

# Irony

## Linguistic aspects

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# Examples

„Maybe you would help me with the dishes during half-time? I'm sure the players will make it through the break without your support!“

“He cannot kick with his left foot, he cannot head a ball, he cannot tackle and he doesn't score many goals. Apart from that he's all right.” (George Best about David Beckham)

„He's always late. But, isn't it great to have such a loving husband who truly cares about his secretaries?“

# Irony in Talk Among Friends (Gibbs, 2000)

- Conversations between students
  - recorded
  - transcribed the ironic statements
    - Types of ironic statements?
    - What are the topics?
    - Male / female usage patterns?
    - Mocking, critical, humorous, asymmetric?
    - Echo, pretense, tone of voice?
    - Reaction of the addressee

# Irony in Talk Among Friends (Gibbs, 2000)

## Types of ironic statements

Anne: Isn't it so nice to have guests here?

Dana: Totally!

Anne: Our housemates bring in the most wonderful guests in the world and they can totally relate to us.

Dana: Yes, they do.

Anne: (laughs) Like I would just love to have them here more often (laughs) so I can cook for them, I can prepare (laughs) ...

# Irony in Talk Among Friends (Gibbs, 2000)

## Types of ironic statements

Anne: Isn't it so nice to have guests here? (rhetorical question)

Dana: Totally!

Anne: Our housemates bring in the most wonderful guests in the world and they can totally relate to us. (hyperbole)

Dana: Yes, they do.

Anne: (laughs) Like I would just love to have them here more often (laughs) so I can cook for them... (sarcasm)

# Irony in Talk Among Friends (Gibbs, 2000)

## Types of ironic statements

David is taking a Latin course...

Sarah: You read all those ancient texts, that's cool (laughs).

David: Why you guys dissin' on Latin?

Sarah: (mocking tone) What, wo-ah, you're dissin' my Latin.

(teasing)

# Irony in Talk Among Friends (Gibbs, 2000)

<u>Types of ironic statements?</u>	occurences
• Teasing	50%
• Sarcasm	28%
• Hyperbole	12%
• Rhetorical Question	8%
• (Understatement)	2% (n=6)

# Irony in Talk Among Friends (Gibbs, 2000)

## What are the topics?

Human concerns

- The current situation
- A past event
- The addressee
- Other people

Hyperbole prefers other people or other comments



# Irony in Talk Among Friends (Gibbs, 2000)

## Male / female usage patterns?

- Women use more hyperbole than men (59% of all hyperbolic statements)
  - Men use more sarcasm (64% of all sarastic statements)
- Women prefer to be more funny while men need to be more aggressive?

# Irony in Talk Among Friends (Gibbs, 2000)

## Mocking, critical, humorous, asymmetric?

- All types are perceived as **mocking** (sarcasm wins with 90% of all sarcastic statements being mocking)
- Sarcasm is the most critical type of ironic statements (~two times critical than all others)
- All types are perceived as being **humorous** (~75% of all times)
- **Asymmetry** of statement-meaning relation
  - Teasing: more often negative statements to transport positive meaning
  - Sarcasm: more often positive statement “hiding” negative, critical meaning

# Irony in Talk Among Friends (Gibbs, 2000)

## Echo, pretense, tone of voice?

- Teasing tends to **echo** the previous utterance and mimick the last speaker (50% echoic)
- Other types are not very echoic (29% or less)
- Teasing and sarcasm involved more **pretense** than other types (hyperbole and rhet. May transport there meaning without pretense)
- All but hyperbole showed a **special tone of voice** (because the superlative is stressed by default?)

# Irony in Talk Among Friends (Gibbs, 2000)

## Reaction of the addressee

- Often responded **ironically** in return (21-33%)
- With hyperboles most often **literal** response
- A responding laughter was less frequent with the more critical sarcasm
  - more laughter with “group humoristic” hyperbole/rhet. Question
  - Responding to teasing may be easier and more appropriate than to hyperbole and especially rhet. questions 😊

# How to use that to find (and classify) ironic statements?

- use contributions found in experiment
  - sarcasm is more often used by men. If you have a male speaker you could use this information
  - if the ironic statement is addressed to more than one person, it's most likely not teasing or sarcasm
  - ...
- Analyze the voice tone. Is it “special”, a clue for an ironic statement?
- If you have a dialogue representation. Look, if the topic is changed abruptly.
- Recursively: Look, if the answer is ironic in return ;-)

# Using lexical clues to find sarcasm (Kreuz & Caucchi, 2007)

100 text passages (Google Book Search):

“I like maths”, Peter **said sarcastically**.

The man **said sarcastically**, “You’re a great friend!” and went away.

“Today, it’s going to rain”, the woman **said**.

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# Using lexical clues to find sarcasm (Kreuz & Caucchi, 2007)

How probable (1-7) is it that the speaker is being sarcastic in the following excerpt?

(excerpt = parapgrph-1 and paragraph+1 added)

4.85 for “said sarcastically” (experimental items)

2.89 for “said” (control items)



# Using lexical clues to find sarcasm (Kreuz & Caucchi, 2007)

identified linguistic clues:

interjections attributed for 5% of all variance in  
the participants judgements ( $R^2=5\%$  in a multivariate  
linear regression)

Thank you 😊

# References

Raymond W. Gibbs. 2000. Irony in Talk Among Friends. *Metaphor and Symbol*, 15:5-27, 2000.

Kreuz, R. J., & Caucci, G. M. (2007, April). Lexical influences on the perception of sarcasm. Paper presented at the Workshop on Computational Approaches to Figurative Language, annual meeting of the Human Language Technology Conference: North American Chapter of the Association for Computational Linguistics (HLT-NAACL), Rochester, NY.