

A Pragmatic Study of the Discourse of Sarcasm on X

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Abstract: This research explores the pragmatic functions and discourse strategies of sarcasm on X (formerly twitter), focusing on how users employ sarcasm to express criticism humour, resistance, and social commentary. Through a qualitative analysis of tweets, this research investigates how sarcasm operates within the constraints of twitter's format and how context, shared knowledge, and implicature shape the interpretation of sarcastic content. The purposively selected ten tweets within the Nigerian X space and pragmatically analyzed the context of their usage. The study further corroborates the fact that sarcasm allows users to express dissent, frustration, or disappointment in a way that is both creative and thought-provoking. Also established in this study is the presence of speech acts in sarcastic tweets.

Keywords: Pragmatics, discourse, sarcasm, humor, irony Twitter, speech acts, relevance theory.

INTRODUCTION

The rise of social media has transformed the way people communicate, interact and share information. Twitter, in particular, has become a significant discursive space where users share their thoughts, opinions and experiences in real time. Sarcasm is a prevalent feature of online discourse on twitter, used to convey humor, irony, and critique. This research explores the pragmatic functions and discourse strategies of sarcasm, focusing on how users employ sarcasm to express criticism, humor, resistance and social commentary. The study aims to investigate how sarcasm operates within the constraints of Twitter's format and how context, shared knowledge, and implicature shape the interpretation of sarcastic content. The relationship between discourse, pragmatics and sarcasm is more defining, relying on one another for the purpose of this research. Meaning at the discourse level of sarcasm is beyond the surface level and could involve the use of inference and implicature and or contextual factors.

The importance of this study cannot be overemphasized because even though the use of sarcasm is mainly for humour, on X (twitter), the concept seems to take a more direct approach and even filters into sociopolitical or socioeconomic problems of the country. Identifying sarcasm in written form is controversial because it lacks tone, emphasis, stress and intonation. In this light, certain writing form are used to represent them, making these writing forms sarcastic markers. However, before this is applied, the context in meaning must suit the relationship between the writer and their audience and the history they

share. This implies that the message is sarcastic only when understood and acknowledged as sarcasm beyond the surface meaning by the receiver. Sarcastic detection in general is interesting and a relevant research field because sarcasm is a really common phenomenon. One out of ten things we say to our friends is not meant to be literal (Bakker, 2015). In spoken language, sarcasm is easy to identify and analyze because there are subtle clues that give information of whether a sentence is sarcastic or not. Also, pragmatic functions give information that helps the recipient of an utterance understand what the sentence means and what the speaker wants to communicate.

Pragmatic information is not limited to speech; it is possible to have pragmatic markers in written texts. For example, in social media and text message services, features like emoticons are used quite often to give clues about how an utterance should be understood (Dresner and Herring 2010). Therefore, pragmatic function is useful in expressing intended meaning.

The concept of discourse has gained wide circulation and recognition in the education, academics, journalism and socio-political environments. According to Muzaffar (2024), discourse is one of the most common and poly semantic concepts of the humanities, the subject of which is the functioning of language, communication and their connection to social development like social media. Therefore, we can say discourse refers to a unit of language that is larger than a sentence, often used to describe a

stretch of language in use whether spoken or written. Discourse analysis examines how language functions in social contexts including the structure, purpose and effects of communication.

Discourse when closely linked to pragmatic analysis, provides the materials and contexts for pragmatic analysis and pragmatic analysis in turn helps understand how discourse is used to convey meaning, achieve goals, and create social relationships.

Sarcasm is a form of speech or writing that uses irony, understatement, mocking language to convey contempt, disdain or annoyance. It often involves the opposite of what one truly means, with the intention of being humorous, critical, or provocative. Sarcasm can sometimes be challenging to detect, especially in written communication, as it relies on tone, context and shared understanding of the speaker and listener. Discourse is the platform where sarcasm is expressed and negotiated. In discourse, sarcasm can be used to convey humor and irony, criticize or mock and create a social bond. Pragmatic analysis helps identify sarcasm markers, speaker intention and interpretation and inference. Pragmatic analysis can reveal how sarcasm is used strategically in discourse to achieve specific goals like social critique, relationship management and emotional expression; therefore, we can say the relationship between discourse, pragmatic analysis and sarcasm is interconnected. Discourse provides the context for sarcasm, pragmatic analysis helps understand how sarcasm is used and interpreted in discourse and sarcasm relies on the nuances of discourse and pragmatic principles to convey its intended meaning.

