

## **CHAPTER II**

### **SARCASTIC JOKES IN MEMOIR**

This chapter provides a detailed explanation of the literature relevant to the investigation of sarcasm in memoir writing. The discussion initiates with a comprehensive examination of pragmatics within linguistics, highlighting the function of sarcasm as an indirect speech act. This study investigates the function of sarcasm in communication, emphasizing its distinct characteristics compared to irony and pinpointing the linguistic markers crucial for its comprehension. This chapter examines the function of sarcasm in autobiographical writing, highlighting its influence on personal identity formation and its use as a coping mechanism. This study positions itself within the wider academic conversation by examining previous research on sarcasm from both literary and linguistic perspectives.

#### **2.1 Sarcasm**

Sarcasm and irony are often used together by people who are very smart. You can make someone laugh or say bad things about them with it. It shows who you are and how you feel, which can help you write a resume. Matthew Perry doesn't just use humor to make people laugh. He can show his own style, doubt, and draw people into his viewpoint through it (Smith, 2020, p. 3).

Scholars have also explored how sarcasm is interpreted in contexts such as Friends. Magic techniques such as sequence tagging have shown to be more adept in locating sarcastic remarks in text than conventional classification systems

(Joshi et al., 2016, p. 124). This approach reveals sophisticated sarcasm and comedic patterns, therefore highlighting how rich and contextually layered sarcastic language can be in both media and personal narratives.

For this section, the author has prepared one of classic Matthew Perry's sarcastic jokes that can be in both media and personal tales. The joke is:

*"We swallow our feelings. Even if it means we're unhappy forever."*

Above is the too-close-to-the-truth line from Chandler Bing that is played by Matthew Perry in Friends. Maybe Matthew Perry threw that joke as Chandler Bing. But according to his memoir, it refers to the truth and what he feels in real life seeing his miserable life of loneliness and addiction.

Sarcasm is used in memoirs to communicate personality traits, which helps readers connect with the author on a deeper level. Matthew Perry's sarcasm turns his mechanistic techniques on their head, especially when he depicts moments of sadness. Humorous diversions, such as the statement that he drinks "only vodka, no water," reveal a character who uses sarcasm to humor sad truths. These expressions help readers connect with his story by portraying him as self-aware and honest about his weaknesses.

Herwood-Martin (2023, p. 52) says that Matthew Perry's memoir, Friends, Lovers, and the Big Terrible Thing also touches on his real-life relationship with the notoriously sarcastic Chandler Bing. The book also explores how his comedy often reflected his difficult personal circumstances and his coping strategies. Chandler Bing's legendary line "I'm hopeless, awkward, and desperate for love"

showcases Matthew Perry's signature sarcasm. It's similar to how his character from Friends, Chandler Bing, made people laugh with his witty, self-deprecating wit.

### **2.1.1 Sarcasm in Memoir Writing**

Memoir writing, in particular, benefits from an understanding of humor and, more specifically, sarcasm. Sarcasm isn't just funny; it may also provide light on the inner lives and experiences of the main characters. By exposing his flaws and emotional struggles, Matthew Perry's sarcasm in *Friends*, *Lovers*, and *the Big Terrible Thing* helps readers to empathize with his convoluted route (Sherwood-Martin, 2023, p. 56). This approach accentuates a tone everyone can grasp, therefore improving learning conditions. Satire and irony are often used as critical analysis tools in social research because they can make people think about current ideas and help them learn (Watson, 2011, p. 44). Irony and sarcasm are often used in autobiographies and diaries to connect with readers on a deeper level and show complex experiences in a non-linear and symbolic way (Robertson, 2012, p. 27).

These studies show that sarcasm and irony can be used in different ways to communicate and can spark creativity, question social norms, and improve story-telling in a range of situations.

### **2.1.2 Sarcasm as a Means of Conveying Implicit Meaning**

Grice's (1975, p. 45) implicature hypothesis holds that sarcasm is seen as a purposeful transgression of accepted speech standards. Sarcastic comments

instead of sincere ones break the standards of relevance, quality, manner, and quantity to cause laughter or discomfort.

As a variation of indirect discourse, sarcasm challenges the literal interpretation of one's words; however, it is understood precisely because of reciprocal social and language cues. People deduce a different, usually negative, meaning from what a speaker says when she purposefully violates these values, especially about Quality.

### **2.1.3 The Cooperation Principle and Sarcasm's Flouting Maxims**

Examining the Cooperative Principle and how conversational maxims are intentionally flouted provides valuable insights across different contexts. Al-Aameri and Jamil (2020, p. 109) highlight how Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* frequently bends Grice's maxims, revealing the nuanced ways characters communicate in literature. Similarly, Nasution (2014, p. 42) analyzed the *Sarah Sechan* talk show and found that all maxims—especially the maxim of relation—are often flouted, typically to add humor or steer conversations away from sensitive topics. Meanwhile, Li (2010, p. 37) explored psychological consulting, showing that breaking these conversational norms can signal uncooperative behavior, which is key to understanding underlying conversational implications.

