

Sarcasm

(no, this wasn't made last night)



Where to begin?

- “Sarcasm is the use of irony to mock or convey contempt”
 - “The distinctive quality of sarcasm is present in the spoken word and manifested chiefly by vocal inflections”
 - Sarcasm is harder to understand than most things
 - How do we resolve ambiguities in sarcasm, both as a challenge and a study?
 - Some people HATE sarcasm
 - What can sarcasm tell us about everything else in language?
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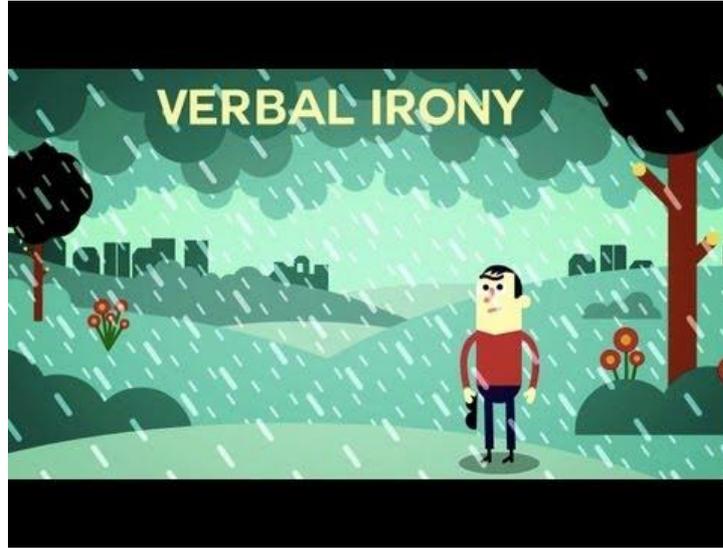
Irony

- Situational Irony
 - When something happens while the opposite was expected
 - Example: When spam floods into your mailbox while you're training your spam filter
- Dramatic Irony (literary)
 - When the audience is more aware of what is happening than the character
 - Example: Dora
- Verbal Irony
 - When words are used to mean the opposite of what they literally mean
 - Example: "Dora is a really suspenseful show"



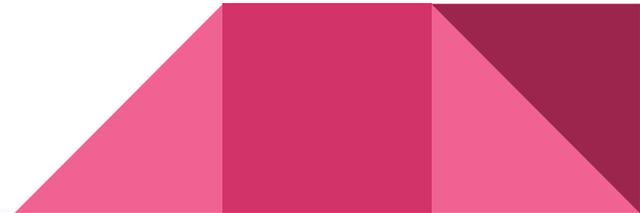
Sarcasm? Verbal Irony? Are They Different?

Yes



Sarcasm vs Verbal Irony

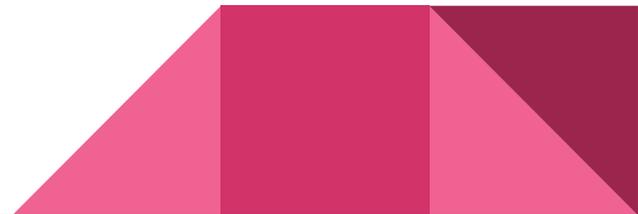
- Verbal Irony is an expression that is meant to signify the opposite meaning
 - “It sure is nice out today!”
- Sarcasm is the malicious use of verbal irony towards a specific person
 - “You were a great asset to this team.”
- People say sarcasm for both all the time, so most of the time it won't matter what you say
- When talking about processing and recognition, however, it's important to distinguish between the two



Prosodic Indication

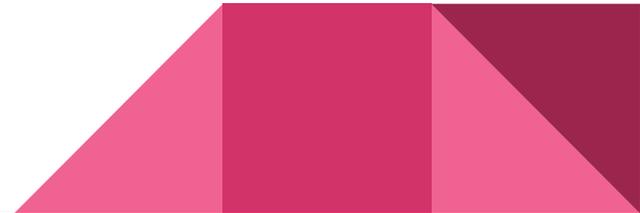
- Prosody: Concerned with elements of speech which are part of larger units of speech than phonetic segments
 - Pitch, length, loudness, quality
- "The distinctive quality of sarcasm is present in the spoken word and manifested chiefly by vocal inflections"
- Speech is slowed, pitch is lowered (really low in Dutch)
- In Cantonese, overall pitch is raised

