

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Background of the Study

Sarcasm can be found in various human activities, even in daily actions. It happens in conversations between peers, older people or younger people, and even between strangers. Mostly, sarcasm occurs intentionally by the speaker. Cutting (2002) mentions that sarcasm itself is a form of verbal irony that is not so pleasant and typically intended to hurt and to mock the interlocutor. Haiman (1998) emphasizes that one way between the other ways to distinguish irony and sarcasm is that irony can occur without the speakers involved in the conversation having the intention to. For instance, it can be seen in Jonathan Demme's film *Married to the Mob*, the heroine says to an FBI agent "You're no different from the mob!" Then he responds "Oh, there's a big difference. The mob is run by murdering, thieving, lying, cheating psychopaths. We work for the President of the United States of America." Here, the FBI agent character uttered it sincerely, without any sarcastic intention (Haiman, 1998). On the other hand, if somebody wants to be sarcastic, though, he should intentionally assert his sarcastic utterances. Sarcastic utterances cannot be produced without the existence of any intention (Haiman, 1998).

By taking this phenomenon into a study, the researcher believes studying sarcasm is essential for both English language learners and lecturers (Rillof et al., 2013). He also stressed that a failure to understand the implied meaning can mislead people into misinterpreting the utterance. By understanding how sarcasm works, people can use it when expressing negative sentiments to minimize nasty effects. Therefore, it leads the English language learners to build a successful verbal

exchange and interact well with each other in the classroom. Furthermore, they will be more encouraged to conduct research on sarcasm by using a variety of appropriate approaches. Indeed, this may also indicate one of the successes of their lecturers in teaching sarcasm in the classroom.

Sarcasm usually occurs in everyday conversation (Dews & Winner, 1995). For instance, Tepperman et al. (2006) note that certain words, such as the phrase “yeah right” in conversations can also be cues to sarcasm. Moreover, sarcasm can also be found in the tweets, reviews, and TV series dialogues (Tepperman et al., 2006). There are a lot of sarcasms that occurring in conversation among the characters in the TV series and other types of TV shows. The researcher finally decided to choose one of the famous American TV series of its era, *How I Met Your Mother* because sarcasm is widely used in conversation among the characters. *How I Met Your Mother* is an American TV series that carries comedy as its genre, so it is also known as an American situation comedy (sitcom hereafter). This sitcom centred on Ted Mosby’s life as the main character and his group of four friends (Marshall Erikssen, Barney Stinson, Robin Scherbatsky, and Lily Aldrin) living in Manhattan. Ted Mosby casts as the centre of the series is pictured as a young architect who always had trouble getting his true love. Until making an effort to get the one supposed to be with him, Ted and his friends often had to face troublesome times when some of the characters behaving led to a feeling of joy among audiences. The plot was built by Ted, as the main character telling his children how he met the children’s mother using a continuous flashback for most of the episodes.

While watching this sitcom, the researcher immediately found an early example of sarcasm that occurred in a conversation between the two major characters as follows:

Marshall : I should call her.
 Ted : No, No. If you call her when she asked you not to you're just going to look weak and you're going to regret it. Now, listen, whenever you feel like calling her, you come find me first. And I will punch you in the face.
 Marshall : **You're a good friend, Ted.** (Episode 1/Scene 3)

At that time, Marshall still could not move on from Lily since being left by her. Marshall, who was very upset at that time, decided not to go anywhere and remained in the apartment. That night, he planned to call Lily because of his longing but was strictly forbidden by Ted. Ted did not want his best friend to look weak in front of Lily since she had made it clear not to contact her anymore. Ted made sure that Marshall would regret it later. Ted also advised Marshall that if he ever wanted to call Lily, he would better come over to Ted and Ted would punch him in the face. With a little surprise, Marshall said that Ted was a good friend. Indeed, Marshall said the opposite of what he meant. Actually, he did not think that Ted was his best friend since Ted wanted to punch him in the face if he called Lily, the ex-girlfriend he missed at the time. Thus, Marshall was sarcastic to mock Ted.

