



EnJourMe (English Journal of Merdeka) :

Culture, Language, and Teaching of English

Journal homepage: <http://jurnal.unmer.ac.id/index.php/enjourme/index>

Sarcasm in the Young Sheldon Finale: Tabacaru-based analysis

¹Adani Nur Sabrina, ²Raden Roro Shinta Felisia

¹²Universitas Gunadarma (Department of English Literature, Faculty of Letters and Cultures), Jln. Margonda Raya No. 100, 16424, Depok, Indonesia

Corresponding author: adaninursabrina@staff.gunadarma.ac.id

ARTICLE INFO

Received 02 May 2026

Accepted 16 May 2026

Available online 31 July 2026

Keywords:

multimodal sarcasm, pragmatics, sarcasm typology, TV discourse, Young Sheldon

DOI:

[10.26905/enjourme.viii.17114](https://doi.org/10.26905/enjourme.viii.17114)

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the sarcasm in the television series Young Sheldon using the typology proposed by Sabina Tabacaru. While previous studies have examined sarcasm in social media and television discourse, limited attention has been given to the use of sarcasm in Young Sheldon, particularly through a multimodal perspective based on Tabacaru's framework. Employing a qualitative content analysis approach, the study analyzed sarcastic utterances collected from all episodes of the series' final season through processes of identification, classification, and contextual interpretation based on the proposed typology. The findings show that sarcasm is realized through various strategies, including antithesis, repetitive statement, explicitation, metonymic inferencing, metaphor, shift of focus, reasoning, and rhetorical question. The analysis also reveals overlapping categories, such as a rhetorical question combined with exaggeration, and sarcasm reinforced by non-verbal cues. These findings demonstrate that sarcasm operates as a complex and multi-layered phenomenon, involving both verbal and non-verbal elements. This study contributes to pragmatic studies by providing insight into the multimodal realization of sarcasm in televised discourse.

How to cite this article (APA Style):

Sabrina, A., Felisia, R. (2026). Sarcasm in the Young Sheldon Finale: Tabacaru-based analysis. EnJourMe (English Journal of Merdeka): Culture, Language, and Teaching of English, 11(1) pp.130-147
doi: <https://doi.org/10.26905/enjourme.viii.17114>

INTRODUCTION

Television programmes, especially TV shows, have been one of the inevitable sources of entertainment. Each programme has distinctive characteristics that attract

its target audience. TV shows not only function as a means of recreation, but also represent practices of everyday life, including how language is used in scripted dialogue. This makes TV shows a relevant object for linguistic and pragmatic analysis, as they often represent both natural interaction and constructed discourse tailored to achieve specific effects such as humor, tension, or character development. One of the TV shows that displays the dynamics of rich communication is *Young Sheldon*. This is a coming-of-age situational comedy that aired from 25 September 2017 to 16 May 2024. *Young Sheldon* is a prequel to the famous *The Big Bang Theory* TV show, which portrays the childhood life of the prodigy Sheldon Cooper with his special gifts of intelligence. Due to Sheldon's extraordinary intelligence and socially unconventional behaviour, the series frequently presents communicative tensions that give rise to various pragmatic phenomena, including sarcasm. Notably, sarcasm in this series is not limited to Sheldon as a character but also comes from other characters with differing personalities and communicative intentions, making it a rich source of pragmatic data.

Sarcasm has been widely discussed in relation to irony and pragmatic meaning. According to the Oxford Dictionary (*Oxford Learner's Dictionary*, n.d.), sarcasm is "a way of using words that are the opposite of what you mean to be unpleasant to somebody or to make fun of them". This is in line with Quintilian's view, as cited in [Camp \(2012\)](#), that sarcasm is speech that has the opposite meaning of what is actually said. This notion raises debates regarding the relationship between sarcasm and irony. Oxford Dictionary states one of the definitions of irony as "the use of words that say the opposite of what you really mean, often as a joke and with a tone of voice that shows this." Quintilian also referred to sarcasm as verbal. However, [Tabacaru \(2019\)](#) cited Attardo that sarcasm is seen as harsher than irony as it contains a criticism towards a clear target. She also cited Barbe that sarcasm is more personal than irony. In addition, [Lee and Katz \(1998\)](#) argued that what differentiates sarcasm from irony is the aggressiveness. With those definitions, the current research focuses on analyzing the sarcasm used by the characters in the *Young Sheldon* finale series since the collected data focused on utterances that are meant to be hurtful to the target, yet actually create humour for the audience.

