
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Sarcasm in Iraqi Political Interviews

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| ABSTRACT

Quintilian defined the standard view of sarcasm, or verbal irony, as speech in which we comprehend something that is the complete opposite of what is said. However, This study aimed to investigate the pragmatic features of politically sensitive communication devoted to the events and issues surrounding the present-day Iraqi TV program disputes, which consist mostly of speech acts of offense and insult, frequently taking the form of sarcasm and irony. Also, it aimed to examine the roles of sarcasm and irony in politicians' and Iraqi party representatives' politicized communication. Furthermore, this study investigated why the speakers chose sarcasm to convey their thoughts, as well as why this method of communication was more effective than others. To achieve these aims, the data obtained from Balharf Alwahed, a TV show, by watching multiple episodes on YouTube that include journalists and their interviewees, was used to find out the function of sarcasm in political speeches and the role sarcasm plays in Iraqi TV shows. The findings revealed that sarcasm is an important method of criticism in television interviews. The interviewer deliberately used irony as a weapon to strike his guests with a smooth criticism that the guests would accept without any problems. Additionally, humor is one of the implicit means of provocation used by broadcasters to trace the emotions of the guest, which may lead to knowing the truth. Thus, humor is used by broadcasters with cunning and savvy, where the dialogue is knotted with an intelligence that is not very provocative to the guest but rather works to stir his feelings a little to reveal his political past.

| KEYWORDS

Sarcasm; verbal irony; Quintilian

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1. Introduction

Theoretically, the televised journalistic interview—especially with a politician for high office—represents a version of the wide media. The politician is questioned about his or her policy positions in this vision, and the interviewer forces the politician to defend those beliefs in the face of resistance. The typical journalistic interview is sometimes aggressive, based on "gotcha" journalism or an attempt to obtain insider information from government officials and political commentators.

This study examines the pragmatic features of politically charged communication devoted to the events and topics surrounding the ongoing Iraqi TV show disputes, which mostly consist of speech acts of offense and insult and frequently take the shape of sarcasm and irony. Additionally, the article will examine the roles of sarcasm and irony in politicians' and Iraqi party representatives' politicized communication. Finally, this study will look at why the speakers selected sarcasm to communicate their messages, as well as why this form of communication was more effective than others. The examples in this paper come from two television shows that include journalists and their interviewees. To be more specific, this research aims to address the following questions:

- What is the function of Sarcasm in political speeches?
- What role does sarcasm play in Iraqi TV Shows?

- How do speakers mix between Sarcasm and criticism?

1.1 General Overview:

"Sarcasm is best defined as specific instances of verbal irony that serve to provide ironic criticism or praise that is somehow contrary to reality. Sarcasm naturally involves some sort of incongruity between what is said and the situation in which sarcasm is used" (Skalicky & Crossley, 2018: 7).

It is generally an ironic or sarcastic wit designed to criticise, mock, or entertain. It can take various forms, but detecting it is crucial for natural language processing in order to prevent misinterpreting sarcastic words as literal. The existence of words with a strong polarity that is used sarcastically, for example, can readily mislead sentiment analysis, implying that the opposite polarity was intended (Ellen et al., 2013: 1).

Sarcasm, according to Rajiv Rao (2013: 35), is a form of wordplay that also contains an element of violence. Its attitude of hostility and aggressiveness may be directed towards another speaker in the dialogue, someone who is not physically present, or a general view or attitude against a person or item. Sarcasm has also been linked to humour, particularly in parody situations. Furthermore, sarcasm is definitely a form of rude communication that is used with the goal of being viewed as insulting from a politeness standpoint. The insulting aspect, on the other hand, is expressed through generally courteous or honest speech. As a result, sarcasm is a form of mimicked politeness or a meta-strategy that uses politeness to convey impoliteness. Because of its indirect aspect, it has been named "off-the-record impoliteness." Sarcasm is commonly used in conversation since it is not regarded as unpleasant or harsh but as a more direct kind of criticism.

A satirical tone of voice is one of sarcasm's key signals, making it a national misfit in which prosodic qualities are altered by the negative spin that a speaker intends to place on his or her message in order to separate it from what may otherwise be read as positive and honest. Attitudinal intonation, which signals us into speaker behavior (i.e., intentions and perceptions) in a context, includes this sarcastic tone of voice (Wichmann, 2000: 43).