By examining the relationship between these three concepts, researchers can gain deeper understanding of how language is used in social contexts to convey meaning and negotiate social norms.

The aim of the study is to explore how sarcasm is constructed, conveyed and interpreted within the unique context of this social media platform. This study examines the differences in sarcastic contextual meaning within the platform, the forms, functions and or strategies used to express sarcasm and how shared history plays a role in the interpretation of sarcasm among other factors. The specific objectives of the study include to;

i. examine the pragmatic strategies, functions and markers used to convey sarcasm on X;

ii. discuss the ways in which sarcasm is expressed and interpreted in low context, text-based medium;
iii. explain the discourse functions of sarcasm on X and its communicative implications.

RELATED LITERATURE

Social media communication has revolutionized the way people interact, share information and form relationships. Social media refers to web-based applications that promote the creation and exchange of user-generated content. Its vast, informal network of online venues that can be used for various purposes, such as family celebration, political campaigns, charitable promotions, health support groups, and more. The concept of social media began taking shape in the 1980s with the advent of the internet and email. Email and online bulletin boards enable people to connect and share information. In 1994, the wiki was born, allowing users to collaborate and edit information. In 1997, Sixdegrees, considered the first social networking site, was launched by Andrew Weinreich. Between 2002-2004, Friendster, LinkedIn and Facebook emerged, expanding the concept of social networking. In 2005, YouTube appeared, revolutionizing video sharing. In 2006, Twitter introduced micro-blogging, enabling real-time dialogue and news sharing.

Rise of Twitter as a Discursive Space

Twitter has emerged as a significant discursive space, where users engage in real-time discussions, share information, and express opinions. Let's explore its rise and characteristics. Twitter's design and features contribute to its popularity as a discursive space:

- Real-time updates: Twitter's character limit and instant posting enable users to share brief, timely updates.
- Hashtags: Hashtags categorize and make tweets discoverable, facilitating conversations around specific topics.
- Mentions and replies: Users can engage with each other directly, creating a sense of community and dialogue.
- Retweets and likes: Users can share and endorse others' tweets, amplifying their reach and impact.

Twitter's Discursive Characteristics Include:

- Brevity: Twitter's character limit encourages concise, abbreviated language.
- Interactivity: Twitter's real-time nature and interactive features facilitate dynamic conversations.

- Diversity: Twitter hosts a diverse range of users, including individuals, organizations, and influencers.
- Immediacy: Twitter's real-time updates enable users to respond quickly to events and news.

Twitter is Used for Various Purposes, Including:

- News and information sharing: Twitter is a popular platform for sharing news, updates, and information.
- Discussion and debate: Twitter facilitates discussions and debates on various topics, from politics to entertainment.
- Marketing and advertising: Businesses use Twitter to promote products, services, and brands.
- Community building: Twitter enables users to connect with others who share similar interests and passions.

Twitter's Impact is Evident in:

- Shaping public opinion: Twitter can influence public opinion and shape cultural narratives.
- Facilitating social movements: Twitter has played a role in various social movements, enabling users to mobilize and organize.
- Providing real-time information: Twitter provides instant updates on news, events, and emergencies.
- Despite its benefits, Twitter also faces challenges and limitations, such as:
- Misinformation and disinformation: Twitter can spread false information quickly.
- Harassment and abuse: Twitter users may experience harassment and abuse.
- Character limit: Twitter's character limit can constrain complex discussions.

Overall, Twitter's rise as a discursive space reflects its unique features, uses, and impact. As a platform, Twitter continues to shape online communication and influence public discourse.

Relevance of Sarcasm in Online Discourse

Sarcasm is a prevalent feature of online discourse, particularly in social media, forums, and comment sections. Its relevance can be seen in several aspects. Sarcasm serves various functions in online discourse, including:

- Criticism and social commentary: Sarcasm can be used to critique societal norms, politics, or cultural practices.
- Humor and irony: Sarcasm can add tone and nuance to online interactions, making them more engaging and entertaining.

- Relationship building: Sarcasm can be used to create a sense of shared humor or irony with others, fostering online relationships.
- Emotional expression: Sarcasm can be a way to express frustration, annoyance, or other emotions in a more subtle or indirect way.

