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Paronomasia in Humorous Discourse on Instagram @Queteryo: A Syntagmatic Perspective

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Abstract

Keywords:
Paronomasia;
Syntagmatic;
Humorous;
Social media

The development of digital communication has made humor a medium of linguistic expression that not only serves as entertainment, but also as a means of identity formation and social relationship management in virtual spaces. This study aims to reveal the forms, patterns of occurrence, and functions of paronomasia in digital humor discourse on Instagram using an integrated syntagmatic approach. The focus is on how wordplay and language forms are used to convey humorous meaning while building social interaction among social media users. This study uses a qualitative descriptive method. The data consists of humorous posts on the Instagram account @Queteryo published during the period from January to March 2024. Data collection was carried out through documentation and purposive sampling techniques, then analyzed in terms of discourse by combining syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic studies to identify paronomasia patterns and their communicative functions. The results of the analysis show that paronomasia in digital humor most often appears in imperative and declarative sentence structures by utilizing similarities in sound and word form. Pragmatically, paronomasia functions as a means of conveying satire, persuasive appeals, and indirect criticism that can increase audience engagement. The uniqueness of this study lies in the application of an integrated syntagmatic framework that provides new insights into linguistic creativity, the strengthening of digital literacy, and communicative awareness, especially for the younger generation.

Abstrak:

Kata Kunci:
Paronomasia;
Sintagmatik;
Humoris;
Media Sosial.

Perkembangan komunikasi digital menjadikan humor sebagai medium ekspresi bahasa yang tidak hanya berfungsi untuk hiburan, tetapi juga sebagai sarana pembentukan identitas dan pengelolaan relasi sosial di ruang virtual. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengungkap bentuk, pola kemunculan, dan fungsi paronomasia dalam wacana humor digital di Instagram dengan menggunakan pendekatan sintagmatik yang terintegrasi. Fokus utama diarahkan pada permainan bunyi dan bentuk bahasa dimanfaatkan untuk menyampaikan makna humoris sekaligus membangun interaksi sosial di kalangan pengguna media sosial. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif. Data berupa unggahan humor pada akun *Instagram @Queteryo* yang dipublikasikan selama periode Januari hingga Maret 2024. Pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui teknik dokumentasi dan *purposive sampling*, kemudian dianalisis secara wacana dengan memadukan kajian

sintaksis, semantik, dan pragmatik untuk mengidentifikasi pola paronomasia serta fungsi komunikatifnya. Hasil analisis menunjukkan bahwa paronomasia dalam humor digital paling sering muncul dalam struktur kalimat imperatif dan deklaratif dengan memanfaatkan kemiripan bunyi dan bentuk kata. Secara pragmatik, paronomasia berfungsi sebagai sarana penyampaian satire, ajakan persuasif, dan kritik tidak langsung yang mampu meningkatkan keterlibatan audiens. Keunikan penelitian ini terletak pada penerapan kerangka sintagmatik terpadu yang memberikan pemahaman baru tentang kreativitas linguistik, penguatan literasi digital, dan kesadaran komunikatif, khususnya bagi generasi muda.

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INTRODUCTION

The innate human ability to generate an unlimited number of words and sentences enables individuals to express themselves, share ideas, build social relationships, and achieve various goals in creative and innovative ways. This capacity is facilitated by language, both in its active and passive use, which fosters linguistic creativity, including humorous language. Previous studies have shown that humor plays a vital role in communication by providing emotional support and enhancing interactional effectiveness. The presence of humor contributes to a more relaxed atmosphere, alleviates tension, and reduces boredom, thereby making communication more successful and meaningful. Furthermore, humor fulfills psychological needs by offering joy and pleasure. Essentially, humor functions as a stimulus that evokes laughter or smiles, fostering a sense of happiness in life. This underscores that humor is not merely a form of entertainment but a crucial element in maintaining emotional balance and the quality of communication (Wijana, 2013; Kurniati & Basori, 2023; Rohmadi, 2010). Based on this concept, humor can be regarded as a communicative strategy that creates psychological impact and attracts attention.

Humorous communication techniques are commonly encountered in direct interactions. However, the emergence of social media platforms has broadened opportunities for humor to manifest through discourse. Humorous discourse has become increasingly relevant in the digital age, particularly among technology-oriented generations. Instagram serves as a rich repository of humorous discourse. Haberman (2020) defines discourse as a form of oral or written communication that exhibits cohesion and coherence, linking its parts into a unified and intelligible whole. Humorous discourse does not solely focus on entertainment value but also requires cognitive engagement. Carrell (1997) highlights the complexity of humor processing by

introducing the concepts of “joke competence” and “humor competence” as integral components of a speaker’s linguistic competence. Such cognitive processing must precede a listener’s ability to determine whether a text is humorous.