Grice put out in 1975 the four maxims of the Cooperative Principle—quality (being honest), quantity (being beneficial), relationship (being relevant), and manners (being clear)—that govern good communication. One

deliberate transgression of these standards is sarcasm. For example, expressing "Oh great, another Monday!" violates the Quality standard by stating something blatantly incorrect to express dissatisfaction.

People who use snark frequently violate the Maxim of Quality by expressing things they do not intend. In his work, Matthew Perry sometimes employs overdone praises to conceal criticism or self-deprecation, therefore guiding the reader toward his actual motives. Snark also frequently violates the clear criterion by being purposefully imprecise or sarcastic, thus you really must consider the whole scene to find the joke or the criticism.

## **2.2 Pragmatics**

Pragmatics explores, as a topic of linguistics, how context shapes meaning interpretation in communication (Leech, 1983, p. 24; Yule, 1996, p. 112). Unlike semantics, pragmatics approaches outside aspects such as speaker intention, social context, and common knowledge among interlocutors instead of focusing just on the literal meanings of words and phrases.

Though correct linguistic meaning is crucial, one also has to consider its constituents—implicature, deixis, and speech acts. Considered as a complex pragmatic phenomenon, sarcasm is perceived most of the time as having a distinct intended meaning than its literal reading. When sarcasm is understood and appreciated within genuine relationships, it can spark creativity and encourage more dynamic thinking.

Scholars from several disciplines—including linguistics, psychology, and literature—have examined sarcasm as a kind of verbal expression. By means of

layers of complexity, comedy, and satire, sarcasm is a rhetorical device that greatly improves human communication by transmitting meaning opposite from its literal reading (Attardo, 2000, p.85). Pragmatics classify sarcasm as an indirect speech act depending on contextual cues and mutual background knowledge for exact interpretation (Gibbs, 2000, p.203).

Sarcastic jokes and pragmatics highlight the intricate process behind understanding and crafting humor in language. Rhetorical strategies also play a key role in shaping written jokes, working alongside pragmatic elements to create comedic effects (Rochmawati, 2017, p. 97). Lexical choices, like interjections, strongly influence how sarcasm is perceived, suggesting that sarcastic remarks often follow recognizable patterns (Kreuz & Caucci, 2007, p. 3). According to the incongruity theory of humor, laughter arises when an utterance presents unexpected contrasts, with pragmatic tools such as conversational implicatures, speech acts, and presuppositions playing a central role in these contrasts (De Melo & Novo, 2024, p. 12). For EFL readers, grasping the linguistic, cultural, and social layers of humor is essential for understanding jokes written in English (Rochmawati, 2017, p. 97).

Kreuz and Caucci (2007, p. 3) point out that certain words and expressions play a big role in how we recognize sarcasm. Some interjections, in particular, can strongly shape how sarcastic intent is perceived, making sarcasm seem more structured than spontaneous. Meanwhile, Bowes and Katz (2011, p. 185) explore sarcasm's emotional impact, showing that instead of softening negativity, it can sometimes amplify feelings of victimization and social tension. Together, these

studies highlight sarcasm's complexity—not just as a form of humor but as a nuanced communication tool with both social and emotional weight.

In memoir writing, sarcasm is a narrative tool that helps writers to create their identities, question social mores, and emotionally engage readers. Using sarcasm extensively, Matthew Perry's memoir *Friends, Lovers, and the Big Terrible Thing* addresses addiction, celebrity, and personal struggle. This study aims to investigate how Perry employs sarcasm to make sense of things, interact with others, and consider his own life in order to look at it in a beneficial manner.

### **2.2.1 The Role of Speech Acts**

Originally proposed by John L. Austin, Speech Act Theory looks at how language performs actions beyond basic description (Allington, 2021, p. 102). Austin argues that all utterances are performative; thus, it looks at conventionalized behaviors carried out by verbal and non-verbal ways (Allington, 2021, p. 102). Spanning multiple disciplines, the theory tackles theoretical, empirical, and normative questions in languages, philosophy, politics, and ethics (Fogal et al., 2018, p. 8). Recent advances have examined how sentence grammar connects to speech act potential, re-evaluated traditional ideas such the content-force difference, and explored how speech act theory could clarify hostile and harmful speech dynamics (Fogal et al., 2018, p. 19). Among the many theories of speech acts put out by academics are convention-based, intention-based, function-based, expression of mental states, and norm-constituted approaches (Harris et al., 2018, p. 78). The theory has been used in legal and

political issues as well as ethically important events including silencing, derogation, and coercion.

