

Sarcastic Wit of Meranaw Netizens: An Exploration of Comments on MSU Page and Community Group

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ABSTRACT

The sarcastic wit is a communicative strategy employed by Meranaw netizens to express humor or criticism while navigating social interactions on Facebook. Understanding this sarcasm is crucial as it varies across contexts and cultures, requiring users to be mindful of which sarcastic expressions resonate well within the Meranaw community. With this, this paper examined the pragmatic structures and functions of comments posted by Meranaw netizens on the MSU page and community group. The researchers collected and analyzed a range of comments from both platforms related to the event, University Foundation 2024, using a qualitative approach with a descriptive research design. In the analysis of the data obtained,

propositional was the most common structure, and assessment tool was the most prevalent function of sarcasm used by Meranaw netizens, that was mainly to express irony and critique. Furthermore, the study revealed that the MSU page favored clear sarcasm for wider engagement, while the community group leaned towards more nuanced illocutionary sarcasm that encouraged deeper reflection among users. In the end, this investigation showed that sarcasm is a keyway for Meranaw people to express their thoughts and feelings online by using different styles depending on whether they are in a public or private online setting.

Keywords: *Meranaw netizens, sarcasm, MSU page, community group, propositional*

INTRODUCTION

In the digital age, social media platforms have become integral to people's communication, sharing ideas, and forming communities. Social media's accessibility, particularly Facebook, has democratized the flow of information by empowering individuals to express their thoughts, opinions, and emotions on a global scale. It has turned into an essential element of the individual's lives, including students in today's world of communication (Chen & Xiao, 2022). Sarcasm is an expressive speech act that is often used in

daily communication by every individual. An expression that is not only recognized by its words but also by the tone of voice, facial expressions, and other contexts (Fadilah & Wijayanto, 2024). Sarcasm is often used to entertain or emphasize a point by speaking in a way that contradicts one's true intentions, creating an amusing dynamic for the audience and an exciting one for the speaker. However, digital communication hinges entirely on the written word by necessitating a highly sophisticated approach to unraveling the multifaceted layers of meaning concealed within written expressions of sarcasm and irony on social media platforms such as Facebook (Olaniyan et al., 2023).

According to Cutting (2002), sarcasm is a form of irony that is not so friendly and usually intended to hurt someone's feelings. This is aligned with the idea that sarcasm, when used in communication, can be quite harmful, particularly in social contexts where it serves to ridicule or criticize. Additionally, sarcasm is not only about meaning inversion but also about the attitude or perspective the speaker conveys in their expression (Camp, 2011). As noted by Culpeper (2016), sarcasm can function as a face-threatening act (FTA), which, by its nature, challenges the social face of the person being addressed. The use of sarcasm in everyday conversation, as well as on digital platforms, often involves these social dynamics, where the speaker might not explicitly convey negative emotions but still imparts a subtle form of aggression or critique. Furthermore, the interpretive challenges posed by sarcasm are heightened in online communication due to the absence of vocal intonation and facial expressions wherein it requires audiences to rely solely on textual cues and prior context (Khodak et al., 2018; Oraby et al., 2016).

As such, in the virtual world, sarcasm's humorous undertone enriches engagement and interaction by making it a favored form of expression across platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok (Helal, et al., 2024). Sarcasm stands out as one of the most common and effective figurative devices in social media. Hence, the use of figurative language on social media, particularly sarcasm and irony, in witty and inventive ways, poses significant challenges (Sykora, et al., 2020). This suggests that social media has impacted what people are willing to share with others by obfuscating the lines between public and private language. This shift has significantly affected relationships, social norms, and individual privacy (Jebaselvi et al., 2023). Sarcastic wit, as argued by Baran and Davis (2021), offers individuals a way to participate in critical discourse while also maintaining a sense of camaraderie and belonging within the group. Meranaw's online discourse is emblematic of how marginalized communities use humor as a coping mechanism and a means of reclaiming agency in an often hostile online environment (Berman & Cooper, 2019). Through sarcasm, netizens can challenge power dynamics, question authority, and express collective discontent while also engaging in moments of levity that strengthen social bonds.

Moreover, the sarcastic wit displayed in the online interactions of Meranaw people, particularly on platforms like the Mindanao State University- Main Campus (MSU-Main) page and various community groups, offers a fascinating glimpse into how sarcasm is used as a tool for expression, commentary, and solidarity in digital spaces. With that, this study aimed to explore the characteristics and underlying functions of sarcastic wit in the comments posted by Meranaw netizens by shedding light on how humor can serve as a form of resistance, social commentary, and a medium for group identity.

Additionally, this study sought to contribute to the growing body of research on digital communication by examining the role of sarcastic wit in the online interactions of Meranaw netizens. By analyzing the comments posted on the MSU page and community groups, the researchers aimed to uncover the various ways in which sarcasm functions as a linguistic and cultural tool for the Meranaw community. Ultimately, this research endeavored to demonstrate how humor specifically, sarcasm, is not only an avenue for entertainment but also a complex mechanism for social engagement, and identity formation in the digital age.

Research Questions

This study aimed to analyze the sarcastic wit of Meranaw netizens, particularly their comments on MSU page and community group. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions.

1. What are the pragmatic structures of sarcasm found in the comment sections of the MSU page and community group?
2. What are the classifications of pragmatic functions of sarcasm used by Meranaw netizens?
3. What are the most prevalent pragmatic structures and functions of sarcasm used by Meranaw netizens?

Theoretical Framework

This section discusses the theoretical perspectives that were used in analyzing the sarcasm found in the comment sections of the MSU page and community group. These include the **Politeness Theory** of Brown and Levinson (1978; 1987), and the **Relevance Theory** of Sperber and Wilson (1986).

Politeness Theory

Politeness theory, initially developed by Brown and Levinson (1987), serves as a foundational framework for examining how individuals use language to manage social relationships and mitigate face-threatening acts (FTAs). “Face” refers to the social value a person claims for themselves in an interaction, and it can either be threatened or supported through different communicative strategies. Brown and Levinson proposed two primary politeness strategies for managing FTAs: positive politeness, which aims to preserve the hearer’s self-image by emphasizing solidarity, affection, and shared identities, and negative politeness, which seeks to preserve the hearer’s autonomy and avoid imposition (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Sarcasm, a form of verbal irony, often blurs the lines between these strategies. It can function both to express solidarity through positive politeness and criticize or create distance through negative politeness, especially in indirect or humorous forms. Recent studies have highlighted the dynamic role of sarcasm in digital communication, where the absence of face-to-face cues amplifies the complexity of managing “face.” For instance, Holmes (2018) notes that sarcasm in online settings can function as both a tool for strengthening social bonds and as a form of critique, depending on the relationship and contextual factors. Haugh (2013) also emphasizes that sarcasm’s success in preserving face is contingent upon shared cultural knowledge, which allows the speaker to manage the potential risks of threatening the hearer’s face while still achieving their communicative goals.

In the context of online interactions, particularly within communities like those of Meranaw netizens, Politeness Theory offered a lens through which the researchers explored how sarcasm functioned in managing FTAs. Digital platforms often amplify the subtleties of sarcasm, requiring both speakers and listeners to navigate a range of indirect communication strategies to maintain face. Sarcasm in these contexts may use positive politeness to express camaraderie or affection by strengthening group identity and social cohesion. Alternatively, sarcastic remarks may employ negative politeness to subtly distance oneself from controversial opinions or criticize social norms or behaviors without overt confrontation (Goffman, 1967; Holmes, 2018). For example, sarcastic comments may allow individuals to critique others indirectly, using irony to soften the impact of their criticisms while still conveying disapproval (Pexman et al., 2020). Moreover, recent studies have shown that sarcasm, especially in online spaces, can also serve as a mechanism for boundary-setting, where it creates a safe distance between the speaker and the social norms being challenged (Dyner, 2020). With that said, this theory allows for a deeper understanding of how Meranaw netizens navigate social boundaries and group dynamics through sarcasm, examining its complex role in either fostering solidarity or contributing to social divisions. By applying Politeness Theory, this

study aimed to reveal the multi-faceted nature of sarcasm in digital communication by providing insights into its pragmatic functions in online communities.

Relevance Theory

Relevance Theory, originally proposed by Sperber and Wilson (1986), has been a foundational framework in pragmatics as it offers insights into how individuals infer meaning in communication by balancing cognitive effort and interpretive reward. Recent developments (Wilson & Sperber, 2021; Clark, 2022; Moeschler, 2018) discuss the importance of optimal relevance, where speakers craft messages expected to yield significant cognitive effects for their audience. This theory is especially effective for analyzing sarcasm as it highlights the deliberate mismatch between literal meaning and intended message, requiring listeners to infer the true intent based on contextual cues. In online environments, such as the comment sections of the Mindanao State University Main Campus-Marawi page, commenters often employ sarcasm that hinges on shared cultural knowledge, exaggerated phrasing, and implicit irony. For instance, a sarcastic remark about a local event might praise its flaws in an exaggerated way by assuming the audience will infer the speaker's critical intent. Studies by Dynel (2021), Carston and Uchida (2019), and Taguchi (2022) note the importance of shared context and cultural familiarity in understanding sarcastic remarks, particularly in digital communication where tone and facial expressions are absent.

