

CHAPTER II

THEORY AND METHOD

2.1 Theoretical Framework

Recognizing the theory used in the research is an important step to understanding the study as a whole. This research utilizes two main theories to analyse the phenomenon that occurred throughout the series, which are Camp's (2012) theory of sarcasm, used to classify sarcasm, and Attardo's (2001) theory of irony, which helps to understand the purpose of sarcasm in the series. Each theory is explained in a dedicated subsection below.

2.1.1 Sarcasm

Sarcasm is frequently regarded as a narrower form of irony (Danielyan, 2021). Scholars, however, have not reached an agreement on the exact nature of their relationship. Attardo (2000) stated that it remains unanswered whether irony and sarcasm are essentially the same thing with only surface-level differences, or whether they differ significantly. Lee and Katz (1998) add that the main difference between irony and sarcasm lies in the presence of a target, sarcasm typically functions to ridicule a specific individual or entity, whereas irony does not require one. This statement is further supported by Attardo (2000) who stated that sarcasm is an aggressive type of irony with clearer indicators and explicit target. Additionally, Camp (2012) also argues that sarcasm is more direct and negative in comparison to irony.

Moving on from the scholar debate, the Cambridge dictionary defines sarcasm as the use of remarks that express the opposite of what is said, usually to hurt someone's feelings and criticize something in a humorous way. The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines it as a sharp and often satirical or ironic utterance designed to cut or give pain. Lastly, Giora (1995) described sarcasm as a negation that does not utilize an obvious negation marker.

To highlight and sum up the similarity between each definition, sarcasm utilizes context to imply the opposite meaning of what one says in order to hurt, critique, or negate something. Sarcasm presents both surface and implied meaning at the same time, allowing the audience to compare and understand the literal and implied meaning behind an utterance. An example of this instance is when someone says, "The food looks delicious," when in reality the food presented is looking inedible. The ironist points out that the food looks bad (sincere expression) compared to expectations and is far from being good.

In order to create a more focused analysis on sarcasm in this research, Elisabeth Camp's definition of sarcasm is used. Camp's (2012) theory is used because her model of sarcasm theory is considered suitable for this study. Her theory provides a clear framework for sarcasm identification, as well as a model for grouping sarcasm into a few different categories. With that in mind, Camp (2012) describes sarcasm as the following:

"a speech which presupposes a normative scale; which pretends to undertake (or at least, evokes) a commitment with respect to this scale; and which thereby communicates an inversion of this pretended (evoked) commitment (2012: 605)".

To put it briefly, Camp suggests that in order to understand or evoke sarcasm, a speaker must have a shared standard with the hearer which the speaker then inverts to create the sarcastic meaning.

2.1.2 The Types of Sarcasm

Camp (2012) suggests that there are 4 types of sarcasm, which are propositional, lexical, like-prefixed, and illocutionary sarcasm. This ‘type’ is based on sarcasm’ target of a certain linguistic aspect of an utterance. The main purpose of this theory is to identify sarcasm in general and solidify the data with a theory that supports it.

a. Propositional Sarcasm

Camp (2012) describes this type as the most straightforward; this type targets a proposition that the speaker will seriously commit to if they are in a genuine situation. However, rather than directly states the opposite meaning, the speaker only implies it, so the listener can conclude the intended meaning. An example of this type of sarcasm can be found in Camp’s study that can be seen below.

“He’s a fine friend.” (in context the speaker talks about a bad friend)

“Your plan sounds fantastic” (in a context where the said person has a bad plan).

b. Lexical Sarcasm

Lexical sarcasm is targeted towards specific words or phrases that represent the extreme end of a value scale, such as “brilliant” and “genius.” The lexical sarcasm will flip those said meanings into the opposite side of the meaning. It is worth noting that Camp (2012) stated that it will be difficult to differentiate lexical and propositional in practice. In order to be more effective, Camp (2012) suggests that sarcasm needs specific supporting context and allusive or comparative expressions

such as “so,” and “such a,” an example of this type of sarcasm can be found in Camp’s study that can be seen below.

*“If David is **such a genius**, then he won’t get better than a C”*

c. ‘Like’-prefixed Sarcasm

‘Like’-prefixed sarcasm only works with declarative sentences and targets the word's literal meaning and their combination in a sentence. In other words, utterances prefixed with sarcastic ‘like’ (or other variations of it like “as if”) will actively make the speaker deny their utterance, which makes it difficult for the speaker to take back their sarcastic words. an example of this type of sarcasm can be found in Camp’s study that can be seen below.