Sarcasm in Online Discourse has Several Characteristics, Including:

- Linguistic features: Sarcasm often involves specific linguistic features, such as hyperbole, understatement, or irony.
- Contextual dependence: Sarcasm relies heavily on context, shared knowledge, and inference.
- Tone and intent: Sarcasm can be challenging to interpret, as tone and intent may not be immediately clear.

The Use of Sarcasm in Online Discourse has Both Benefits and Drawbacks:

- Benefits: Sarcasm can add humor, creativity, and nuance to online interactions, making them more engaging and memorable.
- Drawbacks: Sarcasm can be misinterpreted, leading to confusion or conflict. It can also be used to belittle or mock others, which can be hurtful or alienating.

Interpreting Sarcasm in Online Discourse can be Challenging Due to:

- Lack of nonverbal cues: Online communication often lacks nonverbal cues, such as tone of voice, facial expressions, and body language, which can help disambiguate sarcasm.
- Cultural and linguistic differences: Sarcasm can be culturally or linguistically specific, making it difficult for users from different backgrounds to understand.
- Contextual ambiguity: Sarcasm can be context-dependent, and without sufficient context, it may be difficult to determine whether a statement is meant sarcastically or not.

Sarcasm is a complex of online discourse, serving various functions and presenting both benefits and drawbacks. Understanding sarcasm in online communication requires attention to linguistic features, context, tone, and intent. By recognizing the role of sarcasm in online discourse, we can better navigate online interactions and communicate more effectively.

Sarcasm

Sarcasm is a form of speech or writing that uses irony, understatement, or exaggeration to express contempt, disdain, or annoyance. It often involves saying something that is opposite of what one truly means, with the intention of being ironic or mocking. Sarcasm has several key characteristics, including:

1. Irony: Sarcasm often involves irony, where the words used convey a meaning that is opposite of their literal meaning.
2. Tone and intent: Sarcasm relies heavily on tone and intent, which can be conveyed through language, facial expressions, or body language.
3. Contextual dependence: Sarcasm is often context-dependent, requiring shared knowledge or understanding of the situation to interpret correctly.
4. Emotional expression: Sarcasm can be used to express a range of emotions, including annoyance, frustration, or amusement.

There are Several Types of Sarcasm, Including:

1. Verbal sarcasm: Sarcasm that is expressed through spoken language.
2. Written sarcasm: Sarcasm that is expressed through written language, such as in text messages, emails, or social media posts.
3. Situational sarcasm: Sarcasm that arises from a particular situation or circumstance.

Sarcasm can serve various functions, including:

1. Social commentary: Sarcasm can be used to critique societal norms, politics, or cultural practices.
2. Humor and irony: Sarcasm can be used to add humor or irony to language, making it more engaging or memorable.
3. Emotional release: Sarcasm can be used to express frustration, annoyance, or other emotions in a more subtle or indirect way.
4. Relationship building: Sarcasm can be used to create a sense of shared humor or irony with others, fostering relationships.

Sarcasm can be challenging to interpret, particularly in online communication where tone and intent may not be immediately clear. Additionally, sarcasm can be culturally or linguistically specific, making it difficult for people from different backgrounds to understand. Sarcasm is a complicated and multiple featured phenomenon that involves irony, tone, and context. It can be used to express a range of emotions and attitudes, and can serve various functions in language and communication. Understanding

sarcasm requires attention to its characteristics, types, and functions, as well as its potential challenges and limitations.

Sarcasm and Irony have close relatedness and often times are mistaken for one another. Therefore, it is important for the purpose of this study to try and show distinction between the two even though sometimes they meet at cross roads in linguistics analysis.

Irony

Irony is a figure of speech or a situation in which there is a discrepancy or incongruity between what is expected and what actually happens. It can be expressed through language, actions, or situations, and is often used to convey meaning, critique, or humor. There are several types of irony, each with its own unique characteristics:

1. Verbal Irony: This type of irony occurs when the words used convey a meaning that is opposite of their literal meaning. For example, saying "What a beautiful day!" on a rainy day.
2. Situational Irony: This type of irony occurs when the opposite of what is expected to happen occurs, often due to circumstances or fate. For example, a fire station catching on fire.
3. Dramatic Irony: This type of irony occurs when the audience or reader knows something that the characters in a story do not know, creating a sense of tension or irony. For example, in *Romeo and Juliet*, the audience knows that Romeo has taken a potion to make him appear dead, but the characters in the story do not. One of the ways to distinguish irony from sarcasm is by its characteristics.