Several studies about sarcasm have been conducted, such as [Syafuruddin et. al. \(2021\)](#), who analyzed Indonesian people's sarcasm culture; [Fadilah et.al. \(2024\)](#), who discussed sarcasm in social media Instagram, specifically Sam Smith's posts; and [Sukarto and Fauziah \(2022\)](#), who discussed satire and sarcasm on a YouTube channel. Although having a similar topic of study, those three studies differ from the current research in terms of data source and communicative setting, which may influence how sarcasm is pragmatically constructed and interpreted. However, the current research

focuses on a TV show as its object of analysis.

In addition, sarcasm in television discourse has also been widely investigated, for example, [Sherin and Sutrisno \(2019\)](#) analyzed responses to sarcasm in three *Star Trek* shows; [Prša \(2019\)](#) studied the sarcasm in *The Big Bang Theory*; [Ramadhan and Setiasari \(2022\)](#) discussed sarcasm in the TV series *Friends*; [Saragih et al. \(2023\)](#) conducted research on sarcasm in *Wednesday*; and [Al Anssari and Hadi \(2021\)](#) studied sarcasm in selected TV shows. However, these studies generally focus on sarcasm in television series as ongoing narratives, while none of them specifically examine the final season of *Young Sheldon*, where character relationships and communicative patterns have reached narrative maturity.

Moreover, several studies have explored *Young Sheldon* from different pragmatic perspectives. [Sui \(2024\)](#) analyzed the conversations in the series through the perspective of the politeness principle; [Fan \(2024\)](#) examined verbal humor using the Cooperative Principle; [Xiong \(2022\)](#) studied the humorous utterances in the series; and [Zhao \(2021\)](#) analyzed the conversational implicature. Even though those researchers used the TV series *Young Sheldon* as the object, they did not focus on the sarcasm. They also did not clearly specify which season of *Young Sheldon* was analyzed in their studies. Therefore, a gap still exists in studies on sarcasm in the final season of *Young Sheldon*. The final season is important for analysis because it shows the completion of the story, where the relationships between characters and their ways of communicating have fully developed. Because of this, sarcasm in the final season is not only found in isolated lines but also appears as part of ongoing interactions that have been built throughout the series.

To address this gap, the current research aims to identify the sarcasm used by the characters in the *Young Sheldon* finale, categorize it using the typology of sarcasm proposed by [Sabina Tabacaru \(2019\)](#), and analyze its pragmatic functions. Tabacaru's framework is selected because it offers a comprehensive typology of sarcasm that accommodates both verbal and non-verbal realizations, as well as their possible combinations. By using dialogue from a final-season television series, this research is expected to contribute to pragmatic studies, particularly in understanding how sarcasm is shaped by context and character interaction in media discourse.

To analyze the forms and functions of sarcasm in the data, this study applies the sarcasm typology proposed by [Tabacaru \(2019\)](#). In *A Multimodal Study of Sarcasm in Interactional Humor*, Sabina [Tabacaru \(2019\)](#) classifies sarcasm into eight categories: antithesis, repetitive statement, explicitation, metonymic inferencing, metaphor, shift of focus, reasoning, and rhetorical questions. These categories serve as analytical tools to examine how sarcasm is realized in interactional discourse.

Antithesis refers to sarcastic expressions that contradict reality or factual situations. This form is closely related to the violation of Grice's maxim of quality, where positive expressions may convey negative evaluation (Olsen, 2015). Chubaryan and Danielyan (2022) further note that positive statements are more likely to be perceived as sarcastic than negative ones.

