

Irony as Social Criticism in Instagram Comments:
A Study on “Liga Korupsi Indonesia”

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Abstract

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Irony is often employed as a form of social criticism, particularly in online discourse. This study examines the function of irony in comments on the Instagram Reel *Liga Korupsi Indonesia* (LKI). This qualitative descriptive study aims to identify the various roles irony plays in user comments on the Instagram Reel “LKI”. The qualitative descriptive method is appropriate as it allows an in-depth exploration of irony as a linguistic phenomenon within the context of social media interactions. In accordance with the problems in this study, the writers use theories related to the function of irony found from several articles discussing the function of irony from several perspectives. Data, ironic comment, were collected through documentation and content analysis, while triangulation was ensured through methodological and theoretical approaches. The writers identified six primary functions of irony in the comments: (a) a subtle form of criticism (12 out of 76), (b) intensifying condemnation or "salting a wound" (6 out of 76), (c) humour and social bonding (18), (d) emotion regulation (8 out of 76), (e) a persuasive tool in debate and discussion (9 out of 76), and (f) balancing praise and blame (23 out of 76). Among these, irony as a balance between praise and blame emerged as the most frequently used function, indicating that netizens prefer a diplomatic approach to criticism rather than outright confrontation. Conversely, irony employed to intensify condemnation was the least frequent, as its confrontational nature often leads to conflict and unproductive debate. The study highlights how irony serves as an effective tool for nuanced social critique in digital spaces.

Kata Kunci:

Ironi,
Fungsi Ironi,
Instagram,

Abstrak

Ironi sering digunakan sebagai bentuk kritik sosial, terutama dalam diskusi di media digital. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis fungsi ironi dalam komentar pada Instagram Reel *Liga Korupsi Indonesia*. Metode yang digunakan adalah deskriptif kualitatif, karena memungkinkan eksplorasi mendalam terhadap penggunaan ironi dalam interaksi sosial di media sosial. Sesuai dengan permasalahan pada penelitian ini, penulis menggunakan teori terkait fungsi ironi yang ditemukan dari beberapa artikel yang membahas tentang fungsi ironi dari beberapa perspektif. Data, komentar dengan muatan ironi, diperoleh melalui dokumentasi dan analisis isi, dengan triangulasi yang dilakukan melalui pendekatan metode dan teori. Hasil penelitian mengidentifikasi enam fungsi utama ironi dalam komentar, yaitu: (a) bentuk kritik yang halus (12), (b) memperkuat kecaman atau "menambah luka" (6), (c) humor dan ikatan sosial (18), (d) pengendalian emosi (8), (e) alat persuasif dalam debat dan diskusi (9), serta (f) keseimbangan antara pujian dan kritik (23). Temuan menunjukkan bahwa ironi paling sering digunakan sebagai cara untuk menyeimbangkan pujian dan kritik, memungkinkan netizen tetap kritis tanpa terlihat agresif. Sebaliknya, penggunaan ironi untuk memperkuat kritik lebih jarang terjadi karena sifatnya yang lebih konfrontatif, yang berpotensi memicu konflik dan perdebatan yang tidak produktif. Penelitian ini menyoroti bagaimana ironi berperan sebagai alat kritik sosial yang efektif di ranah digital.

INTRODUCTION

At the end of February 2025, Indonesia was shocked by the news of corruption by Pertamina, which cost the State 193 T. More surprisingly, the corruption with a fantastic value was only in 2023, while the corruption was alleged to have occurred since 2018. It of course triggered various reactions from the public. Many people feel disappointed with the incident. As an outlet, many people expressed their frustration on social media. one of which is Instagram.

One of the interesting things that emerged after the revelation of corruption by PT Pertamina Patra Niaga was the emergence of several posts with the title *Liga Korupsi Indonesia* (abbreviated as LKI) or Indonesian Corruption League which went viral. The term LKI refers to the ranking of corruption cases based on the amount of loss caused to Indonesian government. It certainly reminds people on the world of soccer. The term was first introduced on X (previously known as Twitter) on December 27, 2024 by the @Kanlir account, and was later adopted by the @halodesners Instagram account along with the latest news about Pertamina corruption revealed on February 24, 2025. An interesting phenomenon to analyse in this context is the ironical comments spreading across the social media. The phenomenon is of particular interest when irony and sarcasm are often used as tools to express public disappointment and anger towards abuse of power.