Several influential studies in the field of humorous discourse, particularly those conducted by Gomez and Madrid (2015), show that humor is often manifested through marked linguistic features, such as irony, mockery, and sarcasm, which are highly dependent on figurative or connotative meanings. From this perspective, the humorous effect is understood to arise when speakers strategically manipulate language to create incongruity, evaluative attitudes, or critical distance from the target of humor. In contrast, Bagezhwar and Zafar (2023) propose a different but complementary view, asserting that humorous discourse is not limited to explicitly figurative or connotative expressions. Humor can also be realized through denotative and seemingly straightforward lexical choices and syntactic constructions, without explicit surface markers of irony or sarcasm. Within this framework, even simple and literal utterances can perform a humorous function when interpreted within specific interactional, cultural, or situational contexts. This difference in perspective gives rise to two distinct analytical orientations. The first emphasizes the role of marked linguistic devices as key indicators of humorous intent, with irony, mockery, and sarcasm serving as central diagnostic tools. The second, by contrast, emphasizes the primacy of context and pragmatic inference, arguing that humorous meaning may be embedded in unmarked, seemingly ordinary language and only becomes apparent through shared background knowledge, expectations, and specific discourse cues.

One prevalent form of humorous discourse is paronomasia, a rhetorical device involving wordplay that exploits ambiguity. Paronomasia relies on polysemy and homonymy, whereby humor arises not only from phonetic similarities but also from divergent meanings (Keraf, 2004; Tarigan, 2013). Understanding such wordplay requires attention to discourse-forming elements within the context of the utterance. The linguistic branch concerned with interpreting meaning in context is pragmatics, particularly speech act theory. Austin (1962) posited that speech acts are not only a means of saying something but also of performing actions through utterances. Searle (1990) further emphasized that directive speech acts function to prompt interlocutors to perform specific actions. Moreover, examining the formation of wordplay inevitably involves syntactic structure, which can be observed in social media contexts such as Instagram.

Aripadono (2020) asserts that the activities facilitated by Instagram reflect the core principles of new media. Ramadina and Rosdiana (2021) further describe social media as an online space that enables users to express themselves, communicate, collaborate, share stories, and build virtual social connections. According to RRI Digital (2024), Indonesia hosts 122 million active Instagram users, representing 47.3% of the total population. Instagram's widespread use in Indonesia has given rise to various forms of communication, including humorous discourse, which serves to attract users by making shared content more engaging, as exemplified by the Instagram account *@quoteryo*.

Since its inception in 2023, *@quoteryo* has amassed 260,000 followers and published 739 posts as of January 2025. Its content primarily consists of quotes addressing issues relevant to Generation Z. Mawardha et al. (2023) note that Gen Z audiences are particularly drawn to posts that resonate with their lived experiences. This strategy reflects an effort to engage Gen Z, a demographic that is highly active on Instagram. Martínez-Estrella et al. (2023) affirm that social media platforms such as Instagram have become central to Gen Z's communication habits, fostering new patterns, routines, and communicative cultures. Therefore, humorous discourse disseminated via Instagram effectively targets and engages its intended audience. Posts by *@quoteryo* not only amplify the reach of their messages but also elicit dynamic responses from followers, thereby enhancing audience engagement through an adaptive, multimodal, and interactive approach tailored to Gen Z's communicative preferences.

Efforts to increase audience response are highly dependent on language use, both in terms of selection and discourse organization. Studies focusing on sentence structure in speech acts remain limited, even though humor has been examined from the perspectives of speech act theory and stylistics. Usman and Fauzan (2020) demonstrate that spontaneous humor in interactions during the conflict in Aceh functioned to commemorate shared experiences, reveal linguistic limitations, ease tensions, and strengthen intergenerational relationships. Sukatman and Jupriono (2021) found that humorous paronomasia on social media arises from shifts in meaning, social specialization, and figurative language, without the influence of foreign languages, and can be classified into absolute and partial homonymy. Sunarni and Mustakim (2023) explain the distinction between paradigmatic and syntagmatic paronomasia in *pun dajare gairaigo* on the Dajarestation website. Meanwhile, Rahmadani et al. (2024)

conclude that the snobbish style in the humor of the Instagram account *Nopeknoivan* deliberately combines a superior and discrediting tone to produce humorous effects rooted in a specific sociocultural context.