In addition, the application of Relevance Theory to sarcasm in digital discourse has gained increasing scholarly attention, particularly in analyzing how cognitive and social processes shape online communication (Clark, 2022; Matthews & Boyles, 2020; Tanaka & Uchida, 2021). Sarcasm, as a pragmatic phenomenon, often relies on implicit signals such as linguistic choices, intertextual references, and cultural knowledge, which Meranaw commenters adeptly utilize in their discourse. For example, commenters may rely on locally understood humor or criticisms of cultural practices by expecting their peers to interpret these remarks through shared knowledge and contextual inference. Studies by Garmendia and Roush (2020), Dynel (2018), and Ziegler and Dozier (2023) discuss that sarcastic communication online is facilitated by relevance cues such as hyperbolic language or strategic ambiguity, which prompt audiences to invest cognitive effort in deriving the intended meaning. As such, within the context of the MSU page, sarcasm can serve as a vehicle for social commentary, humor, or community bonding, all of which rely on the principles of relevance to be effectively understood. By applying Relevance Theory, the study aimed to analyze how Meranaw netizens embedded relevance cues in their sarcastic comments to ensure their audience interprets the implied meanings accurately, thereby highlighting the interplay between cognitive effort and contextual interpretation in online sarcasm.

Significance of the Study

The exploration of sarcasm within the digital interactions of Meranaw netizens is particularly vital in understanding how contemporary communication reflects cultural values and social dynamics. Sarcasm, as a form of humor, serves not only to entertain but also to critique and navigate complex social relationships. By analyzing the comment sections of the MSU page and community group, this study elucidated the intricate ways in which Meranaw individuals express their thoughts and emotions, revealing deeper societal reflections and shared experiences. The significance of studying sarcasm in this context lies in its capacity to highlight cultural identity, social cohesion, and the subtleties of interpersonal communication that may otherwise go unnoticed.

Moreover, understanding the pragmatic structures and functions of sarcasm enriches the comprehension of language use in social media settings. This study provided valuable insights into the linguistic creativity and resourcefulness of Meranaw netizens in that it showcased how they leverage sarcasm to articulate frustrations, convey solidarity, or challenge norms within their community. By classifying these pragmatic functions, this study enriched a greater appreciation of the cognitive and social

skills necessary for effective communication. Furthermore, this study not only contributed to the field of pragmatics but also aided in promoting intercultural dialogue and understanding by capturing the distinct communicative patterns characteristic of the Meranaw people.

METHODOLOGY

This section presents the research design, corpus of the study, data gathering procedure, data analysis, and ethical considerations that were used in this study.

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive research design to explore the use of sarcastic wit in the comment sections of the MSU page and community group. A qualitative approach was deemed the most appropriate for this study because it enables researchers to capture the complexity of human communication and the contextual nuances of sarcasm in digital interactions. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), qualitative research is particularly effective for studying social phenomena in natural settings, as it allows for a deep understanding of participants' perspectives and behaviors. Similarly, the descriptive research design was suitable for systematically identifying and analyzing patterns in the data without manipulating variables, which made it ideal for exploring the pragmatic structures and functions of sarcasm. This approach was aligned with the study's objective to analyze how Meranaw netizens construct meaning through sarcasm in online interactions. In addition, by collecting and examining comments, the study sought to identify recurring patterns and classifications of pragmatic functions while determining the most prevalent structures of sarcasm used in these contexts. As Tracy (2020) suggests, descriptive designs help researchers make sense of specific behaviors and linguistic expressions by categorizing them meaningfully within their social and cultural contexts. This approach facilitated an in-depth understanding of the linguistic nuances of sarcasm within Meranaw online communities in that it provided insights into how cultural identity and shared knowledge influence communication styles. Consequently, the chosen design ensured a comprehensive exploration of sarcastic wit in these virtual spaces.

Corpus of the Study

The corpus for this study was derived from comments collected from two Facebook sources due to the platform's significance as a widely used medium for communication and interaction among Meranaw netizens. Facebook is not only the most popular social media platform in the Philippines (Kemp, 2023), but it also serves as a rich repository of user-generated content by making it a valuable resource for studying digital communication. The first source, the Facebook page *Boses ng MSUAN*, created on July 20, 2022, is a platform dedicated to news, memes, updates, announcements, rants, shoutouts, and advice related to MSU Main Campus and its students. The second source is the Facebook group *Mindanao State University Main Campus-Marawi [FB Community]*, established on April 1, 2024, which primarily shares updates, news, rants, complaints, and business-related information beneficial for students. These sources were selected because they represent public spaces where MSU stakeholders, particularly students, express their views, engage in discussions, and use sarcasm as a communication strategy.

This paper focused on comments related to the University Foundation 2024 events, specifically the Dance Extravaganza, Musical Extravaganza, Literary Competition, and Intramural Games, as these events are culturally significant and serve as hubs for online discourse. Such occasions typically elicit heightened participation and commentary by making them ideal for analyzing the prevalence and nature of sarcasm in digital communication. These events reflect the community's shared interests and provide a context where sarcasm might be employed to critique performances, highlight issues, or express humor. A recent study of Schneider et al. (2023) supported the value of social media as a platform for understanding linguistic

behavior, noting that comments on Facebook often serve as reflections of cultural identity, values, and social dynamics by focusing on event-specific posts.

Data Gathering Procedure

The data gathering procedure for this study began by collecting a range of comments from both MSU page and community group related to the event, University Foundation 2024. The researchers then focused on identifying the pragmatic structures of sarcasm found in the comment sections of both platforms. These structures were highlighted and categorized based on the linguistic features they exhibit. The comments from MSU page and community group were translated into English and separated to ensure that the data were analyzed distinctly from each platform. This process involved careful analysis to identify the use of sarcasm across various comment sections.

Following the categorization of pragmatic structures, the researchers classified the pragmatic functions of sarcasm used by Meranaw Netizens to determine whether they were sophistication, assessment tool, politeness tool, persuasive aspect, retractability, or tool for group affiliation. These functions were identified through a detailed examination of the comments and the context in which the sarcastic remarks were used.

Lastly, the researchers determined the most prevalent pragmatic structures and functions of sarcasm by conducting a frequency count and calculating the percentage of each type of structure and function in the data. This helped identify the dominant patterns of sarcastic usage in the comment sections of both the MSU page and community group, and the results were compared across the two platforms.

Data Analysis

To analyze the data of the study, the Pragmatic Structures of Sarcasm Model developed by Camp (2012) was utilized to establish the pragmatic structures of sarcasm employed by Meranaw netizens. Specifically, the comments from the community group *Mindanao State University Main Campus - Marawi [FB Community]* and the page *Boses ng MSUAN* were categorized and coded according to the following structures: propositional, lexical, like-prefixed, and illocutionary.

Moreover, to identify the pragmatic functions of sarcasm in the comments, the Classification of Pragmatic Functions of Sarcasm proposed by Attardo (2001) was employed. The data were analyzed using the following categories: sophistication, assessment tool, politeness tool, persuasive aspect, retractability, and tool for group affiliation. Additionally, the Politeness Theory (Brown and Levinson, 1978; 1987) and Relevance Theory (Sperber and Wilson, 1986) were used to evaluate the politeness or impoliteness of the sarcastic comments and their relevance to the context of the MSU online community.

Finally, frequency analysis was utilized to determine the most prevalent structures and functions of sarcasm in the collected data, with the results serving as the basis for interpretation and discussion. Through descriptive qualitative analysis, this study synthesized these findings to provide insights into the communication styles of Meranaw netizens.

Ethical Considerations

The information for this study was gathered from essential sources. The researchers thoroughly scrutinized the data and elucidated the results to obtain knowledge about the pragmatic structures and functions of sarcasm found in the comment sections of the MSU page and community group. In addition, the researchers did not obtain permission to collect data for this study, as the sources used for analysis were publicly posted on Facebook. Furthermore, the other researchers' statements included in this study to

support the claim were cited correctly, and all sources were acknowledged; thus, they were added to the reference list. The researchers also adhered to research ethics by not making up or falsifying data, manipulating data analysis, or misrepresenting results in research reports. More importantly, to ensure the reliability of the analysis, the researchers took deliberate steps to minimize personal bias and to validate the data; that is, they bracketed prior assumptions through reflexive online journaling and manually verified and corrected the results to prevent automation errors and maintained revisions. In addition, the researchers cross-checked ambiguous cases by reviewing the comments to avoid overgeneralizing from isolated examples and sought consultation from their research mentor to ensure that the interpretations and methodological decisions reflected academic rigor. These procedures support the claim that the context analyzed was reliable and that the findings were produced by means of detailed efforts to minimize researcher bias.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Pragmatic Structures of Sarcasm Found in the Comment Sections of the MSU Page and Community Group

Based on the analysis of the data gathered for this study, Meranaw netizens frequently used sarcastic comments in their responses to posts about University Foundation 2024 on the MSU page and community group. These comments served various pragmatic functions, each characterized by distinct pragmatic structures, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Pragmatic Structures of Sarcasm Found in the Comment Sections of the MSU Page, Boses ng MSUAN

University Foundation Categories	Propositional	Lexical	Like-Prefixed	Illocutionary
Dance Extravaganza	5	5	—	5
Musical Extravaganza	6	4	—	5
University Intramural Games (UIG)	5	4	—	6
Literary Competition (LitCom)	5	5	—	5
Total	21	18	0	21

As shown in Table 1, the results revealed the distribution of pragmatic structures of sarcasm in the comment sections of the MSU page, *Boses ng MSUAN*, across four events such as Dance Extravaganza, Musical Extravaganza, University Intramural Games, and Literary Competition. Propositional sarcasm consistently appeared five to six times across all events which indicated its frequent use to express sarcastic commentary. Lexical sarcasm was slightly less common with four to five instances per event, reflecting its variability in sarcastic expression. Illocutionary sarcasm also emerged as a prevalent structure with a notable increase to six occurrences during the University Intramural Games. This suggested a higher reliance on implied meanings in that context. Interestingly, no like-prefixed sarcasm was identified in any

of the events which indicated its absence as a pragmatic strategy in this group's communication. These patterns highlighted the participants' diverse use of sarcasm to engage with the events.