**ME?
SARCASTIC?
NEVER.**

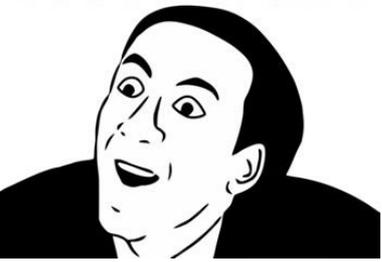


Kinesic Indecation

- Kinesis: The interpretation of body communication (i.e. facial expressions and gestures)
- Expressions and gestures that sharply contrast with the sentence
- Examples:
 - Acting surprised or bewildered after receiving obvious information
 - Playing down some super complex theory



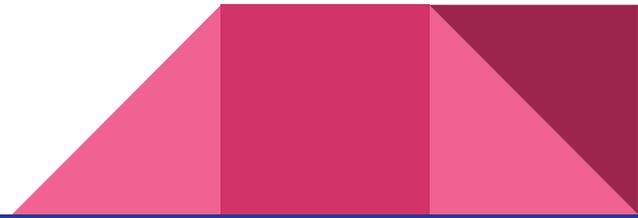
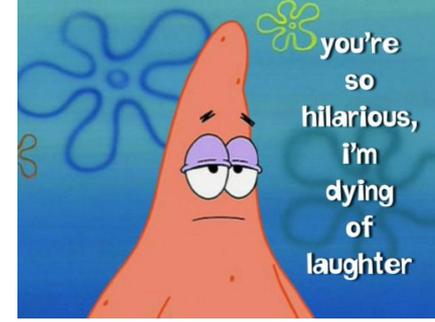
YOU DON'T SAY?



I hate when people see me at the super market & they are like:



"hey what are you doing here?"
and I'm just like:
"Oh you know, hunting elephants."



Sarcasm and the Internet

1983, Jerry Schwartz posted on Usenet:

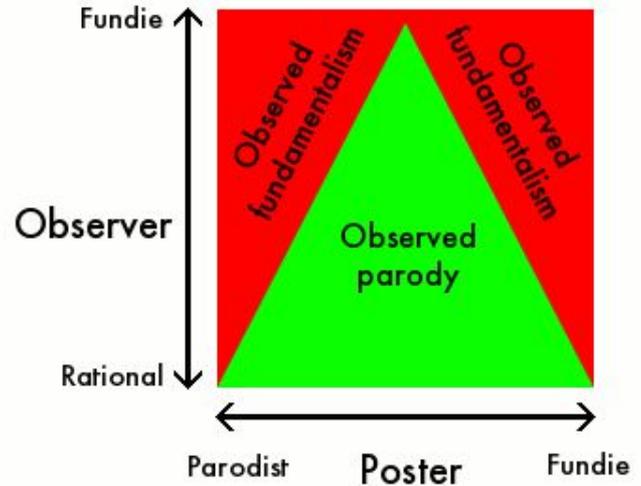
“Avoid sarcasm and facetious remarks.

Without the voice inflection and body language of personal communication these are easily misinterpreted. A sideways smile, :-), has become widely accepted on the net as an indication that ‘I’m only kidding’. If you submit a satiric item without this symbol, no matter how obvious the satire is to you, do not be surprised if people take it seriously”



Poe's Law

- Without a clear indicator of the author's intent, parodies of extreme views will be mistaken by some readers or viewers for sincere expressions of the parodied views
- Nathan Poe, 2005, christianforums.com - "Without a winking smiley or other blatant display of humor, it is utterly impossible to parody a Creationist in such a way that someone won't mistake for the genuine article."
- /r/poeslawinaction



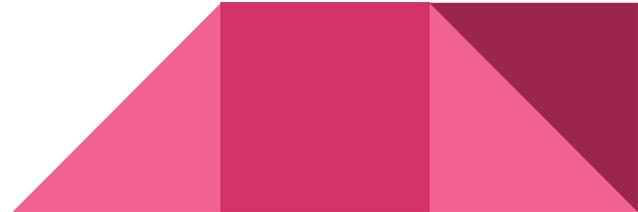
Irony Punctuation

- Henry Denham in the 1580s and other French and English dudes proposed the backwards question mark as the irony indicator
- Tom Driberg recommended reversed italics
- People occasionally use scare quotes to indicate irony
- In certain Ethiopic languages, a mark is used called temherte slaqi (j)