“Like that’s a good idea.” (Implying that it is a bad idea)

d. Illocutionary Sarcasm

Camp (2012) stated that illocutionary sarcasm targets beyond just parts of a sentence or a specific proposition within the uttered sentence. Instead, it includes the entire intention behind what a sincere version of that sentence would convey. An example of this type of sarcasm can be found in Camp’s study that can be seen below.

“You sure know a lot”

Instead of targeting part of the sentence, the speaker here is only pretending to show his amazement, and because it is said in a sarcastic context, the speaker's real intention is to show skepticism towards the target.

2.1.3 The Purpose of Sarcasm

Even though the theory of sarcasm itself exists, there has been no specific theory that explains its communicative purposes. So, the study chose another theory that is considered the most suitable and similar to sarcasm, which is Attardo's (2001) theory about the purpose of irony. Attardo (2001) theory is originally aimed towards irony. However, because sarcasm is also considered as a subtype of irony, this study still utilizes his theory for further analysis of sarcastic utterances. Additionally, his theory framework is also relevant to sarcastic utterances, which similarly rely on contrast between literal and implied meaning. With that in mind, Attardo suggests that there are six purposes of irony, those are sophistication, evaluation, tool for politeness, persuasive aspect, retractability, and group affiliation.

a. Sophistication

Sarcasm is produced when literal meaning is twisted to its opposite, hence the use of it requires an individual to master the usage of language. In addition, the usage of sarcasm can also indicate individual emotional control. Attardo also notes that sarcasm connection to humor (especially in the western society), also add another layer of positive trait to a certain degree. An example of this communicative purpose can be seen when a person says "*Ah yes, modern technology at its finest*" in a situation where her phone just suddenly broke down without a clear reason. This instance demonstrates how the speaker is able to create a contradiction by purposively stating the opposite of what they experiencing.

b. Evaluation

Sarcasm is often connected with feeling, attitude, and evaluation, even though it is often connected to negativity, 'positive' sarcasm is possible. In addition, sarcasm can soften the impact of negative criticism towards someone but also dull the impact of ironic praise, which shows its capability to mitigate strong feelings. An example of this communicative purpose of sarcasm can be seen when someone says to their friend, "*Amazing how you kept your composure back there,*" in a situation where his friend has just become angry at someone. This instance showcases how sarcasm can be used to evaluate someone's behavior without being too direct about it.

c. Politeness

Sarcasm is often considered aggressive since it's considered as an FTA, however Attardo stated that the use of it is less threatening compared to direct aggression. He also adds that sarcasm's ability to retract information contributes to its usage in the context of politeness. An example of this communicative purpose of sarcasm can be seen when a person says "*Oh my god another amazing news to hear early in the morning*" in a situation where the person just got terrible news from his friend but does not want to look angry. In this context, the speaker uses sarcasm to not openly show their anger. Rather than expressing frustration directly, the speaker communicates it indirectly through sarcasm, indicating that the sarcasm functions as a politeness strategy.

d. Persuasive Aspect

Based on previous studies, Attardo concludes that sarcasm can be a powerful persuasive tool. This is caused by sarcasm ability to operate through multiple layers of meaning and relies on shared context that the hearer must recognize. This additional cognitive effort required to interpret ironic utterances makes them more memorable. An example of this communicative purpose of sarcasm can be seen when a salesperson promoting their product by saying *“I’m sure all of you would prefer to own a chair that will break down in six months rather than one that lasts for your entire life.”* In this instance the salesperson is using sarcasm to make his product looks better than the competitor, making it more memorable for the customer.

e. Retractability

Sarcasm can simultaneously provide a speaker with the meaning of the sentence and the opposites of it, which allows the speaker to avoid a bad position in a statement as he/she can sidestep responsibility for the intended message. An example of this communicative purpose of sarcasm can be seen when a person says *“That went perfectly”* during their classmate perform poorly during presentation. In this instance, when the person making the sarcastic utterance is confronted, they can sidestep responsibility by saying, *“I’m being serious”* or *“do you think I was being sarcastic?”* Thus, the speaker of the sarcastic utterance can simultaneously choose the appropriate interpretation for a given situation.

f. Group Affiliation

In a group, sarcasm serves two functions, which are inclusive and exclusive. Inclusive because of its capability to build in-group solidarity, and exclusive because it can be used to negatively judge someone. An example of inclusive sarcasm is the utterance, “*Great job, Tim, we’re proud of you,*” spoken when a member of the group named Tim does something foolish. The sarcasm functions playfully and strengthen ingroup solidarity. In contrast, exclusive sarcasm can be seen in the utterance, “*We’ve got an expert here,*” directed toward someone outside the group who makes an incorrect statement. In this case, the sarcasm emphasizes distance and superiority over the target.