Most research on paronomasia in humorous discourse still focuses on linguistic structure and formal meaning-formation strategies. While this approach highlights aspects of sound play and semantic manipulation, it does not fully explain how interpretation is shaped by social context and digital situations. Previous studies on semantic script theory and generative models of humor emphasize that linguistic structure accounts for only part of the process of producing comedic effects (Attardo & Hempelmann, 2020). In online communication, the diversity of participatory contexts and the open nature of audiences make the interpretation of paronomasia highly dependent on pragmatic awareness and multimodal cues, such as emojis and visuals accompanying utterances (Gal, 2019). Various empirical findings show that digital humor functions as an arena for negotiating identity and social solidarity, as its meaning is shaped by relationships among users and online community norms (Agrawal, 2021). In addition, cognitive experiments indicate that the interpretation of wordplay is determined not only by lexical form but also by readers' cognitive ability to connect multiple meanings with the conversational context (Kao et al., 2016). Therefore, research that integrates paronomastic analysis with contextual interpretation is essential for understanding the social functions of humor on social media. Based on this research gap, the present study examines in depth the forms of paronomasia and variations of directive illocutionary acts in humorous discourse on the Instagram account *@quoteryo*, with the aim of broadening understanding of the relationship between language structure, social context, and humor practices among the younger generation in digital spaces.

In linguistics, syntax is a branch of study that examines how language units such as words, phrases, clauses, and sentences are arranged to form meaning. Ramlan (2005) divides syntax into three main levels, namely words, phrases, and sentences. A word is the smallest meaningful syntactic unit, while a phrase is a combination of two or more words that function as a single syntactic unit without a predicate. Phrases are classified based on their core elements, such as nominal, verbal, adjectival, adverbial, and prepositional phrases (Chaer, 1994). These phrases form a linear syntagmatic structure that produces coherence in a sentence. At the highest level, a sentence consists of at least a subject and a predicate and is marked by final intonation. In

generative syntax, complex sentence structures are described hierarchically through Complementizer Phrases (CP) above Inflectional Phrases (IP). Radford (2004) states that CP consists of a complementizer (C) as the head and IP as the complement, with the function of marking syntactic relations between clauses. Semantically, language meaning is not only lexical but also includes grammatical and contextual meaning. Pateda (2001) explains that lexical meaning comes from the dictionary, grammatical meaning arises through morphological and syntactic processes, while contextual meaning is formed from the situation in which the language is used.

Paronomasia is a rhetorical device that utilizes phonological similarity, polysemy, or lexical association to produce humorous, ironic, or emphatic effects (Delabastita, 1996). According to Attardo (1994), this phenomenon deliberately introduces semantic ambiguity to achieve rhetorical impact in various contexts such as literature, advertising, and everyday communication. Types of paronomastic include punning (homophonic or homographic wordplay), antanaclasis (repetition of a word with different meanings), syllepsis (a single word governing multiple syntactic or semantic domains), asteismus (subtle or ironic jest), situational paronomasia (context-dependent), and malapropism (humorous misuse of words). Each type is characterized by a distinctive manipulation of linguistic structures to generate specific effects be it humor, social commentary, or expressive creativity (Nash, 1985; Redfern, 1984).

The primary function of paronomasia lies in its capacity to evoke humor through semantic ambiguity, enhance rhetorical force, and convey subtle criticism (Attardo, 1994). In both literature and media, this technique enriches linguistic expression and influences audience perception through structured verbal play (Delabastita, 1996). For instance, puns in advertising or asteismus in daily conversations illustrate how paronomasia blends entertainment with communicative efficacy. Thus, paronomasia transcends mere wordplay and functions as a strategic tool for creatively and persuasively framing messages (Ibid, 72).

The interdisciplinary approach in contemporary linguistics views discourse analysis as the study of the complex relationship between linguistic elements and the social context in which they are used. Cutting (2002) asserts that understanding linguistic phenomena requires attention to extralinguistic factors, such as the context of communication, cultural background, and the purpose of the speaker's interaction. Fundamentally, discourse exists in two main forms, namely spontaneous and highly context-bound spoken discourse, and more structured and permanent written discourse

(McCarthy, 1991, in Schmitt, 2002). This difference requires different analysis strategies. Furthermore, discourse analysis does not stop at the linguistic elements of the clause level, but also examines text cohesion, discourse structure, and the dynamics of verbal interaction (Paltridge, 2000). Samsuri (1987) emphasizes the importance of spoken discourse as the main source of data because language functions as a means of verbal communication. The variety of spoken discourse, from spontaneous dialogue to culturally rooted narratives, reflects the pragmatic complexity and communicative competence of speakers in specific sociocultural contexts.

