

Exploring Sarcastic English Utterances in English in ‘Gilmore Girls’ TV Series Season 2

JUTATIP LUECHAI

SAKUNRAT WORATHAMRONG*

Faculty of Humanities, Srinakharinwirot University, Thailand

*Corresponding author email: anusrad@g.swu.ac.th

Article information	Abstract
Article history: Received: 23 May 2025 Last revised: 28 Aug 2026 Accepted: 28 Aug 2026 Available online: 29 Aug 2026	<i>Sarcasm is inherently embedded in everyday communication, often going unnoticed, as its use shifts fluidly across different contexts. This study explored sarcastic utterances in English, focusing on sarcastic types and strategies in various relationship contexts. Adopting a mixed-method approach, the research categorized sarcasm into explicit and implicit types, examining seven strategies: incongruity, explication, reasoning, metonymy, metaphor, rhetorical question, and echoing (shift of focus), adapting from Tabacaru’s taxonomy of sarcastic English utterances (2017). Gilmore Girls TV series (Season 2) was selected to analyze sarcastic types and utterances occurred in close-symmetrical, close-asymmetrical, distant-symmetrical, and distant-asymmetrical relationship contexts. The findings revealed that explicit sarcasm accounted for 51% while implicit sarcasm accounted for 49%. Among these, 33% involved incongruity, 24% rhetorical question, 19% metonymy, 15% explication, 6% echoing, 3% reasoning, and 0% metaphor. It appears that the use of sarcastic utterances is dynamic. It depends on relationship contexts, with explicit sarcasm is more common in close or high-power relationships to signal solidarity or assertiveness, while implicit forms dominate distant or hierarchical contexts to maintain politeness and face. Notably, sarcasm also emerged as a subtle resistance tool among lower-power speakers. The study highlights sarcasm as a context-dependent communicative tool which is salient across diverse interpersonal communication settings.</i>
Keywords: Sarcasm Sarcastic types Sarcastic strategies Sarcastic English utterances Gilmore Girls TV series	

INTRODUCTION

Sarcastic in English, an incongruity between what is said and what is expected of an English utterance towards a certain target, whether present or absent, plays a crucial role in everyday communication in English, shaping interpersonal interactions across various contexts (Caucchi, 2024; Fanari et al., 2023; Mesing et al., 2012; Pexman, 2018). During difficult times in life, sarcastic utterances can be used as a potential coping strategy when interacting with other people (e.g., Rothermich et al., 2021). During arguments, sarcastic remarks can be employed as part of both positive and negative communication mechanisms (e.g., McAuley & Glenwright, 2025). Thus, detecting sarcasm in interactions, whether people agree, disagree,

or provide comments during those interactions, should be useful in predicting how possible interpersonal conflicts can arise and possibly be resolved through understanding sarcasm production in English. However, the question remains as to how one can determine whether an English utterance conveys incongruous ideas toward a particular target.

Although sarcastic utterances in English have been extensively explored through various lenses using naturally occurring data (e.g., conversations in online platforms or product reviews and comments), Caucci (2024) acknowledged limitations in capturing accurate contextual cues and spontaneity in conversations during data recordings, which are salient in context dependent manner of justifying sarcasm. To tackle the limitations, such sarcastic (Caucchi, 2024) utterances have been investigated through scripted dialogues of movies or low to high-stakes TV series, such as *Friends*, *The Big Bang Theory*, *House M.D.*, and *Star Trek*, respectively, which address fundamental and universal themes of family relationships, personal and professional lives, to more complex themes of medical mysteries and existential threats or interstellar wars. Nonetheless, the studies have focused on sarcasm utterances in English in limited relational contexts, such as among colleagues or close friends (Caucchi, 2024; Mesing et al., 2012; Wieslander, 2021). This study seeks to address these gaps by examining sarcastic utterances in English using scripted dialogues from *Gilmore Girls* Season 2 as the data source. This was to investigate how sarcasm in English linguistically constructed when people interact with other individuals across different relationship types in family, work, and life-related situational contexts.

Gilmore Girls is a contemporary American TV series that aired from 2000 to 2007 (Genovese, 2020) and has been available on Netflix since 2026. The series spans seven seasons focusing on the life and relationship of the protagonist pair—Lorelai Gilmore, a single mother, and her daughter Rory, through family, work, and life-related situational contexts in the fictional town of Star Hollow. McCann (2025) stated that the series is a valuable primary source of diving into interpersonal relationships in the 2020s. Although it has been explored in terms of feminism and mother-daughter or intergenerational relationships, the series has not yet been navigated in terms of sarcasm. *Gilmore Girls* Season 2 exemplifies the beginning of more complex life-related situational contexts: intense love life—either Lorelai broke off her engagement or Rory’s love triangle, and complex socialization in community where we could observe how the protagonist pair and other characters interact across relational contexts. We ask the following research questions:

1. What types of sarcastic utterances in English are used among different relationships in the *Gilmore Girls* TV series, Season 2?
2. What are the strategies of sarcastic utterances in English used among different relationships in the *Gilmore Girls* TV series, Season 2?

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section reviews key literature on sarcasm to clarify the distinctions between sarcasm and irony associated with relational contexts, which cast light on the role of sarcasm in shaping

interpersonal interactions across various contexts. A review of sarcastic forms and strategies for a clear boundary between sarcastic utterances and non-sarcastic utterances was explored.

Sarcasm: Definitions and theoretical foundations

Consider the following hypothetical interaction. A arrives 45 minutes late to a college reunion party, where B, one of A's close friends, is already present:

B: Man, you are *super early*.

A: You know me.

B's utterance can be interpreted as sarcastic because the expression *super early* is incongruent with the contextual information that A has arrived 45 minutes late. Rather than simply conveying the literal meaning of *super early*, the utterance invites an interpretation that contrasts with the observable situation. Such incongruity between an utterance and its contextual circumstances has been widely discussed as a central feature of sarcasm. Importantly, however, identifying an utterance as sarcastic cannot rely solely on the presence of an apparent contrast between the utterance and the situation. The speaker's communicative intention and the interpersonal relationship between the speaker and the target also contribute to the interpretation of sarcasm. In this example, B's utterance may function as a humorous or critical comment on A's lateness. A's response, *You know me*, further suggests shared knowledge concerning A's habitual lateness, providing additional contextual support for the sarcastic interpretation.

Now, consider this example. J, who is D's office colleague, wants to grab some coffee after their afternoon external meeting with clients, while D is eager to get to his office to finish his report.

J: Should we stop for some coffee?

D: *Of course, let's do it because we got all these snacks.*

D's response to J's question could be perceived as a sarcastic utterance when considering the opposite saying that is contrary to the speaker's intention. However, it could be interpreted as a non-sarcastic utterance if considering D was in a hurry to get back to his office and would not want to grab a coffee. To some extent, an intent behind D's sarcastic response could be to implicitly refuse J's invitation. To the other extent, this implicit or off record refusal using sarcastic reasoning could be viewed as to save the positive face (Brown & Levinson, 1987) of both the speaker and the addressee or the desire to be liked since they are office colleagues.

