

## **IRONY AND SARCASM AS FIRST- ORDER METALINGUISTIC LABELS**

The expediency of using corpus-based methods in various branches of linguistics is linked with their ability to open new ways for analysis. Examples in most corpora are not taken from analytical scientific papers, thus being a reliable source of first-order definitions, based on laymen's usage, understanding, interpretation and evaluation of particular terms [4, p. 268]. The choice of contemporary drama dialogue as a reserve of illustrations for research is made on the premise that it may be seen as a type of naturally occurring language [3, p.175]. Claudia Claridge argues that occurrences where people comment on verbal irony are potentially more enlightening than particular usage, which tells little about people's understanding of irony [1, p. 137].

The Corpus of American Soap Operas, comprising spoken language data [2], was searched for the instances of two derivatives of the labels "irony" and 'sarcasm', namely, "ironically" and "sarcastically", used both by scriptwriters in their usage textual markers and characters(actors) in their script-based utterances. The corpus contains 100 million words of data from 22 thousand transcripts of American soap operas from the early 2000s and is a great resource to look at very informal language.

"Ironically" and "sarcastically" lemmas were chosen as they seem to be closely related to properties of the speech act itself and also have a considerable descriptive potential of situational parameters. It was not expected that the search will yield instances of ironic and sarcastic utterances in the corpus. We were primarily interested in metalinguistic usage, dependent on the lay users' understanding of irony and sarcasm phenomena irrespective of their communicative status – either the one of speech act participants or that of outsiders. In other words, both "in – the – act" and "out of – the – act" outlooks were of interest.

All in all, the corpus yielded 69 instances of "ironically" and 59 instances of "sarcastically". Within the list of "ironically" labels we found 66 examples of the

actor-labelled character of speech situation and 3 examples of the actors' self-labelling of the character of their own action. In the latter grouping two examples describe physical acts (“...Maybe we could go carolling, if we did it ironically”; “...I do it ironically”) and one example refers to a speech act (“...And I mean that ironically”). Within the selection of “sarcastically” labels we came across 56 instances of the author’s textual markers of speech act character (including 19 paralinguistic markers) and 3 examples of speech act character definitions, given by actors. One example of the latter grouping refers to someone else’s speech act (“...He says sarcastically”), while two examples describe one’s own speech contributions (“...I can’t sarcastically ask you what more you could do to screw up my life, because I’m afraid you’ll have an answer!”; “...I meant it sarcastically”).

The corpus does not contain any instances of “ironically” lemma on part of scriptwriters, though their correlative “sarcastically” textual markers for defining speech act character make up 95% of the respective selection. Besides, while no situations are described with the help of “sarcastically” lemma, 96% of “ironically” labels are attributed to situations, so here the first-order data match prevalent second-order observations perfectly well. As to the actors’ labels for speech act character, both “ironically” and “sarcastically” lemmas in the corpus refer to their own utterances, which contradicts traditional second-order standpoints. Moreover, the use of a “near-to-performative” formula “I can’t sarcastically ask you...” may be evaluated as a pragmatically mal-formed act, comprising a metalinguistic comment which deprives irony of its essential constitutive feature – impliciteness.

### **References**

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