In recent pragmatic developments, the orientation of research is no longer limited to language as a mere symbolic system but has shifted to understanding speech as a concrete form of social action. This shift places language as a practice that is always closely related to interests, ideologies, and communication strategies, especially in the public sphere such as political speeches, debates, and institutional interactions. Speech is not considered a neutral medium for conveying meaning, but rather a means to influence, direct, negotiate social positions, and build and reproduce power relations. Therefore, discourse analysis requires the involvement of speech act analysis and its accompanying social impact, because every choice of language contains a specific intention and has the potential to produce pragmatic consequences that need to be revealed systematically.

In the context of strengthening pragmatic theory, the speech act model proposed by John R. Searle (1979) provides an important conceptual framework for explaining how utterances function as social actions, not merely as conveyors of propositions. This model places illocutionary acts as constructions formed by four main elements, namely propositional content, preparatory conditions, sincerity conditions, and essential rules. On this basis, Searle divides speech acts into five main categories: assertive, which represent the speaker's commitment to the truth of the utterance; directive, which are aimed at influencing the actions of the addressee; commissive, which bind the speaker to future actions; expressive, which reflect the speaker's psychological state; and declarative, which through their utterance are capable of changing social status or reality. In line with this, the multidisciplinary pragmatic discourse analysis approach offers a comprehensive perspective in understanding verbal communication practices in various social contexts (Sari & Filda, 2024). Based on this theoretical foundation, this study position's speech acts as the primary instrument for examining how communicative intent is constructed, negotiated, and projected by speakers in the

discourse under study. Searle's model is not merely used as a formal classification scheme, but as an analytical tool for reading interaction strategies, power relations, and social positions mediated through the choice of speech acts in the text. In line with the principles of pragmatic discourse analysis, which emphasize the interrelationship between language, context, and social action, this study aims to identify prominent speech act patterns, dominant pragmatic functions, and the social implications of language use. Thus, the focus of this study is to critically examine how speech acts as formulated in Searle's framework are operated in specific discourses and how these linguistic practices contribute to reflecting and shaping social reality.

METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative method. As explained by Creswell (2014), qualitative research is an in-depth approach aimed at understanding the meanings behind social phenomena. This approach involves direct observation within natural settings, comprehensive data analysis to build theoretical insights, and a focus on the processes occurring within specific contexts. Hallmarks of qualitative research include its flexibility, emphasis on data validity, and reliance on mutual agreement between researchers and participants.

The data in this study consist of textual discourse extracted from the Instagram account *@Queteryo*, serving as the basis for analysis. The data were collected within the period of January to March 2024. Data collection was conducted using screenshot techniques to ensure authenticity, followed by detailed documentation. Only verbal (textual) elements were included, excluding any visual components. The selected humorous discourse during this period received significant user engagement, as indicated by the number of likes and comments. Data was analyzed using the extralingual matching method (*metode padan ekstralingual*), wherein the interpretation of textual meaning is grounded in its contextual environment. The research procedure follows the descriptive qualitative framework established by Sudaryanto (1993), which comprises three systematic stages: data collection, data analysis, and presentation of findings. The data were gathered using observation techniques, accompanied by the note-taking method, in which screenshots of Instagram posts containing text-based humor were recorded, excluding visual elements. Data selection was carried out purposively, targeting only those posts within the specified time frame that generated high user interaction, as measured by the number of likes and comment serving as

indicators of relevance and communicative impact. The researcher functioned as the primary instrument, actively observing, selecting, and interpreting data in accordance with the research objectives. The data analysis stage utilized the extra lingual matching method, which interprets textual meaning by considering external linguistic factors, such as the situational context, cultural background, and shared knowledge between the discourse producer and receiver. The analytical process involved identifying linguistic forms, interpreting meaning based on social context, categorizing types of humor and pragmatic strategies employed, and drawing inductive conclusions about the functions and patterns of humor within digital spaces. The validity of findings was reinforced through theoretical triangulation and user response analysis, thereby strengthening interpretative credibility. Results are presented descriptively using informal presentation modes, in the form of verbal narratives supported by data excerpts, contextual explanations, and in-depth theoretical interpretations. Through this process, the study aims not only to uncover the implied meanings within digital humor discourse but also to explain the underlying social and cultural constructions that shape its emergence within virtual communicative spaces.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Influence of Paronomasia and Speech Acts on Humorous Discourse on Instagram