Netizens use irony to express criticism or sarcasm about corruption, which seems to be increasingly prevalent in Indonesia. The analogy with sports terminology proves to be effective, making the messages easier to understand. It reflects the remarkable creativity of Indonesian netizens in speaking up their opinions, critiques, and even satire about economic and social issues in society. Delivering criticism and satire through creative and thoughtful irony helps reduce misunderstandings or differing interpretations. Moreover, some comments create a humorous effect, making the criticism entertaining while still conveying a strong message.

Pragmatics is a branch of linguistics that studies how language meaning is used in specific contexts, considering situational factors, speaker intentions, and shared assumptions. In communication, two key principles shape interactions: the cooperative principle (Grice) and the politeness principle (Leech). The cooperative principle emphasizes relevant, clear, and informative contributions in conversations, while the politeness principle aims to minimize impoliteness and maximize courtesy (Lulu, 2019).

In the field of pragmatics, the principle of irony is often associated with the principles of politeness and cooperation. Irony can be used to maintain politeness in situations where direct criticism might be considered too harsh or inappropriate

(Juez, 1994). Irony can be intentionally used to violate these principles in order to achieve a specific effect. Irony often involves the violation of one of Grice's maxims, especially the maxim of quality, where the speaker says something that is literally untrue (Walker, n.d.). When someone employs irony, they deliberately break the maxim of quality because they say something opposite to what they mean, or something untrue in relation to their actual intention (Sequeiros, 2016). However, irony remains understandable because the listener is expected to recognize the discrepancy between what is said and the actual context. In this case, irony relies on the listener's ability to grasp the implicature within an utterance.

In the study of pragmatics, the principle of irony is a form of expression that states something contrary to its true meaning, often with the purpose of satirizing, ridiculing, or emphasizing a point. In everyday communication, irony plays an important role in adding a subtle dimension of humor, sarcasm, or even criticism (Zhang, 2025). Irony allows us to convey a message in an indirect way, which can reduce potential conflict or tension.

In society, the use of irony is often a way to express disagreement or dissatisfaction without having to be directly confrontational. In addition, irony can also enhance creativity and charm in communication, making conversations more interesting and entertaining. In a social context, (Wilson, 2006) understanding and appropriate use of irony can help strengthen relationships between individuals, as it demonstrates the ability to understand nuance and context in communication.

Irony is a complex linguistic device that involves both explicit and implicit elements. It is traditionally defined as saying one thing while meaning another, creating ambiguity in communication (Heru, 2018). Jorgensen, Miller, and Sperber argue that an ironist uses figurative meaning opposite to the literal meaning, as seen in the example, "What lovely weather" during a rainy day, which actually means "What terrible weather" (Gibbs Jr & Colston, 2007). Wilson reinforces this by stating that irony replaces the literal meaning with a metaphorical one (Wilson, 2013).

Grice's theory of irony introduces the concept of "pretense," where the speaker pretends to express mockery or criticism, later developing into the "pretense theory of irony," which explains its psychological functions (Gibbs Jr & Colston, 2007). Geoffrey Leech extends this idea with his Irony Principle, emphasizing irony as a polite form of offensiveness (mock-politeness) that serves to avoid direct confrontation and maintain social harmony (Leech, 1983).

Based on Burgers in (Aliwie, 2024), irony is categorized into three main types: verbal irony, where words mean the opposite of what is said; dramatic irony, where audiences know something the characters do not; and situational irony, where events unfold contrary to expectations. These forms of irony enhance communication, add depth to storytelling, and strengthen the impact of messages.

The uniqueness of irony lies not only in its definition, but also in its function in everyday communication. Irony plays a crucial role in communication, literature, and social interactions. Scholars have explored its various functions, demonstrating how irony can be used to convey criticism, create humour, establish social bonds, and manage emotions. One of the key functions of irony is its ability to highlight contradictions between expectation and reality.

