

Indirect Criticism Strategies in Sigit Sugiana's Content: A Pragmatic Study

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Received:	Revised:	Accepted:	Online:
June 20, 2026	July 21, 2026	August 03, 2026	September 05, 2026

Abstract

The development of social media has given rise to various forms of social criticism delivered creatively through indirect language strategies. This phenomenon indicates that criticism is not always expressed explicitly. This study aims to describe the pragmatic strategies used by Sigit Sugiana in delivering criticism toward government policies, public officials' statements, and social phenomena. It highlights how indirect criticism can function effectively while maintaining politeness in digital public communication. This research employs a qualitative descriptive method. The data consist of linguistic units containing criticism in the form of words, phrases, and sentences collected from 15 YouTube videos uploaded by Sigit Sugiana between January and February 2026. Data were gathered using observation and note-taking techniques. The analysis applies a pragmatic approach, drawing on theories of conversational implicature, indirect speech acts, and off-record politeness strategies. The results show that criticism is realized through five pragmatic strategies: irony, humor and hyperbole, analogy, metaphor and symbolism, and parody with role simulation. All these strategies fall under off-record politeness, conveying criticism implicitly through indirect meaning. This study contributes to digital pragmatics by demonstrating that social criticism on social media employs complex and indirect linguistic strategies, and it opens avenues for further research on different platforms and content creators.

Keywords: Content Creator, Criticism Strategies, Pragmatics, Social Media

1. Introduction

Nowadays, social media has developed very rapidly and has become an important part of people's lives. This development has not only changed the way people communicate but also transformed the way they express attitudes, opinions, evaluations, and criticism toward various social and political phenomena (Anwar & Santuso, 2025; Hakim et al., 2024). Social media also provides an open and interactive space where users are not merely passive recipients of information but active participants in producing and disseminating public discourse. Within this participatory communication environment, certain users have gained significant influence by consistently creating and sharing content that attracts large audiences. These influential users, commonly known as content creators, have become important actors in the digital communication ecosystem because they shape public opinion, interpret current issues, and influence how audiences understand social and political events.

Content creators are individuals or groups who systematically plan, produce, and distribute digital content through various social media platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and others (Amriwan et al., 2024; Edib, 2021). The content produced may take the form of videos, photos, written texts, or audio recordings. Depending on their communication objectives, content creators may focus on entertainment, education, inspiration, commercial promotion, or public commentary (Mufidah, 2023). Among these various types, some content creators consistently produce social and political criticism directed at government policies, public officials, and broader social issues.



Criticism delivered through social media has different characteristics compared to criticism conveyed through conventional media. On social media, criticism is often expressed indirectly by utilizing humor, irony, satire, or other forms of utterances containing implicit meaning (Akbari et al., 2024; Novalia et al., 2024; Santuso & Sukarno, 2025). This occurs because criticism often receives repression from the parties being criticized, especially when those parties are in positions of power.

One of the content creators who consistently produces social and political criticism is Sigit Sugiana. He represents a particularly relevant case for pragmatic analysis because his content is characterized by the systematic use of indirect language in criticizing government policies, public officials' statements, and various social phenomena. Rather than expressing criticism explicitly, he frequently employs irony, satire, humor, metaphor, and other forms of implicit communication that require contextual interpretation. This distinctive communication style provides rich linguistic data for examining how criticism is pragmatically constructed and interpreted in digital public discourse.

His content is distributed through several social media platforms, including Facebook, YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram. Most of his videos begin by presenting current news reports or public statements related to government policies, public officials, or social issues that have attracted widespread public attention. He then provides commentary that contains criticism toward these issues. The uniqueness of Sigit Sugiana's communication style lies in the fact that his criticism is rarely delivered directly but instead relies on utterances containing implicit meanings. Consequently, audiences must infer the intended criticism through contextual interpretation rather than relying solely on the literal meaning of the utterances.

Furthermore, Sigit Sugiana has attracted an increasingly large audience across multiple social media platforms, indicating that his indirect communication style resonates with the public. This growing popularity suggests that his content provides a valuable case for investigating how indirect criticism functions effectively within contemporary digital communication.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Pragmatics and Indirect Criticism

The phenomenon of conveying indirect meaning is an object of pragmatic study. Pragmatics is a branch of linguistics that examines the meaning of utterances based on the context of their use (Birner, 2026; Dey, 2023). This study draws on three major concepts in pragmatics, namely conversational implicature, indirect speech acts, and off-record politeness strategies, to explain how indirect criticism is constructed in social media discourse. Conversational implicature, which refers to implicit meaning that is not explicitly stated by the speaker but can be understood by the listener based on context and the cooperative principle in communication (Grice, 1989). Through conversational implicature, speakers can convey criticism, satire, or evaluation without stating it directly. In addition, this phenomenon is also related to indirect speech acts, namely utterances whose communicative function is not explicitly expressed in their linguistic form (Yule, 2010). By using indirect speech acts, speakers can convey certain intentions, such as criticism or evaluation, through utterances that appear neutral or even literally contradictory.