First developing the speech act hypothesis in 1962, Searle expanded on it in 1969. This approach clarifies the way words function as actions rather than merely sentences. Three types of speech acts are locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary Searle (1969, p. 23). Locutionary acts denote utterances that possess both sense and reference. It may encompass directive, assertive, and imperative forms. Illocutionary acts possess a distinct force or intent. It includes assertive, directive, expressive, commissive, and declarative functions (Campbell, 1973, p. 76). Perlocutionary acts generate effects on the listener. This may indicate types that are persuasive, understanding, submissive, or satirical (Stevani et al., 2023, p. 40). Advertisements, akin to different modes of written and verbal communication, encompass specific speech activities. Educators and students utilize various speech acts in their interactions to improve English language proficiency. Understanding the different types of speech acts (Salsabila et al., 2024, p. 9) enhances communication clarity and reduces the likelihood of misunderstandings in various contexts.

These speech acts can help readers understand what is said and how it is meant. These are examples from memoir that shows each type of speech acts:

- Locutiunary acts

*“I’ve spent a small fortune on rehab. Not that I had a choice.”*

(Page 97)



This utterance, taken at face value, refers to Matthew Perry's financial expenditure on rehabilitation programs. The meaning is literal and straightforward—he has spent a significant amount of money due to his ongoing addiction struggles. While the phrase “not that I had a choice” might hint at deeper implications, it still remains within the bounds of a literal statement and is thus categorized as a locutionary act.

- Illocutionary acts

*“If I didn’t have this addiction, I would have won an Oscar by now.”* (Page 144).

Here, Matthew Perry does more than just express regret. The illocutionary force of the statement is one of self-mockery and critical reflection. The sarcasm in the exaggerated claim about winning an Oscar reveals a deeper recognition of how addiction has derailed his professional aspirations. While the literal form mimics a boast, the intended meaning is a lamentation on lost potential, communicated through ironic overstatement.

- Perlocutionary acts

*“The night I almost died, I was the funniest guy in the room.”* (Page 11).

This line is an example of dark humor that invites the reader to experience a complex emotional response. While it may elicit a chuckle due to its irony, it also evokes shock, sadness, and

empathy. The perlocutionary effect of this utterance lies in its ability to unsettle the reader, drawing attention to the contrast between external performance (humor) and internal suffering (a near-death experience). The sarcastic delivery enhances its emotional impact and prompts reflection on the duality of public persona versus private reality.

While perlocutionary acts explain the emotional effect on the listener, locutory acts—that is, the precise meaning of the words—are denoted by illocutionary acts; People use sarcasm to express ideas unrelated to their intended meaning, hence the person hearing must apply interpretation to ascertain what they truly meant.

### **2.3 Humor**

Humor, as an effective story methodology, may enormously move forward narrating, particularly in diary composing. Examining several ideas of humor helps us to better grasp how sarcasm could be employed not just for comedy but also to handle more important problems.

Social interactions are strongly influenced by concepts directly connected to sarcasm and humor. Research indicates that sarcasm usage is mainly predicted by a strong humor style (Branowska et al., 2023, p. 5). The Benign Violation Theory clarifies this relationship by suggesting that humor results from people seeing something as both a violation and a benign, which explains why a variety of stimuli can cause laughter (Warren & McGraw, 2015, p. 11).

In conversation, humor can convey warmth within a circle of friends, tip the hat, and foster intimacy (Norrick, 2009, p. 216). Despite its dual usage as a friend-maker, a friend-deterrent, and an angry expression, sarcasm is structured similarly to comedy (Ducharme, 1994, p. 32). Our understanding of the function and effect of sarcasm and humor in public and private relationships has been enhanced. In order to understand humor in depth, one must also consider things like gender, power, and how people from different cultures understand and use humor.

Readers can better understand sarcasm in a story if they are familiar with the theories of humor. Getting the better of, feeling relieved, and not fitting in are some of the most well-known ideas.

According to Hobbes, comedy results from one's feeling of superiority over others. In this situation, sarcasm is often employed to establish perspective or show control. In Matthew Perry's memoir, sarcasm helps him to separate from his sensitivity. Through caustic remarks on his difficulties, he creates humorous moments that subtly convey a tone of perseverance, even superiority, over the obstacles of his life.

In Freud's Relief Theory, comedy can be used to release pent-up emotions or tensions. Humor is a technique of dealing with harsh or terrible circumstances. Matthew Perry's sarcasm, which is often dark and self-reflective, can be interpreted as a means of coping with the emotional weight of his addiction and loneliness. Sarcasm often serves as a means of emotional release, allowing it to control the intensity of its journey.