With this versatility of sarcastic utterances, they could be viewed and taken differently in different situational contexts (Helal et al., 2024; Hall, 1982, as cited in Bennett, 2023, pp. 33–47) and social relationships among communications of similar or diverse cultural backgrounds (Goddard & Levisen, 2023; Leech, 2014; Zhu & Wang, 2020), where ones from high-context cultures, such as Chinese, could perceive sarcastic utterances as impolite, and others from low-context cultures, such as British, could view the utterances as humorous and polite (Zhu

& Filik, 2024). Such a dynamic view and reception could be explained through a spectrum of four dimensions of relationships (Brown & Levinson, 1987). They include close-symmetrical relationships (e.g., siblings or close friends); close-asymmetrical relationships (e.g., parent-child or mentor-mentee); distant-symmetrical relationships (e.g., acquaintances); distant-asymmetrical relationships (e.g., boss-subordinate). The more interactants are close, and in a symmetrical power dynamic. The lower the degree of negative perception of sarcasm is detected. It is viewed as humorous and appropriate. This will be an opposite view when interactants are in distant and in asymmetrical power dynamic.

While irony can highlight unexpected contrasts without necessarily conveying an evaluative stance toward an individual or situation, sarcasm typically involves an identifiable target, whether present or absent from the interaction (Tabacaru, 2017). The presence of such a target therefore constitutes an important distinction between sarcasm and irony and is particularly relevant when examining sarcasm in relation to interpersonal dynamics. However, identifying an utterance as sarcastic requires more than establishing the presence of a target. It also requires consideration of the relationship between the utterance and its surrounding context, particularly when the utterance conveys a meaning that is incongruous with the situation in which it occurs. This raises the of how such contextual incongruity and target orientation can be systematically identified across different interpersonal relationships.

Sarcastic forms and strategies

At a broader view to justify an utterance in English as sarcasm, creating a definition of sarcasm that connects multiple definitions of previous works on sarcasm appears to be a significant step in many studies (e.g., D'Arcey & Fox Tree, 2022). The listed definitions seem to point to two linguistic types of sarcasm: explicit and implicit sarcasm. Explicit sarcasm contains overt linguistic markers such as exaggerated intonation or clearly contradictory statements, whereas implicit sarcasm relies on contextual inference and subtle cues, requiring more interpretive effort from the addressee (Tabacaru, 2017). These two linguistic types of sarcasm offer a possibility to categorize sarcastic and non-sarcastic utterances.

Through a microscopic approach to dive deeper into linguistic mechanism that create sarcastic utterances in various contexts across different relationships, eight strategies for expressing sarcasm in English are identified. They include incongruity, explicitation, reasoning, metonymy, metaphor, repetition, rhetorical question, and shift of focus. The following paragraphs present Tabacaru's (2017) definitions and examples of these strategies from the two series: *House M.D.*¹ and *The Big Bang Theory*².

Incongruity

To begin with the first strategy, incongruity is a sarcastic technique wherein the speaker deliberately expresses a statement that contradicts their genuine belief or the actual situation,

¹ *House M.D.* (2004–2012) centers on Dr. Gregory House, a brilliant yet troubled diagnostician known for solving complex medical cases with a mix of expertise and dark humor.

² *The Big Bang Theory* (2007–2019) follows a group of socially awkward scientists as they navigate relationships and daily life, with humor rooted in friendship, love, and nerd culture.

aiming to mock or criticize a target. Unlike irony, which may lack a specific target, sarcasm involving incongruity necessitates one, whether present or implied, to convey its critical or humorous intent. An example of this strategy is illustrated in the following section, as shown in (1).

In a scene from *House M.D.*, Dr. House is in the consultation room with a young boy named Ricky, who is accompanying his father, the patient, who remains silent throughout the consultation.

(1) Ricky: About a year ago, and then he couldn't talk.

House: *Right, yeah, well, that happens. You know, it's very dangerous operating so close to the vocal cords.*

House sarcastically agrees, commenting on the supposed danger of operating near the vocal cords during knee surgery. His sarcasm mocks the absurdity of the idea, targeting not only Ricky but also anyone who might believe such a claim, clearly illustrating incongruity.

Explicitaion

Explicitation refers to a technique where the speaker emphasizes an obvious or overly clear fact to mock or critique a specific target. By highlighting the clarity of the statement, the speaker reveals flaws or absurdities in the target's behavior or beliefs, making the sarcasm evident through an overtly direct tone. The following lines present an example of the explicitation strategy, as (2) demonstrates.

In a scene from *House M.D.*, Dr. Cuddy confronts Dr. House about his disrespectful behavior and offensive remarks, accusing him of making racist and sexist comments.

(2) Cuddy: Your attitude towards supervisory personnel is disrespectful, and a disturbingly large proportion of your comments are racist or sexist.

House: *That top makes you look like an Afghani prostitute...would be an example of that.*

Dr. House's sarcastic remark, comparing Cuddy to an Afghani prostitute, mocks her accusations of racism and sexism, presenting it as a hypothetical comment. This builds on Cuddy's earlier statement, clearly targeting her but in a non-serious manner.

Reasoning

Reasoning is a sarcastic mechanism that uses exaggerated logic to create humor or criticism, often drawing an exaggerated if-then or if-clause conclusion to highlight the illogicality of a situation and target someone or something, as shown in (3).

In a scene from *House M.D.*, Dr. House and his team discuss a patient who made an unusual prediction about his own fate. House sarcastically responds, adding his own twist to the situation.

(3) Cole: It was creepy. The patient predicted his own death.

House: *Would have been more impressive if he predicted that he wasn't going to die.* Of course, that takes longer to prove.

House's sarcasm uses deductive reasoning with remote conditionals, highlighting the absurdity of predicting death in a hospital. It targets the magician and believers, built on the shared truth that everyone dies, linked by the if-clause.

Metonymy

Metonymy strategy involves substituting one concept, the vehicle, for another, the target (Song, 2011), within the same mental framework to create sarcasm. By focusing on a prominent part of a concept, it accesses the broader context, allowing sarcasm to convey complex meanings in a simple, familiar way. This substitution highlights key features to subtly suggest something different from the literal statement. The example (4) illustrates how this mechanism works.

In a scene from *The Big Bang Theory*, Sheldon Cooper and Leslie Winkle meet with the department head to address an ongoing dispute, where Leslie employs metonymic substitution to target Sheldon sarcastically.

(4) Leslie: Well, don't turn it off; you might miss your call from the Nobel committee letting you know you've been nominated as *dumbass laureate* of the year.

Leslie's sarcasm toward Sheldon shines through her repeated mockery, calling him *dumbass* and *dumbass laureate of the year*, humorously casting him as a fool sarcastically honored by the Nobel committee. The audience sees this playful exaggeration as comic mockery.

Metaphor

Metaphor strategy is a way of understanding one concept by comparing it to a different one (Song, 2011), often used in sarcasm to emphasize certain traits while minimizing others. Unlike metonymy, which swaps terms within the same domain, metaphors cross domains. Taken literally, they produce clearly false statements, much like sarcasm, where it could enrich the expression with vivid imagery, as demonstrated in example (5).

In a scene from *House M.D.*, Dr. House is in the hospital with Dr. Chase and Dr. Cuddy, engaging in a tense exchange in the presence of his supervisors.

(5) House: [to Chase, because Cuddy is in the room] What, you got her on speed dial?
Cuddy: I just follow *the scent of arrogance*.

Cuddy's sarcastic reply uses metaphor, linking arrogance to a scent to emphasize its strong presence. The contrast between *scent* and *arrogance* highlights the sarcasm, targeting House's extreme arrogance.