2.2 Research Method

This section of the study is focused on the research methodology used within the whole research. This includes: type of research, research approach, data source, population and sample, method of collecting data, and method of analyzing data. Each subsection is described in greater detail below.

2.2.1 Type of Research

This is a descriptive qualitative study. According to C. R. Kothari (2004), a qualitative approach focuses on subjects' attitudes, behaviors, and opinions. This approach aims to create findings in non-quantitative forms rather than relying on heavy quantitative analysis. Descriptive qualitative research allows for a detailed analysis of the subtleties and complexities of sarcasm shown in the show. By utilizing this type of research, the study aims to describe and interpret the various forms of sarcasm used within the show as well as linking the theory of sarcasm with

cultural aspects of the show. Descriptive qualitative research provides the study with a detailed analysis of how sarcasm functions within the narrative, and provide insights into the characters' interactions.

2.2.2 Research Approach

This study uses pragmatic for its research approach. According to Yule (1996), pragmatics studies are concerned with the meaning created by the speaker and how it's perceived by the listener. This approach involves the interpretation of what people mean in certain contexts and how the context influences it. In the context of the study, sarcasm required the analysis of implied meaning rather than literal ones, which makes a pragmatic approach the most suitable, as it allows sarcasm to be analysed at a deeper level.

The approach in this research specifically uses the theory of sarcasm based on Camp (2012) and the purpose of its usage by Attardo (2001). The data are analysed using their context within the show to decipher their actual meaning and then grouped into their categories using the mentioned theory. Subsequently, the findings are analysed from a cultural perspective by examining the tendencies that the Asian characters have within the show.

2.2.3 Data Source

The source of the data of this research is the first season of *Fresh Off the Boat* (2015) series. The data consists of sarcastic utterances made by all the Taiwanese American characters within the series' season 1. The data is taken from characters

dialogue within the series season one, with the help of transcription from tvsubtitles.net.

2.2.4 Population and Sample

The data population of this research is collected from the show's Taiwanese American characters sarcastic utterances. The data consists of 30 sarcastic utterances that made by all the Taiwanese American characters within the show's season 1.

Using this population, samples were selected using total sampling, meaning that all the sarcastic utterances uttered by the Taiwanese American characters are selected. In a table with four columns, each sample are analyses using its context within the show. The sample are then grouped into its respective category that based on camp (2012) and Attardo (2001) theory. To avoid unnecessary repetition of the same information within the results section however, only few representative examples are analyses in greater detail. Additionally, the frequency of the data from each type is presented using a table in their respective subsection.

2.2.5 Method of Data Collection

The data present in the research were collected by using nonparticipant observation, which is a method to observe and describe the behavior of a subject without direct participation in the actual situation (Kothari, 2004). Specifically in this research, the data in the form of sarcastic utterances and the context behind it made by all Taiwanese American characters are collected by taking notes when the scene depicting sarcasm happened within the show. The data collecting process begins by

watching the show thoroughly on Amazon Prime, then through observation and the help of subtitles and transcription the data is carefully selected to match the criteria of sarcasm. By using this technique, a relevant data in form of dialogue and contextual information can be systematically obtained for further analysis.

2.2.6 Method of Data Analysis

The study uses qualitative content analysis for analyzing the data retrieve from the series. According to Hsieh & Shannon (2005), qualitative content analysis is a research method used for the subjective interpretation of data through a systematic classification process of coding and identifying patterns or themes. This method works in this research specifically because sarcasm is systematically grouped into types and purpose based on the preexisting theories. The results of that classification are then processes to identify the emerging patterns that align with the research objectives. The process of analyzing data is divided into few crucial steps. Each step ensures the data analysis process is conducted systematically and consistently. Here are the steps of analyzing the data within this research:

1. The data that have been gathered is grouped into the types of sarcasm by Camp (2012), and the purpose of sarcasm by Attardo (2001).
2. Using context of the data, each data are then being analyzed based on the types of the data
3. The results of the previous analysis are then merged to identify patterns and tendencies of certain cultures in the use of sarcasm
4. Drawing conclusion from the findings of the analysis