Based on an analysis of 45 humorous discourse posts uploaded by the Instagram account *@Queteryo*, it was found that the most dominant form of speech was directive illocution, followed using formal paronomasia, particularly homophonic and homographic wordplay. In this context, directive illocutionary acts function to influence readers to respond to humor through specific actions, such as leaving comments or sharing content, thereby strengthening the interaction between the creator and the audience. Meanwhile, formal paronomasia, such as wordplay exploiting phonetic (homophonic) or orthographic (homographic) similarities, serves as the primary choice due to its effectiveness in generating humor through linguistic ambiguity. The combination of these two elements not only enriches the variety of humor but also prompts active engagement from Instagram users in interpreting the double meanings within each joke. Each humorous post on the *@Queteryo* account does not merely serve as entertainment but also stimulates followers' creativity in producing paronomasia variants following similar patterns. This phenomenon demonstrates

linguistic imitation, wherein the audience adopts popular humor structures and innovates by applying different vocabulary while retaining the homophonic/homographic mechanism.

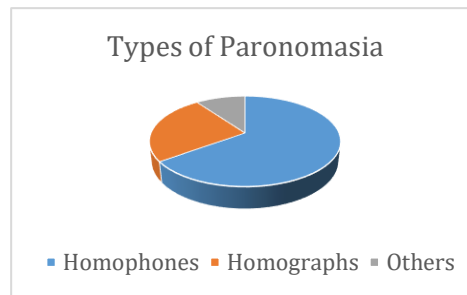


Figure 1. Types of Paronomasia

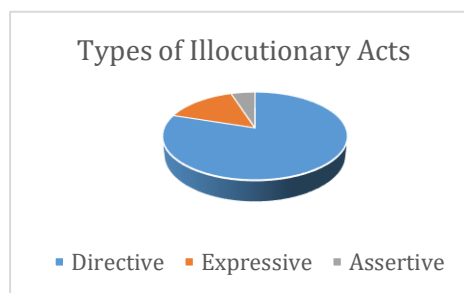


Figure 2. Types of Illocutionary Act

Both diagrams show that the most prominent paronomasia pattern in the data is the omission or utilization of sound similarities through homophones, while homographs and other variations appear much more limited. This indicates that humorous and rhetorical effects are built more on phonological similarities than on similarities in written form. From a pragmatic perspective, this tendency toward homophone-based paronomasia is consistent with the distribution of illocutionary acts in the following diagram, which shows the dominance of directive acts over expressive and assertive acts. Thus, these sound games are mainly used to direct, influence, or encourage the speech partner to take action, such as asking, commanding, or giving advice, because they are easier to grasp and remember. Conceptually, these findings confirm that sound manipulation in paronomasia is not merely aesthetic in nature, but functions as a pragmatic strategy that reinforces the effectiveness of directive illocution through increased listener attention, engagement, and response, while expressive and assertive functions are present as side effects of the use of these homophonic forms.

Analysis of Highest-Engagement Data on Paronomasia and Speech Acts



Figure. 3 (Screenshot) Instagram Post

Based on this data, the utterance “What's the name of the paper? HTS, right?” shows an interrogative pattern that is not standard, but is common in casual conversations on social media. This structure contains two clauses, namely the main clause “what is the name of the printed paper?” with a nominal phrase as the subject and the particle ‘sih’ which indicates the intensity of the utterance (E. K. Brown & J. E. Miller, 2013), and the elliptical clause “hts ya?” which serves a rhetorical function. Its grammatical incompleteness actually emphasizes the spontaneous and familiar characteristics of digital humor. Syntactically, the use of “HTS” instead of “HVS” creates a deviant lexical relationship that triggers humor through syntactic and phonological surprises (Attardo, 2020). From a semantic-pragmatic perspective, the play between ‘HVS’ (type of paper) and “HTS” (Relationship Without Status) presents multiple layers of meaning. Referring to the classification of homophonic paronomasia (Attardo, 1994) and the concept of qualia structure (Pustejovsky, 1995), the difference in the referential domain of these two terms is deliberately exploited for humorous effect. Pragmatically, “hts ya?” is not merely a request for information, but rather a play on words within the framework of directive speech acts (Searle, 1979) that consciously exploits the misuse of terms for comical effect. the utterance is not merely a request for information but a creative play on words. While framed as a confirmation-seeking question typical of directive speech acts the speaker intentionally employs the incorrect term.