Irony often involves:

1. Incongruity: A discrepancy or mismatch between what is expected and what actually occurs.
2. Contrast: Irony often involves a contrast between what is said and what is meant, or between what is expected and what actually happens.
3. Ambiguity: Irony can be ambiguous, requiring the reader or listener to interpret the intended meaning.

Irony can serve various functions such as criticism and social commentary, humor and satire and emotional expression

Irony can be found in various forms of literature, art, and everyday life, including:

1. **Literary Works:** Irony is often used in literature to create complex characters, plot twists, or themes.
2. **Everyday Conversations:** Irony is commonly used in everyday conversations to add humor, nuance, or emphasis to language.
3. **Satire and Parody:** Irony is often used in satire and parody to critique or mock societal norms or cultural practices.

Irony is an important concept because it adds complexity to language and communication creates humor by highlighting contradiction in a situation and encourages critical thinking. Irony has its challenges such as misinterpretation, requirement of context and its ability to be culturally specific. Irony is an interestingly compounded concept that involves a discrepancy or incongruity between what is expected and what actually occurs. It can be expressed through language, actions, or situations, and is often used to convey meaning, critique, or humor. Understanding irony requires attention to its various forms, functions, and characteristics.

Pragmatics

Pragmatics is the study of how language is used in context to communicate effectively. It examines the relationship between language, users, and context, and how these factors influence meaning and interpretation. Some key concepts in pragmatics include:

1. **Context:** The situation, environment, and background knowledge that influence language use and interpretation.
2. **Inference:** The process of drawing conclusions or making inferences based on language and context.
3. **Implicature:** The implied meaning that goes beyond the literal meaning of words.
4. **Speech acts:** The actions performed through language, such as requesting, promising, or apologizing.

Pragmatics encompasses various areas of study, including:

1. **Discourse analysis:** The study of language in use, including conversation, narrative, and institutional discourse.
2. **Conversation analysis:** The study of talk-in-interaction, including turn-taking, sequencing, and repair.
3. **Politeness theory:** The study of how language is used to show respect, courtesy, and consideration for others.

Pragmatics has various applications in fields such as Communication disorders, Language teaching and Cross-cultural communication:

Pragmatics is essential for effective communication, as it helps us:

1. **Understand implicit meaning:** Pragmatics helps us infer meaning that goes beyond literal language.
2. **Navigate social interactions:** Pragmatics informs our understanding of social norms, politeness, and relationships.
3. **Communicate effectively:** Pragmatics enables us to use language appropriately in context, taking into account the audience, purpose, and situation.

Pragmatics is a vital aspect of language study, focusing on the relationship between language, users, and context. By understanding pragmatics, we can better appreciate the complexities of human communication and improve our ability to communicate effectively in various contexts.

Discourse

Discourse refers to the use of language in social contexts to convey meaning, express ideas, and construct reality. It encompasses various forms of communication, including spoken and written language, and can be found in different settings, such as everyday conversations, academic writing, media, and institutions. Discourse has the following characteristics

1. **Contextual dependence:** Discourse is shaped by the context in which it occurs, including the social, cultural, and situational factors.
2. **Social construction:** Discourse is a social construct, created and negotiated by individuals and groups through language and interaction.
3. **Meaning-making:** Discourse is a means of making meaning, conveying ideas, and constructing reality.
4. **Power dynamics:** Discourse can reflect and reinforce power dynamics, social hierarchies, and relationships.

There are various types of discourse, including:

1. **Spoken discourse:** Face-to-face conversation, dialogue, and discussion.
2. **Written discourse:** Texts, articles, books, and other forms of written communication.
3. **Institutional discourse:** Discourse that occurs within institutions, such as education, law, or healthcare.
4. **Media discourse:** Discourse that occurs through media, such as news, advertising, or entertainment.

Discourse serves various functions, including:

1. Communication: Discourse is a means of conveying information, ideas, and attitudes.
2. Socialization: Discourse plays a role in socializing individuals into groups, communities, and cultures.
3. Identity construction: Discourse can be used to construct and negotiate identities, including personal, social, and cultural identities.