Repetition

Repetition creates sarcasm by repeating someone's words but shifting from a serious to a mocking tone. This signals to listeners that the repeated words are meant ironically or with disbelief, as shown in example (6).

In a scene from *The Big Bang Theory*, Beverley talks with Howard, who claims his girlfriend is absent because her grandmother died. Beverley repeats his words with a smile and raised eyebrows, turning the statement into sarcasm that casts doubt on his excuse.

- (6) Howard: She had to go out of town, her grandmother died.
Beverley: I see. [smiles, pauses] *Her grandmother died.*

Beverley's sarcastic reply uses repetition, repeating Howard's words to cast doubt on his excuse. Her tone and gestures shift the meaning, turning the serious statement into mockery that targets Howard and questions the truth of his claim.

Rhetorical question

Rhetorical question in sarcasm is used to make a pointed statement rather than seek an answer. Typically implying the opposite of what is asked, it emphasizes skepticism, criticism, or humor. While it may invite a response, its primary purpose is to convey the speaker's attitude, allowing the listener to interpret the underlying sarcasm or disbelief. The following dialogue (7) offers an example.

In a scene from *House M.D.*, House uses a rhetorical question to express his annoyance towards Kutner, who has played a prank on the team involving someone else's blood that Amber, their female colleague, gives to them.

- (7) House: Get that idiotic smile out of my face. I've got to go on a killing spree.
Kutner: Or, four, he has something that tests positive for syphilis.
House: [sighs] It's not Chagas.
Kutner: He worked in Costa Rica before he was married.
House: *Is two a spree, or do I have to kill you too?*

House sarcastically targets Kutner with the rhetorical question, *Is two a spree, or do I have to kill you too?* This highlights House's irritation, using humor instead of a serious threat, based on the context of his frustration with Amber's secret.

Shift of Focus

Shift of Focus in sarcasm works by diverting attention from the current topic to a previous, often unrelated, remark in order to create irony or humor. It requires the listener to recall earlier context to grasp the sarcastic point. This is illustrated in example (8).

In a scene from *House M.D.*, House shifts the focus from the patient's condition back to an earlier joke about Foreman, using this shift to sarcastically call out Foreman's seriousness and lack of fun.

- (8) Kutner: So you're not wearing any underwear?
Foreman: Uhh... There's a guy bleeding...
House: Foreman! She's not wearing any underwear. *You used to be more fun.*
[...]
House: Amyloidosis was your idea.
Foreman: I was wrong.
House: Yeah, me too. *You were never fun.*

In this scene, the focus moves from the patient's condition to Dr. House's sarcastic comment directed at Foreman. To grasp the intended sarcasm, viewers must refer back to an earlier exchange between them. Here, Dr. House's remark shifts from light teasing to a more pointed, sarcastic critique.

In the following sections, we present the methodology and some examples drawn from our data that could allow a better understanding of sarcasm production in English.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a mixed-method approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative techniques. According to (George, 2022), this approach offers a more comprehensive and credible understanding by merging numerical data with in-depth explanations. In order to analyze sarcastic utterances in English found in *Gilmore Girls* TV series, Season 2. Sarcastic utterances in English were collected and categorized into explicit and implicit types. These utterances were then analyzed contextually to explore how various sarcastic strategies in English function within the scripted dialog of *Gilmore Girls* TV series, Season 2.

Each utterances collected underwent two layers of analysis. The first layer was literal meaning assessment, in which the surface meaning of the utterance was examined to determine whether it aligned with conventional interpretations. The second layer was contextual evaluation, where the broader conventional context and relational dynamics were considered to assess whether the utterance conveyed sarcasm. Following this process, utterances were classified according to Tabacaru's (2017) framework, which distinguished among three categories: literal utterances (statement without irony or sarcasm), merely incongruent statement (expressions that contain unexpected elements but do not function as sarcasm through sarcasm or lack a clear target audience), and fully sarcastic utterances (statements that exhibit sarcasm through contextual contrast, exaggeration, or contradiction, and include a clearly identifiable target audience). Non-sarcastic and merely incongruent statements were excluded from this study.

To ensure validity and reliability, a secondary coder independently reviewed a subset of sarcastic utterances in English, resolving disagreements through discussion until full consensus was reached. Sarcasm identification criteria were also cross-checked with previous studies to ensure theoretical consistency. The IOC assessment from the two experts in linguistics confirmed high validity (IOC = 0.75), indicating that the classification and categorization of sarcastic utterances in English were methodologically sound and consistent with established research frameworks.

Sample

This study used purposive sampling where it enabled us to deliberately select data aligned with our research goals. The sample was drawn from *Gilmore Girls* TV series, Season 2. This contemporary American series was ranked among the series' best by several entertainment outlets (Madden, 2024). It remains popular across generations (Gutierrez, 2023). Its inclusion was further supported by the show's appearance on a list of 100 iconic American TV series from leading media sources (Time, 2007). Within this framework, *Gilmore Girls* qualifies as a timeless series, known for its universal themes and sharp, fast-paced dialogue, suggesting natural execution of sarcasm making it particularly well-suited for examining sarcasm in conversation.

Season 2 was selected because it provides a relatively stable context for examining established interpersonal relationships and recurring social interactions. The analysis focused primarily on Lorelai and Rory, the two central characters whose interactions extend across a range of interpersonal relationships. Their recurring exchanges with family members, friends, and other characters provide multiple relational contexts through which sarcasm can be examined. Focusing on these two characters therefore allowed the study to investigate how sarcasm operates across different interpersonal dynamics while maintaining a coherent and manageable dataset. In addition, limiting the analysis to a single season provided sufficient contextual information for interpreting sarcastic utterances in relation to the speaker, the target, and their interpersonal relationship.

Season 2 of *Gilmore Girls* consists of 22 episodes with a total runtime of approximately 16 hours and 16 minutes. Approximately 15 minutes and 8 seconds contain clearly recognizable sarcastic interactions embedded within character dialogues. From this dataset, 100 sarcastic English utterances were identified, including utterances produced by or directly addressed to Lorelai and Rory in on-screen interactions, excluding absent audiences and exchanges among other characters.

Research framework

Each sarcastic utterance was classified based on its degree of interpretive transparency. Utterances in which sarcastic intent was overt and directly accessible were coded as explicit, whereas those requiring contextual inference or shared understanding were coded as implicit. Following this classification, each utterance was then coded according to the strategy associated with its type.

This study adapted Tabacaru's (2017) taxonomy of sarcastic utterances in English, which originally identified eight sarcastic strategies including incongruity; explicitation; reasoning; metonymy; metaphor; repetition; rhetorical question; and shift of focus. In our study, repetition was excluded because this strategy relied heavily on prosodic cues beyond the study's scope. We redefined the shift of focus strategy. Unlike the original shift of focus strategy, the use of this strategy by the characters in our data was to recall or refer to previous situations, but not to switch attention. Thus, we decided to use the term echoing instead. This echoing strategy emphasizes recalling prior statements or shared background knowledge to convey sarcasm (Kreuz & Glucksberg, 1989).