A repetitive statement involves repeating another speaker's utterance as a form of mockery or evaluative commentary. Explicitation refers to stating something already obvious in a way that creates sarcastic emphasis. Metonymic inferencing conveys sarcasm through associative or indirect reference rather than explicit criticism.

Metaphor in sarcasm is realized through figurative comparison that indirectly evaluates or criticizes a target. Shift of focus occurs when the speaker redirects attention from the expected topic to create indirect insinuation. Reasoning uses seemingly logical structures, such as conditional or causal relations, to produce insincere or contradictory meanings. Meanwhile, rhetorical questions express criticism or disbelief without expecting an actual answer.

Tabacaru (2019) also notes that sarcastic utterances may overlap across categories, particularly in multimodal interaction. Therefore, this study also considers several supporting phenomena found in the data, including exaggeration, non-verbal gestures, and hyper-understanding (Veale et al. in Tabacaru, 2019), which contribute to the layered interpretation of sarcasm in televised discourse.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research design using a content analysis approach. A qualitative design was employed because the study focuses on interpreting sarcastic utterances within their contextual and interactional settings. This approach is appropriate for examining the pragmatic meanings and interactional functions of sarcastic utterances. A content analysis is employed within the current investigation to examine sarcastic utterances in televised discourse, as content analysis enables the interpretation of communication across verbal and visual forms (Sirilakshmi et al., 2024).

The data of this study were collected from the final season of the TV show *Young Sheldon*, which consists of 14 episodes. The researchers selected the final season because it represents the latest and completed narrative stage of the series, in which the characters and their interactional patterns are already fully developed. The data were collected using purposive sampling, in which utterances containing sarcasm were included, as they were considered relevant to the objectives of the study.

The data were taken through several steps: 1) the researchers watched all episodes of the selected season thoroughly to gain an overall understanding of the context; 2) the researchers transcribed dialogues containing sarcastic expressions identified through contextual and pragmatic cues; 3) the researchers identified and selected utterances that met the criteria of sarcasm based on contextual and pragmatic cues.

The analysis was conducted in several stages: 1) each utterance was examined based on contextual contradiction, evaluative meaning, and speaker intention to determine its sarcastic nature; 2) the identified sarcastic utterances were then categorized into one of the eight types of sarcasm proposed by Tabacaru, namely *antithesis*, *repetitive statement*, *explicitation*, *metonymic inferencing*, *metaphor*, *shift of focus*, *reasoning*, and *rhetorical questions*. The coding scheme was based on the characteristics of each sarcasm category described in Tabacaru's framework; 3) the researchers interpreted the pragmatic functions and contextual meanings of each utterance by considering the situational context and character interaction.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the analysis, the researchers repeatedly rechecked the data, the categorization process, and the contextual interpretation of each utterance. In addition, the coding results were discussed through peer debriefing with a researcher familiar with pragmatic analysis to minimize subjective interpretation and improve coding reliability.

RESULTS

The results showed the Young Sheldon finale season contains all types of sarcasm proposed by Tabacaru (2019). A total of 32 sarcastic utterances were identified in the dataset. However, since several utterances exhibit overlapping sarcasm types, the total frequency of sarcasm categories exceeds the number of unique data points. Therefore, the frequencies and percentages presented in Table 1 represent the occurrence of each sarcasm type across the dataset rather than the number of individual utterances.

Table 1 : Frequency of Sarcasm Types

Type of Sarcasm	Frequency	Percentage
Antithesis	4	11.8%
Repetitive Statement	1	2.9%
Explicitation	4	11.8%
Metonymic Inferencing	6	17.6%
Metaphor	1	2.9%
Shift of Focus	2	5.9%

Reasoning	5	14.7%
Rhetorical Question	7	20.6%
Exaggeration*	1	2.9%
Non-Verbal/Gesture*	2	5.9%
Hyper-understanding*	1	2.9%
Total Category Occurrences	34	100%

Additional combination-related phenomena proposed by [Tabacaru \(2019\)](#). Some utterances were categorized into more than one type of sarcasm. Below is the list of overlapping types.