Irony plays a significant role in literature and communication by serving multiple functions. It critiques social norms, enhances humour, engages audiences, and elicits emotional responses. Additionally, irony is used beyond literature in political discourse, media, advertising, and everyday conversations to subtly critique, entertain, and engage. It also appears in modern media, television, film, music, and art as a powerful tool for commentary and storytelling. Ultimately, irony enriches narratives, deepens emotional engagement, and fosters critical thinking in various contexts (Madaminjonovna & Qizi Mukhammadsodiq, 2024).

Additionally, regarding the usage of irony in various contexts, first, they frequently employ it in literary works to develop character pictures, highlight social issues, produce dramatic confrontations, and improve the works' aesthetic appeal. Second, irony is frequently used in everyday conversation to convey displeasure, grievances, mockery, or commendation. Third, marketers and advertising professionals are skilled at utilizing irony to draw in customers and advertise goods.

Fourth, irony is frequently used by politicians, authors, and social critics to highlight social issues, critique governmental actions, or parody social occurrences.

According to Dews, Kaplan, and Winner in (Gibbs et al., 2012) irony allows speakers to express frustration or disappointment in a more nuanced way, making interactions engaging while softening the impact of direct criticism. Another significant function of irony is its role in humour and social bonding. Kotthoff argues that irony in casual conversations among friends strengthens relationships by reinforcing shared knowledge and common attitudes (Kotthoff, 2003). It aligns with Anolli et.al , who suggest that irony can be a tool for balancing praise and blame, creating a playful yet meaningful exchange between individuals. Through irony, speakers can tease, joke, or exaggerate their statements without causing direct offense, making it a valuable element of social communication (Anolli et al., 2002).

Irony also serves as a persuasive tool in debates and rhetorical discussions. Colston highlight how irony can be used strategically to reduce or enhance condemnation. In some cases, ironic criticism softens a negative remark (sugaring a pill), making it more socially acceptable, while in other cases, irony intensifies condemnation (salting a wound), emphasizing the speaker's discontent. This ability to shift between different effects makes irony a versatile mechanism for influencing conversations (Gibbs et al., 2012)

Additionally, irony helps individuals manage emotional control. Instead of expressing anger or disappointment directly, speakers use irony to mask their true feelings, allowing them to remain composed while still conveying their intended message. Dews & Winner in (Gibbs Jr & Colston, 2007) propose the Tinge Hypothesis, which suggests that irony subtly reduces negativity, making critical remarks sound less harsh. It highlights irony's role in maintaining social harmony while still enabling speakers to express their views effectively.

The adaptability of irony also makes it an important tool for indirect speech. As Kotthoff and Anolli et al discuss, irony allows speakers to navigate conversations strategically, avoiding direct confrontation while still making their stance clear (Anolli et al., 2002; Kotthoff, 2003). The ability to shape meaning

indirectly while maintaining ambiguity makes irony a powerful linguistic device, enhancing the depth and complexity of interactions across different contexts.

Dews, Kaplan, and Winner in (Gibbs Jr & Colston, 2007) further explore the social functions of irony, emphasizing its role in protecting interpersonal relationships. Their study suggests that irony is often used to soften criticism, making it less damaging to the speaker-addressee relationship. They argue that ironic remarks are perceived as funnier as and less insulting than direct criticism, allowing speakers to maintain emotional control and avoid unnecessary conflict. It aligns with Colston's findings, which highlight irony's dual function—either reducing condemnation or intensifying it depending on the context (Gibbs Jr & Colston, 2007)

Based on the functions of irony proposed, the conclusion can be taken by the writers. Irony has **six** main functions in communication, literature, and social interactions. **First**, it serves as a subtle form of criticism, allowing speakers to express disagreement or dissatisfaction in an indirect way, making negative remarks sound less harsh. **Second**, irony can intensify condemnation, emphasizing the gap between expectations and reality, making failures or shortcomings more noticeable (salting a wound). **Third**, irony plays a key role in humour and social bonding, helping people build relationships by reinforcing shared attitudes and making conversations more engaging. **Fourth**, it helps speakers control emotions, allowing them to mask frustration or disappointment while maintaining composure. **Fifth**, irony is a persuasive tool in debates and discussions, influencing opinions and enhancing rhetorical arguments. **Sixth**, it can balance praise and blame, creating ambiguity in communication where a statement may appear positive but actually conveys criticism, or vice versa.