To examine our sample in a more systematic relational contexts, this study employed the four dimensions of relationships (Brown & Levinson, 1987) based on emotional closeness (D- / D+) and power dynamics (P- / P+), both of which influence interaction patterns as shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Relationship contexts based on Brown and Levinson (1987)

Power Relations Social Distance	Balanced Power (P-)	Power Imbalance (P+)	4 Relationship Contexts	
Closeness (D-)	Symmetrical (P-)	-	Close-symmetrical	(D- / P-)
	-	Asymmetrical (P+)	Close-asymmetrical	(D- / P+)
Distance (D+)	Symmetrical (P-)	-	Distant-symmetrical	(D+ / P-)
	-	Asymmetrical (P+)	Distant-asymmetrical	(D+ / P+)

Based on **Table 1**, relationship contexts could vary by emotional closeness and power dynamics: close-symmetrical relationships (friends, colleagues) foster open, playful communication based on mutual trust; close-asymmetrical relationships (parent-child, mentor-mentee) balance indirect guidance with respect for hierarchy; distant-symmetrical relationships (strangers, acquaintances) require cautious, polite interaction; and distant-asymmetrical relationships (boss-subordinate) often involve communication that reinforces authority or subtly negotiates power.

Taken together, these relational dimensions form an integral part of the analytical framework of this study. Sarcasm is therefore examined not only as a linguistic phenomenon, but as a context-based communicative practice shaped by interpersonal distance and power relations in interaction. Guided by this framework, the following section presents the categorization of sarcastic utterances in English as observed in the scripted dialogue of *Gilmore Girls* (Season 2).

Categorization of sarcastic utterances in English

This study categorizes sarcasm into two primary types, *explicit sarcastic utterance* and *implicit sarcastic utterance*, based on the degree of directness in the utterance and the cognitive effort required for interpretation. Each type is associated with specific strategies that contribute to the sarcastic effect.

Explicit sarcastic utterance

- **Strategies:** Incongruity, Explicitation, and Reasoning
- **Characteristics:** Explicit sarcasm is direct and overt, often marked by clear linguistic cues like exaggerated intonation or lexical contrasts that highlight the difference between literal and intended meanings. It leaves little ambiguity and is easily recognized by listeners. The following paragraphs will demonstrate examples of explicit sarcastic English strategies from *Gilmore Girls* Season 2, used as samples in this study.

Incongruity

Season 2 EP 3

Context of Relationship: Close-Asymmetrical (Mother-daughter)

Context of Situation:

Emily arrives punctually at eight o'clock for Lorelai's bachelorette party, having been invited by Michel with the intent to surprise Lorelai. Left waiting alone, she finds the situation inappropriate and voices her frustration to Lorelai upon her arrival, criticizing her for poor punctuality and hosting. When Lorelai clarifies that it was Michel, not her, who issued the invitation, the tension escalates further. Emily's sarcastic reply underscores her irritation at being kept waiting and her dissatisfaction with Lorelai's explanation.

(9) Emily: And in the future, when you plan one of these things, and you tell a person to show up at eight o'clock, it is considered good manners for you to also show up at eight o'clock.

Lorelai: Well, I didn't exactly invite you mother, Michel did.

Emily: *Ah, well, I feel much better now.*

Type of Sarcastic Utterance: Explicit

Emily's use of explicit sarcasm is direct and unmistakable, as seen in her remark, *Ah, well, I feel much better now*, which clearly targets Lorelai. The lack of subtlety highlights her frustration and conveys her expectation for an apology, ensuring the criticism is fully understood without further explanation.

Type of Sarcastic Strategy: Incongruity

This strategy relies on incongruity, as Emily's line, *Ah, well, I feel much better now*, contradicts her true feelings. While she feigns relief, the context, Michel, not Lorelai, invited her, reveals her disappointment. This contrast creates sarcasm, subtly expressing her annoyance and unmet expectations without stating them directly.

Explicitation

Season 2 EP 11

Context of Relationship: Close-Symmetrical (Colleagues)

Context of Situation:

Lorelai struggles to secure a loan for termite repairs on her house, growing frustrated with the process. In her conversation with Michel, his sarcastic remarks propose increasingly outrageous solutions, heightening the tension. Despite his suggestions, Lorelai quickly shuts him down.

(10) Lorelai: Well, I have to do something and I'm not sure exactly where to draw the line.

Michel: *You know in Thailand; women do this trick with a Ping-Pong ball that is a big crowd pleaser.*

Lorelai: Line drawn, thank you.

Type of Sarcastic Utterance: Explicit

Michel's sarcastic remark is explicit, openly suggesting exaggerated and inappropriate solutions for securing the loan, leaving no doubt about his teasing. By proposing a Ping-Pong ball trick, a sexual performance from Thailand, Michel makes his sarcasm unmistakable to Lorelai, clearly positioning her as the target of his mockery. This suggestion implies that Michel, in a dismissive and unserious manner, perceives her as the type of woman who might resort to such extreme measures to secure money, thereby making his intent to ridicule the situation immediately evident.

Type of Sarcastic Strategy: Explicitation

Michel clearly employs an explicitation strategy of sarcasm by directly stating his exaggerated suggestions, rather than implying them. His comments, such as the Ping-Pong ball trick, are both overt and exaggerated, which highlights the absurdity of the situation. This approach allows Michel to emphasize the sense of desperation in the scenario, subtly mocking the extreme measures Lorelai might consider securing the loan, while making his sarcastic intent unmistakably clear.

Reasoning

Season 2 EP 1

Context of Relationship: Close-Symmetrical (Colleagues)

Context of Situation:

Lorelai and Sookie notice Michel's healthy meal and wonder why he swapped sweets for turkey. Sookie says Michel believes his strict diet will grant him eternal life. Lorelai jokes about his ambition with a Fame reference, making Sookie laugh. Michel overhears and sarcastically says that in a hundred years, he'll laugh with scientists at their ignorance, showing his annoyance.

(11) Lorelai: But. . . What's with the turkey?

Sookie: Oh, Michel thinks he's gonna live forever.

Lorelai: Like on Fame?

Sookie: That's what I said!

Michel: Hmm, *a hundred years from now I will sit around telling my fellow man of science about the two of you and we will giggle like little girls at your ignorance. Now I have work to do.* [Michel leaves]

Type of Sarcastic Utterances: Explicit

Michel's remark is an explicit sarcastic utterance, directly addressing Lorelai and Sookie's skepticism by claiming he will one day laugh at their ignorance. His sarcasm is overt, not implied, as he clearly envisions himself mocking their disbelief. The lack of ambiguity makes his sarcastic intent unmistakable.

Type of Sarcastic Strategy: Reasoning

Michel uses reasoning, building an exaggerated hypothetical to make his point. His response, *a hundred years from now... we will giggle like little girls at your ignorance*, follows an if-then logic: if his strict diet ensures longevity, then he'll outlive them and mock their doubt. This far-fetched scenario highlights the sarcasm, mocking Lorelai and Sookie while showing his (somewhat absurd) confidence in his lifestyle.

Implicit Sarcastic Utterance

- **Strategies:** Metonymy, Metaphor, Rhetorical Question, and Echoing
- **Characteristics:** Implicit sarcasm is indirect, context-dependent, and requires inference. Unlike explicit sarcasm, it lacks overt markers and relies on contextual knowledge, shared experiences, or subtle cues. Its meaning is often ambiguous and open to interpretation, making it common in situations where direct criticism is socially discouraged and subtlety is needed.