Kant's Incongruity Theory proposes that comedy results from the rupture of assumptions between the set up and the punchline. Sarcasm plays a major role in this by turning assumptions upside down, thus producing humor from incongruous realities. Matthew Perry's use of sarcasm helps readers discover the paradoxes of his life and the absurdity of difficult situations, and it also highlights the function of humor in reconciling such harsh realities. This cacophony incorporates complexity to Matthew Perry's story, as the joke reveals the disjointedness of his open and private challenges.

#### **2.4 The Memoir Genre: Style and Purpose**

Knowing the memoir form will help one to understand the way Matthew Perry uses sarcasm as a kind of narrative. Memoirs combine introspection on the author's own life with an awareness of society as a whole, therefore creating a special kind of narrative composition.

Memoirs are sometimes utilized as a kind of therapy since they help writers to properly manage and understand difficult circumstances in a healthy way (Wise, 2019, p. 19). However, the genre raises moral issues concerning self-disclosure since it asks one to balance the need to speak honest about personal affairs with the likely consequences of revealing private or sensitive information (Bradley Smith, 2010, p. 72).

Also, memoirs have to accurately recreate memories while dealing with issues of fairness and truthfulness, since memories are inherently subjective and open to different interpretations (Bojanic Cirkovic, 2019, p. 59). Memoirs are recognized by their unmistakable mix of self-expression, restorative request, and

moral complexity, which interfaces individual accounts to more prominent human encounters.

#### **2.4.1 Understanding the Memoir: Definition and Characteristics**

Unlike autobiographies, memoirs focus on a sequence of personally selected events that have been deliberately picked after much thought, instead of presenting a person's whole life story (Miller, 2018, p. 64). This kind of writing explores personal hardships and victories by means of a narrative with an emotional and personal character. In his memoir, for example, Matthew Perry explores his challenges with addiction, popularity, and mental health more thoroughly than he does in previous writings. Apart from narrating his personal story, he writes to help others understand and handle their circumstances.

#### **2.4.2 Memoir as a Narrative Tool for Personal Stories**

Matthew Perry uses sarcasm to show and hide ironic facts in his writing, and his book is a place for people to share their own stories. He uses sarcasm to put up a wall that makes people less sensitive and lets them into his life. His style of writing pushes readers to consider his life's highs and lows from a more balanced, nuanced standpoint, straying from comedy to sadness (Davis, 2021, p. 87).

### **2.5 Previous Studies on Sarcasm and Humor**

Several previous studies have examined the role of sarcasm in discourse, particularly in scripted narratives and literary texts. These studies provide

valuable insights into the pragmatic and stylistic functions of sarcasm, which align with the focus of this research on Matthew Perry's memoir.

Wanti (2023, p. 85), in her undergraduate thesis *Sarcasm in the American Sitcom TV Series 'Sam and Cat'*, analyzed the different types and purposes of sarcasm in the popular sitcom *Sam and Cat*. Using a pragmatic approach, the study identified various sarcastic expressions used by characters and examined their communicative functions. The findings suggested that sarcasm serves multiple purposes, including humor, criticism, and social bonding. This study is relevant to the present research as it highlights the ways in which sarcasm enhances character identity and audience engagement—elements that are similarly present in Matthew Perry's memoir.

Alrikabi and Yasir (2021, p. 31), in their study *Sarcasm in Selected Modern Short Stories: A Pragmatic Analysis*, explored sarcasm as a linguistic strategy in contemporary short stories. The research examined how sarcasm operates as a form of impoliteness, distinguishing it from irony and other rhetorical devices. By analyzing various sarcastic utterances, the study highlighted the pragmatic functions of sarcasm in literature, including its role in reinforcing character development and emphasizing critical social commentary. This study is relevant to the present research as it provides a foundational understanding of sarcasm's role in literary narratives and its potential impact on readers.

Laszlo (2017, p. 54), in her thesis *A Corpus-Based Textual Analysis of Irony and Sarcasm in Scripted Discourse*, conducted a detailed linguistic analysis of sarcasm in television scripts, specifically in soap operas. The study utilized a

corpus-based approach to identify lexical and grammatical markers of sarcasm in scripted conversations. Findings revealed that sarcasm is often indicated through exaggerated phrasing, tonal cues, and contextual contrasts. This study contributes to the present research by demonstrating how sarcasm functions within written dialogues, offering a comparative perspective between scripted television discourse and memoir writing.

While these studies explore sarcasm in various forms of scripted discourse, the present research focuses on its role in autobiographical writing, particularly in memoirs. By analyzing sarcastic jokes in *Friends*, *Lovers*, and *the Big Terrible Thing*, this study extends existing discussions on sarcasm beyond fictional narratives to personal storytelling, where humor functions as both a narrative device and a coping mechanism.