The use of indirect criticism is also related to politeness strategies in communication. Brown and Levinson (1987) explain that speakers can use off-record politeness strategies, namely strategies of conveying intentions indirectly, to reduce threats to the face of the party being criticized. This strategy enables speakers to express criticism without stating it explicitly, thereby reducing the potential for conflict or possible consequences that may arise, such as repression and other forms of negative response.

2.2. Previous Studies and Research Gap

Research on criticism strategies has previously been conducted by several scholars. These studies can generally be grouped into two main research focuses. First, studies on politeness strategies, such as those conducted by Asbon et al. (2026), Fitri et al. (2025), Martisa and Eso (2025), Aprilia et al. (2023), as well as Rehanisafira and Juita (2022), show that politeness strategies, particularly off-record strategies, are used to convey criticism implicitly through satire, figurative expressions, or vague utterances in order to avoid interpersonal conflict. Second, studies on the speech act of criticizing by Khoironi et al. (2024), Massaguni et al. (2025), Nurhannah and Triwinarti (2025), Prasetyo et al. (2023), as well as Rahma and Marzuqi (2025) found that criticism can be realized both directly and indirectly. Indirect criticism is often expressed through suggestions, rhetorical questions, metaphors, humor, as well as irony or satire.

Previous studies have examined criticism from various perspectives, including politeness strategies, speech acts of criticizing, conversational implicature, and humor in different communicative contexts. However, these studies generally investigate these pragmatic phenomena separately. Most focus on political debates, films, television programs, online comments, or general social media interactions rather than on digital content creators who intentionally construct criticism as their primary communicative practice.

Moreover, existing studies rarely explain how multiple pragmatic mechanisms operate simultaneously in a single act of indirect criticism. Specifically, little attention has been paid to the interaction between conversational implicature, indirect speech acts, and off-record politeness strategies in constructing criticism within social media content. Consequently, there is still limited understanding of the systematic pragmatic patterns employed by content creators who consistently communicate social and political criticism through indirect language.

2.3. The Present Study

Addressing this gap, the present study investigates the indirect criticism strategies employed by Sigit Sugiana, a content creator whose communication is characterized by implicit and highly contextualized criticism. By integrating Grice's theory of conversational implicature, Yule's indirect speech acts, and Brown and Levinson's off-record politeness strategies into a unified analytical framework, this study provides a more comprehensive explanation of how indirect criticism is linguistically constructed and communicated in contemporary social media discourse.

3. Methods

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach. This approach was chosen because the object of the study consists of utterances containing implicit meanings, which require interpretative analysis based on contextual understanding and pragmatic theory. The data source of this study is video content uploaded on Sigit Sugiana's YouTube account. The research data consist of linguistic units that contain criticism toward government policies, statements by public officials, or social phenomena that have attracted public attention. These linguistic units take the form of words, phrases, clauses, or sentences uttered by the speaker in the videos and contain critical meaning, either explicitly or implicitly.

This study employed purposive sampling by selecting 15 videos uploaded between January and February 2026. This period was selected because it was recent and because it represented a continuous phase of content production in which Sigit Sugiana consistently addressed a wide range of current social and political issues using a relatively stable communication style. Limiting the dataset to this period ensured that the analysis was conducted within a comparable socio-political context while providing

sufficient variation in topics to identify recurring pragmatic patterns. This sampling strategy also reduced the influence of possible changes in communication style that might occur over a longer period, thereby allowing a more focused analysis of indirect criticism strategies. The selected videos were then screened based on their relevance to the research objectives, namely the presence of utterances demonstrating pragmatic strategies of indirect criticism.

Data collection was carried out using the observation (*simak*) technique and note-taking technique. These techniques were implemented by carefully and repeatedly observing Sigit Sugiana's video content in order to identify utterances containing criticism. Subsequently, the identified utterances were transcribed into written text to facilitate the analysis process. In addition to the video content, the researcher also examined audience comments associated with each video to gain contextual insight into how the utterances were interpreted by viewers. These comments were not treated as primary data but were used to support the interpretation of implicit meanings during the analysis.

Data analysis was conducted using a pragmatic approach. The analysis focused on identifying the pragmatic strategies used to convey criticism indirectly. In this study, the analysis was conducted using three pragmatic theoretical frameworks: (1) conversational implicature analysis based on Grice's theory to identify implicit meanings generated from the difference between literal meaning and intended meaning; (2) indirect speech act analysis based on Yule's theory to identify the relationship between the linguistic form of an utterance and its communicative function; and (3) off-record politeness strategy analysis based on Brown and Levinson's theory to identify strategies used to convey criticism implicitly.