1.2 Varieties of Sarcasm

1.2.1 Sarcasm & Verbal Irony

"Sarcasm and verbal irony clearly do differ in some respects. Sarcasm is usually thought to be more pointed, blatant, and negative than sophisticated cases of verbal irony" (Camp, 2011: 17).

In the most canonical cases of sarcasm and irony, such as "Your plan sounds fantastic". The speaker just appears to make a statement or other speaking act, but in doing so, she implicitly implies some norm of assessment, as well as the fact that this standard has been broken and that she is negatively affected by it. Furthermore, she does all of this without making any meaningful claims, inquiries, or imperatives. In these circumstances, the speaker is effectively attempting to control the common ground without making a move that is recorded on the conversational scoreboard. If the hearer acknowledges both the violation of a presupposed expectation and the legitimacy of the speaker's unhappiness, the view that underpins this negative judgment gets tacit acceptance without the speaker ever overtly expressing or defending it (Camp, 2011: 19).

1.2.2 Propositional Sarcasm

The most obvious examples of sarcasm are those in which the sarcasm is directed at a proposal to which an honest statement would have committed the speaker. In the most basic situations, such as:

He's a fine friend.

James must be a real hit with the ladies.

"The speaker pretends to assert the proposition P that is fixed by semantic composition plus lexically-focused pragmatic processes—roughly, what contextualists identify as „what is said. This proposition P evokes a situation at one extreme of an evaluative scale, typically the positive end; by pretending to assert P, the speaker implicates the contrary of P" (Camp, 2011: 21).

So far, this fits Grice's implicature model quite well, in which the speaker means the complete opposite of what she says and has a negative attitude towards the content of what she means. However, as we saw in (2), sarcasm's target proposition P does not have to be 'what is stated' in pure Gricean terms (Camp, 2011: 21).

1.2.3 Lexical Sarcasm

For Camp (2011:25), if propositional sarcasm is the closest match to the classical implicature model, then lexical sarcasm is the best choice for a semanticist postulation when it comes to lexical sarcasm, such as:

Because George has turned out to be such a diplomat, we've decided to transfer him to PayPal, where he'll do less damage.

"The speaker undertakes an overall speech act whose illocutionary force is guided by the uttered sentence's grammatical mood in the usual way and whose content is a compositional function of the standard meanings of its constituent terms plus local, lexically-focused pragmatic processes. The notable feature, of course, is that the operative „local processes include inverting the meaning of at least one expression" (Camp, 2011: 25).

Propositional sarcasm has a stronger link to an imagined evaluative scale than lexical sarcasm. Whereas in propositional sarcasm, the evaluative scale may be merely pragmatically evoked, lexical sarcasm most naturally targets expressions that denote the extreme end of a conventionally-associated, normal scale—expressions like brilliant,' inspired,' genius,' diplomat,' and thrilled"—so that the sarcastic inversion contributes a value to the scale. The targeted expression usually indicates a positive value, but it can also indicate a negative value (Camp, 2011: 25).

1.2.4 Like-prefixed Sarcasm

'Like'-prefixed sarcasm, similar to propositional sarcasm, tackles a whole proposition. But, unlike bare propositional sarcasm, which can target any of the various propositions associated with an utterance's focal content, presuppositions, or implicatures, as generated by sentences of any grammatical mood, prefixed sarcasm only combines with declarative sentences and only targets content that is determined by the constituent expressions' standard. "This inevitably includes the sentence's focal content, and often only that content." Furthermore, although simple propositional sarcasm creates just a strong implicature that the speaker is committed to the inverted content, utterances preceded with sarcastic like' explicitly commit the speaker to reject that content in a way that undermines deniability significantly (Camp, 2011: 27).

For instance, a speaker who uttered, "Like, I've talked to George in weeks" cannot pretend to have intended to claim that she has, in fact, spoken to George recently and could fairly be reported as having denied speaking with George recently, while even a speaker who employed a heavily sneering tone to utter, Oh, I talk with George all the time, could pretend, albeit disingenuously, that her utterance was sincere and could technically object to such an indirect report. Given that, a speaker employing like'-prefixed sarcasm does undertake a primary illocutionary act and not just an implicature, and given that sarcastic like' only combines with declarative sentences (Camp, 2011: 28).