Here, below is the sample of data taken from the comments on posts about University Foundation 2024 from the MSU page, Boses ng MSUan:

3.1.1 Propositional

@username57 (Facebook comment, September 26, 2024)

"Parang cheer niyo ang nagpapalubog sa mga performers. Baka gusto nilang umalis na lang." (Literary Competition)

Translation: Your cheers seem to be dragging the performers down. They might just want to leave.

@username41 (Facebook comment, September 23, 2024)

"Siyempre, ang tunay na talino ay nasusukat sa mga ssss at tweet tweet. Genius." (University Intramural Games)

Translation: Of course, true intelligence is measured by sssss and tweet tweet. Genius.

@username1 (Facebook comment, September 28, 2024)

"Banda mambo pd so pamagokit ko performance. Art kon mambo oto kabasa iran." (Dance Extravaganza)

Translation: Maybe the people passing by are also part of the performance. They say it's art, they say.

In the comments above, the data revealed how propositional sarcasm was employed to express criticism in a subtle yet impactful manner by using ironic statements to highlight issues. For instance, the first comment, *"Parang cheer niyo ang nagpapalubog sa mga performers. Baka gusto nilang umalis na lang,"* criticized the lack of enthusiasm among CSSH students during the Literary Competition. While other colleges actively supported their performers, the sarcastic framing of CSSH's silence as a "cheer" highlighted its demotivating effect on the participants. This indirect critique emphasized the significance of audience support in bolstering performers' confidence. Similarly, the second comment, *"Siyempre, ang tunay na talino ay nasusukat sa mga ssss at tweet tweet. Genius,"* mocked the intense cheering rivalry between the Nursing students (Green Vipers) and Education students (Phoenix) during the Musical Extravaganza. By sarcastically suggesting that intelligence could be measured by cheering sounds, the comment critiqued the competitive yet exaggerated nature of the event. Lastly, the remark, *"Banda mambo pd so pamagokit ko performance. Art kon mambo oto kabasa iran,"* sarcastically referred to the disorderly behavior of students blocking the view during the Dance Extravaganza, humorously framing their actions as part of the performance. This criticism indirectly pointed out the event's lack of organization and the distraction caused by the chaotic scene.

Using Relevance Theory as a framework, these examples demonstrated how propositional sarcasm operates by exploiting the gap between what is said and what is meant. According to Relevance Theory, sarcasm relies on the audience's ability to infer the speaker's intended meaning by processing contextual cues and contrasts (Sperber & Wilson, 1995). In the first comment, the incongruity between "cheer" and the actual silence prompted readers to infer criticism of the CSSH students' inaction. Similarly, in the second comment, the absurdity of linking intelligence to cheering noises signaled the intended critique of the rivalry's excessive competitiveness. Finally, the ironic labeling of disruptive behavior as "art" encouraged readers to recognize and reflect on the event's lack of order. These findings were supported by Tsai and Liang's (2021) study that sarcasm uses exaggeration and contrast to spotlight overlooked issues, as well as Rui et al.'s (2023) findings that sarcasm in digital spaces fosters critique and social commentary. By

engaging readers in a humorous yet critical manner, propositional sarcasm became an effective tool for addressing social and organizational shortcomings.

3.1.2 Lexical

@username25 (Facebook comment, September 27, 2024)

“Dapat bs aki na adna workshop para sa facial expressions, para next year, mas ‘on point’ dn.” (Musical Extravaganza)

Translation: There should be a workshop on facial expressions, so next year, it will be more on point.

@username42 (Facebook comment, September 24, 2024)

“Kuyaw ka unique so mga arguments saya nah. Langon neda na ana type iyan sa zoo.” (University Intramural Games)

Translation: Arguments here are unique. It seems like everyone has a favorite at the zoo.

@username56 (Facebook comment, September 26, 2024)

“Piyakab’ngl² a pyur. Madidi pn so mga audience ka da tanto a gal’bk iran a mabigat.” (Literary Competition)

Translation: It’s really deafening! The audience is so envious; they’re not doing anything too intense.

The data showed that specific word choices using lexical pragmatic structures were employed to convey sarcasm and critique. Specifically, the first comment, *“Dapat bs aki na adna workshop para sa facial expressions, para next year, mas ‘on point’ dn,”* referred to the exaggerated facial expressions of the audience during the Musical Extravaganza. The sarcastic suggestion for a workshop implied that the audience’s expressions were overly dramatic and distracting, which humorously pointed out their unintentional performance-like behavior. While, the second comment, *“Kuyaw ka unique so mga arguments saya nah. Langon neda na ana type iyan sa zoo,”* mocked the chaotic cheers during the basketball games by sarcastically comparing the rowdy and competitive atmosphere to that of a zoo, thus critiquing the intensity of the students’ rivalry. Lastly, the comment, *“Piyakab’ngl² a pyur. Madidi pn so mga audience ka da tanto a gal’bk iran a mabigat,”* sarcastically described the lack of cheering from the CSSH audience during the Speech Choir performance. By using words like *“deafening”* to describe silence and attributing it to envy, the comment humorously criticized the audience’s apparent indifference or lack of support.

The Relevance Theory explained these instances as the outcome of achieving optimal relevance where the audience is encouraged to infer meanings beyond the literal content. According to Sperber and Wilson (1986), communication balances cognitive effort with contextual effects, and sarcasm effectively engages readers by prompting them to process underlying critiques or humor. In these comments, the exaggerated and metaphorical language not only entertained but also signaled social critiques by leveraging shared knowledge and expectations within the group. This approach was aligned with Lee and Zeng’s (2020) findings that lexical sarcasm relies on vivid imagery and exaggeration to deliver indirect criticism. Similarly, Sheldyriani and Munandar (2020) highlight that lexical sarcasm serves as a social tool to allow users to address tensions or conflicts while maintaining a lighthearted tone. Hence, these comments emphasized how lexical sarcasm fostered nuanced communication by ensuring that humor and critique resonated deeply with the intended audience.

3.1.3 Illocutionary

@username30 (Facebook comment, September 27, 2024)

“Banda iran kinanglan so body spray. Odi na banya panyo bo i awidan iran para ma-kontrol so baw.” (Musical Extravaganza)

Translation: Maybe they need some body-spray. Or at least bring a handkerchief to manage the smell.

@username03 (Facebook comment, September 28, 2024)

“Next year, baka puwedeng lagyan ng pedestrian lane sa harap ng audience?” (Dance Extravaganza)

Translation: Next year, maybe they can put a pedestrian lane in front of the audience?

@username32 (Facebook comment, September 25, 2024)

“Sana ipakita niyo sa susunod na pag-aralan kung paano magbeat na walang gigil.” (University Intramural Games)

Translation: Next time, try to show that you have studied how to drum without being too intense.

As shown above, the illocutionary comments revealed the use of sarcasm to indirectly criticize and suggest improvements for certain behaviors and situations during the events. The first comment, *“Banda iran kinanglan so body spray. Odi na banya panyo bo i awidan iran para ma-kontrol so baw,”* sarcastically pointed out the issue of poor hygiene among some students in the audience who were excessively sweating and producing unpleasant odors. By suggesting the use of body spray or a handkerchief, the comment indirectly highlighted a need for personal hygiene awareness in crowded settings. The second comment, *“Next year, baka puwedeng lagyan ng pedestrian lane sa harap ng audience?”* addressed the problem of people obstructing the view of those seated at the lowest rows of the bleachers. Sarcasically speaking, it implied that better crowd management, such as creating a pedestrian lane, could prevent such disruptions in future events. Lastly, the comment, *“Sana ipakita niyo sa susunod na pag-aralan kung paano magbeat na walang gigil,”* referred to a student drummer who enthusiastically and intensely beat the drums to cheer for the players. This sarcastic remark humorously suggested that the drummer should practice a more controlled and measured approach to avoid over-excitement.

In line with Relevance Theory, which suggested that communication relies on the audience’s ability to infer meaning based on shared context and prior knowledge, illocutionary sarcasm used in the comments, such as those addressing poor hygiene and crowd management, relied on contextual clues for interpretation. According to the theory, the audience interpreted these sarcastic remarks through inferential reasoning by using their understanding of the event and social norms. For instance, the comment about body spray implied a critique of hygiene, while the suggestion for a pedestrian lane reflected a critique of crowd management. In short, these comments demonstrated how illocutionary sarcasm was used to critique behaviors while offering subtle recommendations. As Mangaliso and Moore (2022) noted, illocutionary sarcasm relies on implied meanings to convey dissatisfaction and encourage change, often creating an engaging and relatable conversational tone. Similar to the study of Thompson et al. (2019), in which they emphasized that such sarcasm is most effective when shared knowledge and context allow the audience to grasp the intended critique. Hence, the comments above showed how illocutionary sarcasm served as a tool for social commentary and constructive criticism.