To enhance the trustworthiness of the qualitative analysis, the researcher did not rely solely on personal interpretation. The interpretation of implicit meanings was continuously compared with the communicative context of each video and, where relevant, with audience responses expressed in the comment section. Comments that reflected similar interpretations of the speaker's intended meaning were used as supporting evidence to ensure that the identified implicatures and indirect criticism strategies were consistent with how the utterances were understood by the audience. The final interpretation, however, remained grounded in the analytical framework of conversational implicature, indirect speech acts, and off-record politeness strategies.

The data analysis process was conducted through several stages: (1) identifying utterances containing criticism, (2) determining the context of the utterance, (3) identifying the implicit meaning contained in the utterance, (4) analyzing the utterance using the relevant pragmatic theoretical framework, and (5) classifying the analysis results based on the dominant pragmatic strategy used.

The results of the analysis were then categorized into several types of pragmatic strategies. This classification aims to identify patterns of pragmatic strategies used in delivering criticism within social media content. Through these stages, this study is expected to produce a systematic description of the pragmatic strategies used to convey criticism indirectly in social media content, particularly in the content produced by Sigit Sugiana on YouTube.

4. Results and Discussion

Sigit Sugiana is a content creator from Cikijing, West Java. His content is published through four main platforms, namely TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube. As of March 3, 2026, his TikTok account had 208 thousand followers, Instagram 77 thousand followers, Facebook 269 thousand followers, and YouTube 6.7 thousand subscribers. The number of followers and viewers of his videos continues to increase over time. This indicates that the content he produces is increasingly popular and

has strong appeal in the digital public sphere. Sigit Sugiana consistently produces social and political criticism content. The criticism he delivers generally relates to government policies, statements by public officials, and social phenomena that attract public attention.

The criticisms he conveys employ indirect criticism strategies. This study aims to reveal these strategies. Based on this objective, the following section presents the results of the analysis of pragmatic strategies used by Sigit Sugiana in delivering criticism indirectly. These strategies are classified into five patterns.

4.1. Criticism Through Irony Strategy

One of the dominant pragmatic strategies used by Sigit Sugiana in conveying criticism is the irony strategy. Irony is a form of utterance that expresses something literally but conveys a meaning opposite to the speaker's actual intention (Putri, 2025). In pragmatic studies, irony represents a violation of the maxim of quality, because the speaker states something that is not intended as a literal truth. This violation aims to produce conversational implicature, namely implicit meaning that can be understood by the listener based on the context of the utterance. Furthermore, irony also constitutes a form of indirect speech act, because the communicative function of the utterance is not expressed explicitly. Within the framework of politeness theory, the use of irony can also be categorized as an off-record politeness strategy, namely a strategy of delivering criticism indirectly to reduce face-threatening acts toward the party being criticized. The use of the irony strategy can be seen in the following data.

4.1.1. Data 1

Statement:

Indonesia menempati posisi kedua di dunia sebagai negara yang paling rentan ditipu. (Indonesia ranks second in the world as the country most vulnerable to fraud.)

Comment:

Enggak terima saya. Harusnya Indonesia nomor satu. Karena ada yang bilang kemiskinan menurun langsung percaya. Ada yang bilang MBG lebih baik dari Jepang dan Korea langsung bangga, teriak-teriak di podium. Sudah jelas harusnya posisi ke satu paling rentan ditipu. (I can't accept that. Indonesia should be number one. When someone says poverty has decreased, people immediately believe it. When someone says MBG is better than Japan and Korea, people immediately feel proud and shout it from the podium. Clearly, Indonesia should be ranked first as the most vulnerable to being deceived.)

In Data 1 above, Sigit Sugiana responds to a news report stating that Indonesia ranks second as the country most vulnerable to digital fraud in the world. The report was released by Sumsud based on the Global Fraud Index 2025. On a scale of 0–10, Indonesia received a score of 6.53, placing it 111th out of 112 countries studied. In response to this report, Sigit Sugiana states, “*Harusnya Indonesia nomor satu*” (Indonesia should be number one). Literally, the utterance appears to express a desire for Indonesia to occupy the first position. However, based on the context of the utterance, the actual intention is to criticize the low level of critical awareness among the public in receiving information in the digital sphere. The utterance implies that people tend to easily believe various claims without conducting critical evaluation. Thus, the utterance functions as an indirect speech act that conveys social criticism. The use of irony enables the speaker to deliver criticism implicitly, so that it does not appear as a direct or confrontational criticism.

4.1.2. Data 2

Statement:

Nangkap pencuri mesin kopi, pemuda di Aceh malah dituntut 1,5 tahun penjara. (A young man in Aceh who caught a coffee machine thief was instead sentenced to 1.5 years in prison.)