1.2.5 Illocutionary Sarcasm

Illocutionary sarcasm is the last type of sarcasm to consider. These are cases, such as those presented by Kumon-Nakamura et al., in which the sarcasm's scope includes not just some element of the uttered sentence or a proposition associated with the utterance but the entire illocutionary act that a sincere utterance of the relevant sentence would have undertaken. As we've seen, this frequently targets speech acts that have an illocutionary force other than assertion (Camp, 2011: 33).

For instance, in "Thanks for holding the door", the speaker pretends to undertake an utterance that would be appropriate if the addressee had held the door, where door-holding ranks high on a scale of politeness. This pretence draws attention to the disparity between the evoked situation and the actual one and thereby communicates the speaker's evaluation of the addressee's actual behaviour as rude (Camp, 2011: 33).

1.4 Politics & Humor/Irony

The significance of irony and humor in political language has not been substantially examined until lately, despite the fact that these phenomena have always played a significant part in it. One of the most important societal tasks of comedy is to distract people from harsh realities to free them from censorship, fear of authority, and restrictions. Humor has such a significant part in the sustaining of social life, which is considerably more significant than social theorists have typically imagined, according to British scholars (Bilgic, 2005: 236).

"On the one hand, humor is an antidote to stress and a source of pleasure. On the other hand, it can have a negative effect: give false information, cause misunderstanding, disguise problems." Apart from relieving stress, political comedy creates a pleasant environment for interlocutors, reduces vertical distance, and aids the author in conveying his or her message to the audience. Irony serves a similar purpose, but it is more critical and directed at a specific object. Irony and humor both help to make a politician's speech more appealing to the audience, making it brighter, more inviting, and more enthralling. They are effective methods for influencing people during political campaigns, for building ties, and for defusing aggression. People frequently use humor and mockery to alleviate stress and discomfort, vent anger, and strengthen the boundaries between in- and out-group members (Yelenevskaya, 2013: 215-216).

"The concept of irony may be structured as a type of family resemblance or radial category in which various instances are connected by different motivated links" (Gibbs, 2012: 105), or that it is a *"prototypical and perhaps exemplar category"* (Attardo, 2013: 39), with members possessing certain qualities of ironic/sarcastic communication but to different degrees.

Sarcasm is often interpreted as the communicatively aggressive counterpart of irony, with passages interpreted as sarcastic when the level of mockery is raised. Despite the fact that some scholars have questioned the traditional view of sarcasm as a hostile and offensive form of irony, pointing out that sarcastic utterances can range from banter to humor, the dominant position appears to be that sarcasm is an offensive, victimizing, and even anger-provoking form of irony. Making caustic remarks gave the sense of being more enraged, disgusted, and scorned. Speakers who used sarcasm criticism were thought to be more aggressive and rude verbally than those who employed literal criticism. As Attardo states, *"irony and sarcasm are very closely related and occur on a continuum of aggression: irony is less aggressive, sarcasm is more so"* (Attardo, 2013:249).

Irony's distinguishing feature is implicitness; hence, it relies on some kind of inconsistency between the statement and past knowledge. Sarcasm is a detached attitude toward an evoked thinking or view, where linguistic irony is a form of "echoic allusion" to an ascribed remark or concept. In this situation, the speakers reply to ideas by producing a statement that they assume belongs to someone else and that they attempt to disprove as wrong or stupid (Knoblock, 2016: 15).

1.5 Functions of Irony & Sarcasm

In the development of sarcasm, the human aspect is the most important aspect. People employ several types of sarcasm and irony to express complicated pragmatic aims, according to Gibbs (2000): *"Irony's capacity to convey different emotions and evoke various affective states in listeners, depending on the exact form of irony that is used, illustrates irony's important role in helping speakers negotiate social relationships and adapt to changing circumstances"* (Gibbs, 2000: 55).

It has been said that sarcasm can save one's face. Sarcasm, according to Jorgensen, permits communicators to avoid looking unjust, inconsiderate, disrespectful, or unpleasant. Researchers have proposed that one consequence of ironic criticism is to soften criticism and that sarcasm may even be utilized for the sake of politeness because people generally view sarcastic utterances as more amusing, fun, or mocking than literal comments (Knoblock, 2016: 16).