Table 2 : Overlapping Types

Combination	Frequency
Antithesis + Non-Verbal	1
Rhetorical Question + Exaggeration	1
Total Overlapping Data	2

DISCUSSION

In this section, one representative example from each category is presented and analyzed. The findings indicate that sarcasm in the *Young Sheldon* finale season is not only used to create humor but also reflects the characters' personalities and interpersonal relationships. In addition, the sitcom format encourages the use of sarcasm as a pragmatic strategy to create comedic tension and maintain audience engagement.

Antithesis

Mary and Sheldon were in Germany for Sheldon's study when Mary received news that Meemaw's house had been destroyed by a tornado in Texas. Mary insisted on returning home, while Sheldon preferred to continue his study.

Table 3 : Antithesis (Episode 1, 07:05)

Speaker	Utterance
Sheldon	What would we do once we get there?
Mary	I don't know. Uh, be there, provide solace, lend a hand.
Sheldon	Me? Lend a hand? You're funny.

The sarcasm occurs in Sheldon's utterance "You're funny," which contradicts the actual situation. The expression appears to praise Mary as humorous. However, in context, it conveys the opposite meaning. Sheldon does not genuinely find the suggestion amusing, but rather rejects the idea of himself "lending a hand." The sarcastic effect arises from the contradiction between the literal meaning of the utterance and Sheldon's actual intention, thus illustrating antithesis as a form of sarcasm. This sarcastic response also functions as an interpersonal rejection, showing Sheldon's unwillingness to participate emotionally in the situation. At the same time, the sarcasm contributes to humor by reflecting Sheldon's socially detached personality.

This sarcastic utterance also reflects Sheldon's established character throughout the series. He is portrayed as intellectually gifted but socially detached, often dismissing emotional or practical matters that he considers irrational or unnecessary. Pragmatically, the sarcasm functions as an indirect rejection of Mary's expectation while at the same time creating humor through contradiction. This supports [Tabacaru's \(2019\)](#) notion that antithesis relies on oppositional meaning to produce sarcastic effects.

Repetitive Statement

Earlier in the episode, Sheldon told Mary that he would go to the library, but instead secretly boarded a train. After encountering several problems, he eventually returned home in a disheveled condition. Mary, who had already learned the truth, pretended not to know what had happened.

Table 4 : Repetitive Statement (Episode 3, 18:20)

Speaker	Utterance
Mary	Okay, then. Why don't you go lie down?
Sheldon	I will. I'm tired from all the things that happened.
Mary	At the library.
Sheldon	At the library.

The repetitive statement occurs in the repeated phrase "at the library," uttered by both Mary and Sheldon. Mary's repetition functions as sarcastic mockery because she already knows that Sheldon did not actually go to the library. The sarcastic effect arises from the contradiction between Sheldon's excuse and the actual situation. Sheldon's repetition further maintains the false claim, reinforcing the sarcastic exchange. Pragmatically, Mary's sarcasm functions as indirect criticism toward Sheldon's dishonesty while maintaining a humorous family interaction rather than creating direct confrontation.

Beyond merely repeating the phrase, Mary's utterance functions pragmatically as an indirect confrontation. Instead of accusing Sheldon of lying, she repeats his words in a way that shows disbelief and criticism. The sarcasm, therefore, relies heavily on shared contextual knowledge between the speakers and the viewers. The use of this sarcastic type supports [Tabacaru's \(2019\)](#) view that repetition can intensify mockery by drawing attention to the absurdity or inconsistency of a previous utterance.

Explicitation

The explicitation occurs in Mary's utterance, "You do." Sheldon's question is rhetorical and implies that such behaviour is unreasonable or inappropriate. Mary responds by explicitly stating what is already implied in the context, i.e., Sheldon himself often behaves in the same way toward others.