Comment:

Negara macam apa itu? Aparatnya disuruh menangkap pencuri, malah menangkap yang berhasil menangkap pencuri. Sekarang bukan pencuri besar saja yang dilindungi, pencuri kecil juga dilindungi. Sekalian saja semuanya jadi pencuri. Nanti kalau kalian lihat pencuri jangan digetok. Mending ikut mencuri saja. (What kind of country is that? The authorities are supposed to catch thieves, but instead they arrest the person who caught the thief. Now it is not only big thieves who are protected; small thieves are also protected. We might as well all become thieves. If you see a thief, don't beat them. It's better to just join them in stealing.)

The irony strategy is also found in Data 2 above. The content is based on an incident involving a young man from Aceh named Sandika Mahbengi. Initially, Sandika caught a child who was stealing a coffee machine belonging to his aunt in the Takengon area. During the arrest, Sandika hit the child. The perpetrator's parents did not accept this and reported him to the police for alleged child abuse. The case proceeded to court, and the public prosecutor demanded a sentence of 1 year and 6 months of imprisonment for Sandika Mahbengi.

In response to this incident, Sigit Sugiana states, "*Sekalian saja semuanya jadi pencuri*" (We might as well all become thieves). Literally, the utterance appears to invite people to commit criminal acts. However, the actual intention is to criticize a legal system that is perceived as unjust. The utterance contains the implicature that the legal system does not provide proper justice, thereby generating public distrust. The use of irony in this utterance strengthens the critical effect while simultaneously expressing the speaker's dissatisfaction with the condition of the legal system in Indonesia.

4.1.3. Data 3

Statement:

DPR usul MBG dilindungi undang-undang. (The House of Representatives proposes that the Free Nutritious Meal (MBG) program be protected by law.)

Comment:

Cerdas. Ini penting sekali. Biar proyek kita jalan terus. Ee maksud saya biar gizi anak terjamin terus. Sekarang kita stop dulu pembahasan undang-undang lain. Apalagi pembahasan Undang-Undang Perampasan Aset yang mungkin nanti malah menyengsarakan kita. Ee maksud saya yang mungkin nanti malah disalahgunakan. Aduh ini mulut salah mulu. Bahaya. Bahaya. Yeah. (Brilliant. This is very important. So that our project keeps running. Uh, I mean so that children's nutrition is continuously guaranteed. Let's stop discussing other laws for now. Especially the Asset Confiscation Bill that might end up making us suffer. Uh, I mean that it might be misused. Oh, my mouth keeps slipping. Dangerous. Dangerous. Yeah.)

The context of the content above refers to a statement by the Deputy Chair of Commission IX of the Indonesian House of Representatives, M. Yahya Zaini, who proposed that the Free Nutritious Meal Program (MBG) be protected by law. The aim is to ensure that the program can run sustainably and does not depend on which president is in office. In responding to this news, Sigit Sugiana ironically praises the proposal and states, "*Biar proyek kita jalan terus*" (So that our project keeps running). Literally, the utterance appears to express support for the continuation of a project. However, within

the context of the utterance, the actual intention is to criticize the possibility of certain interests behind the policy. This is because the House of Representatives appears to prioritize the MBG program rather than discussing the Asset Confiscation Bill, which could potentially create a deterrent effect for corruptors. The utterance contains a conversational implicature suggesting that the policy may not be entirely based on public interest but rather serves the interests of certain groups, considering that many individuals within those groups are also involved in operating MBG kitchens. By using irony, the speaker can convey criticism implicitly without directly accusing specific parties.

4.2. Criticism Through Humor and Hyperbole Strategies

Sigit Sugiana also consistently uses humor and hyperbole strategies in delivering social and political criticism. In pragmatic contexts, humor does not only function as entertainment but also as a communicative strategy for conveying implicit meaning, including criticism (Mohamad et al., 2025). In addition, hyperbole can also function as a strategy for expressing criticism (Mesra et al., 2025). Hyperbole is a figure of speech that exaggerates a situation to produce a particular effect. In pragmatic studies, hyperbole can be understood as a violation of the maxim of quality, because the speaker expresses something that is literally untrue or unrealistic. This violation aims to generate conversational implicature. Moreover, the use of humor and hyperbole also represents a form of indirect speech act, since the critical function is not expressed explicitly. Within the framework of politeness theory, this strategy can be categorized as an off-record strategy, because the criticism is delivered indirectly through humorous and exaggerated utterances. The use of humor and hyperbole strategies can be seen in the following data.

4.2.1. Data 6

Statement:

Pemerintah bakal ukur otak dan fisik anak setelah dapat MBG. (The government will measure children's brain and physical development after receiving MBG.)

Comment:

Udah cukup, enggak perlu habisin duit buat tes. Udah pasti pintar. IQ meningkat, volume otak meningkat, tubuh semakin kuat. Setara atlet profesional. Udah pasti laporannya begitu. Udah hafal saya. Udah hafal. (That's enough, there's no need to spend money on tests. They are definitely smart. Their IQ increases, brain volume increases, their bodies become stronger. Equal to professional athletes. That's definitely what the report will say. I already know it. I already know.)