Table 2

Pragmatic Structures of Sarcasm Found in the Comment Sections of the Mindanao State University Main Campus- Marawi [FB Community]

University Foundation Categories	Propositional	Lexical	Like-Prefixed	Illocutionary
Dance Extravaganza	5	3	—	7
Musical Extravaganza	7	2	—	6
University Intramural Games (UIG)	7	2	—	6
Literary Competition (LitCom)	7	5	—	3
Total	26	12	0	22

In table 2, the comment sections in the Mindanao State University community group’s posts concerning various events, such as the Dance Extravaganza, Musical Extravaganza, University Intramural Games, and Literary Competition, revealed distinct trends in the utilization of pragmatic structures of sarcasm. Specifically, the findings indicated a prominent use of propositional sarcasm with a total of 26 occurrences across all events. This suggested that commenters frequently use sarcasm that manipulated literal meanings to convey humorous or critical commentary about the events. This is particularly evident in the Musical Extravaganza and University Intramural Games, which both recorded the highest instances of propositional structures (7 each), indicating that participants often framed their sarcastic remarks within the overarching themes of these events. Additionally, illocutionary structures, with a total of 22 occurrences, conveyed the interactive nature of sarcasm by revealing that commenters were not only expressing sarcasm but were also engaging in a performative act that aimed to influence the responses of other community members. Lexical sarcasm had lowest frequency with only 12 occurrences. The use of it suggested a lesser reliance on word choice and more on context and conversational expectations to convey sarcasm. Lastly, the absence of like-prefixed sarcasm in the analyzed comments further revealed that participants leaned towards more direct forms of sarcasm rather than using mitigating expressions.

Below is the sample of data extracted from the comments on posts related to the University Foundation 2024 within the Mindanao State University Main Campus - Marawi Facebook community group:

3.1.4 Propositional

@username53 (Facebook comment, September 26, 2024)

“Kiya organized bs a event aya. Tigakn ba ako sa karinderya sa kadakl a tao.” (Literary Competition)

Translation: This event is really organized. I thought I was in a carinderya because of the number of people.

@username19 (Facebook comment, September 27, 2024)

“So pyur iyan na mas mapiya so katurug kaysa mbantay ko mga performers.” (Musical Extravaganza)

Translation: To be honest, sleeping is more enjoyable than watching the performers.

@username11 (Facebook comment, September 28, 2024)

“Sa kapiya o announcement na lagido so audition na para bo ko di makareready.” (Dance Extravaganza)

Translation: With the way the announcement was made, it seems like the audition is for those who are unprepared.

Based on the data, they showed how propositional sarcasm was used to express dissatisfaction by making comments that seemed straightforward but carried underlying criticism such as in the first comment, *“Kiya organized bs a event aya. Tigakn ba ako sa karinderya sa kadakl a tao.”* The commentor sarcastically described the event as *“organized”* while comparing it to a crowded carinderia. This indicated the speaker’s frustration over the lack of proper crowd management and planning. Another, the second comment, *“So pyur iyan na mas mapiya so katurog kaysa mbantay ko mga performers,”* expressed disinterest in the event by sarcastically stating that sleeping at home was a better option than attending the musical extravaganza. With this, it pointed out how the event failed to capture the audience’s interest. Finally, the third comment, *“Sa kapiya o announcement na lagido so audition na para bo ko di makareready,”* mocked the rushed nature of the dance audition announcement by implying that the organizers failed to give participants sufficient preparation time. These comments reflect how propositional sarcasm can indirectly address perceived issues such as poor organization, lack of appeal, and inadequate planning. This supported the findings of Tsai and Liang (2021), who noted that sarcasm is a strategic tool used to criticize indirectly, often allowing speakers to voice discontent in a socially acceptable yet impactful manner.

3.1.5. Lexical

@username41 (Facebook comment, September 25, 2024)

“Wow, ang thoughtful naman. Ang saya-saya talaga ng announcement na ito.” (University Intramural Games)

Translation: Wow, how thoughtful. This announcement is really so exciting.

@username27 (Facebook comment, September 27, 2024)

“Salakaw ron mambo e talent a obay nga anan, knaba bo skanyan b’ng’l kundi mukhang may future sa concert.” (Musical Extravaganza)

Translation: The talent of the person next to you is something else; he/she is not just deaf, but he/she also seems to have a future in concerts.

@username12 (Facebook comment, September 28, 2024)

“Sobrang nice naman, basta nandiyan ‘yung puso kahit walang practice.” (Dance Extravaganza)

Translation: That’s really nice, as long as the heart is there even without practice.

As shown in the three comments above, lexical sarcasm was used to express criticism or humor through exaggerated or ironic word choices. In the first comment, *“Wow, ang thoughtful naman. Ang saya-saya talaga ng announcement na ito.”* The commentor sarcastically mocked the announcement of a rest day that turned out to be a joke. The words “thoughtful” and “exciting” were used ironically to highlight the commenter’s disappointment and frustration with the misleading post. While the second comment, *“Salakaw ron mambo e talent a obay nga anan, knaba bo skanyan b’ng’l kundi mukhang may future sa concert,”* referred sarcastically to a person cheering so loudly, that it became disturbing to other audience sitting near them, by ironically praising their “talent” and hinting at a “future in concerts.” This exaggerated

praise indicated the disruption caused by such behavior. Similarly, the third comment, “*Sobrang nice naman, basta nandiyan ‘yung puso kahit walang practice,*” mocked the lack of preparation in auditions by sarcastically suggesting that “heart” alone was enough despite the apparent rush and disorganization. This was aligned with the findings of Smith and Johnson (2021), who found that sarcasm often uses specific lexical choices or exaggerated intonations to convey dissatisfaction while maintaining an engaging tone. Lexical sarcasm, as demonstrated in those comments, effectively combined exaggeration and irony to critique actions or behaviors in a humorous yet pointed manner.

3.1.6 Illocutionary

@username24 (Facebook comment, September 27, 2024)

“*Miyapikir akn badn a obabo adna judging system sa mga ‘kilig’ aya.*” (Musical Extravaganza)

Translation: I suddenly thought, I wish there was a judging system for these ‘butterflies in the stomach’ moments

@username42 (Facebook comment, September 25, 2024)

“*Sige, suportahan kita sa pangarap na ‘yan. Gusto rin natin ng rest day.*” (University Intramural Games)

Translation: Sure, I’ll support you in that dream. We also want a rest day.

@username60 (Facebook comment, September 27, 2024)

“*Grabe pkaubos gagaan. Pero joke lang, banda adn pn a lamba ron.*” (Literary Competition)

Translation: That’s crazy, it’s running out fast. Just kidding, there might be some left.

As indicated in the first comment, “*Miyapikir akn badn a obabo adna judging system sa mga ‘kilig’ aya,*” the speaker sarcastically expressed a wish for a judging system to evaluate performers’ emotional moments, like “*butterflies in the stomach.*” This comment used illocutionary sarcasm by implying dissatisfaction with the subjective nature of the performances and judging criteria. The indirect message criticized the event’s setup without explicitly stating it which aligned with Camp’s (2012) findings that illocutionary sarcasm targets intentions rather than direct content. In the second comment, “*Sige, suportahan kita sa pangarap na ‘yan. Gusto rin natin ng rest day,*” the speaker sarcastically pretended to support the idea of a declared rest day by mocking its announcement as a joke. The underlying intent critiques the unrealistic or humorous nature of the post which also showed how sarcasm can highlight the contrast between a message and the audience’s expectations. Lastly, the third comment, “*Grabe pkaubos gagaan. Pero joke lang, banda adn pn a lamba ron,*” responded to the fast-selling tickets for the literary competition, in which the speaker used sarcasm to playfully exaggerate the situation by suggesting panic over ticket shortages but then reassuring readers with humor. This reflected the social use of sarcasm to ease tension and connect with others while indirectly addressing frustration, as highlighted by Colston and Gibbs (2019). Simply put, these comments illustrated how illocutionary sarcasm was used to critique or express dissatisfaction without directly stating the critics by relying on shared understanding between the speaker and audience. According to Dynel (2018), sarcasm often functions as a subtle way to challenge or evaluate social norms while maintaining a humorous tone, enhancing its effectiveness as a communicative tool.

