Journal of Language
Volume 8 Number 2, pp: 494-505
e-ISSN: 2685-8878 | p-ISSN: 2655-9080
DOI: https://doi.org/10.30743/jol.v8i2.14436

Exploring Sarcasm in Putu Wijaya's *Guru*: A Sociological Reading

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Article Info
Article history:
Received: October 01, 2026
Accepted: November 05, 2026
Published: November 10, 2026

Keywords:
Guru;
Putu Wijaya;
Sarcasm;
Social critique;
Sociology of literature

ABSTRACT
This study examines sarcasm in Putu Wijaya's short story *Guru* through a sociological reading, focusing on its causes and purposes as a literary device for social critique. Using a qualitative descriptive approach grounded in the sociology of literature and pragmatic theories of sarcasm, the research treats the short story as primary data. The analysis identifies three causes of sarcasm: psychological triggers rooted in fear and pride, emotional responses such as disappointment and anger, and contextual irony that reveals the gap between public praise for teachers and their actual social and economic position. The findings show that sarcasm serves three functions: social critique that exposes materialism and institutional hypocrisy, a rhetorical strategy to shame or persuade characters into conformity, and character revelation that highlights generational conflict and moral tension. The study concludes that Putu Wijaya uses sarcasm not merely to amuse but to provoke reflection about the value of education and the treatment of teachers in Indonesian society.

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1. Introduction

Putu Wijaya is one of Indonesia's leading writers, known for his surrealist writing style full of hidden meanings. His short story *Guru* is a work rich in social criticism presented through unique literary techniques, including the use of sarcasm. Sarcasm is a form of language that takes irony to the extreme to satirize or ridicule something sharply. Unlike irony, which can be more subtle, sarcasm is often caustic and direct, although it still contains humor and social satire. Sarcasm in modern Indonesian literature is relevant to study because it provides an overview of how writers convey social criticism in a subtle yet meaningful way.

In the world of education, the role of a teacher extends far beyond the mere transmission of knowledge; it encompasses the shaping of character, the fostering of critical thinking, and the establishment of a conducive learning environment. According to Bogdan and Biklen (1998), teachers play a pivotal role in constructing meaning through interaction and experience, not merely delivering content. However, in Indonesia—a country rich in cultural diversity and linguistic nuance—teachers are often treated as occupying a lowly position within society, facing disrespect and undervaluation despite their critical role. This societal perception can significantly impact their morale and effectiveness in the classroom. As Ratna (2013) points out, cultural and societal structures heavily influence the valuation of educational roles, particularly the teacher's status.

The methods employed by educators can vary significantly, reflecting both traditional values and contemporary pedagogical approaches. Among these methods, sarcasm emerges as a particularly intriguing and multifaceted tool. Camp (2012) explains that sarcasm operates not only as humor but also as a sophisticated form of pragmatic communication, capable of delivering criticism veiled in wit. While often perceived as a form of humor, sarcasm can also

serve as a mechanism for critique, a means of engagement, or even a strategy for classroom management (Purwanti, Ulinnuha, & Gendroyono, 2025).

This research aims to investigate the use of sarcasm in Putu Wijaya's short story *Guru*, focusing on its implications for understanding social critique in Indonesian literature. By examining the subtleties of sarcastic communication, insights can be gained into how this rhetorical device influences the relationships between educators and students, as well as its potential to enhance or hinder the learning experience. In *Guru*, Wijaya employs sarcasm not only as a narrative device but also as a reflection of the societal expectations and challenges faced by educators, including the pervasive disrespect that undermines their authority and effectiveness.

Previous studies have examined sarcasm in Indonesian literary works. Lailiyah, Ekawati, & Asmara (2019) analyzed the markers and functions of sarcasm in the novel *Cantik Itu Luka* by Eka Kurniawan, finding that sarcasm is dominated by markers of sentimental contradiction and hyperbole used to convey social criticism on issues such as patriarchy and violence. Masrani (2023) explored the form and meaning of sarcasm in the novel *Hari-Hari yang Mencurigakan*, identifying various forms of sarcasm used to criticize social and political conditions. Qholid (2024) analyzed the use of sarcasm in the short story *Negeri Pemuja Koruptor*, finding that sarcasm conveys sharp criticism of the government and rampant corruption. These studies demonstrate that sarcasm is an effective tool for delivering social and political criticism in Indonesian literary works. However, none has specifically examined the causes and purposes of sarcasm in Putu Wijaya's *Guru*, particularly in relation to the educational theme and the treatment of teachers.