Metonymy

Season 2 EP 7

Context of Relationship: Distant-Asymmetrical (Boss-subordinates)

Context of Situation:

Lorelai arrives at the runway with Luke, who's there for repairs, and quickly notices it's uneven. Concerned, she asks him to check it. When she tells the man who set it up to move, he insists it's fine. With a hint of sarcasm, Lorelai suggests she's not convinced his work is as perfect as he claims.

(12) Lorelai: Okay, um, move.

Man: What?

Lorelai: I want Luke to look at it.
Man: Hey, I put this thing together.
Lorelai: Yes, and *I loved your work in Pisa*, now get out of the way, please.
[the man walks away]

Type of Sarcastic Utterances: Implicit

Lorelai's sarcasm is subtle and layered, using implication instead of direct criticism. By saying, *I loved your work in Pisa*, she indirectly compares his work to the famously flawed Leaning Tower of Pisa. This seeming praise actually hints at instability, making the sarcasm implicit and requiring the listener to infer her true meaning.

Type of Sarcastic Strategy: Metonymy

Lorelai uses Pisa as metonymy to subtly critique the runway's unevenness. By referencing the Leaning Tower, known for its tilt, she draws a parallel to the unstable runway, implying the man's work is flawed. This layered, indirect comparison makes her sarcasm both pointed and incongruent.

Rhetorical question

Season 2 EP 5

Context of Relationship: Distant-Symmetrical (Acquaintances)

Context of Situation:

It's a busy morning at Luke's Diner. Lorelai steps up to the counter, eyeing the fresh plate of donuts that just came out. As she reaches for one, a couple of young boys, already lingering nearby, protest.

(13) Lorelai: Hey, donuts please.
Boy 1: We were here first!
Lorelai: *On the planet?*
Boy 1: Huh?

Type of Sarcastic Utterances: Implicit

Lorelai's sarcastic remark is subtle, using implication over direct criticism. Rather than challenge the boy outright, she exaggerates his claim with *On the planet?*, mockingly scaling it to the absurd. The line sounds innocent but hints that his complaint is exaggerated and unreasonable. Her playful tone keeps the sarcasm light, showing she doesn't take his accusation seriously, even if it is true.

Type of Sarcastic Strategy: Rhetorical Question

Lorelai uses a rhetorical question as her sarcasm strategy. By asking *On the planet?*, she poses a question that doesn't expect an actual answer but serves to mock the boy's assertion that

they were there first. The question exaggerates the idea of being first to an absurd, global level, creating incongruity and signaling her sarcastic stance.

Echoing

Season 2 EP 7

Context of Relationship: Distant-Asymmetrical (Mentor-student)

Context of Situation:

At lunchtime, Rory is sitting alone at a table, listening to her Walkman and reading a book. Mrs. Verdinan approaches her to comment on her solitary habits and suggests that her Walkman makes her unapproachable.

(14) Mrs. Verdinan: But rarely outside of class. At lunch, you're always by yourself.

Rory: That's when I catch up on my reading.

Mrs. Verdinan: And that walkman, it makes you very unapproachable.

Rory: *You approached me.*

Type of Sarcastic Utterances: Implicit

Rory's sarcastic utterance is layered, using reminiscence instead of direct rejection. Her response, *you approached me*, seems factual but subtly mocks the claim that she's unapproachable. Though neutral on the surface, it challenges the implication as inconsistent or exaggerated. The understated delivery keeps the sarcasm implicit, adding humor without direct confrontation.

Type of Sarcastic Strategy: Echoing

Rory uses echoing to highlight the contradiction in the teacher's claim. Her response, *you approached me*, directly recalls the teacher's action, exposing the inconsistency in calling her unapproachable. This calm, factual echo turns the teacher's behavior into a subtle counterpoint, making the sarcasm more effective without directly rejecting the accusation.

The classification of sarcastic English utterances into these two categories reflects the varying degrees of interpretive effort required by the addressee. Based on the examples gathered, explicit sarcasm tends to be more accessible because of its clear markers, whereas implicit sarcasm demands a higher level of contextual awareness and inferential reasoning. This framework, supported by a visual categorization map (Figure 1), offers a structured means of analyzing sarcastic English utterances in communication. By integrating linguistic and cognitive perspectives, it can provide insights into sarcasm's adaptability and function across different interpersonal dynamics and social contexts.

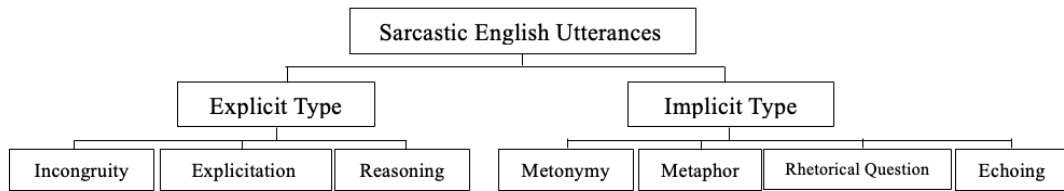


Figure 1 Types and strategies of sarcastic utterances in English

Note. Developed based on Kreuz and Glucksberg (1989) and Tabacaru (2017)

RESULTS

This section analyzes the distribution of explicit and implicit sarcastic utterances across relationship contexts in English, addressing RQ1: *What types of sarcastic English utterances are used among different relationships in the Gilmore Girls TV series, season 2?* (see Section 4.1). It also examines the influence of relational dynamics, such as social distance and power (Sections 4.1–4.2), and explores sarcasm strategies to address RQ2: *What are the strategies of sarcastic English utterances used among different relationships in Gilmore Girls TV series, season 2?* (see Section 4.3), highlighting how strategy choice reflects relationship type.

Distribution of explicit and implicit types across relationship contexts

Table 2
Explicit and implicit types of sarcastic English utterances

Types of Sarcastic English Utterances	Frequency	Percentages
Explicit Type	51	51%
Implicit Type	49	49%
Total	100	100%

Table 2 addresses RQ1: What types of sarcastic English utterances are used among different relationships in the *Gilmore Girls* TV series, season 2? It presents the overall distribution of sarcastic English utterances identified in the dataset. Out of 100 total instances, explicit sarcasm accounts for 51%, and implicit sarcasm accounts for 49%, indicating an almost equal distribution. The slight predominance of explicit sarcasm suggests that speakers frequently employ direct, overt sarcastic forms; however, the high presence of implicit sarcasm demonstrates that indirect, context-dependent sarcasm is also widely used, particularly in relationally sensitive settings. This balance reflects the adaptable nature of sarcasm in everyday communication, where speakers alternate between clarity and subtlety according to interpersonal and situational needs.

To further explore how sarcasm is shaped by contextual factors such as power relations and social distance between interlocutors, the following sections provide a detailed analysis of how explicit and implicit forms are used under these varying conditions.

Table 3
Explicit and implicit types of sarcastic English utterances in close and symmetrical relationships

Close (D-)		Symmetrical (P-)	
Types	Percentages	Types	Percentages
Explicit	52.44%	Explicit	58.06%
Implicit	47.56%	Implicit	41.93%
Total	100%	Total	100%

Table 3 presents the distribution of explicit and implicit sarcastic English utterances in close and symmetrical relationships. In close relationships, explicit sarcasm accounts for 52.44% of the instances, slightly higher than implicit sarcasm at 47.56%. Similarly, in symmetrical relationships, where interlocutors have relatively equal power, explicit sarcasm appears more frequently (58.06%) than implicit sarcasm (41.93%). These results indicate a slight preference for explicit sarcastic strategies in both close and symmetrical contexts, suggesting that familiarity and equal status between speakers may encourage more direct and overt expression of sarcasm.