Theoretical Leaning

This study leans towards different pragmatic theories, including Gricean pragmatics, speech act theory, and relevance theory. These theories provide a useful lens for understanding the pragmatic strategies and discourse functions of sarcasm on X.

Speech Act Theory: Speech act theory provides a useful framework for understanding sarcasm. According to Austin (1962) and Searle (1969), speech acts are actions performed through language, such as asserting, questioning or promising. Sarcasm can be seen as a form of indirect speech act, where the speaker's intended meaning is different from the literal meaning of the words.

Grice's Cooperative Principle and Conversational Maxims: This theory was propounded in 1975 and it posits that speakers and listeners cooperate to achieve effective communication. The principle is guided by four conversational maxims: Quality, Quantity, Relevance, Manner. Sarcasm often involves flouting these maxims, particularly the maxim of Quality, to generate implicature and convey meaning

Relevance Theory: This theory was propounded by Sperber & Wilson in 1995, it provides another useful framework for understanding sarcasm. According to this theory, communication is guided by the principle of relevance, which assumes that speakers aim to convey meaning that is relevant to the listener. Sarcasm can be seen as a form of relevant inappropriateness, where the speaker's intended meaning is different from the literal meaning of the words.

Previous studies have shown that

- Certain suggested features are highly applicable in understanding the pragmatic

properties of sarcastic language and sarcastic intention is delivered as a positive overstatement of utterances. (Chubaryan & Daniel Yan, 2022)

- The nature of the originating posts in line with speech act classification were also found to be expressive and assertive. (Joshua, 2020)
- Sarcasm transforms the polarity of an apparently positive or negative utterance into its opposite (Ibanez, Muresan & Wacholder, 2011)
- In the context of spoken dialogues, automatic detection of sarcasm has relied primarily on speech related cues such as laughter and prosody (Tepperman et al., 2006)
- Understanding the meaning of jokes and realizing their interactional functions in discourse requires an understanding how implicit meaning is produced, communicated and recognized (Abdulasalam & Ja'afar, 2021)