Based on the background outlined above, this research identifies the following problems: (1) What causes the sarcasm toward the teacher in Putu Wijaya's short story *Guru*? (2) What are the purposes of using sarcasm in the short story? In line with these research problems, this study aims to explore the causes of sarcasm portrayed in the short story *Guru* and to identify the purposes of sarcasm used in the short story.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Sociology of Literature

The sociology of literature is an interdisciplinary field that examines the reciprocal relationship between literature and society, focusing on how social contexts, cultural norms, and power structures influence literary creation and reception. This approach considers literature as a social phenomenon, shaped by the institutions and individuals involved in its production, consumption, and evaluation. Literary works often reflect the social realities of their time, offering insights into the experiences of marginalized groups and the evolution of social identities. Lowenthal (1948) emphasized that literature serves as a mirror to society, revealing underlying social contradictions and ideologies. Literature reflects the prevailing mood and environment of a society, suggesting that the form and content of literary works are conditioned by the social context in which they are produced.

The production and reception of literature are deeply embedded within social influences. The publishing industry, market demands, and institutional forces such as academia and literary criticism play significant roles in determining which works gain prominence and how they are received by different audiences. Moreover, readers interpret texts through the lens of their own social identities and backgrounds, leading to diverse understandings and appreciations of the same work. In summary, the sociology of literature provides a framework for understanding how literary works are both shaped by and shape the societies in which they exist, highlighting the complex interplay between culture, power, and identity.

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2.2 Sarcasm

Sarcasm is a form of verbal irony in which the speaker conveys a meaning that is intentionally opposite to the literal interpretation of their words, often with a tone that is biting, mocking, or overtly critical. Unlike subtle irony, sarcasm tends to be more direct and forceful, leaving little ambiguity regarding its critical intent. As a rhetorical device, sarcasm functions as a powerful means of expressing discontent, frustration, or social critique. It challenges the status quo by calling attention to absurdities or contradictions within societal norms. In literature, sarcasm is frequently employed not only for its aesthetic or humorous value but also for its capacity to provoke critical thought and confront social injustices head-on. Its effectiveness often relies heavily on the reader's ability to grasp the cultural and contextual undertones embedded in the narrative.

Dinari (2015) identified various types and markers of sarcasm in literary works, providing a foundation for analyzing sarcastic expressions in narrative texts. One of the most prominent Indonesian authors known for employing sarcasm with striking boldness is Putu Wijaya. In his short story *Guru*, sarcasm is not subtly woven into the narrative—it is the backbone of the story's critique. Wijaya does not mask his commentary behind euphemism or indirect suggestion; instead, he exposes the harsh realities of Indonesian society with raw, unfiltered candor. The story addresses the undervaluation of the teaching profession, portraying it as a paradox: a role that is ideologically celebrated as noble and essential, yet economically and socially dismissed as inferior and unworthy of prestige.

The protagonist, Taksu, embodies the tension between personal idealism and a societal structure that prioritizes material success over moral contribution. His choice to become a teacher is met with disdain by his own parents, who equate the profession with poverty and social failure. Through this conflict, Wijaya delivers an unapologetically sharp criticism of a society that measures worth solely in terms of wealth and status, ignoring the long-term cultural and intellectual value that educators provide.

Sarcasm is embedded in nearly every layer of the narrative—within character interactions, their perceptions, and the outcome of the story itself. There is no attempt to soften the critique; on the contrary, the discomfort that arises from reading the story is precisely what makes it effective. Wijaya's use of sarcasm pushes the reader to confront uncomfortable truths about the social order and the often hypocritical values that govern it. His style is confrontational rather than conciliatory, refusing to allow readers the comfort of emotional distance. In this context, sarcasm is not merely a stylistic choice but a deliberate narrative strategy. It drives the thematic core of *Guru*, revealing the contradictions between how society defines success and how it treats those who cultivate the foundations of future generations.