Table 5 : Explicitation (Episode 2, 01:52)

Speaker	Utterance
Sheldon	And then they laughed at me for not knowing something that they knew. Who does that?
Mary	You do.

The explicitation occurs in Mary's utterance "You do." Sheldon's question implies that laughing at someone for not knowing something is unreasonable or inappropriate. Mary responds by explicitly stating what is already implied in the context, namely that Sheldon himself often behaves in the same way toward others. The sarcastic effect arises from making this implicit understanding explicit, as if Sheldon is unaware of his own behaviour. Pragmatically, the sarcasm functions as indirect criticism of Sheldon's attitude while also creating humor through the contrast between Sheldon's complaint and his habitual behaviour toward others.

From a pragmatic perspective, the sarcastic utterance also functions as criticism disguised as a simple statement. Mary does not directly attack Sheldon but instead points out the contradiction between his complaint and his own actions. This indirect criticism creates the humorous tone of the conversation. The scene supports [Tabacaru's \(2019\)](#) argument that explicitation may create sarcasm by verbalizing information that is already obvious to the participants in the interaction.

Metonymic Inferencing

Mary was convinced that her financial gain was a blessing from God after being influenced by Reverend Travis. Pastor Jeff attempted to explain that the situation was merely coincidental.

Table 6 : Metonymic Inferencing (Episode 5, 06:23)

Speaker	Utterance
Mary	Reverend Travis told me that the Lord wants me to be prosperous and I believe him.
Pastor Jeff	This is nothing but a coincidence. You overpaid your taxes, you got a refund, Jesus has nothing to do with it.
Mary	You sound like Sheldon.
Pastor Jeff	[gasps] I believe I know my way out.

The metonymic inferencing occurs in Mary's utterance, "You sound like Sheldon." Rather than directly criticizing Pastor Jeff's statement, Mary associates his reasoning with Sheldon, who is characterized in the series as highly rational and skeptical toward religious explanations. The sarcastic effect emerges from this indirect comparison, as Sheldon symbolically represents a non-religious or overly logical perspective. Pragmatically, the sarcasm functions as interpersonal evaluation, positioning Pastor Jeff's argument as lacking spiritual sensitivity while also creating humor through the unexpected comparison. This scene creates humor because it reframes a serious theological explanation as something comparable to Sheldon's habit of reducing events to purely logical causes.

Metaphor

Audrey expressed her disapproval of her daughter's marriage to Georgie, while Jim suggested that she should treat him more kindly.

Table 7 : Metaphor (Episode 8, 08:08)

Speaker	Utterance
Audrey	I called it. I said no good would come of this marriage.
Jim	Yeah, yeah, you said it a lot. You said it at the wedding. But, uh, still, you know, I ... I think you could be a little nicer to him.
Audrey	Sure, I can also go out in the backyard and water the crabgrass.

The metaphor occurs in Audrey's utterance "water the crabgrass." Rather than directly rejecting Jim's suggestion, Audrey uses figurative comparison to express her disapproval of Georgie. Crabgrass is commonly associated with something undesirable that should not be nurtured. By comparing kindness toward Georgie to "watering the crabgrass," Audrey implies that being nice to him would only encourage something unwanted. The sarcastic effect arises from this metaphorical comparison, which indirectly criticizes Georgie while exaggerating Audrey's negative attitude toward the

marriage. Pragmatically, the sarcasm functions as interpersonal criticism and reflects ongoing family tension, while also contributing humor through exaggerated figurative language.

Shift of Focus

Connie came to Mary's house and immediately asked for a favour without greeting her first.

Table 8 : Shift of Focus (Episode 10, 03:37)

Speaker	Utterance
Connie	[enters the house] I need you to do me a favour.
Mary	Hello to you, too.