However, in the digital era, especially on social media like Instagram and Twitter, the pragmatic principles (cooperative and politeness principle) are often violated through irony. Irony is used as a way to express criticism or sarcasm indirectly, contradicting its literal meaning. From a pragmatic perspective, irony is interesting because it often breaks the cooperative principle, such as the maxim of quality and manner, and the politeness principle by disguising criticism as subtle

sarcasm. Thus, irony in social media comments is not just a form of expression—it is a pragmatic tool that blurs the lines between politeness and satire in digital communication.

Previous research has examined irony through various points of view, such as vocal expression and prosody (Anolli et al., 2002), lexical-stylistic approaches (Madaminjonovna & Qizi Mukhammadsodiq, 2024), affective content detection on Twitter (Farías, 2017), and pragmatic functions in scripted media (Heriansyah et al., 2024; Jameel, 2024). These studies generally highlight the structure, linguistic form, and detection of irony, but not many focus on the social functions and pragmatics of irony in public comments on locally-based social media, such as the phenomenon of "Liga Korupsi Indonesia" on Instagram. This research fills the gap by analyzing the functions of irony that appear in netizen comments on corruption cases in Indonesia, as a form of citizen participation in criticizing socio-political reality creatively and collectively. The writers want to see how ironic comments are used in responding to corruption cases included in LKI. Therefore, in this research, the writers focus on the function of irony.

METHOD

The study employs a descriptive qualitative approach to examine the use of irony in netizen comments on the Instagram post titled Liga Korupsi Indonesia. The data consist of ironic expressions found in the comments made by Instagram users (referred to as Igers) on the LKI Instagram Reel. The writers read all the comments post on LKI and select only those with ironic comment. During collecting the data, the writers also reduce the same data which are exactly the same such as *Puncak Dingin Bos* which repeatedly found, or those with slight similarity such as *PLN* with *PLN mana nih?* Dealing with such kind of data, the writers only took one found first. The writers skipped the emoticon comments even though they reflect ironic ones. The writers also skipped the ironic comment with impolite words such as swearing. The writers use documentation and content analysis, a structured method for examining qualitative data by recognizing patterns, themes, and connections within written or visual materials to collect the data, following Miles

& Huberman's (1994) approach. As the research focuses on the function of irony found in Igers' comments on LKI, the writers classifies the ironic comments based on the function of irony concluded by the writers from several articles about the function of irony. To simplify the data analysis process, the writers coded the data with the coding system; **No/Ironical comments/function of irony**. In line with Miles and Huberman's model, for triangulation, both methodological triangulation and theoretical triangulation were applied to ensure the validity and credibility of the findings. The analysis follows four key steps: data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. In the data display stage, findings will be organized in tables and explained through a narrative discussion based on theoretical frameworks to address the research problem. By systematically analysing irony in digital conversations, the study aims at providing deeper insights into how the Igers use language as a tool for social and political criticism.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Having collected and reduced the data, the writers found 76 irony comments in Liga Korupsi Indonesia reel post in Instagram. Then, the writers classified them into six functions of irony as can be seen in the following table:

Table 1: Functions of Irony

No	Functions of Irony	Number of data
1.	Subtle form of criticism	12
2.	Intensify condemnation (Salting a wound)	6
3.	Humor and social bounding	18
4.	Control emotion	8
5.	Persuasive tool in debate and discussion	9
6	Balance praise and blame	23
Total		76

The study discovered 76 ironic comments in the LKI Instagram reel post, divided into six categories. The most commonly used function is "Balance praise and blame" (23 comments) such as *Aku bangga jadi orang Indonesia*. I love you Indonesia, in which people combined criticism and praise in their remarks such as . The second most popular is "Humor and social bonding" (18 comments) such as *Nah ini baru bener The Reds di puncak klasemen Premier Liga.....YNWA*

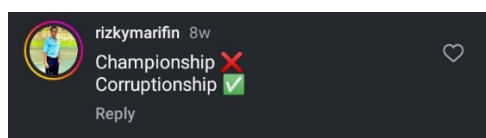
,demonstrating how individuals frequently utilize irony to connect and engage in debates. Meanwhile, "Subtle form of criticism" featured 12 comments such as Championship (X) Corruptionship (✓), expressing disagreement in a clever and indirectly manner. Irony is also employed as a persuasive tactic in debates and discussions (9 comments) such as *Indonesia sangat makmur*, allowing people to make their views more successfully. Additionally, some comments aim to control emotions (8 comments) such as *Ada Supporternya nggak?*, making serious topics feel lighter. The least common function is "Intensify condemnation" (6 comments) such as *Sementara timah tergeser oleh Pertamina dlm liga Champions*, where irony is used to strongly emphasize negative criticism. This analysis highlights how irony serves multiple purposes, from softening criticism to strengthening arguments and enhancing social interaction.

