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# SARCASM IN SOCIAL MEDIA: A FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE ANALYSIS OF RYAN REYNOLDS' YOUTUBE VIDEOS

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#### **Abstract**

This research aimed to identify types and purposes of sarcasm used in Ryan Reynolds' YouTube videos. Ryan Reynolds is famous actor who starred in various movies including Deadpool, Deadpool 2, Free Guy and Red Notice. This study uses the theory proposed by Camp (2011) and Kreuz (1991) regarding types and purposes of sarcasm respectively. This study uses descriptive method to analyse the utterances, as the source of the data. The data for this research were 37 sarcastic utterances taken from 15 videos from Ryan Reynolds' YouTube channel. After the analysis, there are three out of four types of sarcasm found after analyzing the data using Camp's theory while all purposes of sarcasm were found from the data. From the analysis, it was found that the most prominent type of sarcasm used by Ryan Reynolds is propositional sarcasm with 23 occurrences and the most prominent used purpose of sarcasm is to mock with 15 occurrences.

**Key words**: Figurative Language, Sarcasm, YouTube, Ryan Reynolds

#### A. INTRODUCTION

Figurative language is the use of expressions and sentences which contrast to their literal meaning (Gluksberg, 2001). When people use figurative language, the meaning of the message they deliver is different from the utterances that they are producing. Resulting in people expressing themselves in a manner that is not restricted by the rules and makeing them to express their feelings however they wanted. People can express something with exaggeration to show how they feel with the use of hyperbole. Others might use words to describe two different things but having a resemblance, or to point out that one of them is better than the other as such found with metaphor. Some people express anger or irritation to things



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with the intention to mock but presenting it with its opposite connotation. This kind of figurative language is called sarcasm.

Singh (2012) describes sarcasm as an irony that is predominantly used to mock, ridicule, or insult harshly as well as being used in a destructive way as in criticism. Similarly, Gibbs (1986) also defines sarcasm as a bitter and caustic figurative language. The use of Sarcasm itself can be called ubiquitous since it is can be found anywhere in everyday communications, speeches, work environments, and most prominently, social media.

The existence of social media has encouraged people to connect with others through online social networks as well as to create contents with the feature of user-generated content which can be accessed by everyone within the system (Obar and Wildman, 2015). Through social media, people can communicate and express themselves as well as create content that then can be accessed by anyone in the world. As such, social media can also be used as a platform for people to criticize or to mock something including governments, particular people or companies, and so on.

A particular content creator who is also an actor by the name of Ryan Reynolds often employs sarcasm into his videos on his YouTube channel. Ryan Reynolds is a Canadian-American actor, known for his snarky and sarcastic nature due to the frequent use of sarcasm in his movies as well as his everyday life. Such example can be seen in his famous movies such as *Deadpool* (2016) and *Deadpool* 2 (2018,) in which he played a character named Deadpool with a snarky and playful characteristics. Besides *Deadpool*, Ryan also played in several movies portraying characters with the same snarky characteristics with *Deadpool*, such as *Hitman's Bodyguard* and its sequel, *Hitman's Wife's Bodyguard*, *Free Guy*, and *Red Notice*.

Ryan does not only carry his sarcastic, snarky and witty nature to his movies but also to other social media platforms such as YouTube. He began creating videos for YouTube in 2015 to promote his movies that would be released in the following months. Besides promotional videos for his movies, Ryan Reynolds also released videos promoting companies owned by himself to promote services and events those companies provided. Ryan presented his videos in high quality, or also called mini-movies by Reynolds, which is also accompanied by Ryan's unique sarcastic and witty nature throughout his advertisement videos.

Research on sarcasm was also performed previously by Christiani (2016) about sarcasm in a TV show titled *Two Broke Girls*, which aimed to find out about sarcasm utterances in the TV Show. Another research by Fitriyani (2020) discussed sarcasm of netizens' comments on Donald Trump's Instagram account and how it portrayed creative thinking. Lastly, a research performed by Cahyani (2017) examined the use of sarcasm in the American sitcom *The Big Bang Theory* connecting the sarcastic utterances with Grice's Maxim.

