesitation, rhetorical questions, repetition, and address forms were regarded as contextual resources for interpreting the utterance rather than means of expressing a specific act, function, and sarcasm.

Similarly, Putri et al. (2026) discovered that in Indonesian political campaign speech, cyber-pragmatic context is crucial for elucidating, highlighting, and bolstering communicative meaning. Their study's conclusions highlight how crucial it is to take contextual resources into account when deciphering meaning in digital communication. The current study, however, takes a different tack by investigating the ways in which digital signals, linguistic expressions, and socio-contextual data influence the interpretation of illocutionary acts and communicative functions in sarcastic Instagram comments.

The relevance of this study is to identify the role of sarcasm in Instagram comments as a resource for achieving various purposes in digitally mediated interaction. The findings of this research contribute to the understanding of how commenters use linguistic and non-linguistic resources to realize their stances and engage the audience in Instagram. This study aligns with the recent research that demonstrates the importance of comments for expressing opinions, emotions, criticism, and stances using linguistic and extra-linguistic resources (Ahmadi F et al., 2024; Aporbo, 2023; Fatmawati & Ningsih, 2024; Putra et al., 2024).

This study is limited to exploring 42 comments under one public figure's post and one controversy; therefore, the findings cannot be generalized to all Instagram users and topics. Identification of sarcasm, illocutionary acts, and communicative functions also involved researcher interpretation, and assigning one predominant function may oversimplify

Jakobson's view that several functions can coexist. Future research could use larger and more diverse datasets, compare figures, controversies, and platforms, and involve multiple coders to strengthen reliability

6. Conclusion

This study aimed to identify the types of illocutionary acts and the predominant communicative functions realized in sarcastic Instagram comments on Zara Adhisty from a cyberpragmatic perspective. Using Searle (1969, 1979) classification of illocutionary acts and Jakobson (1960) communicative functions, the study examined how sarcastic meanings were constructed through verbal expressions, contextual information, and digital resources in Instagram interaction.

The findings showed that three types of illocutionary acts were identified in the 42 comments. Assertive acts were the most frequent, occurring in 23 comments (54.76%), followed by expressive acts in 11 comments (26.19%) and directive acts in 8 comments (19.05%). In terms of communicative functions, three predominant functions were identified. The emotive function occurred most frequently in 18 comments (42.86%), followed by the referential function in 15 comments (35.71%) and the conative function in 9 comments (21.43%). Data indicate that the two categories do not align perfectly: assertive acts are more numerous than referential functions, whereas expressive acts appear less frequently than emotive functions; this suggests that the illocutionary acts and communicative orientations highlighted within the same statement do not always coincide. Therefore, illocutionary force and communicative function should be treated as related but distinct dimensions in the analysis of digital discourse.

The findings also imply that sarcastic meaning in Instagram comments cannot be interpreted solely from literal verbal content. Sarcasm in the analyzed comments functions not merely as humor or negative evaluation but also as a pragmatic resource for presenting claims, expressing evaluative attitudes, criticizing perceived situations, and influencing audience responses. From a cyberpragmatic perspective, these findings highlight the importance of considering the interaction between verbal expressions, digital cues, and socio-contextual information when interpreting meaning in online communication. The findings may therefore benefit researchers and students in pragmatics, cyberpragmatics, speech-act studies, and digital discourse by providing an example of how illocutionary acts and communicative functions can be examined together without treating them as equivalent analytical categories.However, this study is limited to 42 comments collected from six Instagram posts concerning one public figure and one particular controversy. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalized to all Instagram interactions or all forms of sarcasm in digital discourse. Because the comments were selected purposively, the reported frequencies also describe this dataset only and should not be read as the general distribution of illocutionary acts or communicative functions in sarcastic comments. The identification of sarcasm, classification of illocutionary acts, and determination of predominant communicative functions also involved researcher interpretation. In addition, assigning one predominant communicative function to each comment may simplify Jakobson's view that several functions can coexist within a single message. Future research could address these limitations by examining larger and more diverse datasets, comparing different public figures, controversies, and social-media platforms, and involving multiple coders or intercoder-agreement procedures to strengthen the reliability of the analysis.

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Conflict of Interest
The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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Dian Marisha Putri: supervision, validation, and critical review and editing of the manuscript. All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

Statement on the Use of AI
The authors declare that generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools were used to assist with grammar checking, language refinement, and academic writing improvements. All research content, data interpretation, analysis, and conclusions were reviewed and verified by the authors, who take full responsibility for the accuracy and integrity of the published work.

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