Discussion

Furthermore, in this part, the writers display the functions of irony found in comments on the Instagram reel "Liga Korupsi Indonesia".

1. Subtle form of criticism

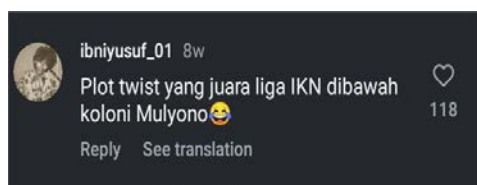
Subtle criticism is a method of expressing dissatisfaction or disagreement in a more diplomatic and indirect manner, thereby ensuring a more polished and less contentious tone. Subtle criticism typically employs more delicate expressions, indirect suggestions, or less direct comparisons. The writer found 12 data functions as subtle form of criticism. Here are the examples of the irony used as a subtle form of criticism;



49/Championship X Corruptionship ✓ /Sub.Criticism/

In a sports league, the priority is of course the Championship but in LKI the priority is Corruptionship. This is actually a subtle satire that in LKI the champions are the corruptors. Irony is often used as a politeness strategy to convey criticism without having to directly attack certain parties. By replacing direct criticism such

as “This country is full of corruption” to “Championship (NO), Corruptionship (YES)”, speakers still convey their criticism but in a more subtle and acceptable way in public conversation.



01/Plot twist yang juara liga IKN di bawah koloni Mulyono/Sub.Criticism/
 (Plot twist: the champion of the [Indonesian corruption] league is IKN under Mulyono's colony.

“Plot twist” is usually used to describe a surprise in a story, In LKI, the top corruption case is Pertamina, but there seems to be a predictable plot twist that the winner is IKN (Ibukota Nusantara). IKN is Indonesia's new capital city, currently being built in East Kalimantan to replace Jakarta. However, the project is also facing allegations of corruption. It has generated pros and cons. The use of the phrase “*di bawah koloni Mulyono*” (under Mulyono's colony) implies that the IKN project is not fully independent, but is under the full control of the main figure, Mulyono. The name Mulyono based on search results refers to the childhood name of one of Indonesia's famous political figures. The use of this name is to reduce confrontation in the community so that this is considered a criticism but subtly and indirectly.



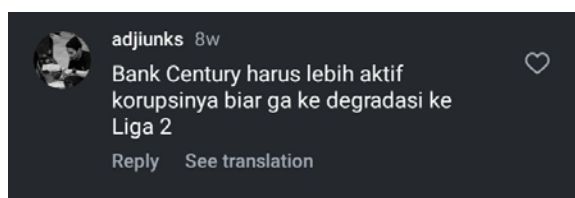
05/Menuju Indonesia emas = Mustahil/Sub.Criticism/
 (Toward a golden Indonesia = Impossible)

Criticism of the irony arises from the pessimistic attitude towards achieving a Golden Indonesia. Indonesia Emas 2045 is a grand vision to make Indonesia a developed, sovereign and sustainable country in 2045, right when Indonesia celebrates 100 years of independence. However, it seems that the Golden Indonesia

is impossible to achieve due to the many cases of corruption in Indonesia. The critique on irony is delivered indirectly and still maintains politeness in communication to reduce direct confrontation.

2. *Intensify Condemnation (Salting the Wound)*

“Salting the wound” in irony refers to the use of irony to strengthen criticism or deepen the negative effect of a statement. Instead of softening the criticism, irony in this context magnifies its emotional impact. The writers found 6 comments function to intensify condemnation.



71/*Bank Century harus lebih aktif korupsinya biar ga ke degradasi ke Liga 2*/Intensify Condemn/
(Century Bank must be more actively corrupted to avoid relegation to League 2.)