What people do with conversation and not with the linguistic or cognitive processes involved in it is what is studied in pragmatics (Grice, 1975). Cooperative Principle is one of the most essential concepts in pragmatics. Grice (1975) formulates a concept of conversational principles, namely the Cooperative Principle. It obligates people who participate in a conversation to “make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by

the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged” (Grice, 1975). Grice’s Cooperative Principle presumes that people co-operate in conducting communication to diminish misunderstanding (Finch, 2005). They cooperate in the communication process by observing a set of sub-principles which are known as Grice’s maxims. There are four conversational maxims that Grice (1975) suggests, namely maxims of quantity, quality, relation, and manner.

Maxims flouting occur “when speakers appear not to follow the maxims but expect hearers to appreciate the meaning implied” (Cutting, 2002). An utterance’s form and meaning are different because there is an implicit meaning that is dissimilar from its literal meaning behind the utterance. Grundy (2000) emphasizes that even though there is a maxim violation at the level of what is uttered or said, there is still an implicature which persuades the hearers to draw an implicated meaning from the utterance. Meanwhile, a speaker who merely violates a maxim intentionally hides the truth of his utterance. He does not want his addressee to realize that he deceives his hearer unostentatiously. He offers restricted, insincere, irrelevant, or obscure information only to confuse the understanding of the addressee. It is what determines maxim flouting and violation distinct. A speaker who flouts a maxim is therefore being cooperative and observing the Cooperative Principle at the point of what is implied.

The topic in this study is worth investigation because the researcher expects to be able to show that the sarcasm that occurs in a friendship, especially in this sitcom, has its own colour and uniqueness. Therefore, it is possible to explore the patterns in play using the theories proposed by some experts such as Grice’s (1975) theory on Cooperative Principle to analyze the flouted maxims and to explain the

realization of sarcasm based on the scene in the sitcom. Since Attardo (2002) in his article *Humor and Irony in Interaction: From Mode Adoption to Failure of Detection*, states that each of sarcastic utterances has its purpose and also formulates sarcastic utterances into specific purposes when they are used in conversation, the theory of Attardo (2002) is appropriate to describe the reasons for sarcastic utterances which occur among the characters in the twenty-two episodes of season 2, which have never been done before in the previous studies used by the researcher as references in conducting this study. Therefore, the aim of this current study is to investigate the representation of sarcasm in “How I Met Your Mother Season 2” using a pragmatics study.

1.2 The Problems of the Study

Concerning the background, the problems of the study in this research were formulated as the following:

1. What maxims were flouted by the major characters exposed in their sarcastic utterances in “How I Met Your Mother Season 2”?
2. How was the sarcasm realized in “How I Met Your Mother Season 2”?
3. Why sarcastic utterances in “How I Met Your Mother Season 2” were realized in the way they were?

1.3 The Scope of the Study

A pragmatics approach is applied in conducting this study. Yule (1996) discussed that the main focus of pragmatics is anything that relates to the study of speaker meaning as the listener’s communication and interpretation. Since sarcasm is one of the figurative languages, sarcasm itself cannot be understood as easily as literal language (Kreuz & Glucksberg, 1989). Hence in this research, the use of

pragmatics approach is required. The utterances of each character that flouted maxim were analyzed by the researcher based on Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle, and this theory is also suitable to explain the realization of sarcasm based on the scene by flouting Grice's maxims. Then, the theory of Attardo (2002) is used to describe the reasons for sarcastic utterances in "How I Met Your Mother Season 2", which aired from 2006 to 2007.

1.4 The Significance of the Study

The result of this study is expected to give some advantages as follows:

a) **Theoretical significance**

The research findings are expected to enrich the findings of flouted maxim and sarcasm under pragmatic study. The researcher hopes that this research can be used to understand Cooperative Principle and sarcasm under the study of pragmatic or other linguistic studies.

b) **Practical significance**

This research can directly give more knowledge about flouted maxim and the realization of sarcasm based on the Cooperative Principle, and the purposes of sarcasm. It is useful for people who are interested in sarcasm, especially sarcasm that is brought in movie, sitcom, or any other TV shows. For those who love watching TV series, specifically sitcom, it can help them to recognize the use of sarcasm and to differentiate the purposes of each sarcastic utterance spoken by the characters. So, they can comprehend that every sarcastic utterance has its meaning and purpose.

It can give additional knowledge in pragmatics for those who major in linguistics and literature, especially which is related to Cooperative Principle.

Linguistics and literature students can use this research as a reference to do another sarcasm research with a pragmatic approach or other linguistic approaches, such as semiotics, sociolinguistics, and stylistics.



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