This research aimed to analyze types and purposes of sarcasm used in social media, specifically sarcastic utterances used by Ryan Reynolds in his YouTube videos. In order to analyze the types and purposes of sarcasm, this

research employed theory of types of sarcasm by Camp (2011) and theory of purposes of sarcasm by Kreuz (1991).

#### **B. RESEARCH METHOD**

The method used in this research is descriptive qualitative research. Descriptive research is used to explain or describe an already-existing phenomenon. Furthermore, qualitative analysis may involve descriptive studies depending on the procedures of data collection and/or analysis (Atmowadoyo, 2018). In addition, Kothari (2004) added that descriptive research is also used to describe particular individual characteristics. This is following the research as the researcher is trying to find out the characteristics of Ryan Reynolds' sarcasm.

The data for this research were taken from Ryan Reynolds' YouTube videos. There are 37 total of data taken from 15 videos used as the source of the data from which sarcastic utterance can be obtained. The data required for the analysis of this research was utterances that contained sarcasm produced by Ryan Reynolds in his YouTube videos. Furthermore, this research employed theory of types of sarcasm by Camp (2011) and theory of purposes of sarcasm by Kreuz (1991) to analyse the sarcastic utterances of Ryan Reynolds in his YouTube channel.

#### C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

#### 1. Research Finding

#### A. Types of Sarcasm

After analyzing 37 sarcastic utterances and classifying them with their respective types using Camp (2011) theory about four types of sarcasm, it is found that there are 23 occurrences of propositional sarcasm, 1 utterance is 'like'-prefixed sarcasm, and 13 utterances are illocutionary sarcasm with lexical sarcasm having 0 occurrences.

No.	Types of Sarcasm	Frequency	%
1.	Propositional sarcasm	23	62%
2.	Lexical sarcasm	0	0%
3.	'Like'-prefixed sarcasm	1	3%
4.	Illocutionary sarcasm	13	35%
	Total	37	100%

Table 1. Result of Analysis of Types of Sarcasm

#### a. Propositional Sarcasm

Propositional sarcasm is the most basic form or sarcasm. Propositional sarcasm targets the inversion of meaning of the proposition of the utterance. In propositional sarcasm, the speaker may say something positive, but in actuality the speaker means the opposite of what he said. Often, propositional sarcasm aimed to make fun, although it is not mandatory.

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#### Datum 34

Ryan: Hey Gordon. Long-time no see.

Gordon: Yeah, it's been a hell of a couple of years. I can't believe I'm... I'm saying this but you know it's really... really nice

to see you!

Ryan: Thank you, I have a feeling that you'll find some way to...

Gordon: No, I have no... I have no intention of hurting you, I'm serious, I know how... I know how important celebrities are, especially in times of global crisis. You and the others in Hollywood are our last line of defence. Thank you.

Gordon's utterance, "You and the others in Hollywood are our last line of defence." contains a preposition that Ryan and everyone in Hollywood are the last defence of humankind in fighting the pandemic. Hollywood is a place where people worked in the film industry and they do not have the capabilities to handle and fight the pandemic. Therefore, the proposition is inverting the notion that people Hollywood, including artists and filmmakers, are capable to fight the pandemic while in actuality they only focus on making films.

#### b. 'Like'-prefixed Sarcasm

Like-prefixed sarcasm is what its name suggest, a type of sarcastic utterance involving the word 'like' which attached to the front of the sentence hence the name 'like'-prefixed sarcasm. This type of sarcasm can only work with declarative sentence which is also indicated by the speaker denying the content of what is uttered. 'Like'-prefixed is prominently used by adolescent as mention by Camp (2011), but it does not rule out the possibility of adults to use this type of sarcasm.

#### Datum 4

Deadpool: What's your super power?

Kid in Storm costume: Took control the weather

Deadpool: You can control the weather?

Kid in Storm costume: Yup

Deadpool: Like Al Roker

The utterance above is produced by Deadpool when he asked a kid in Mystique costume what is her superpower to which the little girls answered with 'i can control the weather.' Deadpool reaffirm what the little girl had said and then Deadpool said 'like Al Roker,' who is an American weather forecast. Deadpool denying the little girl's statement about her controlling the weather by comparing it with that of a weather forecast. Thus Deadpool utterance is sarcastic by denying the kid's powers and equalizing it with that of a weather forecast.