Salting the wound in the irony arises when Century Bank is advised to be more active in corruption to avoid relegation to League 2. In Indonesian football, relegation to League 2 means a team that previously competed in League 1 must drop to the second-tier league because the team is at the bottom of the League 1. Literally, this statement sounds like an encouragement for more corruption so that Bank Century can get back to the League 1. In the context of irony, the actual meaning is a strong criticism of the corruption that has already done by Bank Century.

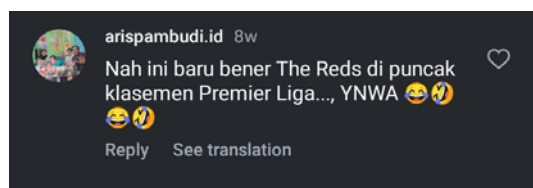


37/*Sementara timah tergeser oleh Pertamina dlm liga Champions*/Intensify Condemn/
(Mean while tin was displaced by Pertamina in the league of Champions)

Salting the wound in the comment appears with the statement that tin's position (PT Timah), which was initially at the top with 271T, was shifted by PT Pertamina with 968.5T. This statement can be considered disrespectful because it conveys painful facts in an ironic way. To the affected parties, it can feel like a mockery of an already bad situation. It is a classic example of situational irony, where something that is already bad could be even worse. The use of the word "displaced" is usually used in the context of competition, but here it is applied to a corruption scandal, which makes it even more satirical.

3. *Humour and Social Bounding*

Irony also helps people bond. When friends understand each other's ironic jokes, it shows they share the same perspective. It can also make tough truths easier to say and helps conversations feel more interesting. There are 18 data functioning as humour and social bounding.



10/Nah ini baru bener The Reds di puncak klasemen Premier Liga.....YNWA/Humour Social Bounding/
 (Now this is really true. The Reds is at the top of the Premier League standings.....YNWA)

The humour in this irony arises when the corruption committed by Pertamina is aligned with the achievements of the Reds (Liverpool) who are at the top of the Premier League standings. This is because both use red as the logo and costume colour. In this case, the red colour, which is usually associated with passion and glory-both in Liverpool and in Pertamina's branding-is actually a symbol of irony because it is associated with a corruption scandal. Humour often arises from paradoxes like this, where something that should make us proud becomes the subject of satire. This irony is also related to social bounding with the emergence of the Reds or Liverpool soccer club, which is famous for its motto You Never

Walk Alon (YNWA). It will certainly be easily understood by those who understand soccer, especially Liverpoolian.



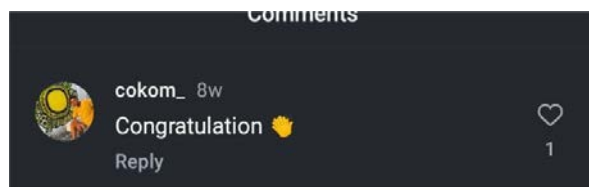
72/**Nitip sandal kalau danantara promosi liga**/Social Humour Social Bounding/
 (Leave the slippers if Danantara promotes the league)

Nitip sandal (“leaving a mark to check updates later”) is a term that often appears in netizen comments on social media such as Instagram or X on viral cases or events. The purpose of this term is to leave a trace so that citizens do not miss the update news of viral case. Humour in irony appears when the person who commented indirectly stated that Danantara will be promoted to the Indonesian Corruption League. Danantara is one of the nowadays Indonesian President programs about the new state investment fund that was launched at the early 2025. The person who commented also tagged the Instagram accounts of RI 1 (the president) and RI 2 (the vice-president). He left a trail of comments on this post so as not to miss the news updates on this post someday. Readers who have a common understanding of the term “*Nitip Sandal*” will certainly understand easily so that this creates social bounding.