Others, on the other hand, have shown that ironic criticism may be utilized for the opposite aim and, as a result, can have a negative impact. Irony, for example, has been demonstrated to increase condemnation or mockery. Irony can also create a barrier between speakers and listeners (Vance, 2012: 7).

The matter of why the speakers chose to utilize sarcasm rather than another method that could be simpler to understand drew scholarly interest. *"Despite carrying certain communicative risk, utilizing ironic speech might provide the speaker with several potential benefits since in certain situations verbal irony is a more effective and thus more logical mode of speech than its literal equivalent."* More discourse goals are achieved by ironic utterances than by literal ones (Vance, 2012:7).

Experts have shown that sarcastic communication helps to create solidarity and connection in work groups. Irony, it is arguable, has the ability to alter social ties. According to Gibbs and Izzett, an ironic utterance's audience may be separated into two camps: those who identify the use of irony (wolves) and those who do not (sheep) (Gibbs & Izzett, 2005: 132-133).

The purpose of the wolves is to increase their numbers so that the speaker may unite specific discourse participants against the satire or sarcasm's target. As Gibbs and Izzett argue, irony may have a dual purpose: on the one hand, it can separate speakers from listeners, and on the other hand, it may bring them closer together. The speakers can achieve both the aim of insulting the opponents and the purpose of motivating their own followers by employing sarcastic techniques. As a result, it is conceivable to claim that irony permits users to better control social circumstances than equal literal forms of discourse (Gibbs & Izzett, 2005: 132-133).

These tendencies are closer to the situation observed in the discussions of Iraqi events; face-saving and politeness did not appear to play a significant role in this sample. The examples provided in this research, on the other hand, tended to be harsh and unpleasant. This impact is not only common but also widespread in the examples within this study, where communicators are —attacking their ideological opponents (Gibbs & Izzett, 2005: 132-133).

2. Data Analysis

"السيد علي العلق شخصيه هادته ولطيفه ومحبوبه , من يكرهه إلى هذا الحد ليخدهه ويعيه ههذه النصيحه بشأن وضع اسمه على العملة?"

Text 1

*"Mr. Ali Al-Alaq is a calm, gentle, and sociable personality. **Who hates to this extent, so he gives him this advice about putting his name on the Iraqi coin?"***

The interviewer used verbal sarcasm with the guest where he asked him about his ill-considered decision about putting his name on the coin that does not match with the constitution through his use of phrases such as who deceived and asked him to do so; this is wrong decision.

"ضيفنا اليوم مثير للجدل وشجاع جدا في طرح ارائه . لا اعرف لم يفز في الانتخابات الاخيره. يدعي هو بان الانتخابات مزوره وهذه ذريعه من يخسر الانتخابات ."

Text 2

"Our guest today is very controversial and very brave in offering his opinion. I don't know why he didn't win the last election. **He claims that the elections are rigged, and this is the claim of those who lose the elections.**"

The interviewer in the above text used irony and sarcastic criticism to refute the claim of the politician Mishaan al-Jubouri, in which he mocked his claim that the elections were strongly rigged by saying that this is the claim of those who lose the elections.

"من مشعان إلى مشعان , العرض مستمر لكن البدله مختلفه . انها معضله ستكون مفهومه لمن يتابع مشعان الجبوري . اخترنا التسعينات لان ضيفنا لمع فيها حيث عارض صدام من سوريا التي توجد بها قصره وفندقه وتجارته . في التسعينات بدء لعبه العرض السياسي المشوق والتي اهم لعبه فيه هي تناقض مشعان "

Text 3

"From Mishaan to another Mishaan, the show continues, but the suit is different. It is a dilemma that will be understandable to those who follow Mishaan al-Jubouri from the nineties. We chose the nineties because our guest starred in it, as he opposed Saddam from Syria, **where his palace, hotel, and business are located.** In the nineties, **the start of the exciting political game show, in which the most important game is the Mishaan's contradiction.**"

The interviewer mocked his guest, Mishaan, by saying the plurality and opposition of the rumors, indicating the difference and contradiction of the opinions and positions of Mishaan al-Jubouri over time. The interviewer ridiculed Mishaan's claim of fighting Saddam by ironically hinting at his escape to Syria, where his palace, his luxury cars and his money are located.