#### c. Illocutionary Sarcasm

Illocutionary sarcasm is a type of sarcasm that inverts the entire illocutionary act of an utterance with the exception of assertion. Illocutionary act involve a certain force that the speaker intented to achieve by uttering a sentence (Searle, 1968). The force that the speaker intended may range from assertion, command, request, order, etc. In order to look for the illocutionary force that the speaker had intended, one must look into the context behind the utterances.

#### Datum 10

Ryan : Do you; do all your own acting? Hugh : If there's sex scene I do them Ryan : Yes, that's where the craft is

Hugh : Yeah, It's key, key to a good marriage

Ryan: Did you guys get any notes from the studio to sow Eddie's mouth shut, make lasers shoot from his eyes?

Hugh: You know, I didn't but I thought it'd be a great idea. As a story it totally makes sense

100%

Ryan : 100% Hugh : Always

Ryan specifically asked Hugh 'Did you guys get any notes from the studio to sow Eddie's mouth shut, make lasers shoot from his eyes?,' because Ryan got a role to play a character with mouth sewn and eyes shoot lasers in his previous movie with Hugh. The movie which Ryan and Hugh starred at was X-Men Wolverine, in which Hugh played as wolverine and Ryan played as Deadpool with mouth sewn and eyes shoot lasers. Ryan felt that his role in X-Men Wolverine was a disaster, just like his role as Green Lantern and he resented those roles. In the interview Ryan asked if Hugh got any similar treatment from the studios of which the same cannot applied to the movie that Hugh currently played at as the movie is about ski and not superheroes.

#### **B.** Purposes of Sarcasm

The second findings regarding purposes of sarcasm using Kreuz (1991) theory about five purposes of sarcasm. From 37 utterances, there is 1 occurrence of sarcasm to show anger, 2 utterance of sarcasm to criticize, 15 utterances of sarcasm used to mock, 13 utterances of sarcasm to insult and the last 6 sarcastic utterances were used to be funny. The table below shows the distribution of the purposes of sarcasm in Ryan Reynolds' YouTube videos.

Table 2. Result of Analysis of Purposes of Sarcasm

No.	Purposes of Sarcasm	Frequency	%
1.	To show anger or irritation	1	3%
2.	To criticize	2	5%
3.	To mock	15	40%
4.	To insult or mean	13	35%
5.	To be funny or witty	6	17%
	Total	37	100%

#### a. To show anger

Sarcasm is used to show anger in which the speaker may use a harsh or stressed voice hinting that the speaker is angry or irritated. In the case of sarcasm used to show anger, the speaker may avoid confronting the addressee using direct words in order to make them less obvious that they are angry about something that happened.

#### Datum 3

Kid in mystique costume: aren't you green lanterns?

Deadpool : You?
Kid in Wolverine costume : Wolverine

Deadpool : I like it, I like it. You hit puberty

early and hard

Kid in mystique costume : Aren't you green lanterns?

Deadpool : What does this suit look to you, huh? Does it look like a

leprechaun had sex with

cartoonist?

Deadpool is asking every kid about the costume that they are wearing and what superhero power that they are cosplaying. One kid in cosplaying as Mystique then teasingly asked Deadpool, or to be precise Ryan who is in Deadpool costume, that isn't he a Green Lantern which is superhero role that Ryan took in 2011. The Green Lantern movie that Ryan played as in 2011 received a lot of critics due to the fact that the movie is full of CGI making the movie looks bad.

Hearing the kid in mystique costume, Ryan immediately replied "what does this suit look to you, huh? Does it look like a leprechaun had sex with cartoonist?" with stressed voiced hinting that he is angry. Ryan also tried to mock his own Green Lantern movie by saying that the CGI of Green Lantern is bad by saying that the costume looked like a leprechaun had sex with cartoonist.

#### b. To Criticize

Criticizing in the form of sarcasm is done when the sarcastic utterance is aimed at negative qualities that people or things may have. The speaker could have intended to criticize something directly, but one can choose to criticize indirectly by using sarcasm. Indirect criticism using sarcastic utterances could have a bigger negative impact towards the addressee compared to direct criticism as the speaker may intent to be impolite, aggressive, mocking, and offensive as stated by Toplak and Katz (1999).

#### Datum 5

Deadpool : But wait there's more.