3.2 The Classifications of Pragmatic Functions of Sarcasm Used by Meranaw Netizens

The pragmatic functions of sarcasm, modeled by Attardo (2001) such as Sophistication, Assessment Tool, Politeness Tool, Persuasive Aspect, Retractability, and Group Affiliation interestingly appeared across

the four university events, namely: Dance Extravaganza, Musical Extravaganza, Intramural University Games (UIG), and Literary Competition. The result was shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Pragmatic Functions of Sarcasm Found in the Comment Sections of the MSU Page, Boses ng MSUAN

University Founding Category	Sophistication	Assessment Tool	Politeness Tool	Persuasive Aspect	Retractability	Group Affiliation
Dance Extravaganza	3	4	—	3	3	2
Musical Extravaganza	4	3	3	3	2	—
University Intramural Games	2	3	3	4	2	1
Literary Competition	4	3	2	2	2	2
Total	13	13	8	12	9	5

As shown in Table 3, it revealed that the six pragmatic functions served as a framework for analyzing how commenters employed sarcasm to express humor, critique, and suggestions during these events. Sophistication and assessment tools were the most dominant pragmatic function used with the highest frequency score, with both at 13. This indicated that sarcasm was predominantly used as a means to deliver clever and intellectual observations or sophistication and constructive feedback or assessment tool. These functions reflected the university community’s tendency to critique and evaluate events creatively by using humor to navigate frustrations while maintaining a witty, lighthearted tone. The persuasive aspect was the third pragmatic function of sarcasm with a frequency score of 12, followed by the fourth pragmatic function of retractability which occurred nine times. The following pragmatic function of sarcasm was the politeness tool with eight occurrences. Conversely, group affiliation scored the lowest with a frequency of 5, which suggested that while sarcasm enriches camaraderie to some extent, other functions take precedence in these event contexts.

Here, below is the data on the distribution of the pragmatic function of sarcasm across the four events. The following discussion examined each function in detail by exploring its specific application in the events and analyzing why certain functions appeared more frequently in certain contexts.

3.2.1 Sophistication

@username 26 (Facebook post, September 27, 2024)

“Wow, ‘harsh’ talaga? Tigakn ba oto perfume.” (Musical Extravaganza)

Translation: Wow, ‘harsh’? I thought that it was perfume.

@username16 (Facebook comment, September 27, 2024)

“Kung sa palakasan ng sigaw, nanalo na talaga ang College of Next-Level Noise.” (Dance Extravaganza)

Translation: If it is based on the strength of the shout, the College of Next-Level Noise has already won.

The data revealed that sarcasm was used to criticize and evaluate social situations while still making the comments sound clever. The first comment, *“Wow, ‘harsh’ talaga? Tigakn ba oto perfume,”* made fun of the original post’s strong statement about the students’ smell. The commenter used irony to imply that the claim was too much. This showed her sharp thinking and humor. Similar with Pantoja and Mendoza’s (2020) findings, which noted that sarcasm helps people show they are smart. However, the comment hurt the positive face of the person who posted the post by making her seem too harsh in her judgment. As for the second comment, *“Kung sa palakasan ng sigaw, nanalo na talaga ang College of Next-Level Noise,”* the commenter clearly joked about the loud cheering during the event. It turned the shouting into a joke, making it seem like a contest, while pointing out how distracting it was. This matches Miller and González’s (2019) findings that sarcasm can be used to criticize without being too direct. The comment threatened the positive face of the students in the post by saying their noise was too much. However, it also strengthened group ties, as sarcasm, according to Fadilah and Wijayanto (2024), often aligns people with those who share similar views. These comments showed how sarcasm can be both a sharp critique and a tool for maintaining social harmony.

3.2.2 Assessment Tool

@username 55 (Facebook post, September 26, 2024)

“Kudos sa NSM, kasi sa floorplan lang nila tayo nadala.” (Literary Competition)

Translation: Kudos to NSM, because it’s only through their floor plan that we’ve been brought together.

@username 17 (Facebook post, September 27, 2024)

“Proud na proud sa cheer, parang hindi mga late magpasa ng assignments.” (Musical Extravaganza)

Translation: Very proud of the cheer, as if they do not usually submit assignments late.

As indicated in the comments above, the results presented how sarcasm worked as an assessment tool by indirectly criticizing behaviors and actions while maintaining a socially acceptable tone. The first comment, *“Kudos sa NSM, kasi sa floorplan lang nila tayo nadala,”* praised the NSM’s floor plan in a sarcastic manner by implicitly convey that it was the only good thing they contributed. This indirectly critiqued the group’s overall performance without directly confronting them. As Miller and González (2019) claimed that sarcasm softens criticism and reduces the risk of conflict, the comment challenged the NSM’s freedom to act without judgment by threatening their negative face and suggesting they need to improve. On the other hand, the second comment, *“Proud na proud sa cheer, parang hindi mga late magpasa ng assignments,”* sarcastically questioned the students’ priorities by contrasting their loud cheering with their tendency to submit assignments late. This provided an unclear critique of their behavior, which was supported by Pantoja and Mendoza’s (2020) findings that sarcasm allows people to evaluate others indirectly. This comment threatened the students’ positive face in a way of undermining their image of being responsible. Hence, both comments showed how sarcasm works as a tool for giving critical feedback in a socially acceptable way, as Fadilah and Wijayanto (2024) pointed out, by combining criticism with humor to avoid direct confrontation. Additionally, the retractable nature of sarcasm, as discussed by Kadhim and Mewada (2023), allowed the commenters to frame their remarks as jokes if they receive negative reactions.

3.2.3 Politeness Tool

@username 09 (Facebook post, September 29, 2024)

“Kuyaw so energy niyan. Pero next time na baka pwedeng less laway, more cheer?” (Dance Extravaganza)

Translation: Her energy is amazing. But next time, maybe less saliva, more cheer?

@username 33 (Facebook post, September 25, 2024)

“Baka magalit na ang mga drums sa sobrang gigil.” (University Intramural Games)

Translation: The drums might get angry if you keep drumming too hard.

The comments above used sarcasm as a politeness tool, which softened criticism while still addressing issues as in the first comment, *“Kuyaw so energy niyan. Pero next time na baka pwedeng less laway, more cheer?”*, wherein it humorously critiqued a student who was so enthusiastic and energetic during an event that he unintentionally spat saliva onto the students sitting below him in the bleachers. While the comment acknowledged the boy’s excitement and enthusiasm with the phrase *“Kuyaw so energy niyan”* (His energy is amazing), it gently pointed out the unintended consequence of his high energy, which was the saliva splatter. By suggesting, *“less laway, more cheer”* (maybe less saliva, more cheer), the commenter implied that the boy should focus more on controlling his physical expressions while still maintaining his enthusiasm.

This sarcastic remark served to lighten the critique by making it less harsh and more playful. Instead of directly scolding the boy for his actions, the comment used humor to point out the issue while still appreciating his enthusiasm. In this way, the speaker avoided causing embarrassment or threatening the boy’s positive face to allow the message to be received more easily without creating tension, which aligned with the idea of sarcasm as a politeness tool discussed by Pantoja and Mendoza (2020). Similarly, the second comment, *“Baka magalit na ang mga drums sa sobrang gigil,”* humorously suggested that the drummer might be playing so intensely that the drums could get angry. This sarcastic remark indirectly criticized the drummer’s playing style by implying that the beat was too forceful and could potentially damage the drums. By framing the criticism in a playful and exaggerated manner, the speaker softened the message and avoided directly confronting the drummer. This use of humor served as a polite way to suggest that the drummer should tone down the intensity of their playing to prevent harm to the instrument. According to Miller and González (2019), sarcasm in such situations can be an effective tool for addressing issues without being confrontational, as it allows the speaker to express their opinion in a less direct and more socially acceptable way. The playful tone of the comment helped preserve the drummer’s positive face, as the criticism was framed in a light-hearted manner rather than as a harsh judgment (Pantoja & Mendoza, 2020; Miller & González, 2019).

3.2.4 Persuasive Aspect

@username 26 (Facebook post, September 27, 2024)

“Baka kailangan ng mga judges dito. Baka matalo pa sa Walang Tulugan.” (University Intramural Games)

Translation: Maybe the judges are needed here. They might even lose in No Sleep.

@username 26 (Facebook post, September 27, 2024)

“Bakit kaya hindi magbati-bati ang iba? Sige, go lang sa drama.” (Literary Competition)

Translation: Why aren’t some people making peace? Go ahead, just keep the drama going.

The comments presented how sarcasm was used effectively to persuade others by highlighting contradictions and drawing attention to conflicts in a humorous manner, while also maintaining or

threatening faces according to Politeness Theory. In the first comment, “*Baka kailangan ng mga judges dito. Baka matalo pa sa Walang Tulugan,*” the commenter sarcastically indicated that judges might be necessary, implying that without proper judgment, the situation could escalate. Plus, the reference to “*Walang Tulugan*” (No Sleep) humorously exaggerated the level of competition by indirectly conveying that the situation was becoming overly intense and chaotic. This comment challenged the competition’s behavior while saving the positive face of the group, as it avoided direct criticism or confrontation. In addition, the commenter humorously criticized the environment by suggesting that the group needed help without directly offending or embarrassing anyone. According to Miller and González (2019), sarcasm serves a persuasive function by pointing out contradictions or exaggerations in a manner that makes others reconsider their perspectives. In the latter comment, the commenter used sarcasm to subtly challenge the status quo while avoiding a threat to negative face, thus encouraging reflection without escalating tension. While the second comment, “*Bakit kaya hindi magbati-bati ang iba? Sige, go lang sa drama,*” sarcastically commented on the ongoing conflict between the groups involved in the Literary Competition. By stating “*Go ahead, just keep the drama going,*” the speaker meant that continuing the argument would only make things worse. This sarcastic remark indirectly highlighted the futility of furthering the conflict by encouraging others to reconsider their actions and think more rationally. In this case, the speaker was threatening the negative face of the individuals involved in the drama by implying that their actions were inappropriate and unnecessary. However, the comment saved the positive face of the group by not directly insulting anyone but instead offering a humorous critique of the ongoing situation. Hence, it suggested that the drama was not helping anyone, encouraging others to reflect on their behavior without a direct attack. As Kadhim and Mewada (2023) found in their study, sarcasm in debates is often used to emphasize the absurdity of a situation, much like how this comment sarcastically addressed the ongoing drama. The commenter indirectly criticized the ongoing conflict by using sarcasm to push for a more peaceful resolution without threatening the individuals’ core identities.