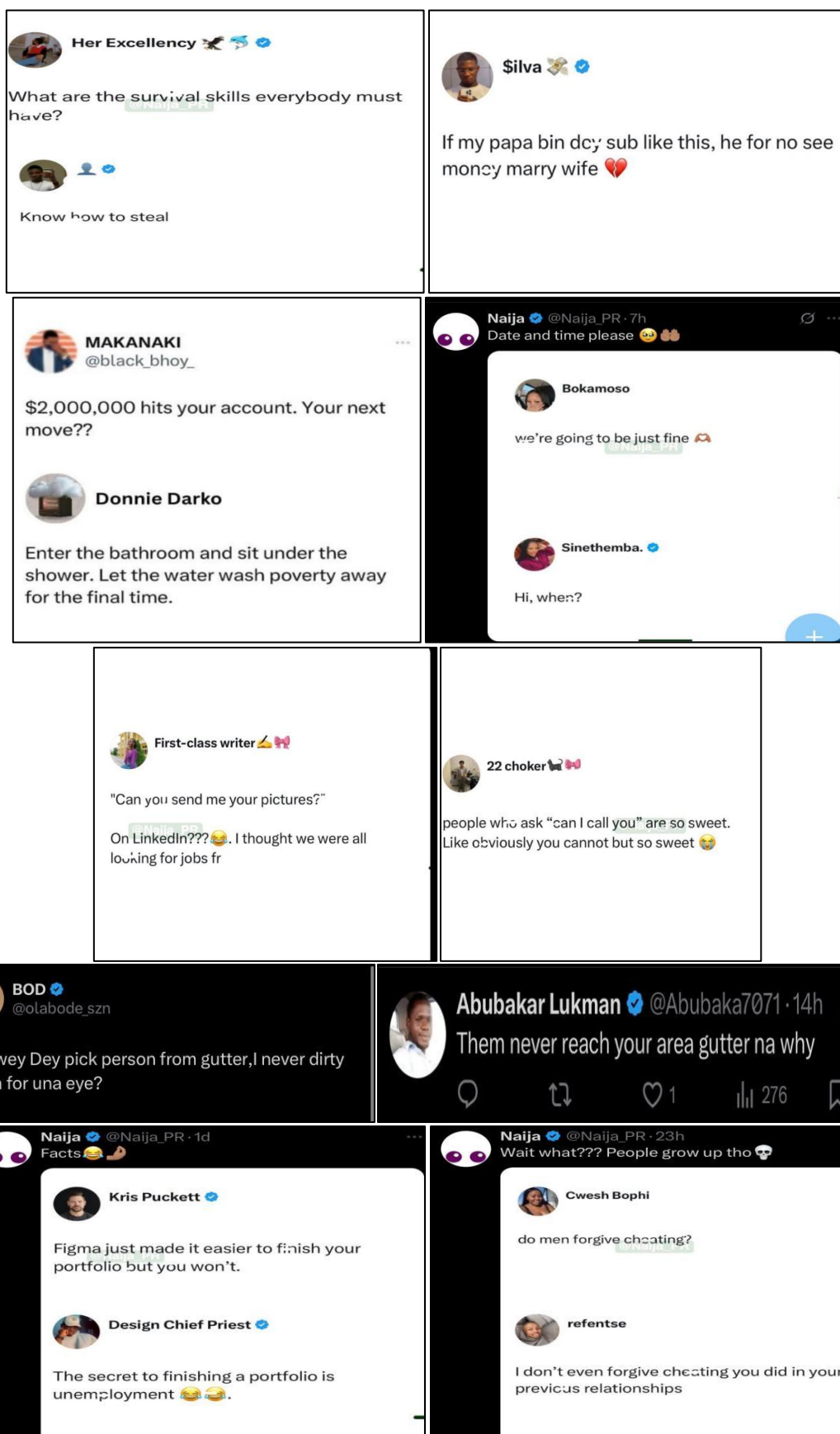
METHODOLOGY

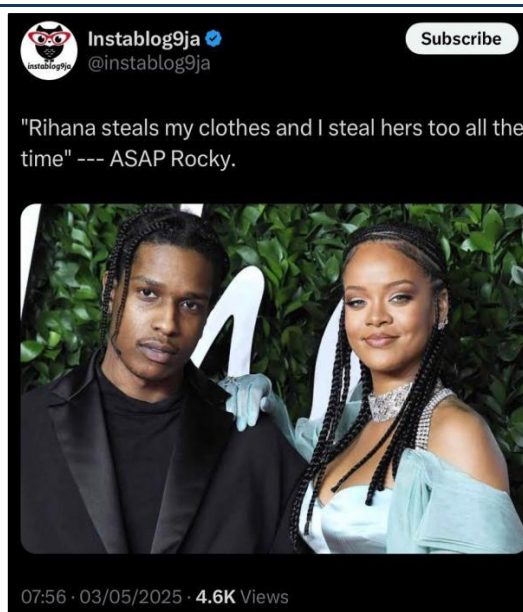
The study on pragmatic analysis of the discourse of sarcasm on X employs a qualitative research design, specifically a discourse analysis approach. This design would allow for an in-depth examination of the language and communication patterns used to convey sarcasm on the platform.

The population of the study consists of Nigerian users of X who engage in online communication using sarcasm. This study will examine various pragmatic functions and styles used in the discourse environment surrounding sarcasm, a mix of other linguistic features like irony is also analyzed to enable the establishment of the differences and similarities between them. The sample size for the study would be 10 tweets and comments containing sarcasm-related context, words and sentence structure. The X users are purposively sampled because they frequently use sarcasm in their online communication.

The method of data analysis involves examining the language and communication patterns used to convey sarcasm on X, analyzing the context, intention, and interpretation of sarcasm in online communication and identifying themes and patterns in the data related to sarcasm and online communication.

DATA ANALYSIS





The first tweet is a sarcastic response to the question of what survival skills everyone must have. The comment "know how to steal" is intended to be humorous or ironic, rather than a genuine suggestion. The comment suggests that knowing how to steal is a necessary survival skill. However, the tone and context suggest that the comment is meant to be sarcastic, implying that stealing is not a desirable or admirable skill. The tweet is referencing the challenges of survival in the country, where some individuals may feel forced to resort to unorthodox means to get by. The tone of the comment is humorous, with the writer using sarcasm to make a point about the preposterous sense of suggesting that stealing is a necessary survival skill. The tweet is mind provoking in the sense that it visualizes the state of society, where some individuals may feel that stealing is a necessary evil to survive. The use of sarcasm highlights the importance of understanding tone and context in online communication. The **second** post is a commentary on the challenges of financial struggles in relationships. The use of Nigerian Pidgin English adds a layer of cultural authenticity. The tweet suggests that if the speaker's father bought so much airtime data as he has done, he wouldn't have had money to marry a wife which is probably his mother. The tone implies sarcasm and humor, suggesting that financial struggles are often made worse by unnecessary expenses. The tweet reflects a broader conversation about financial management and priorities. The use of Nigerian Pidgin English and colloquialisms adds to the humor and cultural relevance. The **third** tweet presents a hypothetical scenario where someone