Deadpool : You'll also get a limited edition eye infection as

well as backstage passes to my asshole. I know

right!

Deadpool : Some things are too good to be true and some

things are just too good.

Deadpool : On a personal note, this job makes me happier

than a United States Senator on hooker

Monday.

Deadpool in the video is proposing several of his selected ideas for the Empire magazine featuring his own movie, Deadpool. Deadpool stated that the editorial staffs were locked behind his crawl space which left Deadpool alone to fill the magazine with whatever he wanted.

At the end of the video, Deadpool stated that pouring his ideas into the magazine has left him pleased compared to what the US senators had to deal regarding their scandal involved in prostitution. The sarcastic utterance that Deadpool stated is used to criticize the US senators who were involved in a negative act of prostitution.

#### c. To Mock

Sarcastic mockery is used to ridicule or to tease the addressee, but not to a humiliating degree such as in insulting. Sarcasm can also be utilized to mock someone or something aimed to ridicule or to playfully tease. Sarcastic mockery can be indicated with the speaker's intention to ridicule or to tease designated with the mild expression that the speaker's uttered.

#### Datum 14

Deadpool : aahh Brazil, The beautiful sun kiss home of Pele,

hairless genitalia, and the world's largest Jared

Leto statue.

Deadpool : to show my dedication to the legions of Brazilian

Deadpool fans, I've spent up to 20 minutes on Google translate as well as countless hours

## watching telenovelas to teach me everything about your official language.

In the video, Deadpool stated that he had learned Portuguese in order to better convey the message to Brazilian people. Deadpool then said "I've spent up to 20 minutes on Google translate as well as countless hours watching telenovelas to teach me everything about your official language," suggesting that by spending hours on Google translate and watching telenovelas, one can learn the Portuguese language to the point of being able to fluently speak Portuguese.

Deadpool is sarcastically saying that Portuguese language can be learned by anybody, as long as they have access to internet to be able to watch Brazilian telenovelas and Google translate, thus saying to people who want to learn Portuguese no longer need to take any courses. Deadpool deliberately mocking Google translate as well as telenovelas as sources for people to learn Portuguese language.

#### d. To Insult or to be Mean

Compared to sarcastic mockery, sarcastic insult is in higher scale of disrespect, humiliation as well as aggression towards addressee. The speaker may use sarcastic insult if the intention of the speaker is to hurt someone's feeling or to be aggressive. This can be indicated with the offensive tone from the speaker towards the addressee.

#### Datum 22

Gordon: what's up big shot? It's nice to see you again. It's like looking into mirror, five years from now.

Ryan : it's nice to see you Gordon, we're off to a great start
Gordon : look, I promise you I'm gonna be good, okay? Alright,
first question. It's father's day. It's right around the corner.
So uh... so how are the kids?

Ryan : Good, they are...

Gordon: Children of celebrities, they always turn out normal I'm sure they're gonna be fine.

Ryan Reynolds is holding an interview with his twin brother named Gordon, who is played by Ryan himself. This situation with Ryan Reynolds playing both sides as Ryan and Gordon making it seem like Ryan and Gordon are identical twins. Ryan in the situation is having a reserved attitude and only replies when he felt he needed to. Gordon on the other hand is a snarky and sarcastic twin brother of Ryan who enjoys making fun of him or even insulting him whenever the situation calls. Specifically in this video, Ryan and Gordon is meeting again after previously they also had an interview after the pandemic ended.

Gordon started the interview by saying "what's up big shot. It's nice to see you again. It's like looking into mirror, five years

from now," Gordon greeted Ryan by calling him 'big shot' which an expression showing that Ryan is a famous person in Gordon's eye. Given the snarky attitude of Gordon, the expression he uttered is not a sincere compliment, but rather a sarcastic insult which he actually intended the opposite of what he said. Gordon continues greeting his twin brother with the expression "it's like looking into mirror, five years from now," Gordon said that when he look at Ryan it is the same as he is looking at a mirror indicating the similarities between the two, but Gordon added 'five years from now' which is insulting Ryan on his older look compared to Gordon.

#### e. To be Funny or Witty

Sarcasm can be used to make fun of someone or make fun of one self, just like what Ryan Reynolds usually do with his self-deprecating humour. In order to make a sarcastic remark funny, the speaker must employ a lighter tone of voice when directing the utterance to someone else and that the speaker should not have ill intentions in uttering the sarcastic remarks.