The shift of focus occurs in Mary's utterance, "*Hello to you, too.*" Instead of responding to Connie's request, Mary redirects the conversation to Connie's lack of politeness. The original focus on the request is thus shifted to the issue of greeting etiquette. The sarcastic effect arises from this deliberate change of focus, as Mary implicitly criticizes Connie's behaviour rather than addressing the request itself. This illustrates how sarcasm can be conveyed by diverting attention to a different aspect of the interaction. The utterance also functions to express mild social criticism regarding politeness norms while preserving the casual and humorous tone of the conversation.

From the perspective of humor function, sarcasm creates comedy through everyday social awkwardness. Rather than harshly criticizing, the utterance generates humor from a familiar interpersonal situation in which someone points out impoliteness in a subtle but noticeable way.

Reasoning

Mary was unaware that she had been deceived by Reverend Travis. Concerned about this situation, George asked Connie to help Mary come to her senses.

Table 9 : Reasoning (Episode 5, 06:23)

Speaker	Utterance
George	Will you talk some sense into your daughter?
Connie	If I could talk sense into her, she would never have married you.

The reasoning occurs in Connie's utterance, "*If I could talk sense into her, she would never have married you.*" Instead of directly agreeing to George's request, Connie constructs a hypothetical condition using an *if-clause* to express her response. The

implied reasoning is that Mary's decision to marry George reflects a lack of sound judgment. Therefore, if Connie were truly able to talk sense into her, that marriage would not have occurred. The sarcastic effect arises from this indirect logical construction, which simultaneously rejects George's request and mocks him. Thus, the utterance exemplifies sarcasm through reasoning.

This type of sarcasm is strongly connected to Connie's character, who is portrayed as witty, blunt, and sharp-tongued throughout the series. Rather than criticizing others directly in a serious manner, she often gives criticism through clever logical constructions that sound humorous to the audience. The sarcastic reasoning, therefore, functions not only as a mockery but also as a characterization device that reinforces Connie's role as a sarcastic and outspoken family member.

Rhetorical Question

Mary and Sheldon were in Germany when Mary informed Sheldon that a tornado had destroyed Meemaw's house, although everyone was safe.

Table 10 : Rhetorical Question (Episode 1, 06:42)

Speaker	Utterance
Mary	... there was a tornado back home. Everybody's okay, but your meemaw's house was destroyed.
Sheldon	But everyone's okay, that's confirmed?
Mary	Thank God, yes.
Sheldon	You're thanking the deity who sent the tornado?

The rhetorical question occurs in Sheldon's utterance, "You're thanking the deity who sent the tornado?" Although structured as a question, the utterance does not seek an actual answer. Instead, Sheldon uses it to express skepticism toward Mary's statement. The sarcastic effect arises from the implied contradiction between thanking God for safety while simultaneously associating the disaster with the same deity. Pragmatically, the sarcasm functions as intellectual criticism of Mary's religious perspective while also reinforcing Sheldon's rational and skeptical personality, which contributes to the humor of the interaction.

The use of rhetorical questions is closely related to Sheldon's character, who is portrayed as highly logical and analytical. Rather than expressing disagreement directly, Sheldon frequently challenges statements through questioning patterns that expose what he perceives as inconsistencies.

Non-Verbal or Gesture

Sheldon was being tutored by a younger student named Chen. During their interaction, Sheldon attempts to appear dismissive of Chen's academic background despite demonstrating clear knowledge of her professor.

Table 11 : Non-Verbal Sarcasm (Episode 2, 12:07)

Speaker	Utterance
Sheldon	They're my teachers, and they're really smart.
Chen	I've never heard of them.
Sheldon	Well, I've probably never heard of your teacher.
Chen	I recently studied with Henry W. Kendall.
Sheldon	The Nobel Prize winner for his pioneering research on the deep inelastic scattering of electrons on protons and bound neutrons?
Chen	Yes.
Sheldon	Never heard of him.
Chen	[sighs and closes her eyes]

The sarcasm is conveyed through Chen's non-verbal response, indicated by her sigh and eye-closing gesture. Rather than verbally responding to Sheldon's utterance, "Never heard of him," Chen expresses disbelief and frustration through physical reaction. The sarcastic effect arises from the contradiction between Sheldon's detailed description of the professor and his subsequent denial of recognizing him. Pragmatically, the non-verbal sarcasm functions as implicit criticism of Sheldon's arrogance while also contributing to interpersonal tension and humor within the interaction.