2.3 Causes of Sarcasm

Scholars agree that sarcasm often arises from underlying emotions and social dynamics rather than simple humor. For example, Filik et al. (2016) note that sarcastic language typically serves a communicative function that elicits emotional responses in others that straightforward speech would not. In practice, sarcasm often accompanies feelings of frustration, anger, or disappointment, allowing speakers to express hostility while maintaining an outwardly ironic tone. Syafruddin et al. (2021) report that in Indonesian culture, sarcasm frequently signals negative emotions; speakers use it when they feel angry, annoyed, disappointed, or even when just joking. In their study of Indonesian verbal sarcasm, the authors found that sarcasm is a way of "expressing thoughts and feelings towards a particular problem, event, situation, or object," often in response to problems or disillusionment. Thus,

one cause of sarcasm is the speaker's emotional frustration or disenchantment with a person or situation.

Another recognized cause is a critical attitude toward authority or norms. Kalaba (2014) shows that sarcasm can function as a form of "trenchant satire" to undermine official discourse in societies with limited freedom. In this view, writers or speakers employ sarcastic remarks when formal criticism seems unsafe or insufficient, so they cloak their disdain in ironic wordplay. In short stories or plays, sarcasm often emerges when characters confront oppressive institutions or absurd conventions. This critical orientation aligns with Kalaba's (2014) observation that sarcastic language often "creates an affirmative context in which the domineering structures of the official discourse are undermined."

Together, these expert perspectives suggest that sarcasm in literature is caused by a combination of the speaker's negative emotions (frustration, anger, disenchantment), the desire to indirectly attack or mock authority and social flaws, and the dynamics of familiar relationships where indirect criticism is acceptable. These causes align with common literary analyses: sarcasm often reflects characters' inner dissatisfaction with society or authority, expressed through veiled criticism and humor.

2.4 Purpose of Sarcasm

Sarcasm in the short story *Guru* has a strong purpose in expressing and highlighting the social problems faced by teachers in Indonesia. Not only as an expression of dissatisfaction, sarcasm is used strategically to open readers' eyes to a reality that is often ignored. Through a sharp and pointed style of portrayal, the story raises critical questions: Why are teachers, who are supposed to be role models for society, portrayed so pathetically?

Putu Wijaya does not provide a direct answer but rather encourages readers to investigate the causes of the picture themselves. This creates a space for deep reflection, which not only questions the social status of teachers but also targets the education system, cultural values, and state policies that help perpetuate these conditions. As Hutcheon (1994) states, sarcasm used appropriately can broaden the reader's understanding of structural issues, not just at the individual level. In the short story *Guru*, sarcasm becomes a tool for collective introspection that opens a discourse on how the teaching profession is positioned in the social structure, and why their role is often ignored or underestimated by society and state institutions.

Furthermore, the use of sarcasm in Guru can be understood as a form of social criticism that challenges the contradiction between the ideal image of teachers and their actual position in society. Sarcasm allows writers to communicate criticism indirectly, inviting readers to interpret meanings beyond the literal expressions and recognize the social tensions underlying a narrative. D'Arcey and Fox Tree (2022) examine the diverse strategies through which sarcasm is produced and understood, while Zhu and Filik (2024) demonstrate that the interpretation of sarcasm can be influenced by the social status of the people involved. These perspectives are relevant to Putu Wijaya's portrayal of teachers because the contrast between their expected moral authority and their social circumstances can encourage readers to question established assumptions about the teaching profession. Moreover, Maulana (2021) identifies inequalities associated with differences in teachers' employment status in Indonesia, highlighting how institutional arrangements can contribute to disparities in material conditions and authority. Through its sarcastic portrayal, Guru can therefore be interpreted as exposing the gap between society's expectations of teachers and the realities of their professional lives. Rather than merely creating humor or ridicule, sarcasm functions as a literary strategy for challenging social assumptions, exposing institutional contradictions, and encouraging critical reflection on the relationship between education, authority, and social justice.