Table 4
Explicit and implicit types of sarcastic English utterances in distant and asymmetrical relationships

Distant (D+)		Asymmetrical (P+)	
Types	Percentages	Types	Percentages
Explicit	44.44%	Explicit	39.47%
Implicit	55.56%	Implicit	60.53%
Total	100%	Total	100%

Table 4 presents the distribution of explicit and implicit sarcastic English utterances in distant and asymmetrical relationships. In distant relationships, where interlocutors are less familiar or emotionally detached, implicit sarcasm occurs more frequently (55.56%) than explicit sarcasm (44.44%). This suggests a slight preference for indirect and subtle expressions of sarcasm in less intimate interactions. A similar tendency is observed in asymmetrical relationships, where power differences exist between speakers; implicit sarcasm accounts for 60.53% of the instances, compared to 39.47% for explicit sarcasm. These findings indicate that when social distance or hierarchical imbalance is present, speakers are more likely to employ indirect sarcastic strategies, reflecting a cautious and context-sensitive approach to expressing criticism.

While the results from Tables 3 and 4 reveal general tendencies in how intimacy and power dynamics influence the use of sarcasm, they do not fully account for the variations that occur when these two factors intersect. The overall trend suggests that closeness and power symmetry can encourage slightly more explicit expressions, whereas distance and familial hierarchy favor implicit ones. However, this pattern becomes more complex when examining mixed relational contexts. As the following sections (Tables 6 and 8) will illustrate, close–asymmetrical relationships, despite emotional familiarity, show a higher frequency of implicit sarcasm, while distant–asymmetrical relationships display the opposite pattern, with explicit sarcasm often used by those in positions of power. These findings provide a more nuanced understanding of how sarcasm operates at the intersection of intimacy and hierarchy.

The next section provides a detailed analysis of sarcastic English utterances across four relationship contexts, based on Brown and Levinson's (1987) framework: (1) Close-asymmetrical relationships, such as those between parents and children or mentors and students; (2) Close-symmetrical relationships, including friendships, and peer colleagues; (3) Distant-asymmetrical relationships, such as interactions between superiors and subordinates or hierarchical exchanges with strangers; and (4) Distant-symmetrical relationships, involving strangers or acquaintances of equal social standing.

Types and strategies of sarcastic English utterances adopted in four relationship contexts based on Brown and Levinson (1987)

The following subsections present findings based on Brown and Levinson's (1987) typology: close-asymmetrical, close-symmetrical, distant-asymmetrical, and distant-symmetrical relationships. These finer-grained distinctions reveal interactional patterns not captured in Tables 4 and 5 alone.

Table 5
Types and strategies of sarcastic utterances in English in parent-child and mentor-mentee relationships

Close-Asymmetrical Relationship		
Types	Strategies	Percentages
Explicit	Incongruity	20%
	Explication	6.67%
	Reasoning	6.67%
	Subtotal	33.34%
Implicit	Metonymy	20%
	Metaphor	0%
	Rhetorical Question	26.66%
	Echoing	20%
	Subtotal	66.66%
Total		100%

Table 5 presents the distribution of sarcastic strategies used in parent-child and mentor-mentee interactions, which represent close-asymmetrical relationships. The findings indicate that implicit strategies, including metonymy, rhetorical question, and echoing, account for 66.66% of sarcastic utterances, while explicit strategies, such as incongruity, explication, and reasoning, make up 33.34%. Among these, rhetorical question and incongruity emerge as the most frequently employed strategies (26.66% and 20%, respectively), followed by echoing and metonymy (each 20%) and explication and reasoning (each 6.67%), whereas metaphor is notably absent. The lack of metaphor suggests that speakers may avoid overly complex figurative devices that require deep inferential effort, opting instead for strategies that rely on shared context or common background knowledge. Interestingly, echoing occurs exclusively in this relational type among all categories examined, implying that speakers in close-asymmetrical relationships possess sufficient mutual familiarity to employ and interpret echoing effectively despite power differences. While Tables 3 and 4 suggest an overall association between emotional closeness and sarcasm, this finding shows that emotional closeness alone does not automatically result in more explicit sarcastic expressions.

Table 6
Types and strategies of sarcastic utterances in English in friend or colleague relationships

Close-Symmetrical Relationship		
Types	Strategies	Percentages
Explicit	Incongruity	40.4%
	Explication	21.15%
	Reasoning	1.91%
	Subtotal	63.46%
Implicit	Metonymy	19.23%
	Metaphor	0%
	Rhetorical Question	17.31%
	Echoing	0%
	Subtotal	36.54%
Total		100%

Table 6 illustrates the distribution of sarcastic English strategies in friend and colleague interactions, categorized as close-symmetrical relationships. In this context, explicit sarcasm predominates, accounting for 63.46% of all occurrences, while implicit sarcasm represents 36.54%. Among explicit strategies, incongruity (40.4%) and explication (21.15%) are the most common, followed by reasoning (1.91%). For implicit strategies, metonymy (19.23%) and rhetorical question (17.31%) are observed, whereas metaphor and echoing are entirely absent. The predominance of explicit strategies in these relationships suggests that when interlocutors share both emotional closeness and equal power, sarcasm is expressed more openly and directly. This directness may reflect a high degree of mutual understanding and reduced threat to face, allowing speakers to employ overt sarcastic remarks without risking relational harmony. When compared with the close-asymmetrical context in Table 6, these findings further demonstrate how the interplay of intimacy and power balance shapes the explicitness of sarcastic communication.

Table 7
Types and strategies of sarcastic English utterances in boss-subordinate and power-imbalanced stranger relationships

Distant-Asymmetrical Relationship		
Types	Strategies	Percentages
Explicit	Incongruity	50%
	Explication	12.5%
	Reasoning	0%
	Subtotal	62.5%
Implicit	Metonymy	25%
	Metaphor	0%
	Rhetorical Question	12.5%
	Echoing	0%
	Subtotal	37.5%
Total		100%

Table 7 presents the distribution of sarcastic English strategies in boss–subordinate and power-imbalanced stranger interactions, categorized as distant–asymmetrical relationships. In this context, explicit sarcasm constitutes 62.5% of all instances, while implicit sarcasm accounts for 37.5%. Among explicit strategies, incongruity is the most prevalent (50%), followed by explicitation (12.5%), whereas reasoning does not occur. For implicit strategies, metonymy (25%) and rhetorical question (12.5%) are observed, while metaphor and echoing are absent.

Furthermore, the study reveals that speakers with higher power produced 75% of sarcastic utterances, whereas lower-power interlocutors contributed only 25%. When subordinates employed sarcasm, it was primarily to defend themselves or to soften confrontation without directly challenging authority. The predominance of explicit sarcasm among those in power suggests that social distance does not necessarily foster indirectness; rather, hierarchical security enables dominant speakers to express criticism more overtly. These findings indicate that power asymmetry, when coupled with social distance, can shift communicative strategies toward explicitness, reinforcing sarcasm’s role as both a tool of dominance and a defensive mechanism in unequal relationships.