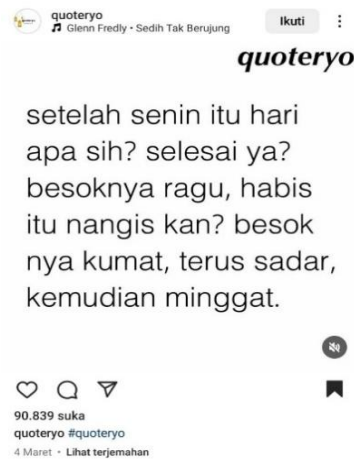


Figure. 4 (screenshot) Instagram Post

Based on the utterance above, the sentence "setelah Senin itu hari apa sih? selesai ya? besoknya ragu, habis itu nangis kan? besoknya kumat, terus sadar, kemudian minggat." demonstrates characteristics of modern syntactic analysis. Structurally, this utterance consists of seven short clauses, most of which comprise only three to four words, alternating between interrogative and declarative sentence types. The opening clause is a rhetorical question ("setelah Senin itu hari apa sih?" / "What day comes after Monday, really?"), serving as a personal and emotional trigger, followed by a series of declarative clauses that depict a rapid sequence of emotional shifts (Biber et al., 2021). In terms of formal syntactic structure, as seen in syntactic tree representations (Radford, 2009), the utterance can be analyzed as a sequence of CPs (Complementizer Phrases) with discourse particles in the head position (C), such as "sih," "ya," and "kan," which govern the core clauses (IP). This structure highlights that, despite appearing informal and non-standard, the utterance still possesses a grammatical framework that can be analyzed systematically. According to Attardo (1994), from a lexical standpoint, the utterance involves paronomasia, a form of wordplay and sound-based ambiguity. This is evident in the phrase "selesai ya?" which phonetically resembles "Selasa ya?" ("Tuesday, right?"), merging literal and referential meanings in a single expression. The overlap between the literal meaning ("Is it over?") and the referential meaning ("Is it Tuesday?") adds interpretive depth and creates humorous, ironic, or emotionally reflective effects, highly dependent on the surrounding context. From semantic and pragmatic perspectives, utterances such as "ragu," "nangis," "kumat," "sadar," and "minggat" may initially appear to describe a simple chronology of everyday events. However, upon closer examination, each word carries a strong emotional charge, representing a turbulent and complex internal state. These

words do not merely refer to actions but also convey rapidly shifting emotional states ranging from doubt and sorrow to emotional breakdown, realization, and finally the decision to leave. This aligns with what Cruse (2011) refers to as connotative meaning, which encompasses not only the lexical meaning but also the emotional associations understood within specific social and psychological contexts, distinct from neutral, literal (denotative) meanings. Furthermore, the utterance "setelah Senin itu hari apa sih?" ("What day comes after Monday, really?") can be classified as a directive speech act in Searle's (1979) theory, taking the form of an information request (interrogative). However, in terms of pragmatic function and context, the utterance is not intended to elicit a literal answer about the days of the week, as both speaker and listener already know the answer.



Figure. 5 (screenshot) Instagram Post

The utterance "isian roti tuh apasih namanya? selesai ya?" ("what's the filling in this bread called? is it over?") presents an interesting example of a linguistic form namely syntax consisting of two elliptical clauses that are structurally incomplete according to formal grammatical standards, yet are highly common and acceptable within the context of informal and interactive digital communication. The first clause, "isian roti tuh apasih namanya?", is an interrogative form that exhibits structural reduction. This question can be reconstructed as "Apa sih nama dari isian roti itu?" ("What is the name of that bread filling?"), indicating the omission of an explicit subject ("itu" / "that") and a rearrangement of word order typical of spoken discourse. Furthermore, the expression "selesai ya?" within this utterance can be classified as an instance of homophonic paronomasia. Homophonic paronomasia refers to a type of wordplay involving two words or phrases that sound similar (homophones) but carry different meanings (Attardo, 1994). In this case, "selesai ya?" phonetically resembles

“Selasa ya?” (“Tuesday, right?”). This phonological resemblance generates semantic ambiguity, as the phrase may be interpreted either as a confirmation that something has ended (“is it finished?”), or as a temporal question (“is it Tuesday?”).

Denotatively, the utterance “isian roti tuh apasih namanya? selesai ya?” appears to be a light, food-related inquiry. However, beneath its surface simplicity lies a complex layer of meaning that can be examined through semantic and pragmatic analysis. According to Cruse’s (2011) theory of semantic prosody, words or phrases do not merely carry lexical meanings but also accumulate emotional charges and speaker attitudes based on their usage across various contexts. In this case, the phrase “selesai ya?” exhibits referential ambiguity: literally, it could signal the closing of a discussion about a bread filling, but connotatively, it may imply emotional exhaustion or signal the end of a relationship or issue an interpretation commonly found in interpersonal discourse on social media. From a pragmatic perspective, based on Searle’s (1979) speech act theory, the utterance represents an expressive speech act that implicitly conveys the speaker’s emotional state. However, on a connotative level, it also serves as a directive speech act, in the form of an information request. Its primary illocutionary function, however, is to express the speaker’s internal condition, such as confusion, fatigue, or even concealed despair, wrapped in a tone of humor or sarcasm. Pragmatic markers like “tuh”, “sih”, and “ya” serve not only to soften the utterance but also to invite and engage the interlocutor, functioning as cues for interactional involvement. Thus, through such utterances, the speaker is not merely expressing a message but also seeking to elicit the creative participation of the addressee.