The context of the content in Data 6 above is taken from a statement by the Coordinating Minister for Food Affairs, Zulkifli Hasan, on January 29, 2026. Zulkifli Hasan stated that the government would prepare follow-up measures to evaluate the effectiveness of the Free Nutritious Meal (MBG) program. This evaluation would be conducted by measuring the overall growth of Indonesian children, ranging from physical development to the brain volume of children who are beneficiaries of the program.

Through the content above, Sigit Sugiana responds to Zulkifli Hasan's statement by saying, "*Udah pasti pintar. IQ meningkat, volume otak meningkat, tubuh semakin kuat. Setara atlet profesional*" (They will definitely be smart. IQ increases, brain volume increases, their bodies become stronger—equal to professional athletes). Literally, the utterance describes a strong confidence regarding the extreme improvement of the children's abilities after receiving the MBG program. However, this statement represents a form of hyperbole intended to satirize claims or expectations that are considered overly exaggerated. This is because the MBG program has only been implemented for about one year. Furthermore, many Nutrition Fulfillment Service Units (SPPG) have been found serving menus that do not meet nutritional and food safety standards. Therefore, the government's claims or expectations are

considered premature. The implicature generated from the utterance is the speaker's skepticism toward the effectiveness of the MBG program. This utterance violates the maxim of quality because the speaker does not intend to state a literal fact but rather uses hyperbole to convey criticism implicitly.

4.2.2. Data 7

Statement:

28 juta warga Indonesia alami gangguan jiwa. (Twenty-eight million Indonesian citizens experience mental disorders.)

Comment:

Enggak heran sih, mungkin bentar lagi bertambah jadi 50 juta. Masyarakat sudah terlalu stres dengan apa yang terjadi di Indonesia. Stres susah cari kerja, stres susah cari keadilan, stres susah cari silvester. (It's not surprising, maybe soon it will increase to 50 million. People are already too stressed with what is happening in Indonesia. Stressed because it is hard to find jobs, stressed because it is hard to find justice, stressed because it is hard to find prosperity.)

The context of the content above refers to data from the World Health Organization (WHO), cited by the Indonesian Minister of Health, Budi Gunadi Sadikin, stating that the global prevalence of mental health disorders ranges from 1 in 8 to 1 in 10 people. If calculated based on Indonesia's current population, around 28 million people in Indonesia potentially experience mental health disorders. Responding to this information, Sigit Sugiana states that the number of people experiencing mental disorders may increase to fifty million. The phrase "*lima puluh juta*" (fifty million) represents a form of hyperbole, indicating a very large number. The utterance contains the implicature that the social and economic conditions of society are highly concerning and may affect public mental health. The hyperbole in this utterance functions to emphasize the severity of the criticized condition while simultaneously creating a humorous effect that strengthens the communicative appeal of the utterance.

4.3. Criticism Through Analogy Strategy

Another pragmatic strategy used by Sigit Sugiana in delivering criticism is the analogy strategy. Analogy is a form of utterance that compares one condition with another condition that has certain similarities, with the aim of clarifying or evaluating the criticized condition (Luthfi, 2020; Sucipta et al., 2025). In pragmatic studies, analogy can generate conversational implicature because the critical meaning is not stated directly but conveyed through comparison with another situation. By using analogy, the speaker does not express criticism explicitly but rather delivers an implicit evaluation that can be understood by the audience. Therefore, the use of analogy also constitutes a form of indirect speech act, since the critical function is not directly stated in the literal utterance. From a politeness perspective, this strategy can also be categorized as an off-record strategy, because the criticism is conveyed indirectly through implicit comparison, thereby reducing the face-threatening effect toward the party being criticized. The use of the analogy strategy can be observed in the following data.

4.3.1. Data 9

Statement:

Anggota DPR minta anggaran MBG tak dibenturkan dengan gaji guru. (A member of the House of Representatives requests that the MBG budget should not be compared with teachers' salaries.)

Comment:

Ya udah kalau begitu saya benturkan saja dengan gaji DPR. Coba saja kalau gaji DPR sama dengan gaji guru honorer, mungkin Anda juga bakal ikut-ikutan teriak. Bahkan mungkin Anda enggak mau jadi DPR. (Alright then, I will compare it with the salary of members of the House of Representatives. Just imagine

if the salary of DPR members were the same as that of honorary teachers, you might also start protesting. You might even not want to become a member of the DPR.)

Question from another person:

Serius amat, Pak. Mana komedinya? (Why so serious, Sir? Where is the comedy?)

Answer:

Nanti puasa dulu. Yang ini enggak bisa dibercandain. (Let's fast first. This one cannot be joked about.)

The context of the content above is taken from a statement by a member of the Indonesian House of Representatives from the Gerindra Party faction, Azis Subekti, who requested that the budget for teachers and the MBG program should not be set against each other. According to him, comparing the MBG budget with teachers' salaries constitutes a categorical error. Azis also stated that opposing the MBG program and education demonstrates a failure to understand the ecosystem of human development.