4. *Controlling Emotion*

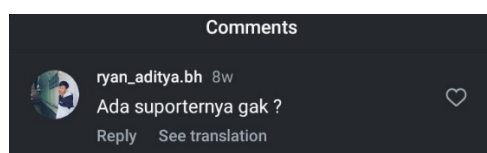
Irony functions as an emotional control because it helps someone create psychological distance from stressful situations, reducing the intensity of negative emotions and enhancing adaptability. By viewing an event from a lighter perspective, one can alleviate stress and anxiety, as well as express feelings without having to face direct confrontation. Additionally, irony strengthens social relationships by creating a shared understanding that reduces tension in interactions. Overall, irony is not only a figure of speech but also a psychological strategy that

promotes emotional resilience and flexibility in facing challenges. There are 8 irony comments found in the research, such as;



03/**Congratulation**/Control Emotion/

By saying 'Congratulations' in response to something clearly negative (corruption), social media users indirectly express their disappointment without having to express it aggressively. The use of irony in comments like this helps society see the situation from a lighter perspective. It can reduce the stress and anxiety that arise from the ongoing news of corruption.



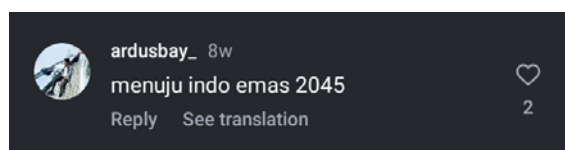
35/**Ada suporternya gak?**/Control Emotion/

(Are there supporters?)

The expression "*Ada suporternya gak?*" in LKI posting is a form of irony used to control public emotions regarding the recurring issue of corruption. The irony serves as a psychological defence mechanism by soothing anger and frustration through sarcastic expression, while also reducing the intensity of negative emotions by presenting a lighter perspective by asking if there are supporters in the LKI. It is analogous to the Football League in Indonesia which generally has many supporters. In addition, the use of irony builds social solidarity among individuals who share the same dissatisfaction with corruption. Overall, irony in this comment is a psychological strategy that helps people to manage their emotions regarding the issue of corruption while strengthening solidarity in social criticism. Moreover, this corruption makes people even more disappointed because it turns out that the Pertamina they always buy is mixed with Peralite.

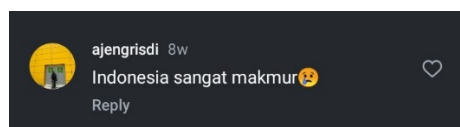
5. *Persuasive Tool in Debate and Discussion*

Irony in debates and discussions helps to convey criticism in a subtle way, attract attention, and strengthen arguments. By establishing an emotional connection and highlighting the absurdity of an issue, irony makes the message more effective and relatable. The writers found 9 data belonging to this category, such as;



05/**Menuju Indo emas 2045**/Debate and Discussion/
(Toward golden Indo 2045)

In the context of discussions and debates on “Menuju Indo emas 2045,” the emergence of ironic comments on the LKI posts that reveal trillions of rupiah in losses serves as a powerful tool of persuasion. Such ironic comments, rather than directly attacking, subtly insinuate or cast doubt on the “Indonesia Emas 2045” narrative amidst the rampant corrupt practices revealed. The irony works by highlighting the glaring contradiction between the lofty ideals of the nation's future and the harsh reality of rampant corruption. As such, the ironic comment persuasively invites society to doubt the foundation towards an “Indonesia Emas”. If the issue of corruption is not taken seriously, it can raise critical awareness and urge real action.



45/**Indonesia sangat makmur**/Debate and Discussion/
(Indonesia is very prosperous)

In the context of LKI, the ironic comment “Indonesia sangat makmur” functions as a form of persuasion that strikes a chord in discussions and debates. Instead of directly criticizing the high rate of corruption, the comment uses a sharp contradiction. By stating “Indonesia sangat makmur” amidst the revelation of

fantastic state losses due to corruption, the comment implicitly highlights how ironic the situation is. The prosperity that should be enjoyed by the people is eroded by corrupt practices. The irony works by exploiting the gap between Indonesia's potential prosperity and the reality of nation budget lose due to corruption. The commentary persuasively invites the society to question the narrative of prosperity that might exist, if fundamental problems such as corruption are not eliminated. In short, the irony of "Indonesia sangat makmur" becomes a devastating satire that raises awareness and urges concrete action to realize real prosperity.