3.2.5 Retractability

@username 26 (Facebook post, September 27, 2024)

“Sarap ng bonding nila! Sigawan, kulitan... at sunog na boses after.” (Musical)

Translation: Their bonding is so much fun! Yelling, teasing... and losing voices afterward.

@username 26 (Facebook post, September 27, 2024)

“Sana matuloy ito, pero alam naman natin na sana lang talaga.” (UIG)

Translation: I hope this happens, but we all know it’s just a wish.

As presented in the sample comments, the data showed how sarcasm was used with retractability by allowing speakers to make critical yet humorous remarks, while also saving face such as in the first comment, “*Sarap ng bonding nila! Sigawan, kulitan... at sunog na boses after,*” wherein the commenter humorously acknowledged the students’ high energy but discreetly pointed out that their loud cheers might cause sore throats. With that, the speaker’s sarcastic tone softened the critique, which helped avoid direct confrontation. According to Politeness Theory, the speaker saved the positive face of the audience members by acknowledging their excitement and energy while simultaneously threatening their negative face by drawing attention to the negative consequences of their behavior (i.e., the sore throats). However, since the sarcasm was not harsh, it reduced the threat and gave room for retraction if anyone felt offended. Kadhim and Mewada (2023) suggested that sarcasm in this manner allows speakers to express indirect assessments while offering an opportunity for retraction, thus protecting both the speaker’s and the audience’s face. While, in the second comment, “*Sana matuloy ito, pero alam naman natin na sana lang talaga,*” the speaker sarcastically downplayed the hope for an event happening by indicating doubt about its realization.

More so, by using sarcasm, the speaker avoided directly rejecting the idea, leaving room for a retraction if the event were to happen. This strategy served to protect the speaker's own positive face, as the speaker showed enthusiasm or support for the event, even while implying skepticism. On the other hand, the speaker slightly threatened the positive face of the event organizers or those who hoped for the event by softly conveying that the event was unlikely. Miller and González (2019) noted that sarcasm can reduce the intensity of critical remarks by allowing speakers to make a judgment while keeping it less confrontational. The latter comment above is also an example of how sarcasm can be retractable which allowed the speaker to take back the negative implication if it was misinterpreted or if the event actually took place.

3.2.6 Tool for Group Affiliation

@username 26 (Facebook post, September 27, 2024)

"Da pd a suporta sa CSSH odi suktano bu. Bapiya naba mapiya na, e cheer tano." (Literary Competition)

Translation: No one supports CSSH better than us. Even if it's not really good, let's cheer for it.

@username 26 (Facebook post, September 27, 2024)

"Only in MSU talaga. Sa bawat event, may bida sa stage at may bida rin sa daanan." (Dance Extravaganza)

Translation: Only in MSU for real! In every event, there is a star on stage and there's also a star on the sidelines.

Based on the sample data, the findings revealed how sarcasm can strengthen group bonds while managing faces, for instance, the first comment, *"Da pd a suporta sa CSSH odi suktano bu. Bapiya naba mapiya na, e cheer tano,"* humorously suggested that, regardless of the performance's quality, the audience should still cheer to show support for CSSH. This sarcastic remark served to save the positive face of the performers by framing the critique in a very soft and indirect manner, making it less harsh and more about group loyalty than the performance itself. By doing so, the commenter encouraged social bonding and loyalty within the group without directly insulting the performers' abilities. This strategy is evident in Miller and González's study (2019), wherein they explicate that sarcasm softens criticism and protects the face of the target while maintaining group cohesion. Additionally, Kadhim and Mewada (2023), noted that sarcasm in social interactions can maintain a balance between critique and politeness. Meanwhile, the second comment, *"Only in MSU talaga! Sa bawat event, may bida sa stage at may bida rin sa daanan,"* highlighted how the students passing by at the event unintentionally become part of the show. Here, sarcasm indirectly mocked the situation by exaggerating the idea that the passing students were as much a part of the event as the performers. This comment saved the positive face of the students passing by, as it framed their actions in a humorous, non-threatening way. Instead of directly criticizing their behavior, it acknowledged the shared experience of the event in a sarcastic tone by creating a sense of camaraderie among the MSU community. According to Pantoja and Mendoza (2020), this use of sarcasm fosters group affiliation by linking members of the group through shared understanding and humor. Additionally, Fadilah and Wijayanto (2024) highlighted how sarcasm in social media comments helps create a sense of belonging by signaling shared values and experiences. Both comments illustrated how sarcasm can be a strategic tool for managing face while promoting social connections within a group.

Table 4

Pragmatic Function of Sarcasm Found in the Comment Section of the Community Group, Mindanao State University-Main Campus- Marawi [FB Community]

University Founding Category	Sophistication	Assessment Tool	Politeness Tool	Persuasive Aspect	Retractability	Group Affiliation
Dance Extravaganza	3	3	1	3	3	2
Musical Extravaganza	1	5	3	3	3	—
University Intramural Games	3	3	4	2	3	—
Literary Competition	2	5	2	1	2	3
Total	9	16	10	9	11	5

As displayed in Table 4, the findings revealed how sarcasm was distributed across the pragmatic function of sarcasm by reflecting the varying communicative roles sarcasm played in different university events. These pragmatic functions served as a framework for analyzing how commenters employed sarcasm to express humor, critique, and suggestions during these events. The most dominant pragmatic function used with the highest frequency score of 16 is attributed to the assessment tool. This highlighted that sarcasm is predominantly used as a method to evaluate or critique and suggested that Meranaw netizens often employed sarcasm to provide feedback or judgments on the performances, organizations, or other event-related aspects. Retractability was the second pragmatic function of sarcasm with a frequency score of 11. While politeness tool was the third pragmatic function of sarcasm with the frequency score of 10. The following pragmatic function of sarcasm were both sophistication and persuasive tool with a frequency score of nine. In contrast, group affiliation scored the lowest with a frequency of five, suggesting that while sarcasm fostered camaraderie to some extent, other functions, such as evaluating and suggesting improvements, took precedence in these event contexts.

Below here is the data on the distribution of the pragmatic function of sarcasm across the four events found in the comment sections of the community group, Mindanao State University-Main Campus-Marawi [FB Community].

3.2.7 Sophistication

@username 36 (Facebook post, September 25, 2024)

“Sana nga naman, hindi na lang tayo nag-aral. Mas masaya ang mag-enjoy, hidi ba?” (UIG)

Translation: I wish we had not studied at all. It is more fun to just enjoy, right?

@username 6 (Facebook post, September 28, 2024)

“Kaloka! Para kang nanood ng Broadway sa sobrang kilig, ha?” (Dance Extravaganza)

Translation: Hilarious! It is like you watched a Broadway show because of how thrilled you are, huh?

The comments above were identified as sophistication under the pragmatic functions of sarcasm because they achieved a complex interplay of face-saving and face-threatening acts by demonstrating a nuanced understanding of pragmatic communication. Firstly, the commenter saved his positive face through an expression of a relatable sentiment, that is, the desire to avoid stressful academic obligations and prioritize enjoyment, by saying “*Sana nga naman hindi na lang tayo nag-aral. Mas masaya ang mag-enjoy, hindi ba?*” This created common ground and avoided direct argument with the original poster’s (the one who posted the post in the Facebook community group) complaint. It implicitly acknowledged the validity of the poster’s feelings without explicitly agreeing. However, the comment subtly threatened the poster’s face by implying his complaint was overly dramatic or even childish. The suggestion that foregoing education is “more fun” undercut the seriousness of the poster’s concerns about academic pressure. The rhetorical question, “*hindi ba?*” further challenges the poster to reconsider their perspective. The commenter positioned himself as someone who understood the value of fun over academic rigor, potentially making the poster feel somewhat unreasonable. Meanwhile, the commenter used playful exaggeration (“*Kaloka!*” - hilarious!) to express amusement and create a non-serious atmosphere by saying “*Kaloka! Para kang nanood ng Broadway sa sobrang kilig, ha?*” With this, it saved her positive face by avoiding direct criticism and instead offered a humorous observation, plus the comment avoided outright disagreement with the poster’s emotional response. This comment, however, subtly threatened the poster’s face by implying that their strong emotional reaction (“*sobrang kilig*” - extremely thrilled) was excessive and somewhat ridiculous. The comparison to a Broadway show suggested the poster’s reaction was overly theatrical and perhaps not entirely genuine. Moreover, the use of “*ha?*” at the end added a touch of playful mockery, further challenging the poster’s emotional expression. In both instances, the sarcastic comments skillfully explored the delicate balance between expressing agreement (or at least understanding) and subtly criticizing the original poster’s perspective. This nuanced approach demonstrated a sophisticated understanding of facework and the strategic use of language to achieve communicative goals. The humor served as a buffer, mitigating the potential for conflict while still conveying a critical assessment. This is a hallmark of sophisticated sarcasm, going beyond simple mockery to engage in a more complex and subtle form of communication (Holtgraves, 2019).

