

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a complete review of the research. It provides background of the study, research questions, objectives, significance, and definitions of terms related to the examination of sarcastic humor in Matthew Perry's book, *Friends, Lovers, and the Big Terrible Thing*.

1.1 Background of the study

Historically, people have used humor as a social tool and a defense mechanism for those who have had hard times in their lives. Sarcasm stands out among the many forms of comedy because of its ability to soften a complex emotional expression, disguise weaknesses, and provide critical commentary. In journalism, memoirs often incorporate personal narratives and humor to connect with the public. In this context, Matthew Perry's journey shows a mix of personal struggles and humor. Matthew Perry, best known for his role as Chandler Bing on the hit television sitcom *Friends* (1994–2004), opens up about his dark experiences with addiction, relationships, and loneliness in his memoir *Friends, Lovers, and the Big Terrible Thing*. Throughout the work, Matthew Perry skillfully uses sarcasm not just as a humorous element, but also to address important personal issues.

Basically, jokes are the art of breaking other people's assumptions. The main formula for creating a joke is set up and punchline. Set up is the serious part or the sentence for building people's assumptions. Then, after the perfect set up

and the perfect timing, here comes the funny part which is the punchline. The moment people think that what they think is not what actually happened is the art of comedy. People are laughing at something they didn't expect to come.

For example, take a look at Jimmy Carr's famous bit in his latest stand up comedy material: Natural Born Killer. He said something brutally about asking forgiveness for jokes. He said in sarcastic way:

"You can't go around apologizing for jokes, they're jokes! So I've got a plan. The next time I got cancelled over a joke, I'm gonna come out on the day of cancellation, I'm gonna make a public statement. I'm gonna say... [sarcastically] 'I'm soooooorryyyy.' And then the people I've offended will say: 'You don't really mean that apology.' And I say "so you're saying I could say something and not mean it. Now, you're getting it.'"

According to that joke, Jimmy Carr hit people who are always offended with jokes. He said that when he says something funny and yet offensive, he doesn't really mean it. What he meant is just joking and aiming for laughter. So, the *"I'm sorry"* part sarcastically means that he can say something but doesn't really mean it. Same as a joke he told, Jimmy Carrs proves the audience that he can say something but also doesn't mean it.

According to Iles & Nan (2017), sarcastic humor has various effects in various sectors. For example, sarcastic messages are found in health advertisements to reduce unhappy emotions, but can also result in counterarguments, which makes the argument weaker when compared to pure humor. This theory illustrates the complexity of sarcasm as a communication tool,

capable of eliciting laughter and discomfort when reading it. When understood correctly, sarcasm can stimulate creativity in an environment. However, as Bowes and Katz (2011) point out, sarcastic remarks can be perceived as aggressive, and can also be a double-edged sword in their use.

Interestingly, their research shows that while men don't always use sarcasm in certain situations, they do use it more often. Matthew Perry's presence highlights how humor is used in one's narrative. His memoir could be a witty account of his own struggles, particularly with habits, such as those related to his popularity as a famous TV personality. Sherwood-Martin (2023) observes that Matthew Perry's story not only illuminates the often-unseen consequences of celebrity, but also goes into the complex interplay between addiction and mental health.

In this light, Matthew Perry's use of sarcasm becomes not only a source of amusement, but also a means of expressing deeper emotions. For example, his offensive words can create a sense of pity or discomfort for the reader, which forces them to think more critically about the problems they are experiencing.

Matthew Perry's introspective view of his life in his memoir *Friends, Lovers, and the Big Terrible Thing* aligns with the topics discussed in Trevor Noah's *Born a Crime*. Trevor Noah's memoir covers his youth in apartheid South Africa, using a unique blend of humor and cultural commentary to provide profound insights into societal concerns and personal growth. Both memoirs provide opportunities for the authors to reflect on their experiences while negotiating difficult social contexts. Trevor Noah's wit is not only entertaining but

also gives a critical lens that allows readers to see his hard times under apartheid and the strength it took to overcome those challenges. In this regard, both authors' use of humor in their memoirs reinforces their efforts to connect with readers on a deeper level.

Humor is also essential in memoir writing, serving to engage readers while criticizing cultural conventions. According to Cardell and Kuttainen (2012), humor can help authors assert authenticity while addressing their own experiences. Furthermore, this investigation into humor is essential in memoirs, since personal tales frequently attempt to connect with readers on an emotional level. Similarly, humor—particularly in visual forms—can give a critical viewpoint, elevating it beyond simply amusement. This diversity of humor makes it more likely for writers to connect with their readers while revealing more personal truths in their stories.

Finally, Matthew Perry's book shows how sarcasm may be used as a coping method in the face of suffering, rather than just for entertainment. This subtle use of humor encourages readers to investigate the emotional intricacies that underpin Matthew Perry's narrative. This study's point is to look at the structure, reason, and depth of sarcastic humor in Matthew Perry's memoir.

Moreover, the author also seeks to explore how jokes reflect Matthew Perry's personal struggles and the broader scope of humor in the narrative genre. The selection of sarcastic jokes is based on an important thing in showing the author's identity. Matthew Perry often employs sarcasm as a defense mechanism to navigate hard times like addiction, loneliness, and fame. Matthew Perry uses

sarcastic humor to provide insight into his personal outlook on life and injects wit storytelling. By analyzing the many types of sarcastic jokes in his memoir, this research seeks to uncover how sarcasm operates pragmatically and how it contributes to the meaning in memoir discourse. This analysis is expected to explain the emotional response of Matthew Perry's humor. Thus, the results of this study can enrich our knowledge of his experiences and the broader significance of sarcasm in memoir writing.

Sarcasm communicates only with context, tone, and author-reader awareness. Pragmatic theories such as Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle and Sperber & Wilson's (1995) Relevance Theory hold that sarcasm usually breaches conversational maxims to transmit implied meanings. This paper looks at Perry's use of humor and language to create sarcastic jokes about his life and captivate the viewers.

Today, sarcasm is popular in journalism and creative non-fiction to make serious topics more approachable. This is also true in memoir writing. The fact that books by Trevor Noah and David Sedaris are so popular shows how important sarcasm is to interesting life stories. This paper adds to the discussion on humor, language pragmatics, and autobiographical story by focusing on Perry's memoir's biting quips.

1.2 Research Questions

The author designed this study to answer the following questions:

1. What type of sarcasms are portrayed in Matthew Perry's memoir?

2. What are implicit meanings of sarcastic jokes used in Matthew Perry's memoir?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

From the research questions above, the author has set the study's aims, such are:

1. To investigate the use of sarcasm as a communication tactic in Matthew Perry's memoir.
2. To look into how humor frames sensitive themes in Matthew Perry's memoir.

1.4 Scope of the Study

The study will concentrate on the sarcastic quips featured in Matthew Perry's memoir. It will look at how these jokes add to the narrative structure and engage readers, particularly in the context of journalism. The study will not examine other forms of comedy or Matthew Perry's work beyond the book.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study is crucial in the field of celebrity journalism, because memoirs serve as vehicles for prominent personalities to share personal stories with a larger audience. By examining sarcasm in Matthew Perry's book, this study advances our understanding of how humor, particularly sarcastic humor, is used in journalistic storytelling to frame complicated emotional storylines and engage readers.