Table 8
Types and strategies of sarcastic English utterances among acquaintance and power-balanced stranger relationships

Distant-Symmetrical Relationship		
Types	Strategies	Percentages
Explicit	Incongruity	20%
	Explicitation	10%
	Reasoning	0%
	Subtotal	30%
Implicit	Metonymy	10%
	Metaphor	0%
	Rhetorical Question	60%
	Echoing	0%
	Subtotal	70%
Total		100%

Table 8 illustrates the tendency of speakers to favor implicit over explicit sarcasm in distant–symmetrical relationships. In this context, implicit sarcasm occurs considerably more often (70%) than explicit forms (30%). Rhetorical question is the most dominant strategy (60%), while incongruity (20%), explicitation (10%), and metonymy (10%) appear less frequently; metaphor, reasoning, and echoing are entirely absent. The prominence of rhetorical question suggests that speakers in distant–symmetrical settings employ subtle and indirect sarcasm to uphold politeness and mitigate potential face threats. Unlike distant–asymmetrical relationships, where explicit sarcasm often signals authority or control, distant–symmetrical interactions emphasize social balance and mutual respect through ambiguity and shared understanding. This pattern underscores how sarcasm flexibly adapts to both power dynamics and emotional distance, revealing its role as a strategic linguistic resource for maintaining interpersonal harmony even among socially distant interlocutors.

Strategies of sarcastic English utterances found in this study

Table 9
Percentages of strategies of sarcastic English utterances found in this study

Strategies of Sarcastic English Utterances	Percentages
Incongruity	33%
Rhetorical Question	24%
Metonymy	19%
Explicitation	15%
Echoing	6%
Reasoning	3%
Metaphor	0%
Total	100%

Table 9 summarizes the overall distribution of sarcastic strategies identified in this study. The most frequently occurring strategy was incongruity, accounting for 33% of all sarcastic utterances. This was followed by rhetorical question at 24%, and metonymy at 19%. Explicitation comprised 15% of the dataset. Less frequently observed strategies included echoing at 6% and reasoning at 3%. Metaphor did not appear in the dataset (0%).

The three most frequently used strategies—incongruity (33%), rhetorical question (24%), and metonymy (19%)—share core functional features that help explain their dominance across relational contexts. All three rely on a detectable mismatch between literal and intended meaning, enabling speakers to convey sarcasm through implication rather than explicit labeling. Incongruity exaggerates or contradicts reality, rhetorical question highlights obviousness or absurdity, and metonymy conveys criticism indirectly through association. Because these strategies allow sarcastic intent to be inferred without requiring extensive shared knowledge or risking the bluntness of direct ridicule, they function as versatile and relatively low-risk choices across both close and distant relationships.

In contrast, explicitation accounted for only 15% of the dataset, indicating that overtly signaling sarcastic intent is comparatively less preferred. Although explicitation reduces interpretive ambiguity, its directness increases the risk of face threat, making it more appropriate in relationships that tolerate higher communicative assertiveness, such as close-symmetrical dynamics or high-power positions.

Echoing (6%) and reasoning (3%) appeared infrequently and only within close relationships, suggesting that these strategies rely on shared familiarity, trust, or conversational history. Their low frequency implies that they operate as relational markers rather than broadly applicable sarcastic tools, used selectively when speakers can assume mutual understanding. Metaphor did not occur in the dataset (0%), which may reflect its reliance on higher inferential effort or the stylistic tendencies of the scripted genre.

Their frequent use aligns with Gibbs Jr.'s (2000) and Huang and Galinsky's (2023) argument that indirect strategies help mitigate face-threatening acts, making them socially efficient and relationally adaptable.

In summary, the distribution of strategies indicates a clear preference for sarcasm that balances interpretive accessibility with social subtlety: speakers favor strategies that enable indirect criticism or stance-taking while minimizing interpersonal risk.

CONCLUSION

This study analyzed sarcastic English utterances in *Gilmore Girls* Season 2, examining how its types and strategies align with varied relational contexts. The findings demonstrate that sarcasm operates as a strategically flexible communicative tool, intricately shaped by social power dynamics and emotional closeness. Explicit sarcasm—characterized by overt incongruity, explicitation, and immediate reasoning—predominates in low-risk, close-symmetrical ties (e.g., friends and colleagues) where it signals social solidarity and fulfills light-hearted, humorous functions (Zhu & Wang, 2020), as well as in high-power positions to assert authority or clarify ironic intent. Conversely, implicit sarcasm—utilizing indirect strategies like metonymy, rhetorical question, and echoing (Kreuz & Glucksberg, 1989; Tabacaru, 2017)—is more prevalent in high-stakes contexts such as distant-symmetrical interactions or familial and pedagogical hierarchies. In these face-threatening environments, implicit forms soften criticism, preserve negative face, and offer speakers plausible deniability (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Sidelinger & Madlock, 2021). Notably, the data also reveals that sarcasm can serve as a linguistic defense mechanism for lower-power participants responding to superiors.

These patterns strongly align with Politeness Theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987) and Goffman's (1967) face-saving framework. Rather than acting as a mere stylistic device, the choice of sarcastic technique reflects a socially attuned strategy directly tied to interactional goals, relational intimacy, and power structures. Ultimately, explicit strategies reinforce positive face by projecting confidence and mutual bonding (Leech, 2014), whereas implicit strategies shield negative face by mitigating direct communicative conflict (Huang & Galinsky, 2023).

Implications

The critical value of this study lies in its validation of scripted television dialogue as a linguistic microcosm of authentic human interaction. Rather than serving as mere stylized entertainment, the conversational dynamics within *Gilmore Girls* function as a structured portrayal of human society, proving that sarcasm is a common linguistic phenomenon intrinsically shaped and controlled by real-world social conditions. By demonstrating that media dialogue accurately mirrors the subtle complexities of face management found in spontaneous daily conversations, this study confirms that highly acclaimed, cross-generational television series can serve as a dependable, highly accessible proxy for analyzing complex politeness strategies and interpersonal behaviors.

Practically, by identifying the specific social contexts where explicit and implicit sarcasm operate, these insights offer actionable value for real-world communication. Understanding these patterns can assist educators and communicators in training individuals to navigate social risks effectively—learning when sarcasm can be deployed to foster social solidarity, or decoded accurately to prevent cross-cultural and interpersonal communication breakdowns.

Limitations

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. First, reliance on a scripted television series may not fully reflect the spontaneity and complexity of sarcastic exchanges in naturally occurring communication, thereby limiting the generalizability of the findings. Second, the focus on a single season of *Gilmore Girls* may have restricted the diversity of sarcastic expressions and interpersonal contexts represented in the dataset. The absence of metaphorical sarcasm, for instance, may reflect the stylistic characteristics of the selected dialogue, particularly its emphasis on concise, witty, and fast-paced exchanges, as well as the broader conventions of scripted television, which may prioritize clarity and comedic timing over complex figurative language. Examining additional seasons, other television series, or naturally occurring discourse could therefore provide a broader understanding of the relationship between sarcasm and interpersonal dynamics. Third, the top-down approach based on existing frameworks (e.g., Kreuz & Glucksberg, 1989; Tabacaru, 2017) may have limited the identification of context-specific sarcastic strategies. Future research could adopt a bottom-up, data-driven approach to capture emergent forms of sarcasm that may not be fully accounted for by existing frameworks. Lastly, this study focused solely on text-based verbal sarcasm and did not systematically examine prosodic or nonverbal cues, which may play an important role in identifying sarcastic intent. These cues were not analyzed due to limitations in context retrieval and the risk of missing or inconsistently capturing such information.