3.2.8 Assessment Tool

@username 22 (Facebook post, September 27, 2024)

“*So, ito ang tinatawag na kilig? Iba na ang standards ng mga tao ngayon.*” (Musical Extravaganza)

Translation: So, this is what they call ‘butterflies in the stomach’? People’s standards have changed now.

@username 57 (Facebook post, September 26, 2024)

“*Ganito ba gumana ang system? Talo pa ang pila sa NFA rice.*” (Literary Competition)

Translation: Is this really how the system works? The line is worse than for NFA rice.

As shown in the comments above, the data reflected the pragmatic function of an assessment tool because they evaluated and criticized social behaviors, systems, or standards. Through sarcasm and humor, the speakers provided a critique that encouraged the audience to reflect on their perceptions or practices. This use of indirectness and irony mitigated the critique while still delivering an evaluative commentary on societal or institutional issues. In the line “*So, ito ang tinatawag na kilig? Iba na ang standards ng mga tao ngayon,*” the speaker sarcastically criticized how the concept of “*kilig*” (a Filipino term for an overwhelming feeling of thrill or excitement) was perceived. By implying that the standards for what elicited “*kilig*” have lowered or shifted, the remark humorously evaluated changing societal preferences. In line with Politeness Theory, the comments employed negative politeness strategies, using sarcasm and

humor to mitigate the face-threatening nature of critique. By indicating their assessments in indirect language, such as the metaphorical comparison in “*Talo pa ang pila sa NFA rice*,” the speaker avoided confrontation while still pointing out flaws. This aligned with Holmes’s (2018) findings that humor and sarcasm soften critical messages to maintain social harmony.

3.2.9 Politeness Tool

@username 52 (Facebook post, September 26, 2024)

“*Ang saya. Siguro naman worth it ‘yung siksikan para sa ganitong experience.*” (Literary Competition)

Translation: How fun! Surely the crowding is worth it for an experience like this.

@username 16 (Facebook post, September 27, 2024)

“*Mapiya ron anan, kiyasipag ka talaga. Tamang tulog lang*” (Musical Extravaganza)

Translation: That’s good, you are really hardworking. Just sleeping all the time.

Based on the data of sentence patterns, it can be drawn from the result that the comments revealed the pragmatic function of sarcasm as a politeness tool as it used humor and indirectness to deliver critiques in a socially acceptable manner and soften the potential impact of disapproval. In the first comment, “*Ang saya. Siguro naman worth it ‘yung siksikan para sa ganitong experience*” the commenter sarcastically evaluated the inconvenience of crowding at an event but did so with humor by making the critique less aggressive. Similarly, “*Mapiya ron anan, kiyasipag ka talaga! Tamang tulog lang*” humorously juxtaposed exaggerated praise for hard work with a delicate critique about frequent sleeping by indirectly signifying laziness without directly offending. These comments tempered negativity through irony but maintain interpersonal harmony, in which they showcased how sarcasm can serve as a tool for delivering criticism politely and tactfully. This was supported by the Politeness Theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987), in which the comments employed positive politeness strategies through the use of sarcasm and humor to convey criticism while minimizing the threat to the hearer’s face. By framing the critique exaggeratedly or humorously, the commenter lessened the impact in ways of maintaining social harmony and respect. According to Holmes’s (2018) assertion, sarcasm can be used to both critique and preserve relationships, as it allows speakers to express discontent without direct argumentative meeting.

3.2.10 Persuasive Aspect

@username 29 (Facebook post, September 29, 2024)

“*Baka kailangan mong magdala ng earplugs next time, just in case.*” (Musical Extravaganza) **Translation:** You might need to bring earplugs next time, just in case.

@username 4 (Facebook post, September 28, 2024)

“*Antonay kabaya aka, talong o chicharrón, para lkaan so gate?*” (Dance Extravaganza)

Translation: What do you need, eggplant or chicharrón, to open the gate?

As seen in the sample comments, the findings presented that both the comments were under pragmatic function of sarcasm in a persuasive aspect because it used humor and subtle indirectness to guide the audience to a particular action or conclusion without any direct argumentation. In the first comment, “*Baka kailangan mong magdala ng earplugs next time, just in case,*” the commenter humorously implied that the one who owned the post, saying she was irritated by the students who cheered loudly near her, may need earplugs due to the excessive noise. This means that the commenter was persuading her to prepare for future events without directly criticizing the situation. Similarly, in the second comment “*Antonay kabaya aka, talong o chicharrón, para lkaan so gate?*” the sarcastic question encouraged the students, who were jamming in the gate entrance of the gymnasium, to rethink their approach to opening the gate by humorously

conveying that their current method may be insufficient. Through these indirect, playful remarks, sarcasm effectively persuaded the students to reflect on their behavior or decisions in a non-confrontational way. Here, Politeness Theory stated that sarcastic comments used negative politeness strategies where the speaker distances themselves from directly imposing or criticizing the listener, using humor and indirectness to suggest changes or offer advice. Furthermore, the sarcastic tone put the suggestion in a light way to make it more palatable and less aggressive. As Brown and Levinson (1987) noted, negative politeness aimed to avoid imposition, and in this case, humor allowed the speaker to suggest without imposing it overtly.

3.2.11 Retractability

@username 45 (Facebook post, September 25, 2024)

“Paynal. Langon tano deserve so kadekha, bapiya pn anan joke bo.” (University Intramural Games)

Translation: Okay, I agree! We all deserve rest, even if that is just a joke.

@username 48 (Facebook post, September 26, 2024)

“Ati kiyapiya! Kasi o daa awayan na tonaa pn e meaning o competition?” (Literary Competition)

Translation: It is really fun! Because if there are no fights, what is the meaning of competition?

According to the data in the comments above, they indicated the pragmatic function of sarcasm specifically, retractability as it presented a statement or opinion on the event that could easily be retracted or softened the flow as seen in the first comment, *“Paynal. Langon tano deserve so kadekha, bapiya pn anan joke bo,”* wherein the commenter humorously agreed with the idea of rest but framed it in a way that left room for retracting the statement by labeling it as a joke, thus enlightened any potential criticism. Similarly on the excerpt, *“Ati kiyapiya! Kasi o daa awayan na tonaa pn e meaning o competition?”* sarcastically questioned the value of competition without conflict by suggesting that it was just a joke. This allowed the commenter to easily retract the critique if needed, besides, this use of humor and irony created an indirect approach that maintained flexibility, which enabled the speaker to withdraw or modify their statement without offending. Hence, with the application of Politeness Theory, it supported that the use of sarcasm in these comments was a negative politeness strategy because it allowed the commenter to distance himself from the potential of face-threatening remark. Brown and Levinson (1987) discussed that negative politeness seeks to avoid imposition, and in this case, sarcasm allowed the speaker to present a critique in a way that preserves face, with the option to retract without causing social discomfort.

3.2.12 Tool for Group Affiliation

@username 15 (Facebook post, September 29, 2024)

“Tayo lang ang nakakaintindi sa struggle na ito. Saan ka pa?” (Dance extravaganza)

Translation: We’re the only ones who understand this struggle! Where else would you go?

@username 49 (Facebook post, September 26, 2024)

“Isang pamilya tayo. Kung may laban, dapat may away. Kita-kits tayo.” (Literary Competition)

Translation: We are one family. If there is a fight, there should be a brawl! See you all.

Above, it can be perceived that both comments revealed the pragmatic function of sarcasm as a tool for group affiliation because it emphasized shared experiences and group identity through humor and exaggeration as seen in the first comment, *“Tayo lang ang nakakaintindi sa struggle na ito. Saan ka pa?”* the commenter utilized sarcasm to strengthen a sense of solidarity within the group by humorously

exaggerating the uniqueness of their shared struggles, thereby deepening their connection. Similarly, “*Isang pamilya tayo. Kung may laban, dapat may away. Kita-kits tayo*” used exaggerated sarcasm to emphasize group unity, humorously framing conflict as a natural part of being a close-knit group. This sarcasm not only affirmed group identity but also enriched camaraderie by strengthening the bond between members through shared jokes and exaggerated expressions of loyalty. According to the Politeness Theory, the sarcasm in the comments functioned as a positive politeness strategy, because it highlighted solidarity and group identity. By using exaggerated or humorous expressions, the speaker reinforced a sense of belonging and mutual understanding, which Brown and Levinson (1987) identified as essential to positive politeness. This approach strengthened group affiliation by acknowledging shared experiences and highlighting common values in a non-threatening way.

3.3 The Most Prevalent Pragmatic Structures and Functions of Sarcasm Used by Meranaw Netizens

The results from the study, as shown in Table 5, presented the frequency and percentage of the pragmatic structures and functions of sarcasm employed by Meranaw netizens. The data indicated that propositional sarcasm was the most used structure followed by illocutionary and lexical sarcasm, while like-prefixed sarcasm was notably absent. In terms of pragmatic functions, sarcasm was primarily used as an assessment tool for expressing judgements and evaluations, with secondary functions including sophistication persuasion, and retractability, while the politeness tool and group affiliation functions were less frequently observed.