"حيدر العبادي يرفع ثلاث اعلام فوق داره وكل يوم يرفع علم معين ويفاوض عليه حزب معين . الرايه الاولى قماشتها انكليزيه كونه عاش في بريطانيا اثناء قتره الحكم السابق فهل هذا يعني انه مدعوم من بريطانيا وانها السبب في جعله رئيس الوزراء ؟ "

Text 4

"Haider al-Abadi raises three flags above his house, and every day, a certain flag is raised, and a certain party negotiates over it. **The first flag was made in English**, as he lived in Britain during the period of the previous regime. **Does this mean that he is supported by Britain and that it is the reason for making him prime minister?**"

The broadcaster accuses the former prime minister, Haider al-Abadi, of having multiple affiliations, both personal and international, as he sarcastically accuses him of working for Britain in order to obtain the position of prime minister, where he accuses him of sarcastically and ironically in order to discover the truth from the guest.

"عزت الشابندر هو السياسي الذي يلقب بالمفتاح كونه لديه مفتاح أي معضله فهو يغازل الامريكان ويفاوض الاحزاب ويسامر ايران ويدافع عن بعض دول الجوار , انتقل بين الاحزاب السياسييه من حزب إلى حزب بحثا عن منصب حكومي . دائما ما يحوم حول الملفات المشبوهه ويعيد المنفيين السياسيين واصحاب المشاكل ولديه اتصالات مع المعارضين خارج البلاد في عمان"

Text 5

"Izzat al-Shabandar is the politician who is nicknamed the key because he has the key to any dilemma. **He flirts with the Americans, negotiates with parties, negotiates with Iran and defends some neighboring countries. He moved from party to party in search of a government position. He always circles around suspicious files, returns political exiles and troublemakers, and has contacts with opponents outside the country in Amman.**"

The interviewer used sarcasm very carefully, alluding to the tricking of his guest and the transformation of his political opinions and stands in search of positions. He also accused him sarcastically of migrating to some countries and cajoling them and dealing with them in order to obtain support and backing.

3. Results & Discussions

The above data were collected from the TV show —Balharf Alwahed by looking at several episodes on YouTube. The data show that sarcasm is an important method of criticism in television interviews. The interviewer deliberately used irony as a weapon to strike his guests with a smooth criticism that the guests would accept without any problems.

The interviewer used implicit sarcasm in his dialogue through his comic sentences that express his opinions and inquiries. The irony in the interviewer's words came from two aspects. The first consisted of direct accusations explicitly for exposing the guest's secrets and violations of the law and regulations. The second consisted of implicit hints and implications that the interviewer inserted into the dialogue in order to provoke the guest and force him to anger and nervousness, which led him to lose control of his emotions. Thus, the announcer lures and interrogates him and reveals his secrets, hidden stories, and dark political past.

Thus, humor is one of the implicit means of provocation used by broadcasters in order to trace the emotions of the guest, which may lead to knowing the truth. Thus, humor is used by broadcasters with cunning and savvy, where the dialogue is knotted with an intelligence that is not very provocative to the guest but rather works to stir his feelings a little to reveal his political past.

4. Conclusion

Humor and irony are more than simply language concepts; they are a way of looking at life and a method of perceiving reality. The capacity to be witty or sarcastic is a personal trait, although it has national and cultural variations. These discourse techniques serve a variety of purposes, ranging from distancing and establishing boundaries to improving communication and forming relationships.

Irony and humor are frequently employed by modern politicians for a variety of objectives, including attacking opponents, gaining support, attracting audience attention, enhancing their own image, and amusing the public. The examples in the article are based on wordplay, ambiguity, and absurdity, among other things. Irony and humor enhance the clarity, impact, and persuasiveness of a discourse. Skilled speakers use these instruments to have a stronger impact on the audience and achieve their objectives.

Sarcasm is the best way for politicians and broadcasters to criticize each other, as it is an indirect way to attack the opponents and reveal their shortcomings, which weakens their political stance towards the people and strengthens the speaker's position. It is a very wit strategy that needs a deep knowledge and a wide cultural background to be used.

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