This type of sarcasm highlights that sarcastic meaning in conversation is not always delivered verbally but can also emerge through gestures and facial expressions. In that scene, Chen's reaction functions as a pragmatic cue that signals mockery and disbelief without using explicit verbal action. This makes non-verbal sarcasm an effective strategy to create humor in *Young Sheldon*.

Hyper-understanding

Sheldon and Missy were discussing their upcoming move to a new city. While Sheldon expressed concern, Missy responded with indifference and mockery.

Table 12 : Hyper-understanding (Episode 12, 16:01)

Speaker	Utterance
Sheldon	Are you nervous about moving to a new city?
Missy	Nope.
Sheldon	But you won't know anyone.

Speaker	Utterance
Missy	That's the best part. I won't be the dumb sister of the smartest boy in town.
Sheldon	You're not going to brag about me?
Missy	Hell, no. I'm gonna tell people you were sent away to a school for special kids.
Sheldon	Caltech is a school for special kids.
Missy	Great, it works on two levels.

The hyper-understanding occurs in Missy's utterance, "Great, it works on two levels." The phrase "school for special kids" carries two possible meanings: it may refer to children with special needs, as implied sarcastically by Missy, or to intellectually gifted students, as interpreted by Sheldon. Missy's response acknowledges both meanings simultaneously and intentionally maintains the ambiguity. The sarcastic effect arises from this layered interpretation, where Sheldon's attempt to reinterpret the insult still supports Missy's mockery. Pragmatically, the sarcasm functions as sibling criticism and interpersonal teasing while also creating humor through semantic ambiguity and double meaning.

The occurrence of hyper-understanding also demonstrates that sarcasm in *Young Sheldon* is often built through playfulness rather than simple mockery alone. Since many characters in the series are portrayed as verbally sharp and highly expressive, sarcasm frequently develops through semantic ambiguity. The humor emerges because both Sheldon and Missy understand the layered meaning of the phrase, while the audience also recognizes the insult and Sheldon's unintended support of it.

Antithesis and Non-Verbal

Connie was placed under house restriction as a punishment, which she found extremely boring. Dale attempts to entertain her by suggesting that they solve a puzzle together, but Connie shows no interest.

Table 13 : Antithesis and Non-Verbal Cue (Episode 6, 04:49)

Speaker	Utterance
Dale	Ooh. I found a corner.
Connie	Congratulations. [flat expression]
Dale	Oh, come on. We can have a little fun.

The antithesis occurs in Connie's utterance, "Congratulations." Although the expression literally conveys praise, Connie does not genuinely feel impressed by Dale's minor achievement. The sarcastic effect emerges from the contradiction between the positive expression and Connie's actual attitude.

The sarcasm is further reinforced through the non-verbal cue indicated by Connie's flat expression. The lack of enthusiasm strengthens the ironic interpretation of the utterance and highlights her boredom and disinterest. Pragmatically, the sarcasm functions as an indirect dismissal of Dale's attempt to entertain her while also creating humor through the combination of verbal contradiction and non-verbal expression.

Rhetorical Question and Exaggeration

Missy prepared a meal while Mary was away in Germany, accompanying Sheldon. However, her effort initially went unacknowledged.

Table 14 : Rhetorical Question and Exaggeration (Episode 2, 09:23)

Speaker	Utterance
Missy	Would it kill anyone to say thank you for this delicious meal?
Jim	Thanks.
Mandy	Thank you.