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3. Research Method

This study employs a qualitative descriptive design, which is appropriate for collecting open-ended, textual data and understanding meanings in context (Sugiyono, 2012). This study was focused on textual analysis of Putu Wijaya's short story *Guru*. According to Creswell & Creswell (2018), qualitative research collects open-ended, textual data and seeks to understand meanings in context. In this study, the characters and narrative voice of the text serve as the "participants," and their words and actions are the data. The research employs document analysis, treating the story as a cultural setting whose details and language must be interpreted to uncover themes. Data analysis follows Creswell's recommended procedures: after thoroughly reading *Guru*, key sarcastic passages are identified, coded, and grouped into themes that answer the research questions concerning the causes and purposes of sarcasm. The study uses multiple validity strategies to enhance trustworthiness, including rich, thick description of textual examples and clarification of the researcher's potential biases. By triangulating insights from the literature review with textual evidence, the study aims for credibility.

The primary data source is the short story *Guru* by Putu Wijaya, published in *Jawa Pos* on August 5, 2005. This story was selected for its strong use of sarcasm as social commentary, particularly through character dialogue and conflict. All quotes and lexical aspects of the story are analyzed as core data, with no interviews or field observations involved. Secondary data consist of theories related to sarcasm, satirical language, social criticism, and text analysis methodologies, drawn from academic books, journals, and articles. The researcher acts as the main instrument, conducting a layered and in-depth analysis of both the text and its supporting literature. Data collection was carried out through a literature study, which involves reviewing books, literature, records, and reports related to the issue being addressed (Nazir, 1988). The researcher accessed the complete text of *Guru* from the official LPPM Kreativa website and verified its authenticity by cross-checking the digital copy with the original print version from *Jawa Pos*. Every line or sentence that potentially contains sarcasm was identified and marked for deeper analysis. Secondary data were collected from reputable sources such as peer-reviewed journals, textbooks, theses, and online academic resources, using keywords such as *sarcasm in Indonesian literature* and *Putu Wijaya analysis*. Each source was evaluated for credibility, and only relevant and up-to-date literature was recorded.

The data analysis procedure follows a systematic, multi-layered approach. First, the researcher conducted a comprehensive reading of the short story to identify instances of sarcasm with social and ideological implications. Each sarcastic utterance was extracted and coded to identify patterns and recurring themes. Second, the analysis focused on the rhetorical features of sarcasm, such as exaggeration, irony, metaphor, and rhetorical questions, drawing upon linguistic and pragmatic theories proposed by Camp (2012) and Kreuz (2020). Third, the study contextualized each sarcastic instance within Indonesian socio-cultural realities, referencing societal norms, educational paradigms, and public attitudes toward teachers. By applying Ratna's (2013) perspective that literature reflects historical and social values, each sarcastic statement was interpreted through a lens considering both textual and extra-textual dimensions. Finally, the procedure included synthesizing the findings to demonstrate how sarcasm, as a literary device, constructs layered critiques of Indonesian educational and social systems.

4. Discussion

This section presents the portrayal of sarcasm in Putu Wijaya's short story *Guru*. The focus is on the reasons that led the characters to act sarcastically in their verbal interactions

and what those sarcastic remarks accomplish. The main object of analysis is the dialogue between Taksu and his parents, especially the father and mother.

4.1 Causes of Sarcasm

According to Syafruddin et al. (2021), sarcasm is frequently used in Indonesian culture to convey negative sentiments. Speakers employ sarcasm when they are sad, disappointed, angry, or even just making jokes. Personal psychological and emotional irony combine to create the sarcasm in *Guru*.

4.1.1 *Psychological Triggers*

Pedersen (2022) proposed that situations triggering emotional responses or strong memories, sometimes beyond a person's control and related to previous events or trauma, are called triggers in psychology. In this short story, the teaching profession is described as a difficult and unsatisfying job, giving rise to sarcasm related to society's negative perceptions and stigma toward the profession. This is supported by the following quote:

"Gila, masak kamu mau jadi g-g-guru?"

"Are you crazy, you want to be a t-e-a-c-h-e-r?" (Wijaya, 2005:1)

Taksu's father shows strong distrust and rejection of Taksu's decision. This distrust comes from the psychological belief that teachers are considered low in social and economic value and are seen as useless. Sarcasm emerges as a reaction to maintain the parents' expectations and idealism, as shown in the following quote:

"Menjadi guru itu bukan cita-cita. Itu spanduk di jalan kumuh di desa."