receives a large sum of money (\$2,000,000) and asks what the person's next move would be. The comment "enter the bathroom and sit under the shower, let the water wash poverty away for the final time" is a sarcastic response. The comment suggests a bizarre action of sitting under a shower to wash away poverty. The tone and context indicate sarcasm, implying that receiving such amount of money would require a show of starting afresh or a chapter in life. The use of an outlandish action (sitting under a shower) highlights the sarcasm. The **fourth** tweet says "we're going to be fine," which is a statement of reassurance or optimism. The comment "Hi when?" seems to be a sarcastic response. The comment appears to be a nonsensical greeting ("Hi when?"). The tone suggests sarcasm, implying the commenter is questioning the timing or certainty of the original statement ("we're going to be fine"). The tweet reflects a conversation about uncertainty, challenges, or future prospects. The tone is sarcastic to make a point. The use of a nonsensical greeting ("Hi when?") adds to the humor and sarcasm. The comment uses sarcasm to critique the original statement's vagueness or optimism. The response employs humor to engage with the topic and challenge the audience's perspective. The **fifth** tweet appears to be a sarcastic response to a request for a picture on LinkedIn. The comment "On LinkedIn??? I thought we were all looking for jobs fr" suggests that the person is surprised by the request, implying that it's unprofessional or inappropriate for the platform. The comment questions the relevance of sending a picture on LinkedIn. The tone and context suggest that the comment is sarcastic, implying that the request is

unnecessary and unprofessional. The tweet is likely referencing the professional nature of LinkedIn, where users are primarily focused on networking and job searching. The tone of the comment is likely to be humorous and slightly annoyed, with the author using sarcasm to express their surprise and skepticism. The use of "???" and "fr" (short for "for real") adds to the sarcastic tone. The **sixth** tweet is a humorous commentary on the phrase "can I call you," often used as a way to ask for someone's phone number or to suggest a phone conversation. The tone is lighthearted and sarcastic. The tweet describes people who ask "can I call you" as sweet. The tone suggests irony and sarcasm, implying that these people are not actually sweet because the request is often insincere. The tweet likely pokes fun at dating or social interactions where this phrase is commonly used. The tone is humorous and sarcastic, using irony to critique the phrase. The use of the emoji adds to the humor and emphasizes the absurdity. The **seventh** tweet appears to be a response to a criticism or accusation, with the author claiming they are not responsible for someone's situation. The comment "them never reach your gutter area na why?" seems to be a sarcastic or response. The comment is sarcastically asking the poster of the tweet to exercise patience as it would soon get to his turn. The tone suggests sarcasm, implying the author is highlighting the selective nature of the criticism or pointing out hypocrisy. The tweet likely reflects a broader conversation about entitlement mentality, privilege, and the general discourse of lifting people out of poverty. The use of "na why" (a Nigerian Pidgin phrase) adds to the conversational tone. The **eighth** tweet mentions that Figma has made it easier to finish a portfolio, but the comment takes a humorous turn by suggesting that the real secret to completing a portfolio is unemployment. The comment says that unemployment is the key to finishing a portfolio. The tone suggests sarcasm and humor, implying that having ample time (due to unemployment) is what allows someone to focus on completing a portfolio. The tweet likely reflects a broader conversation about productivity, time management, and the challenges of balancing work and creative projects. The tone is sarcastic and humorous, using irony to highlight the challenges of finding time to work on creative projects while employed. The use of the emoji adds to the humor and lightheartedness of the comment. The **ninth** tweet asks whether men forgive cheating, and the comment responds with a sarcastic remark. The comment says that the speaker doesn't forgive