Figure. 6 (screenshot) Instagram Post

The utterance “kalo mau nge charger hp tuh dicolokin kemana sih? lost contact ya?” (“if you want to charge your phone, where should you plug it in? lost contact?”)

illustrates the structure of a compound sentence composed of two distinct clauses: an interrogative clause (“dicolokin kemana sih?”/“where should it be plugged in?”) and a declarative clause (“lost contact ya?”/“lost contact, huh?”). Both clauses exhibit characteristics of informal spoken language using ellipsis (omission of sentence elements) and clipped word forms. According to Ramlan's (2005) syntactic framework, the interrogative clause demonstrates a passive construction with an omitted subject (“dicolokin” functioning as the predicate and “kemana” as a directional adjunct), along with a word order that does not conform to the standard subject predicate object structure. The particle “sih” serves as an extra-clausal element that intensifies the question, signaling its conversational and informal nature. At the semantic level, this utterance involves paronomasia, or wordplay, which leverages homophony and lexical ambiguity. The phrase “lost contact ya?” can be interpreted in two ways: first, as a literal expression referring to a loss of interpersonal connection, and second, as a technical term denoting a disconnected power supply during phone charging. According to Attardo (1994), such ambiguity is a hallmark of linguistic humor, arising from the overlap between denotative and connotative meanings, thereby generating humorous effects.

Furthermore, as Cruse (2011) notes, lexical choices such as “dicolokin” and “lost contact” not only carry literal meanings but also reflect elements of popular culture and the communication habits of the digital generation. The use of these expressions reinforces the social dimension of the utterance, illustrating how language evolves in tandem with technological developments and changing modes of interaction in society. From a pragmatic perspective, this utterance functions both as a directive and an expressive speech act. In Searle's (1979) theory, the question “dicolokin kemana sih?” formally constitutes a request for information. However, in context, it functions more as a rhetorical or even a pretended speech act, since both speaker and interlocutor already know the answer (i.e., the electrical outlet). The humor arises from the incongruity between the hidden intent and the linguistic form, consistent with Grice's (1975) principle of relevance. Thus, this utterance not only reflects linguistic creativity, but also captures the dynamic nature of social interaction within virtual spaces.



Figure. 7 (screenshot) Instagram Post

The utterance “kalo chatnya udah dibales: hm, wk, sip, ok, gpp, apalagi cuma diread, mending ke dapur ambil telur terus dadar diri” (loosely translated: “if your message gets responses like: hm, wk, sip, ok, gpp, or worse, just gets read, you’d better go to the kitchen, grab some eggs, and make an omelet of yourself”) exemplifies a compound sentence construction consisting of two primary components: (1) an enumeration of minimal chat responses (“hm, wk, sip, ok, gpp”) and (2) an absurd imperative clause (“mending...dadar diri”). According to Ramlan’s (2005) syntactic framework, this structure reflects the features of informal spoken language using ellipsis and lexical truncation. The main clause, “kalo chatnya udah dibales” (“if the message has been replied to”), functions as a conditional sentence with an implicit subject, while the list of responses forms a series of elliptical Tense Phrases (TPs), each of which may be expanded into full clauses (e.g., “hm” implying “I’m thinking”). The final imperative clause, “dadar diri” (literally “to omelet oneself”), exhibits syntactic deviation by replacing a standard expression (such as “make an omelet”) with a humorous and unconventional construction. This syntactic irregularity, viewed through Radford’s (2009) framework of Head Movement and Adjunction in Complementizer Phrase (CP) theory, highlights a deliberate manipulation of syntactic rules for expressive effect. Semantically, the utterance employs paronomasia form of wordplay through its blending of literal and figurative meanings. The phrase “dadar diri” conveys ambiguity between its literal interpretation (a culinary action) and its idiomatic implication (a hyperbolic expression of emotional resignation or self-directed humor). In line with Attardo’s (1994) theory of script opposition, this utterance juxtaposes two incongruent conceptual frames: digital communication (marked by minimalistic replies) and domestic activity (cooking), thereby producing semantic incongruity as a source of humor. The phrase “dadar diri” serves as a pivot word, simultaneously invoking both a literal and metaphorical domain, and exemplifies creative polysemy and lexical ambiguity. Lexical reductions such as “wk” (a shortened form of “wkwk”, meaning laughter) and “gpp” (“nggak apa-apa,” meaning “it’s

okay”) reveal typical features of digital language, where phonetic approximations and abbreviations shape informal discourse. The syntactic ambiguity is intentionally crafted to amplify the utterance’s humorous impact.