"Being a teacher is not an ambition. That's a banner on a dirty road in the village." (Wijaya, 2005:1)

This quote compares teachers to "banners on a dirty street," indirectly demeaning the teaching profession. This sarcasm implies that being a teacher is not something to be proud of, reflecting a psychological trigger because teachers are considered to have an unglamorous job.

"Ngapain jadi guru, mau mati berdiri?"

"Why be a teacher, just to die of boredom?" (Wijaya, 2005:1)

The father's fear and embarrassment about his son's decision give rise to sarcasm. He is angry at the idea that Taksu wants to become a teacher because he feels humiliated.

"Guru itu hanya sepeda tua."

"A teacher is only an old bicycle." (Wijaya, 2005:1)

This sarcasm belittles the teaching profession by using a metaphor. An old bicycle is described as a financial limitation and something outdated. This sarcasm stems from psychological triggers such as negative perceptions and social stereotypes.

"Masak jadi guru? Itu cita-cita sepele banget, itu namanya menghina orang tua."

"You want to become a teacher? That's a very trivial ambition, it's like insulting your parents." (Wijaya, 2005:2)

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This line describes the father's anxiety about status and wounded pride. He feels that becoming a teacher is an insult to the family's expectations. In societies that prioritize material possessions and status, the teaching profession is often looked down upon, so becoming a teacher is considered an insult to the family.

4.1.2 Emotional Responses

Strong emotions such as anger and irritation can also cause sarcasm. Emotions are complex psychological states consisting of subjective experience, physiological response, and behavioral or expressive response (Hockenbury & Hockenbury, 2007). One type of emotional response that conveys disbelief is surprise, as evidenced by the following quote:

> "Kami dengar selentingan, kamu mau jadi guru, Taksu? Betul?!" Taksu mengangguk. "Betul Pak." "Kami kaget."
>
> "We heard a rumor that you want to become a teacher, Taksu? Is that true?!" Taksu nodded. "That's right, Dad." "We are shocked." (Wijaya, 2005:1)

The statement "We are shocked" shows the parents' disappointment and rejection of Taksu's decision. Because it is based on an emotional response, this short sentence has important emotional meaning as the beginning of sarcasm.

> "Istri saya menarik nafas dalam-dalam karena kecewa, lalu begitu saja pergi."
>
> "My wife took a deep breath in disappointment, then just left." (Wijaya, 2005:1)

Taksu's mother's deep breath is a powerful way of expressing disappointment and despair. Her departure is a complex emotional reaction expressed indirectly through sarcasm.

> "Saya sudah bilang saya ingin jadi guru, kok ditanya lagi, Pak," "Sekarang saya naik darah."
>
> "I already said I want to be a teacher, why are you asking me again, Dad?" "Now I'm furious." (Wijaya, 2005:2)

This statement shows deep anger that has reached its peak. When emotions reach their peak, sarcasm emerges as a sharp and hurtful way to express disapproval.

> "Kenapa kamu bodoh sekali mau masuk neraka, padahal kamu masih muda..."
>
> "Why are you so stupid for going to hell when you're still young..." (Wijaya, 2005:2)

This expression shows Taksu's father's despair over his decision to become a teacher. The sarcastic word "stupid" mocks a decision that the parents consider wrong, representing a strong clash between the parents' material expectations and Taksu's idealism.

4.1.3 Contextual Irony

Sarcasm is irony when someone is criticized. Teachers are seen as heroes by the government and society, but they receive lower salaries and are not well respected. This situation triggers sarcasm because it is considered empty words that do not match reality, as shown in the following quote:

> "Mentang-mentang mereka bilang, guru pahlawan, guru itu berbakti kepada nusa dan bangsa. Ahh! Itu bohong semua! Itu bahasa pemerintah!"
>
> "Just because they say teachers are heroes, teachers are devoted to the country and the nation. Ahh! That's all fake! That's government talk!" (Wijaya, 2005:2)

Taksu's mother believes that such extravagant praise is nonsense and manipulation of "government language" used to make teachers happy and continue working hard without demanding decent salaries. The sarcasm aims to criticize structural injustice in teachers' work.