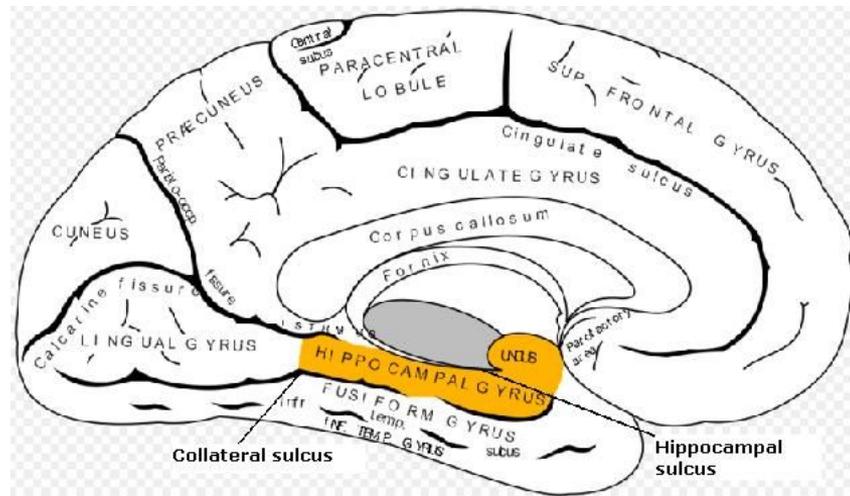
Others...

- `</sarcasm>` (`/sarcasm`, `/s`)
- `<Fe></Fe>`
- `* rolling eyes *`
- `:>`
- `:P`
- More recently -- `:^)`
- Kappa
- `#sarcasm`



How Do We Process Sarcasm?

- Katherine Rankin
- Showed people conversations that looked normal when written, but were delivered in an obviously sarcastic manner, took MRIs
- Found that most activity occurs in the right parahippocampal gyrus
- Previously thought to be important only for detecting contextual background changes in visual tests



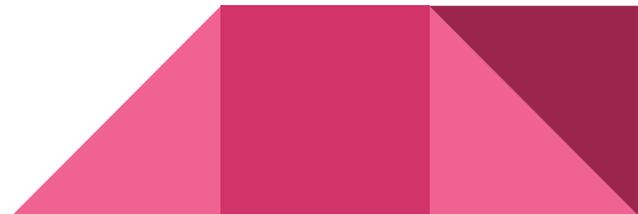
How Should We Process Sarcasm?

- People from the Hebrew University in Israel (Dmitry Davidov and friends) tried to detect sarcasm in tweets and amazon product reviews
- Used semi-supervised machine learning algorithm to learn how to detect sarcasm
- Patterns of high-frequency/content words, punctuation marks, #sarcasm



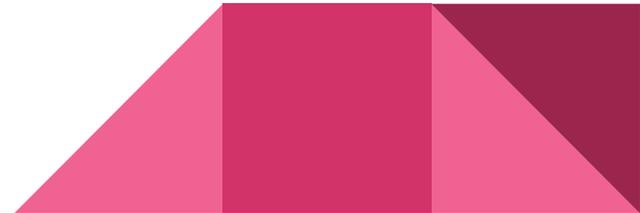
Philosarcasm

- Sarcasm and irony pose challenges to try to develop a comprehensive theory of language and language comprehension
- *“In sarcastic verbal irony one asserts a statement that expresses something that is contrary to reality but, does so with the expectation that the utterance will be understood. This contradiction poses a theoretical difficulty: How do people understand such comments when there is a mismatch between the intended (speaker) meaning and the meaning of the words being used (utterance meaning)”* - John D. Campbell



Contextual Clues

- Since there is a mismatch in meaning between the literal meaning and the intended meaning, additional information should be necessary to comprehend the sentence
- Therefore, we should be able to identify characteristics that define a ironic/sarcastic context or environment that precedes the sarcastic statement



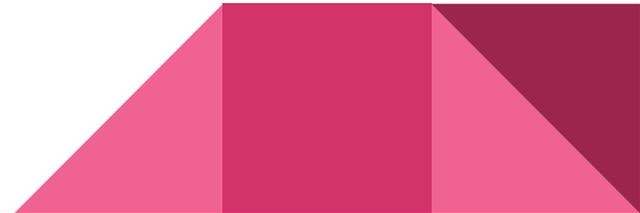
Allusional Pretense Theory

- Conditions
 - Allusion to Failed Expectations (implicit or explicit)
 - Pragmatic Insincerity
- “Nice hair!” would have an allusion to failed expectations if the societal expectation was that people would have “good” hair after a haircut, but this individual did not meet these expectations (haircut and bad hair)
- Speaker also needs to not sincerely intend what they say
 - Sincerity condition: assumption that a speaker, when performing a well-formed speech act, is being truthful or sincere in what they are saying



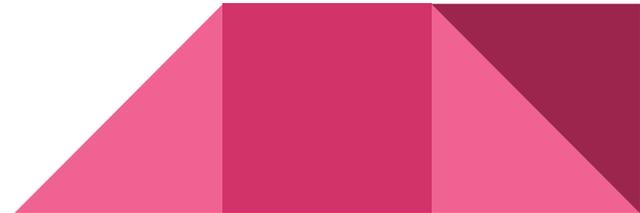
Implicit Display Model

- To identify as ironic, statement needs to be identified as coming from an ironic environment
- Ironic Environment consists of:
 - The speaker has a certain expectation (E) at time (t)
 - Speaker's expectation (E) fails
 - The speaker has a negative emotional attitude toward the incongruity between what is expected and what actually is the case.