From a pragmatic perspective, the utterance functions predominantly as an expressive illocutionary act (Searle, 1979), used to articulate the speaker’s psychological attitude toward unsatisfying digital interactions. The speaker expresses disappointment and frustration using three rhetorical strategies: (1) the exaggerated listing of minimal responses (“hm, wk, sip, ok, gpp”), reflecting dissatisfaction with the interaction’s quality; (2) the clause “apalagi cuma diread” (“especially if it’s just read”), which implicitly criticizes the interlocutor’s passive behavior; and (3) the absurd imperative “dadar diri”, which operates as a metaphor for the futility and emotional toll of one-sided communication. As an expressive act, this utterance aligns with Searle’s categories of behabitives (statements reflecting attitudes toward social behavior) and expressive verdictives (evaluative judgments), in which the speaker not only expresses emotion but also critiques prevailing norms of digital communication.



Figure. 8 (screenshot) Instagram Post

The statement “What is the main ingredient in chili sauce that makes it spicy? Tired, huh?” appears to be an informative question, but it actually serves a rhetorical function to provoke humor. Syntactically, the main clause “what is the main ingredient that makes sambal spicy?” forms a complex interrogative sentence with the relative clause “that makes it spicy” as a noun modifier for sambal. According to Ramlan (2005), this structure indicates a subordinate clause that provides information about the noun in the main clause. The presence of the question word “what” and the phrase “is it called” marks the process of nominalization in a non-standard interrogative pattern that is

common in informal speech. Semantically, humor arises from shifts in meaning and ambiguity. In line with Alan Cruse (2011) in *Meaning in Language*, the phrase “makes it spicy” extends from the sensory realm (spicy taste) to the psychological realm (tension or fatigue). The word “tired” functions as a lexical pivot that bridges denotative and connotative meanings, so that it is this meaning mismatch that drives the humorous effect. Furthermore, based on Attardo’s (1994) framework, the utterance contains paronomasia, particularly homophonic punning. The final question “cape ya?” (“tired, huh?”) is phonologically identical to “cabe ya?” (“chili, huh?”), the expected logical answer to the question regarding the spicy ingredient. This intentional phonetic ambiguity subverts the audience’s semantic expectations, replacing the anticipated answer (“chili”) with an unrelated but sound-alike word (“tired”), producing humor through semantic misalignment. This is consistent with incongruity theory, which posits that humor emerges from cognitive dissonance and semantic surprise. Pragmatically, this utterance constitutes a directive illocutionary act, particularly in the form of a rhetorical question. Although structurally framed as a request for information (“What’s it called?”), within the context of social media communication which tends to be monologic and performative the question is not intended to elicit a literal answer. Instead, it serves as a humorous device aimed at eliciting emotional responses such as laughter or amusement. In terms of Searle’s (1979) speech act theory, the utterance’s illocutionary force lies in subtly guiding the audience’s attention toward a predetermined answer, while the perlocutionary effect is the generation of humor through semantic misdirection. Overall, this discourse illustrates how linguistic devices such as paronomasia and illocutionary acts can be creatively employed to produce humor, reinforce social bonding, and reflect the adaptability of language within informal digital interactions.

CONCLUSION

Based on an analysis of humorous discourse on the Instagram account *@Queteryo*, this study confirms that paronomasia, particularly through homophones and homographs, is a key element in creating humorous effects. The findings do not stop at sound and meaning games, but also reveal complex pragmatic work, namely the combination of wordplay with implicit speech acts such as rhetorical questions that involve audience interpretation. Digital humor thus functions as a space for social interaction that unites linguistic, cognitive, and affective dimensions. For Generation Z

as the dominant audience, humor based on linguistic ambiguity and popular cultural references is considered interesting and reflects their digital and linguistic literacy. The study's objective of revealing the link between linguistic creativity and social interaction has been achieved, while also contributing to the study of digital pragmatics and interdisciplinary linguistics, and opening up opportunities for cross-platform research and application in strengthening language and digital literacy.

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