Recommendation

The findings indicate that echoing and reasoning occur exclusively within close relationships. Echoing was observed in close-asymmetrical interactions (e.g., parent–child), while reasoning appeared in both close-symmetrical and close-asymmetrical contexts. These patterns suggest that relational depth, built through familiarity, trust, and shared background knowledge, is a prerequisite for the successful use of these two strategies. Given that echoing and reasoning emerged only in close relationships, these strategies may serve as potential indicators of relational intimacy, appearing only when interactants share sufficient interpersonal closeness to interpret the intended meaning without misunderstanding. Future research could further explore the diagnostic value of these strategies by examining how different levels of intimacy shape their distribution across diverse relational, cultural, and generational contexts. Incorporating real-life interactional data and multimodal cues (e.g., prosody, facial expressions, gaze, and gesture) would also deepen our understanding of how relational closeness enables or constrains the use of these nuanced forms of sarcastic communication.

THE AUTHORS

Jutatip Luechai is a lecturer in the English Program at the School of Liberal Arts, Mae Fah Luang University, Thailand. She earned her Master's degree in English from the Faculty of Humanities at Srinakharinwirot University, Thailand. Her primary research interests focuses on pragmatics, specifically the linguistic and social aspects of sarcasm.

fang.jutatip@gmail.com

Sakunrat Worathamrong, Ph.D., is an Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Humanities of Srinakharinwirot University, Thailand. Her research expertise mainly centers on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and cross-cultural communication.

anusarad@g.swu.ac.th

REFERENCES

- Bennett, M. J. (2023). The relational roots of intercultural communication. In J. Baumann Montecinos, T. Grünfelder, & J. Wieland (Eds.), *A relational view on Cultural complexity: Implications for theory and practice* (pp. 33–47). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-27454-1_2
- Brown, P., & Levinson, S. C. (1987). *Politeness: Some universals in language usage*. Cambridge University Press.
- Caucci, G. M., Kreuz, R. J., & Buder, E. H. (2024). What's a little sarcasm between friends: Exploring the sarcastic tone of voice. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 43(4), 486–502. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0261927X241233001>
- D'Arcey, J. T., & Fox Tree, J. E. (2022). Oh, SO sarcastic: Diverse strategies for being sarcastic. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 41(3), 288–311. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0261927X221081735>
- Fanari, R., Melogno, S., & Fadda, R. (2023). An experimental study on sarcasm comprehension in school children: The possible role of contextual, linguistics and meta-representative factors. *Brain Sciences*, 13(6), Article 863. <https://doi.org/10.3390/brainsci13060863>
- Genovese, H. (2020). [Review of the book *Gilmore Girls: A cultural history*, by L. Stache & R. Davidson]. *Journal of Popular Culture*, 53(4), 973–974. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jpcu.12936>
- George, T. (2022, October 25). *Mixed methods research: Definition, guide, & examples*. Scribbr. <https://www.scribbr.co.uk/research-methods/mixed-methods/>
- Gibbs, R. W., Jr. (2000). Irony in talk among friends. *Metaphor and Symbol*, 15(1–2), 5–27. https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327868MS151&2_2
- Goddard, C., & Levisen, C. (2023). Contrastive metapragmatics and the shifting semantics of 'sarcasm' in English and Danish. *Contrastive Pragmatics*, 1(3), 1–24. <https://doi.org/10.1163/26660393-bja10107>
- Goffman, E. (1967). *Interaction ritual: Essays in face-to-face behavior*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203788387>
- Gutierrez, W. (2023, February 17). *The legacy of classic films: Why old movies still matter today*. Enochs Eagle Eye. <https://enochseagleeye.org/2988/showcase/the-legacy-of-classic-films-why-old-movies-still-matter-today/>
- Helal, N. A., Hassan, A., Badr, N. L., & Afify, Y. M. (2024). A contextual-based approach for sarcasm detection. *Scientific Reports*, 14, Article 15415. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-024-65217-8>
- Huang, L., & Galinsky, A. D. (2023). SHARP wit: Why receiving sarcasm improves perspective-taking. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 54, Article 101709. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2023.101709>
- Kreuz, R. J., & Glucksberg, S. (1989). How to be sarcastic: The echoic reminder theory of verbal irony. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General*, 118(4), 374–386. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0096-3445.118.4.374>
- Leech, G. (2014). *The pragmatics of politeness*. Oxford University Press.
- Madden, C. (2024, June 9). *Every season of Gilmore Girls, ranked*. SlashFilm. <https://www.slashfilm.com/1598997/gilmore-girls-every-season-ranked/>
- McAuley, L., & Glenwright, M. (2025). Humor styles predict self-reported sarcasm use in interpersonal communication. *Behavioral Sciences*, 15(7), Article 922. <https://www.mdpi.com/2076-328X/15/7/922>

- McCann, E. (2025). *From Emily to Lorelei to Rory: A qualitative textual analysis of scripts from Gilmore Girls for real-world application* (Thesis No. 7135) [Doctoral dissertation, University of North Dakota]. UND Scholarly Commons. <https://commons.und.edu/theses/7135/>
- Mesing, J., Williams, D., & Blasko, D. (2012). Sarcasm in relationships: Hurtful or humorous? *International Journal of Psychology*, 47(Suppl. 1), 724. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00207594.2012.709129>
- Pexman, P. M. (2018). How do we understand sarcasm?. *Frontiers for Young Minds*, 6, Article 56. <https://kids.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/frym.2018.00056#>
- Rothermich, K., Ogunlana, A., & Jaworska, N. (2021). Change in humor and sarcasm use based on anxiety and depression symptom severity during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Journal of Psychiatric Research*, 140, 95–100. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpsychires.2021.05.027>
- Sidelinger, R. J., & Madlock, P. E. (2021). Humor at work: Exploring supervisors' sarcasm, self-disparaging and vulgar language based humor, and verbal aggression. *Communication Research Reports*, 38(5), 293–303. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08824096.2021.1963697>
- Song, S. (2011). Metaphor and metonymy—A tentative research into modern cognitive linguistics. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 1(1), 68–73. <https://doi.org/10.4304/tpls.1.1.68-73>
- Tabacaru, S. (2017). When language bites: A corpus-based taxonomy of sarcastic utterances in American television series. *Pragmatics & Cognition*, 24(2), 186–211. <https://doi.org/10.1075/pc.17027.tab>
- Time. (2007, September 6). *All-TIME 100 TV shows*. <https://time.com/collection/all-time-100-tv-shows/>
- Wieslander, M. (2021). Challenging and destabilizing official discourses: Irony as a resistance resource in institutional talk. *Culture and Organization*, 27(1), 16–32. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14759551.2019.1699093>
- Zhu, N., & Filik, R. (2024). The role of social status in sarcasm interpretation: Evidence from the United Kingdom and China. *Discourse Processes*, 61(1–2), 69–89. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0163853X.2023.2252695>
- Zhu, N., & Wang, Z. (2020). The paradox of sarcasm: Theory of mind and sarcasm use in adults. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 163, Article 110035. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2020.110035>