Sigit Sugiana responds to this statement by saying, "*Coba saja kalau gaji DPR sama dengan gaji guru honorer, mungkin Anda juga bakal ikut-ikutan teriak*" (Just imagine if the salary of DPR members were the same as that of honorary teachers, you might also start protesting). This utterance compares the condition of members of the House of Representatives with that of honorary teachers. Literally, the utterance merely describes a hypothetical situation, but pragmatically it contains an implicature criticizing the inequality of welfare between government officials and educators. The analogy is used to demonstrate that differences in economic conditions influence how individuals perceive a policy. This utterance represents an indirect speech act, because the speaker does not explicitly state that the salary of DPR members is excessively high or unfair, but instead conveys the criticism through a comparison of conditions.

4.3.2. Data 10

Statement:

Dinikahi WNI, perempuan Malaysia hidup susah di Lombok. Pemerintah Malaysia turun tangan. (Married to an Indonesian citizen, a Malaysian woman lives in hardship in Lombok. The Malaysian government intervenes.)

Comment:

Negara macam apa itu? Kenapa masih sibuk ngurusin warga? Biarkan saja. Biarkan mau sengsara, biarkan. Apalagi sudah pindah warga negara. Contoh dong negara Konoha. Eh, tapi enggak usahlah. Nanti kalau dicontoh kalian ikutan sengsara. Tapi aneh sih, udah bagus-bagus kalian tinggal di Malaysia malah pindah ke Indonesia. (What kind of country is that? Why are they still busy taking care of their citizens? Just let it be. Let them suffer if they want to. Especially since they have already changed citizenship. Take an example from the country of Konoha. Eh, actually don't. If you follow that example, you might end up suffering too. It's strange though, you already had a good life in Malaysia but moved to Indonesia instead.)

In Data 10 above, Sigit Sugiana discusses the case of a Malaysian citizen, Norida Akmal Ayob, who was brought back to Malaysia by the Malaysian government after living in Indonesia for 18 years. Norida is a widow whose husband remarried and who had lived for many years in Lombok in conditions of economic hardship with her child.

Based on this phenomenon, Sigit Sugiana compares the condition of citizens living in Malaysia with those living in Indonesia. The utterance suggesting that Malaysian citizens should not move to Indonesia contains an implicature that the level of welfare or citizen protection in Indonesia is

perceived as inadequate. The comparison between the two countries functions as a means of delivering criticism toward social conditions in Indonesia. The speaker does not directly state that conditions in Indonesia are poor but instead uses an analogy with another country to produce this implicit meaning.

4.4. Criticism Through Metaphorical and Symbolic Strategies

Another pragmatic strategy used by Sigit Sugiana in delivering criticism is the use of metaphorical and symbolic expressions. Metaphor refers to the use of a term or expression to refer to another entity that shares certain similar characteristics (Susanti et al., 2023), whereas symbolism refers to the use of a particular term as an implicit representation of a specific object or concept (Djawa & Pane, 2025). In pragmatic studies, metaphor and symbolism function to generate conversational implicatures, because the meaning intended by the speaker is not stated literally but conveyed through indirect representation. By using metaphor and symbolism, speakers can express criticism implicitly without mentioning the object of criticism directly. Therefore, the use of metaphor and symbolism also constitutes a form of indirect speech act, since the critical function is not explicitly stated in the literal utterance. From a politeness perspective, this strategy also belongs to the off-record strategy, because the criticism is delivered through implicit meaning, thereby reducing the face-threatening effect toward the party being criticized. The use of metaphorical and symbolic strategies can be seen in the following data.

4.4.1. Data 12

Statement:

Malaysia tegas tolak gabung BoP Trump, pilih setia pada PBB. (Malaysia firmly refuses to join Trump's Board of Peace (BoP) and chooses to remain loyal to the United Nations.)

Comment:

Wah, enggak gaul ini Malaysia. Contoh dong negara Konoha. Setiap ada grup baru langsung ikutan walau harus bayar triliunan. Walau masyarakatnya tidak setuju karena untuk operasional negara sendiri saja harus ngutang. Hah, Malaysia ini gimana sih? Banyak bergaullah sama negara Konoha biar kita sama-sama menjadi negara paling bahagia di dunia. (Wow, Malaysia is not very sociable. Take an example from the country of Konoha. Every time there is a new group, it immediately joins even if it has to pay trillions. Even though the people do not agree because the country itself has to borrow money just to run its operations. What's wrong with Malaysia? You should socialize more with the country of Konoha so we can both become the happiest countries in the world.)