cheating, specifically referencing past relationships. The tone suggests sarcasm and playfulness, implying that the speaker is highlighting the double standard or hypocrisy in relationships. The tweet likely reflects a broader conversation about relationships, trust, and forgiveness. The use of a straightforward statement ("i don't even forgive cheating you did in your previous relationships") adds to the sarcasm and playfulness. The **tenth** tweet features a quote from ASAP Rocky about him and Rihanna stealing each other's clothes. The comment, however, takes a sharp turn by referencing the rising cost of basic necessities like bread and fish in Nigeria, implying that Nigerians have more pressing concerns than celebrity fashion trends. The comment mentions the price increase of bread and fish in Nigeria. The tone suggests frustration and sarcasm, implying that Nigerians face more significant challenges than celebrity fashion disputes. The comment reflects a broader conversation about economic struggles and priorities in Nigeria. The tone is sarcastic and critical, using irony to highlight the disconnect between celebrity culture and everyday struggles. The use of "sha" (a Nigerian Pidgin expression) adds to the conversational tone and cultural relevance.

DISCUSSION

Many tweets use sarcasm to comment on societal issues, relationships, and cultural norms. Sarcasm often relies on irony and humor to convey meaning. The tweet about unemployment being the secret to finishing a portfolio uses irony to highlight the challenges of balancing work and creative projects. The meaning of sarcasm is often context-dependent. The tweet about men forgiving cheating uses sarcasm to critique relationship dynamics, with the context of past relationships influencing the interpretation. Sarcasm can be conveyed through tone, language, and punctuation. The use of emojis and phrases like "sha" or "na why" add to the sarcastic tone and cultural relevance. Sarcasm serves various pragmatic functions, including social commentary, critique, and humor. It can be used to engage audiences, convey complex emotions, and challenge societal norms. Cultural relevance: Sarcasm can be culturally specific, with certain phrases, tone, and language use being more prevalent in certain cultures or communities. The tweets analyzed showcase the use of Nigerian Pidgin English and cultural references that add to the sarcastic tone.

The tweets analyzed in this study aligns with the precepts of the speech acts theory of Austin (1962) and Searle (1969). The sarcastic responses to the tweets are indirect speech acts with the intended meanings different from the literal meanings of the initial posts. Also, the comments to the tweets align with the relevant inappropriateness concept of the relevance theory of Sperber and Wilson (1995). On a specific note, in terms of the speech acts; tweets numbers 1, 2,3,6,8 and 10 are *assertions*, for tweet number 4 the initial post is a *promising act* while the sarcastic response is one of *questioning*. Number 5 contains *requesting acts and questioning acts*, 7 has *requesting acts and assertive acts*, and tweet number 9 is *questioning speech acts*.

Sarcasm can be ambiguous, and interpretation may vary depending on the reader's context, cultural background, and personal experiences. This ambiguity highlights the importance of considering context in pragmatic analysis. Sarcasm can be used to challenge power dynamics, critique societal norms, and assert individuality. The tweets analyzed demonstrate how sarcasm can be used to comment on relationships, societal issues, and cultural norms. Understanding sarcasm in digital communication: The analysis highlights the importance of considering context, tone, and language use when interpreting sarcasm in digital communication. The use of culturally specific language and references in sarcasm underscores the need for cultural sensitivity and awareness in communication. The analysis demonstrates the value of pragmatic analysis in understanding the complex meanings and functions of language use in digital communication.

CONCLUSION

Sarcasm is a prevalent and effective tool for social commentary. The tweets demonstrate that sarcasm is a widely used and effective means of commenting on societal issues, relationships, and cultural norms. Sarcasm allows users to express complex emotions, critique societal norms, and engage audiences in a unique and impactful way. The analysis highlights the importance of context in interpreting sarcasm. The meaning of sarcasm can be highly dependent on the context in which it is used, including cultural references, personal experiences, and shared knowledge. Understanding the context is essential to accurately interpreting the intended meaning behind sarcastic language. Sarcasm is a culturally specific phenomenon, the use of Nigerian Pidgin

English and cultural references in the tweets showcases the culturally specific nature of sarcasm. Sarcasm can be deeply rooted in cultural norms, values, and language use, making it essential to consider cultural context when analyzing sarcastic discourse. The analysis reveals that sarcasm serves various pragmatic functions, including social commentary, critique, humor, and emotional expression. Sarcasm can be used to challenge power dynamics, assert individuality. The tweets demonstrate that sarcasm can be a potent tool for critiquing societal norms, challenging power dynamics, and commenting on relationships. Sarcasm allows users to express dissent, frustration, or disappointment in a way that is both creative and thought-provoking.

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