Implicit Display Model (cont.)

- Ironic communication presumes the implicit display of an ironic environment
 - Alludes to speaker's expectation (E)
 - Includes pragmatic insincerity by intentionally violating one of the pragmatic principles
 - Expresses indirectly the speaker's negative attitude toward the failure of (E)
- Key claim: in order for a statement to be considered ironic, the surrounding environment or context should contain the particular cues that create the ironic context (allusion to failed expectation and negative tension)



John D. Campbell (2012)

- Wrote an entire dissertation on sarcasm and irony and their surrounding context
- Given statements that were not rated as sarcastic, people were told to generate contexts to make the sentences meaningful
- None of the components of sarcastic context were found to be necessary in understanding

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April 2012

Investigating The Necessary Components of a Sarcastic Context

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The University of Western Ontario

Graduate Program in Psychology

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree in Doctor of Philosophy

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Mike Lamb: “The Seven Types of Sarcasm” (2011)

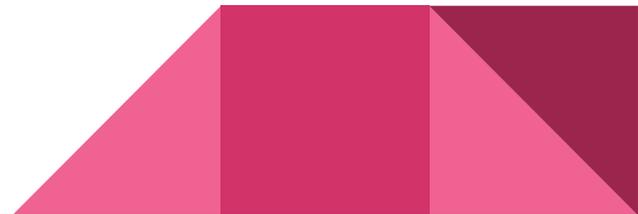
(self described artist, writer, and drunken lunatic prophet)

1. **Self-deprecating:** plays on an exaggerated sense of worthlessness
 - a. “Hey Bob, I’m gonna need you to work overtime this weekend.”
 - b. “Yeah, that’s fine. I mean, I was gonna get married this weekend but, you know, it’s not a big deal, I’ll just skip it. She would’ve left me anyway”



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2. **Brooding:** speaker says something polite in a bitter tone
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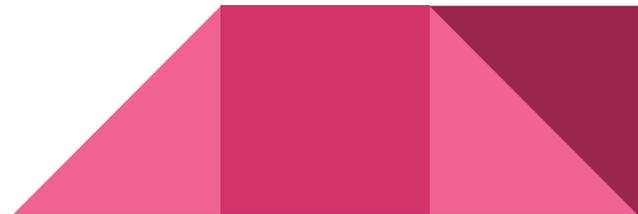


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 3. **Deadpan:** said without laughter or emotion, hard to tell whether speaker is joking with and/or mocking the other person
 - a. “Hey Bob, I’m gonna need you to work overtime this weekend.”
 - b. “Can’t make it. Got a cult meeting. It’s my turn to kill the goat.”
- 

Mike Lamb: “The Seven Types of Sarcasm”

1. **(4) Polite:** subtle, but just a bit too nice
 - a. “Hey Bob, I’m gonna need you to work overtime this weekend.”
 - b. “Ooh, fun! I’ll bring the ice cream!”



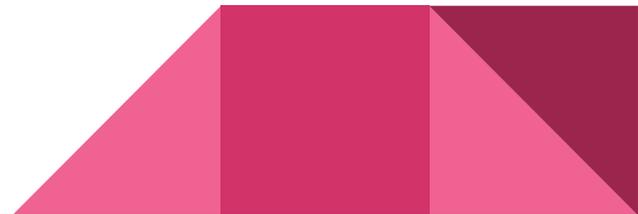
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2. **(5) Obnoxious:** “the kind of sarcasm that makes people want to punch you in the face... usually spoken in a...whiney tone of voice.”
 - a. “Hey Bob, I’m gonna need you to work overtime this weekend.”
 - b. “Oh, well that’s just f*****g great. Just what I wanted to do this weekend. Awesome.”



Mike Lamb: “The Seven Types of Sarcasm”

1. **(6) Manic:** so unnaturally happy that it’s borderline crazy
 - a. “Hey Bob, I’m gonna need you to work overtime this weekend.”
 - b. “God, you are the best boss EVER! Have I ever told you how much I love this job? I wish I could live here! Somebody get me a tent, I never wanna leave!”