In the data 12 above, Sigit Sugiana comments on a news report about Malaysia firmly rejecting the proposal to join the Board of Peace (BoP), a peace council initiated by the President of the United States, Donald Trump. In his criticism, he uses the term “*negara Konoha*” (the country of Konoha). Literally, this term refers to a fictional village called Konohagakure in the anime series *Naruto* produced by Studio Pierrot and Aniplex. The village is led by a figure known as the Hokage. However, in the context of the utterance, the term is used metaphorically to refer to Indonesia. This association arises because of the perceived similarities between the sequence of Indonesian presidents and the Hokage leaders in the *Naruto* series, ranging from the founding leader to those emerging from ordinary backgrounds. Another perceived similarity lies in the concentration of power among elites who share familial or political ties. Moreover, political events in Indonesia are often unpredictable, resembling the plotlines of anime stories that are full of unexpected twists.

The use of the term “Konoha” enables the speaker to criticize social conditions or policies in Indonesia without directly mentioning the country's name. The term functions as a metaphor to criticize power dynamics and issues of political dynasties in Indonesia in a subtler manner that is safer

from potential legal consequences. Thus, the utterance contains an implicature that criticizes the conditions associated with the term. The use of this symbolic metaphor represents an indirect speech act, because the criticism is not expressed explicitly but conveyed through symbolic representation understood by the audience based on social and cultural context.

4.4.2. Data 13

Statement:

Heboh sepanduk UMKM dicopot, tapi bendera partai dibiarkan. (There is controversy as UMKM banners are removed, while party flags are left untouched.)

Comment:

Dengar ya, rakyat paling bahagia di dunia. Partai itu katanya bulan ini mau ulang tahun. Jadi, tolong dimengerti dikit. Masyarakat juga kalau mau hajatan kan suka ada yang blokir jalan, suka ada yang bikin tenda di tengah jalan. Itu mengganggu pengendara, bikin kemacetan. Ini partai cuma pasang bendera doang di pinggir jalan lagi. Kalian hebohnya minta ampun. Nanti kalau pestanya sudah selesai, itu bendera dicabut lagi kok. Bukan begitu kah, Bapak Ketua? Gimana? Saya sudah mulai jago kan? Jangan lupa transfer Rp100 juta. (Listen, the happiest people in the world. The party is said to celebrate its anniversary this month. So please try to understand a little. When people hold celebrations, they sometimes block roads or set up tents in the middle of the street. That disturbs drivers and causes traffic jams. This party only puts flags on the roadside. Yet you are making such a big fuss. Later, when the celebration is over, the flags will be removed anyway. Isn't that right, Mr. Chairman? How is it? I'm getting good at this, right? Don't forget to transfer 100 million rupiah.)

The use of symbolic strategy can be observed in Data 13 above. The context of the content is based on an incident in which President Prabowo complained about the large number of UMKM banners displayed along the streets of Bogor, particularly those leading to his private residence in Hambalang. Within hours, officers from the Bogor Municipal Public Order Agency (Satpol PP) removed these banners, labeling them as visual pollution, even though many of them were placed within private property rather than on public facilities. However, in the days leading up to the 18th anniversary celebration of the Gerindra Party on February 6, 2026, the party's flags were displayed throughout many corners of the capital city and were not removed by Satpol PP officers.

Based on these two different treatments, Sigit Sugiana produced a video in which he appears to defend the Gerindra Party. He states that the party flags displayed throughout the city are reasonable because the party is celebrating its anniversary. Afterward, he adds, "*Bukan begitu kah, Bapak Ketua? Gimana? Saya sudah mulai jago kan? Jangan lupa transfer Rp100 juta*" (Isn't that right, Mr. Chairman? How is it? I'm getting good at this, right? Don't forget to transfer 100 million rupiah). This utterance employs symbolism to represent practices associated with power relations and particular interests. The statement is not intended literally as a real request for money but rather serves as a symbolic representation of the alleged practices being criticized. The utterance implies that there exists a power relation that enables preferential treatment, namely that party flags are not subject to removal by Satpol PP officers. Thus, the utterance represents an indirect speech act that uses symbolic expression to convey criticism.

4.4.3. Criticism Through Parody and Role Simulation Strategies

Another pragmatic strategy used by Sigit Sugiana in delivering criticism is parody and role simulation. Parody and role simulation refer to a speaker's act of imitating or pretending to be a particular party and then producing utterances that represent that party's perspective (Busairi, 2023; Tamami & Mijianti, 2025). In pragmatic studies, this strategy generates conversational implicatures,

because the critical meaning is not conveyed literally but through the representation of a particular role that must be interpreted by the audience based on context. Through this strategy, the speaker can deliver criticism implicitly without directly expressing a negative evaluation toward the criticized party.

The use of parody and role simulation strategies can be seen in Data 13 mentioned earlier. The content in the data represents Sigit Sugiana's response to the preferential treatment received by the Gerindra Party, whose party flags were not removed by Satpol PP officers, unlike the removal of UMKM banners. Sigit Sugiana states, "*Bukan begitu kah, Bapak Ketua? Gimana? Saya sudah mulai jago kan? Jangan lupa transfer Rp100 juta*" (Isn't that right, Mr. Chairman? How is it? I'm getting good at this, right? Don't forget to transfer 100 million rupiah). This utterance shows that the speaker is not speaking as himself but is simulating the role of a party involved in a certain power relation. Literally, the utterance appears as an ordinary request or statement. However, in the context of the discourse, the statement is not intended as a real request but rather as a parodic representation of the behavior being criticized.