> "Negara sengaja memuji-muji guru setinggi langit tetapi lihat sendiri, negara tidak pernah memberi gaji yang setimpal, karena mereka yakin, banyak orang seperti kamu, sudah puas karena dipuji."
>
> "The government praises teachers to the highest level, but look for yourself, the government never gives them a fair salary, because they believe that many people like you are satisfied with just being praised." (Wijaya, 2005:2)

These lines show society's ironic perspective on teachers. When praise does not match reality, sarcastic comments arise. The government often praises teachers as heroes even though they face economic injustice.

> "Kamu tertipu Taksu! Puji-pujian itu dibuat supaya orang-orang yang lemah hati seperti kamu, masih tetap mau jadi guru."
>
> "You've been fooled, Taksu! Those compliments were made so that weak-hearted people like you would still want to be teachers." (Wijaya, 2005:3)

This sarcasm emphasizes that "praise" is a tool of deception and a trap for young teachers like Taksu. Praise is used to protect the teaching profession from discrimination, especially in financial terms.

4.2 Purposes of Sarcasm

The sarcastic tone in *Guru* serves clear purposes in the narrative. The parents use it as a social critique, as a rhetorical strategy, and as a way to reveal character traits.

4.2.1 Social Critique

Many sarcastic comments criticize the public's perception of the role of government and the teaching profession. In some places, teaching is considered worthless and unappreciated. As stated in the following quote:

> "Bercita-citalah yang bener. Mbok mau jadi presiden begitu! Masak guru! Gila!"
>
> "Have realistic dreams, such as be a president, but a teacher? That's crazy!" (Wijaya, 2005:4)

This expression contains sarcasm that expresses disbelief and disapproval of his son's dream. It shows the social stigma and materialism in which the teaching profession is considered an unfavorable and shameful choice.

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"Guru itu pekerjaan yang anti pada materi, buat apa kamu menghabiskan hidup kamu untuk sesuatu yang tidak berguna?"

"Teaching is a job that is anti-materialistic. Why would you spend your life doing something useless?" (Wijaya, 2005:3)

This statement contains sarcastic criticism of the idealism of the teaching profession. It reflects stereotypes and stigma against teachers in some communities.

"guru pahlawan... itu bohong semua"

"Teachers are heroes... that's all bullshit." (Wijaya, 2005:2)

The idea that teachers are national heroes is criticized in this statement. This satire reveals social criticism: because society does not support teachers, calling them "heroes" is just nonsense.

4.2.2 Rhetorical Strategy

Sarcasm is a powerful rhetorical device used deliberately to persuade or emphasize a point. It is also used as a stern warning to convince Taksu to change his decision.

"Guru itu hanya sepeda tua. Ditawar-tawarkan sebagai besi rongsokan pun tidak ada yang mau beli."

"A teacher is like an old bicycle. Even offered as scrap metal no one will buy it." (Wijaya, 2005:1)

The father's argument becomes stronger and more memorable thanks to these sarcastic images. He uses this mocking tone repeatedly to convince Taksu that teaching is useless.

"Kalau kamu jadi guru, paling bentar setelah menikah kamu akan kembali menempel di rumah orang tuamu dan menyusu sehingga semua warisan habis ludes. Itu namanya kerdil pikiran."

"If you become a teacher, shortly after getting married you will return to live with your parents and suckle on their money until all your inheritance is gone. That's called narrow-mindedness." (Wijaya, 2005:4)

Taksu's father uses the sarcastic phrases "to suckle" and "the inheritance is gone" as rhetorical tactics that indicate threats or dire predictions. The aim is to make Taksu afraid of a shameful future.

"Kalau kamu menjadi buta, itu namanya bukan cinta tetapi racun. Kamu sudah terkecoh, Taksu. Meskipun keluarga pacarmu itu guru, tidak berarti kamu harus mengidolakan guru sebagai profesi kamu."

"If you become blind, that's not love, it's poison. You've been fooled, Taksu. Even though your girlfriend's family are teachers, that doesn't mean you have to idolize teaching as your profession." (Wijaya, 2005:6)

Taksu's father uses sarcasm to hurt Taksu's feelings and equates his love for Mina with "poison." This is a rhetorical strategy used to disapprove of Taksu's decision.

4.2.3 Character Revelation

Sarcasm is a way of expressing a character's attitude and personality. The sarcasm used by the father and mother directly reveals their nature, principles, and obsession with social and material status.