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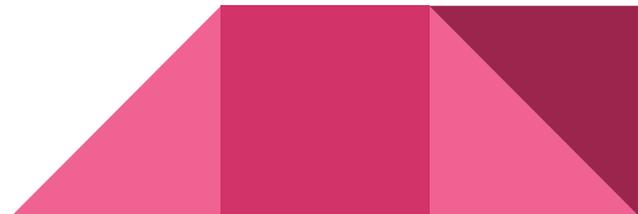
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2. **(7) Raging:** relies heavily on hyperbole and threats of violence
 - a. “Hey Bob, I’m gonna need you to work overtime this weekend.”
 - b. “Oh, don’t worry! I’ll be there! Want me to shine your f*****g shoes while I’m at it?! Hell, I’ll come to your house tonight and wash your goddamn Ferrari! Actually, you know what? Forget it. I’m just gonna go home and blow my brains out.”



Benjamin Carlisle: “A taxonomy of sarcasm” (2010)

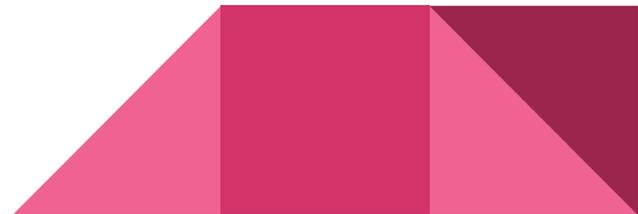
1. **First degree:** Saying what you mean, and saying it insincerely
 - a. “Oh! Now *that* was intelligent!” [said sardonically after something stupid is done]
2. **Second degree:** Saying what you don’t mean, but saying it sincerely
 - a. “Oh, now that was intelligent.” [said in a complimentary way after something stupid is done]
3. **Third degree:** Saying what you mean, but saying it insincerely
 - a. “Yeah, *you’re* a good friend.” [said in a mocking tone of voice to a true friend]
4. **Fourth degree:** Saying what you mean, and saying it sincerely
 - a. “Yeah, you’re a good friend.” [said in a matter-of-fact tone of voice to a true friend]

Intent x literal	insincere	sincere
insincere	1st	2nd
sincere	3rd	4th



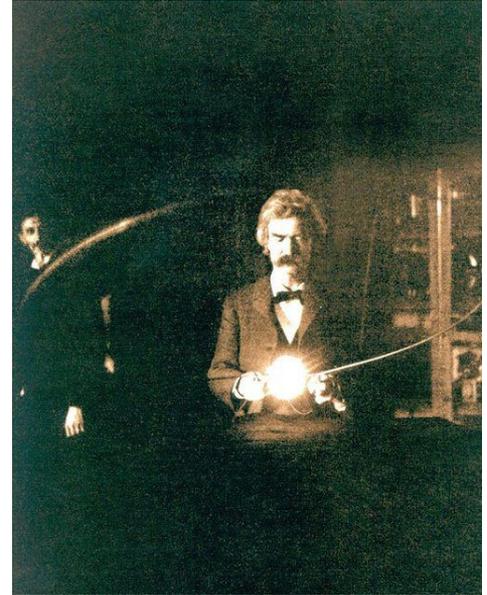
Using Sarcasm to Compliment

- People recognize sarcasm that insults and plain-old insults pretty well
 - Positive context, sarcastic intonation
 - Negative context, sincere intonation
- It's much harder to recognize sarcasm that's used to compliment, recognition rate is comparable to trying to interpret an ambiguous context/intonation pairing
 - Negative context, sarcastic intonation
 - Positive context, sincere intonation



Mark Twain: “Advice to Youth” (1882)

- Overview
 - “Always obey your parents, when they are present”
 - “If a person offend you, and you are in doubt as to whether it was intentional or not, do not resort to extreme measures; simply watch your chance and hit him with a brick”
 - “Build your character thoughtfully and painstakingly upon these precepts, and by and by, when you have got it built, you will be surprised and gratified to see how nicely and sharply it resembles everybody else’s.”
- What is he even trying to say?!?!?!?



HATE

- "Sarcasm I now see to be, in general, the language of the devil; for which reason I have long since as good as renounced it" - Thomas Carlyle
- "It can be quite annoying when used often, it makes you look like a jerk and people never will believe anything you say because you might be being sarcastic." - Mythnomniac
- "At times it can come off as being rude and in some cases can be hard to detect which can cause confusion. Just kidding, it's awesome :wink:" - NVIDIATI



Hate... cont... I guess...?