The utterance produces the implicature that there are certain practices or behaviors associated with the abuse of power or relations of interest. The criticism is not conveyed directly but through role simulation that implicitly represents such behavior. Thus, the utterance constitutes an indirect speech act, because the function of criticism is not explicitly stated but delivered through the representation of a particular role. From the perspective of politeness theory, parody and role simulation belong to off-record politeness strategies, because the criticism is not expressed directly. The speaker does not explicitly state accusations or negative evaluations but conveys them through role representation. In this way, the speaker can avoid directly threatening the face of the criticized party. This strategy also provides interpretative space for the audience, allowing the criticism to be understood without being explicitly stated.

The use of this strategy can also be found in Data 3 mentioned earlier. In this data, Sigit Sugiana clearly pretends to take the position of the criticized party, namely a member of parliament or a power actor who has an interest in the MBG project. The pronoun *kita* (we) in the utterances "*Biar proyek kita jalan terus*" (So that our project continues to run) and "*Apalagi pembahasan Undang-Undang Perampasan Aset yang mungkin nanti malah menyengsarakan kita*" (Moreover, the discussion of the Asset Confiscation Bill which might later make us suffer) indicates the speaker's identification as part of the ruling group. However, this identification is immediately "corrected" through the expression "*Ee maksud saya...*" (Uh, I mean...) which is repeated several times. This pretend correction actually strengthens the parodic effect, because the speaker appears as if he accidentally reveals hidden motives and then tries to retract them. This form constitutes an indirect speech act, because structurally it appears as a statement of support, but functionally it contains criticism toward the alleged political interests behind the proposal for legal protection in the law.

4.4.4. Broader Implications of Indirect Criticism in Digital Political Communication

The findings of this study have broader implications for understanding political communication in contemporary digital environments. The identification of irony, humor and hyperbole, analogy, metaphor and symbolism, as well as parody and role simulation demonstrates that criticism on social media is no longer predominantly expressed through direct evaluative statements. Instead, content creators increasingly rely on indirect pragmatic strategies that allow criticism to be communicated in a more subtle, creative, and context-dependent manner. These strategies enable speakers to challenge government policies, public officials, and social conditions while reducing the interpersonal risks commonly associated with direct criticism.

These findings also contribute to the understanding of digital activism. In social media environments, indirect criticism functions not merely as a linguistic phenomenon but also as a communicative resource that facilitates public participation in political discussion. By embedding criticism within humorous, ironic, or metaphorical expressions, content creators can make political issues more accessible and engaging for wider audiences. Such communicative practices encourage users to participate in online discussions, share content, and collectively construct interpretations of social and political events.

Furthermore, the identified pragmatic strategies have important implications for audience engagement. Because the criticism is conveyed implicitly rather than explicitly, audiences are required to infer the intended meaning through contextual interpretation. This inferential process encourages more active audience involvement compared with direct criticism, as viewers become participants in constructing meaning rather than passive recipients of information. Consequently, indirect criticism has the potential to strengthen interaction between content creators and audiences through comments, discussions, and content sharing across social media platforms.

From a scholarly perspective, this study also extends pragmatic research by demonstrating that conversational implicature, indirect speech acts, and off-record politeness strategies operate simultaneously in authentic digital discourse rather than as isolated pragmatic phenomena. The findings therefore contribute not only to pragmatic theory but also to interdisciplinary studies of political communication, digital media, and online public discourse by illustrating how indirect criticism functions as an effective communicative strategy in contemporary social media environments.

5. Conclusion

Based on the findings and discussion, it can be concluded that the criticism delivered by Sigit Sugiana in his social media content is realized through indirect pragmatic strategies. The criticism is not expressed explicitly in the form of direct evaluative statements but is conveyed through utterances containing implicit meanings. The critical meaning is generated through conversational implicatures. In addition, the utterances used also represent forms of indirect speech acts. Thus, the criticism is understood by the audience through inferential processes based on contextual interpretation and shared knowledge.

Furthermore, these indirect pragmatic strategies are manifested through five patterns, namely irony, humor and hyperbole, analogy, metaphor and symbolism, and parody with role simulation. All of these strategies can be categorized as off-record politeness strategies, because the criticism is delivered implicitly without directly mentioning the criticized party or explicitly expressing negative evaluation. This strategy allows the speaker to deliver criticism effectively while minimizing potential face-threatening acts toward the criticized party. In addition, the use of these strategies also enhances the attractiveness of the content, enabling the criticism to be more widely received by audiences within the context of social media communication.

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