#### Datum 12

Ryan: You had specially designed lifts put in your shoes so you would appear taller than one of your co-stars. Is this true or just a silly fact?

Hugh: it's, it's true. I, I did uhh...

Ryan: Next question

In this situation, Ryan is asking Hugh whether he cheated his height by inserting lifts in his shoes to appear taller than Ryan when they are making X-Men movie together. This is of course not true because Hugh is taller than Ryan; despite that Hugh answered the question by affirming that he used lift in his shoes in an attempt to retaliate from Ryan's teasing.

#### 2. Discussion

Based on the analysis of types and functions of sarcastic utterance from Ryan Reynolds YouTube videos, there are 37 occurrences of sarcastic utterance from overall 15 videos selected for this research. The 37 utterances have been analysed and identified according to its types and purposes using Camp (2011) and Kreuz (1991) theories respectively.

Using Camp (2011) theory of types of sarcasm, from 37 sarcastic utterances, the researcher has found that propositional sarcasm is the most prominent type of sarcasm used in the videos with 22 occurrences. The next type of sarcasm that occurs frequently is illocutionary sarcasm with 13 occurrences followed by the least used type of sarcasm which is like-prefixed sarcasm with 1 occurrence. The last type of sarcasm is lexical sarcasm which does not have any occurrences from the analysis. The most prominent type of sarcasm from the research is propositional sarcasm which involved in inverting the proposition that of a sincere utterance. Propositional sarcasm being the most prominent type of sarcasm is in accord with Camp theory of propositional sarcasm in which it is the

most basic and direct form of sarcasm making it easy to produce and directed towards the addressee. The next type of sarcasm that occured the most is illocutionary sarcasm which involved in inverting the whole illocutionary speech act with the exception assertion. Previously, propositional sarcasm only works with assertion and illocutionary sarcasm can be used with the rest of the illocutionary speech act, however, illocutionary sarcasm does not only invert any proposition or any specific words but it inverts the whole illocutionary act of the utterance.

This type of sarcasm can be easily differentiate with propositional sarcasm as it occurred with any other type of illocutionary act such as suggestion, request, command and so on, which in this analysis the most prominent illocutionary that can be identified is interrogative illocutionary act or question act. The question act according to Stiles (1981) is an act that requires the addressee's own experience or knowledge regarding the given situation. In Ryan's cases, he often asks his addressee about something that he may have also experienced before and that experience was bitter for him. For example when he asked Hugh 'did you guys get any notes from the studio to sow Eddie's mouth shut, make lasers shoot from his eyes' which is Ryan asking about his role as Deadpool in the previous X-Men movie which was a role that Ryan holds resentment towards. Ryan did not try to aim his sarcasm towards Hugh, but towards himself for making bad decisions performing in said movie which is also in accord with his self-deprecating characteristics.

The last type of sarcasm that occurs is like-prefixed sarcasm which only occurs once. The rarity of this type of sarcasm is also in accord with Camp's theory which she stated that like-prefixed sarcasm can only occur with declarative sentence and cannot be used with any other illocutionary speech act. In addition, this type of sarcasm frequently produced by adolescent which Ryan was not part of. Due to this, Ryan only produces once like-prefixed sarcasm when he was speaking with kids in the park during Halloween night. The lexical sarcasm is a type of sarcasm which involved the use of specific expression located in the furthest side of an evaluative scale, which include brilliant, genius, diplomat, and so on that such words and phrases were rarely used by Ryan in his videos, or often not.

The result of analysis of types of sarcasm in this research is different from previous research which also using the same theory proposed by Camp. A paper written Fitriyanti (2020) regarding sarcasm used by netizens in Donald Trump's instagram comment also using theory of Camp (2011). In the research, Fitriyanti found that the most prominent types of sarcasm were lexical sarcasm followed with illocutionary in the second place. This is very different from the current research being propositional sarcasm is the most prominent while illocutionary taking second position is the same with Fitriyanti.

Overall, the research has found that Ryan Reynolds frequently use propositional sarcasm in his videos with occasionally using illocutionary sarcasm. While only occur once, like-prefixed sarcasm still shows that Ryan also able to produce this type of sarcasm. Similarly, while no occurrence of lexical sarcasm

found in this research, it does not mean that Ryan Reynolds could not produce this type of sarcasm in his videos.

