

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Problems

Putu Wijaya is one of Indonesia's leading writers who is known for his surrealist writing style, and full of hidden meanings. The short story *Guru* is a work that is full of social criticism that is presented through unique literary techniques, including the use of sarcasm. Sarcasm is a form of language that takes irony to the extreme to satire or ridicule something sharply. Unlike irony which can be more subtle, sarcasm is often caustic and direct, although it still contains humor social & satire. Sarcasm in modern Indonesian literature is relevant to study because it provides an overview of the way 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 & 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 (2011) 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, Fitria Ulinuha, & Gendroyono (2025)

This research aims to investigate the use of sarcasm for teachers in Indonesia, focusing on its implications for student engagement, classroom dynamics, and the broader educational landscape. 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. To ground this exploration, this research will analyze Putu Wijaya's short story "*Guru*," which poignantly encapsulates the complexities of sarcasm within the Indonesian context. 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.

Through a close reading of this text, this research will uncover the layers of meaning embedded in the characters' interactions and the broader implications of sarcasm in educational settings. As Camp (2011) notes, sarcasm is often used as a

form of pretense that masks critique under the guise of humor, which aligns with how *Wijaya* subtly addresses systemic issues in education. Additionally, the work of Dinari (2015) and Masrani (2022) supports the interpretation of sarcastic expressions as tools for indirect commentary on social hierarchies and power dynamics within pedagogical environments. Furthermore, Kreuz (2020) emphasizes that sarcasm in narrative forms can reveal deeper psychological and social tensions, a perspective that is crucial for understanding the emotional resonance in *Wijaya's* portrayal of teachers.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Based on the background of the study, the research problems are formulated as follows:

1. What caused the sarcasm toward the teacher that putu wijaya created the short story?
2. What are the purposes of the use of sarcasm in the short story?

1.3 Objective of the Study

1. To explore the causes of sarcasm portrayed in the short story "Guru".
2. To identify the purposes of sarcasm used in the short story "Guru".

1.4 Scope of the Study

This scope of this study is focused solely on the causes and purposes of the sarcasm in the short story “Guru” by Putu Wijaya. This scope is made to direct specifically to the subject matter that will analyzed in the detail in this study. This research is focused on causes of sarcasm including psychological triggers, emotional responses, contextual irony and purposes such as social critique, rhetorical strategy and character revelation.

1.5 significance of the study

1. The research is important as an effort to open new insight in literary studies and to explore how sarcasm is used in the short story genre.
2. This study will help readers and researches understand the layers of meaning that are not directly conveyed by the author in this work.
3. This study is expected to contribute to the development of literary criticism theory, especially those related to the use of sarcasm.

CHAPTER II

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. Stanford University Press

Literary works often reflect the social realities of their time, offering insights into the experiences of marginalized groups and the evolution of social identities. For instance, Lowenthal (1948) emphasized that literature serves as a mirror to society, revealing the 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. For example, the consolidation of publishing houses has led to a corporate-driven

landscape where business interests increasingly dictate publishing practices, often sidelining creative risks and emerging voices. 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.

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 headon. Its effectiveness often relies heavily on the reader's ability to grasp the cultural and contextual undertones embedded in the narrative.

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 the 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. The directness of Wijaya's sarcasm challenges readers to reassess long-standing assumptions about professional respectability and the systemic neglect of educators. Rather than aiming to entertain or subtly persuade, his narrative seeks to disrupt, to provoke, and to expose.

2.2.1 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. In a literature context, an author may have a character use sarcasm to convey anger at societal injustice or personal failure

for instance, a teacher character might use a mocking tone to criticize an ineffective education system Syafruddin et al. (2021)

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. For example, a teacher satirizing rigid school regulations with a cutting joke exemplifies sarcasm born of institutional critique. This critical orientation aligns with the observation by Kalaba (2014) 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.

2.2.2 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.

2.3 Related Studies

It is a research by Lailiyah, (2019) analyzed the markers and functions of sarcasm utterances in the novel *Cantik Itu Luka*” by Eka Kurniawan. The study found that sarcasm in the novel is dominated by markers of sentimental contradiction and hyperbole, which are used to convey social criticism of issues such as patriarchy and violence. The identified communication functions of sarcasm include criticizing, complaining, personal sentiment, insulting, annoying, and reminding. This research is relevant to this thesis because it shows how sarcasm can be used as a tool to convey sharp social criticism in literary works, similar to Putu Wijaya's use of sarcasm in the short story *Guru*.

It is a research by Masrani (2022) explores the form and meaning of sarcasm in the novel *Hari-Hari yang mencurigakan*. The study identified various forms of sarcasm, including the use of harsh words, the mention of body organs, labeling with animal names, and other negative connotations. The meaning of sarcasm in this novel is used to convey criticism of existing social and political conditions. This research is relevant to this thesis because it shows how sarcasm can be used to criticize complex social realities, similar to the approach used by Putu Wijaya in the short story *Guru*.

It is a research by Amelia Nur Qholid (2024) analyzed the use of sarcasm language style in the short story *Negeri Pemuda Koruptor*. The study found that sarcasm is used to convey sharp criticism of the government and rampant corruption practices. The sarcasm in this short story reflects the author's attitude that is less polite in language, but effective in conveying moral and social

messages. This research is relevant to this thesis because it shows how sarcasm can be used as a tool to criticize government institutions, similar to the criticism of the education system and the treatment of teachers in Putu Wijaya's short story *Guru*.

The three studies above show that sarcasm is an effective tool in delivering social and political criticism in Indonesian literary works. By analyzing the use of sarcasm in the short story *Guru*, this thesis can contribute to a deeper understanding of the role of sarcasm in revealing complex and often overlooked social realities.