"Guru itu tidak punya masa depan. Dunianya suram."

"Teachers have no future. Their world is bleak." (Wijaya, 2005:2)

This statement shows the father's materialistic and cynical view. The phrase "no future" shows that "future" for him is equivalent to wealth, savings, and luxury cars.

"Lihat mana ada guru yang naik Jaguar. Rumahnya saja rata-rata kontrakan dalam gang kumuh. Di desa juga guru hidupnya bukan dari mengajar tapi dari tani."

"Look at the teachers who drive Jaguars. Their houses are just average rentals in shabby alleys. Even in villages, teachers don't make a living from teaching but from farming." (Wijaya, 2005:1)

This statement shows his repressed attitude toward poverty and status. The father shows the symbol of success of "driving a Jaguar," revealing his measure of luxury and success.

"Yang bener saja. Kita hidup perlu materi. Guru itu pekerjaan yang anti pada materi, buat apa kamu menghabiskan hidup kamu untuk sesuatu yang tidak berguna? Paham?"

"Come on. We need material things to live. Teaching is a job that's anti-materialistic. Why would you spend your life doing something useless? Do you understand?" (Wijaya, 2005:3)

This statement shows the mother's selfish attitude, who strongly believes that material things are the only real things. She sarcastically describes the teaching profession as "anti-material" and "useless." Each sarcastic remark deepens our understanding of a character's true feelings and principles.

4.3 Findings

The analysis yields the following findings:

1. Personal fears and pride: The parents are sarcastic because they worry about their child's future and their wounded pride. Sarcasm becomes a defence mechanism to control and avoid decisions considered demeaning or embarrassing.
2. Anger and frustration: Sarcasm arises from strong emotions. Sarcastic comments such as "Why are you so stupid as to want to go to hell?" were made out of the father's anger. The parents' emotional shock turned into disappointment, frustration, and anger.
3. Situational irony: Sarcasm is triggered by ironic contextualization—teachers are praised but not actually valued. By using sarcasm, parents show the difference between what people say and what actually happens, such as "the government praises teachers... but... does not provide them with fair salaries."
4. Social criticism: Sarcasm is used to criticize society's attitudes. This story mocks the concept of "teachers as heroes" and exposes hypocritical attitudes, targeting society's neglect of teachers and its materialistic orientation.

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5. Revealing characters: Sarcastic remarks reveal the true nature of the speakers. The parents' sarcastic language reveals their materialism, cynicism, and emotional vulnerability, while Taksu's calm and principled responses show his integrity and idealism.

5. Conclusion

This study examined the use of sarcasm in Putu Wijaya's short story *Guru* through a sociological reading. The analysis leads to two main conclusions corresponding to the research questions.

First, regarding the causes of sarcasm, the study finds that sarcasm in *Guru* stems from three interrelated factors. Psychological triggers include the parents' fear of losing family honor, their fear of a profession they consider unworthy, and internalized social stigma. Emotional responses include shock, disappointment, frustration, and anger, which drive the parents to use harsh and mocking language. Contextual irony arises from the gap between the government's rhetoric of "teachers as heroes" and the economic and social marginalization of educators, which the characters expose through sarcastic remarks.

Second, regarding the purposes of sarcasm, the study finds that sarcasm serves three functions. As social critique, it exposes materialism and institutional hypocrisy, particularly the contradiction between public praise for teachers and their actual treatment. As a rhetorical strategy, it is used deliberately to persuade, embarrass, or force Taksu to meet his parents' expectations through hyperbolic and mocking remarks. As character revelation, it exposes the parents' materialism, cynicism, and emotional vulnerability while highlighting Taksu's idealism and integrity.

In conclusion, Putu Wijaya's *Guru* demonstrates that sarcasm is not merely a stylistic device but a deliberate narrative strategy for social critique. Through sharp and poignant dialogue, the story invites readers to question the sincerity of society's respect for teachers and to consider the real conditions in which educators find themselves. The study confirms that sarcasm in Indonesian literature functions as both a mirror and a mold of public sentiment, offering valuable insights for literary criticism, educational discourse, and the understanding of sarcasm as a culturally embedded communicative strategy.

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