6. *Balancing Praise and Blame*

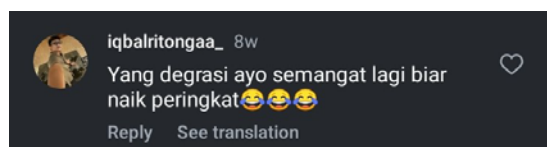
Irony plays an important role in balancing praise and blame by focusing on contradictions. When someone is most praised, irony can gently expose flaws or exaggerate compliments to show that the reality may be different. Similarly, when someone is overly blamed, irony can soften criticism by showing an unexpected truth that changes the perspective. The technique allows people to reassess situations with a more balanced view, preventing extreme judgments and encouraging deeper understanding. The writers found 23 irony comment function as balancing praise and blame, for example;



24/Aku bangga jadi orang Indonesia. I love you Indonesia/Praise and Blame/
(I am proud to be an Indonesian. I love you Indonesia)

The comment "I'm proud to be an Indonesian. I love you Indonesia" in the context of the Indonesian Corruption League post on Instagram shows irony that functions to balance praise and blame. Irony occurs when a statement appears to be praising, but in certain contexts it contains hidden criticism. In this case, the expression of pride in Indonesia contradicts the harsh reality that is being highlighted, namely rampant corruption. By using irony, netizens indirectly express their disappointment with the condition of the country, while maintaining their love

for the country. This technique allows social criticism to be conveyed in a more subtle way, so that it does not only blame but also invites reflection on the existing situation.



30/Yang degradasi ayo semangat lagi biar naik peringkat/Praise and Blame/
(Those who are relegated, let's get excited again so that they can move up the rankings)

The comment “Yang degradasi ayo semangat lagi biar naik rank 😂” in the context of LKI post on Instagram shows irony that serves to balance praise and blame. Literally, the comment sounds like a motivational push for those who have been degraded. However, in the context of LKI, degradation refers to corruption rankings, so this comment becomes a sharp satire against the perpetrators of corruption. By displaying enthusiasm as if they were competing in a league, this irony reveals the absurdity of a situation where corruption seems to be something that is “ranked” and continues to occur. The use of laughing emoticons further strengthens the impression of sarcasm, showing that this comment is not a real compliment, but a criticism of the state of corruption in Indonesia. This irony technique allows netizens to convey social criticism in a lighter but still sharp way, so that it does not only blame but also invites reflection on the existing situation.

CONCLUSION

Irony is frequently employed as an indirect mode of expression on social media, particularly in Instagram comment sections, where someone may post something that seems neutral or good but is actually a sarcastic or critical statement. The writer found 6 functions of irony. Based on the study, the irony may function to subtle the criticism, to intensify condemnation, to express humor and social bounding, to control emotion, to be persuasive tool in debate/discussion, and to balance the praise and blame.

The most frequent function of irony was as a balance between praise and criticism, while the least frequent was irony to strengthen criticism. It shows that netizens tend to use irony as a more subtle and indirect way to convey their opinions. Instead of a frontal attack, they choose for a more diplomatic approach, which allows them to remain critical without appearing aggressive. Meanwhile, the use of irony to amplify criticism is less common due to its more confrontational nature, which has the potential to spark conflict and unproductive debate.

In addition, irony in netizens' comments also serves to convey subtle criticism, present humor, control emotions, and as a persuasive tool in debate or discussion. It shows that irony acts as a social mechanism that allows social media users to express their opinions in a lighter and more controlled way. Humor and irony become effective tools in attracting audience attention and creating emotional engagement, so that the criticism conveyed feels easier to accept.

In the comments section of LKI, the writers found many comments in the form of emoticons such as pictures of flames, pictures of smiling people, pictures of people clapping their hands, pictures of snow emoticons, pictures of the Indonesian flag and others that reflect ironic issues. However, these emoticons are not included in the research data because the data in this study focuses on Igers' comments. This finding may be followed up by other researchers for further research related to irony in the form of emoticons.

From a linguistic perspective, further research can be conducted by examining linguistic patterns in the use of irony on various social media platforms, including how stylistics, metaphors, and pragmatics play a role in the construction of irony. In addition, studies on the differences in irony usage based on user demographics, such as age or cultural background, could provide a more comprehensive understanding. Implicitly, this research has an important contribution to the field of education, especially in learning digital literacy and understanding social communication in online media. By understanding how netizens use irony to express their opinions, educators can teach effective, reflective communication strategies that respect the diversity of perspectives in the digital public sphere.

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