From the analysis of purpose of sarcasm using Kreuz (1991) theory, the researcher has found that to mock is the ones that appear the most, with 15 occurrences followed with 'to insult' in 13 occurrences. While to be funny occurred 6 times, to criticize 2 times and to show anger once, ranking them third, fourth and fifth, respectively. Ryan Reynolds being a self-deprecating person is in accord with the findings of this research being to mock and to insult occupy the first and second place. The purpose of mock is used to make fun of or to ridicule someone, but not to humiliating degree, by using sarcastic utterance. On the other hand, the purpose of insult is intended to humiliate someone by using offensive and impactful words and tone. In this research, both purposes were used by Ryan almost equally with to mock being the one that appear the most. The third most used purpose of sarcasm used by Ryan is to be funny or to be witty, in which the speaker of sarcastic utterance aimed to make fun of someone or something. These three purposes of sarcasm are the most used purpose of sarcasm by Ryan in his videos, because of the goal of him making videos is to make people happy by also incorporating his self-deprecating humour with the use of his sarcastic remarks.

The other two purposes of sarcasm, to criticize and to show anger, were the least used purposes of sarcasm in Ryan's videos. The purpose to criticize is aimed to make judgment towards negative qualities of people. In this research Ryan used sarcastic utterance to criticize on two times, criticizing the US Senators' scandal involved with prostitution and his role in X-Men Wolverine movie. The last purpose of sarcasm used is to show anger which occur once. This purpose of sarcasm is used when someone is angry or irritated without using direct words so that it that does not appear that they are angry. Ryan only use sarcasm to show his irritation once in this research, that is when he was asked about his role as Green Lantern by a kid in a playground, a role that Ryan resented.

The result of the analysis of purposes of sarcasm in this research is very different from other research regarding purposes of sarcasm. An undergraduate thesis written Christiani (2016) was also researching about purposes of sarcasm in which the researcher investigates the sarcastic utterance in Two Broke Girls TV series. Christiani used the theory of purposes of sarcastic utterance by Attardo (2001) which include group affiliation, sophistication, evaluation, politeness, persuasive effect, and retract ability. Similarly, a research written by Cahyani (2017) was focused on flouting of maxim as well as purposes of sarcasm using the same theory by Attardo. Another research also using Attardo's theory, performed by Fitriyanti (2020) analysing sarcastic comments in Donald Trump's Instagram comments. The theory by Attardo seems to cover a broader scope of purposes of sarcasm compared to the theory used in the current research which is more narrow and personal.

#### C. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

#### 1. Conclusion

In Ryan Reynolds' YouTube channel, it can be concluded that Ryan mostly used propositional sarcasm in his videos. This is due to the fact that propositional sarcasm is the easiest and the most basic type of sarcasm to be produced by speaker. Ryan also employs illocutionary sarcasm which covers all form of illocutionary acts with the exception assertion, showed that the wide use of this type of sarcasm. Ryan only used one 'like'-prefixed sarcasm which mainly used by teenagers.

Ryan also mostly used sarcasm for the purpose of mocking as well as to insults. This is coincide with the trait of Ryan Reynolds of self-deprecating humor in which he make fun of himself and insulting his past movies with also several occurrence of Ryan making fun of others. Ryan also uses sarcasm to entertain people by being funny, which shows that Ryan is also humorous type of person. Sarcasm to criticize and to show anger being the least used purpose by Ryan shows that Ryan Reynolds' is a person who does not get angry easily but instead a funny and snarky person who tends mock and insult himself with his self-deprecating remarks.

#### 2. Suggestion

This research is far from perfect and there many flaws and mistakes in the paper. Therefore, suggestion and constructive criticism would be very welcomed. The researcher hopes that this research can contribute to other researcher in their attempt to perform research within the topic of sarcasm. This research focuses of identifying types and purposes of sarcasm and other researcher may develop other research objective regarding sarcasm. Sarcasm reseach may be applicable in other field of studies, such as computational science, psychological studies and many other field of studies. Ultimately, the researcher hopes that this research could help people from various backgrounds to have a better understanding about sarcastic utterances.

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