Table 5
Most Prevalent Pragmatic Structures of Sarcasm

Pragmatic Functions	MSU Page	MSU Community Group	Frequency	Percentage
	Boses ng MSUAN	Mindanao State University Main Campus- Marawi [FB Community]		
Propositional	21	26	47	39.17%
Lexical	18	12	30	25%
Like-Prefixed	—	—	—	—
Illocutionary	21	22	43	35.83%
Total			120	100%

The result from table 5 presented that propositional sarcasm was the most frequently used structure across both the MSU Page and the Community Group which accounted for 39.17% (47 occurrences). This indicated that users often relied on statements that contrasted with reality to express sarcasm. Illocutionary sarcasm followed closely at 35.83% (43 occurrences), demonstrating its strong presence in mocking or questioning implied intentions rather than explicit content. Meanwhile, lexical sarcasm with a percentage of 25% (30 occurrences) showed that specific words or phrases were also commonly used to convey irony. It was also notable that like-prefixed sarcasm was entirely absent on both platforms. This means that this structure was not a preferred strategy in these contexts.

Furthermore, with regards to the differences between the two platforms, the data showed the distinct patterns in how sarcasm was used. In the MSU Page, propositional sarcasm dominated as public posts often aimed for direct and clear irony to reach a broader audience and create engaging content. The straightforward nature of propositional sarcasm served as an effective way to communicate humor or

critique without relying on shared knowledge or deeper social connections. This was supported by the research from Gianluca et al. (2022) who pointed out that larger, more public platforms often need to use simpler, clearer structures to maintain accessibility and understanding across diverse user groups. On the other hand, the community group showed a higher prevalence of illocutionary sarcasm in that it suggested a more nuanced and context-dependent approach to communication. Members of the community group likely shared common knowledge and experiences which allowed for more complex forms of sarcasm that implied meanings beyond the literal content. As a result, illocutionary sarcasm was an effective tool for expressing subtle critique and reinforcing in-group solidarity, as found in the study by Vasic and Koteyko (2019) on the impact of social closeness in digital communication. More so, the differences in sarcasm use between the platforms could be attributed to their distinct social dynamics and user interactions. Public pages like the MSU page cater to a larger audience and often prioritize general understanding by making propositional sarcasm a fitting choice. On the other hand, more private and intimate spaces, such as community groups, encourage user interaction that relies on shared context by allowing illocutionary sarcasm to thrive. This was supported by findings from Reinecke et al. (2021), who examined how social context and platform characteristics shaped communication styles. The study emphasized that platforms with a higher level of user familiarity and interaction, such as community groups, enabled users to express more layered and implied meanings. In short, the comparison highlighted how platform type and audience size played significant roles in shaping the structures of sarcasm used in digital communication.

In addition, the findings of this study clearly justified the Relevance Theory by demonstrating how the choice of sarcasm structure on each platform was influenced by the audience’s cognitive environment and shared knowledge. In the MSU page, propositional sarcasm was employed to ensure clarity and immediate relevance for a diverse audience, which aligned with the theory’s emphasis on optimizing communication for cognitive processing. In contrast, the use of illocutionary sarcasm in the community group highlighted how communication was shaped by the shared context and mutual understanding among its members, which allowed for more nuanced and implicit meanings. This supported the idea that effective communication depends on how well the information fit the expectations and background knowledge of the audience. (Clark, 2013; Reinecke et al., 2021).

Table 6

Most Prevalent Pragmatic Functions of Sarcasm

Pragmatic Functions	MSU Page	MSU Community Group	Frequency	Percentage
	Boses ng MSUAN	Mindanao State University Main Campus- Marawi [FB Community]		
Sophistication	13	9	22	18.33%
Assessment Tool	13	16	29	24.17%
Politeness Tool	8	10	18	15%
Persuasive Aspect	12	9	21	17.5%
Retractability	9	11	20	16.67%
Tool for Group Affiliation	5	5	10	8.33%
Total			120	100%

As illustrated in Table 6, the data revealed notable patterns in how sarcasm was employed. The total frequency of sarcastic instances across both platforms was 120 with the highest number of occurrences found in the assessment tool category (29 instances). This indicated that sarcasm was commonly used to express judgments or evaluations. The sophistication function was also frequently used, appearing 22 times, in that it highlighted the role of sarcasm in demonstrating wit or intelligence. The politeness tool function appeared 18 times by showing that sarcasm was sometimes used to soften the delivery of potentially harsh statements. The persuasive aspect was evident in 21 instances as it implied that sarcasm was utilized to influence opinions or actions. The retractability function, which allowed for statements to be retracted or softened, appeared 20 times. This indicated that users might have used sarcasm to make comments less harsh or avoid direct confrontation. In addition, the tool for group affiliation had the fewest instances as it only appeared 10 times. The rare use of it means that sarcasm was not totally used to foster a sense of belonging.

As such, a closer look at the platforms revealed distinctive patterns in the use of sarcasm. In the MSU page, sarcasm was most frequently used for demonstrating sophistication and assessment tool with the persuasive aspect being the third most common, this pattern indicated that the MSU page functioned as a space where users often engaged in sarcastic commentary to display intelligence, make evaluative remarks, and subtly persuade others. The relatively lower use of politeness on this platform showed that while sarcasm served evaluative and persuasive purposes, it was less often used to soften statements. In contrast, the community group showed a greater frequency of using sarcasm as an assessment tool and a slightly higher use of retractability. This means that participants in the community group used sarcasm more as a tool for critique and for mitigating the impact of their remarks, possibly to maintain a balance between directness and social harmony. The use of sarcasm as a politeness tool was somewhat more common in the community group than on the MSU page, which revealed that the group's interactions might have required more nuanced, indirect communication strategies to maintain positive social bonds. The tool for group affiliation was minimal on both platforms because it indicated that sarcasm was rarely used as a means to strengthen social ties or build group identity. The differences observed between these two platforms may reflect the varying communication goals and contexts of each. According to research by Kavanaugh et al. (2019), platforms with more public, wide-reaching audiences, such as university pages, may encourage users to engage in sarcasm that demonstrates intellectual prowess and shares evaluative opinions. On the other hand, more private or semi-private groups, like the community group, foster a space where participants may prioritize maintaining relationships, balancing critical remarks with retractability and politeness strategies.

With that being said, Politeness Theory provided essential justifications for the use of sarcasm in this study. Politeness Theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987) explains how individuals strategically manage face and maintain social harmony which can be seen in the community group's use of sarcasm. The higher frequency of assessment tool and sophistication in this platform implied that netizens were more evaluator and cautious in using sarcasm to express criticism in a veiled manner, mitigate potential conflict, and maintain positive social interactions, to ensure that their remarks did not threaten the "negative face" of others and at the same time, saving their negative face as well. Plus, such use of sarcasm, particularly the assessment tool and sophistication, aimed to maintain politeness and avoid direct confrontation using sarcasm as a way to deliver feedback without openly attacking other's social identities. As Brown and Levinson (1987) stated, individuals use indirect communication strategies, such as sarcasm, to navigate sensitive social interactions. Recent studies such as those by Liao (2020) and Chen and Yang (2021), highlight how sarcasm in online spaces can be a tool for mitigating face threats, which allow users to explore social dynamics without escalating conflict.

Conclusion

This study used a qualitative approach with a descriptive research design to explore the use of sarcasm in the comment sections of the MSU page and the community group. The researchers aimed to answer the three research questions posed in this study. The findings revealed that propositional sarcasm was the most common structure followed by illocutionary sarcasm and lexical sarcasm with like-prefixed sarcasm entirely absent. Propositional sarcasm was primarily used to express irony and critique, while illocutionary sarcasm implied dissatisfaction and encouraged reflection. Lexical sarcasm, on the other hand, involved exaggeration and irony through word choice, serving as a means to convey humor or critique. With these results, distinct patterns emerged between the two platforms: the MSU page featured more propositional sarcasm as it indicated a preference for clear and direct sarcasm that engaged a wider audience, while the community group utilized illocutionary sarcasm more often as it implied that users leveraged shared context to communicate more nuanced critiques. In terms of pragmatic functions, sarcasm served mainly as an assessment tool to evaluate or critique, with secondary functions including sophistication and persuasion. The politeness tool function appeared less frequently, and the group affiliation function was very minimal. Moreover, the specific uses of sarcasm further emphasized these differences. In the MSU page, sarcasm was predominantly used for showcasing intelligence by making evaluative remarks and persuading others, while in the community group, it was more often employed as an assessment tool and for softening critical remarks through retractability and politeness. These differences suggested that public platforms encouraged more assertive and intellectual use of sarcasm, while semi-private spaces emphasized the maintenance of social harmony and relationships.

Taking everything into account, these findings revealed how Meranaw netizens strategically use sarcasm as a form of wit that reflected their social and cultural communication preferences. Beyond its role as a tool for humor or critique, sarcasm emerged as a sophisticated method for expressing identity, building connections, and navigating the dynamics of digital interactions.

While this study provides valuable insights into how sarcasm was structured and functioned in online interactions among Meranaw netizens, there were limitations that future researchers should address. This study focused primarily on the pragmatic structures and functions of sarcasm, without considering other linguistic aspects such as tone, syntax, or speaker intention. To gain a more comprehensive understanding of sarcasm in digital communication, it is recommended that future researchers include these additional dimensions. Expanding the scope to explore how tone and syntax interact with sarcasm can offer deeper insight into how sarcasm is perceived and used. Additionally, future studies should consider cross-cultural comparisons to examine if and how sarcasm varies across different communities or cultural contexts. Lastly, investigating the role of sarcasm in promoting or hindering online discourse may also provide further understanding of its social impact.

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