The rhetorical question occurs in Missy's utterance, "*Would it kill anyone to say thank you for this delicious meal?*" Although it takes the form of a question, it does not seek an actual answer. Instead, Missy uses it to express dissatisfaction and to implicitly criticize the others for not showing appreciation. The sarcastic effect arises from this indirect reproach, as the expectation of gratitude is presented as something that should be obvious. The sarcasm is further reinforced through exaggeration in the phrase "*Would it kill anyone ...*" The use of the word *kill* constitutes an unrealistic overstatement, emphasizing Missy's frustration. This hyperbolic expression intensifies the utterance and strengthens its sarcastic impact. Beyond humor, the sarcasm reflects Missy's emotional frustration and her desire for interpersonal recognition within the family interaction.

The combination of rhetorical questions and exaggeration shows how sarcasm in *Young Sheldon* frequently functions as a humorous way to express annoyance without delivering criticism too directly. This interactional strategy is common in family conversations within sitcoms, where humor often emerges from indirect conflict and emotional tension.

The findings demonstrate that sarcasm in *Young Sheldon* is realized through diverse linguistic and interactional strategies, ranging from direct contradiction to indirect evaluative expressions. Among the identified categories, rhetorical questions, metonymic inferencing, and reasoning appear more frequently, suggesting that sarcasm in the series is often conveyed indirectly rather than through explicit insult. This supports [Tabacaru's \(2019\)](#) view that sarcasm operates as a complex interactional phenomenon that frequently relies on contextual interpretation and implied meaning.

Several sarcastic utterances in the data also reflect the relationship between sarcasm and irony discussed by [Camp \(2012\)](#) and [Lee and Katz \(1998\)](#). While irony generally involves saying the opposite of what is meant, the sarcastic utterances found in the series additionally contain criticism or interpersonal evaluation directed toward a specific target. This is particularly visible in interactions involving Sheldon, where sarcasm is often used to criticize social behaviour, intellectual arrogance, or emotional insensitivity. The findings therefore, support the argument that sarcasm tends to be more aggressive and target-oriented than irony.

The analysis further reveals that sarcasm in televised discourse is strongly shaped by character relationships and communicative context. Family interactions between Sheldon, Missy, Mary, Connie, and other characters frequently use sarcasm not only to criticize, but also to maintain humor and interpersonal dynamics. In several cases, sarcasm functions simultaneously as emotional expression, social evaluation, and comedic device. This aligns with previous studies on television discourse, such as [Ramadhan and Setiasari \(2022\)](#), [Sherin and Sutrisno \(2019\)](#), and [Saragih et al. \(2023\)](#), which found that sarcasm in entertainment media often serves both humorous and interpersonal purposes.

Another important finding is the presence of multimodal sarcasm and overlapping categories. Some sarcastic expressions are reinforced through gestures, facial expressions, exaggeration, or layered meanings, indicating that sarcasm cannot always be interpreted solely through verbal language. This supports [Tabacaru's \(2019\)](#) argument that sarcasm in interaction frequently operates multimodally. In the present study, non-verbal cues such as Chen's sigh and Connie's flat expression strengthen sarcastic interpretation by clarifying the speaker's attitude and emotional stance. Similarly, overlapping categories such as rhetorical questions combined with exaggeration demonstrate that sarcastic meaning is often constructed through multiple pragmatic strategies simultaneously.

Overall, the findings suggest that sarcasm in *Young Sheldon* functions as a dynamic pragmatic phenomenon shaped by contextual contradiction, interpersonal relationships, multimodal cues, and communicative intention. The study, therefore, contributes to pragmatic and discourse-analysis research by showing how sarcasm in televised interaction is constructed not only through linguistic form but also through social and multimodal meaning-making processes.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to analyze the types of sarcasm in the *Young Sheldon* finale season based on the typology proposed by Tabacaru (2019). The findings revealed that sarcasm in the data collected is realized through all of the types in the typology, namely *antithesis*, *repetitive statement*, *explicitation*, *metonymic inferencing*, *metaphor*, *shift of focus*, *reasoning*, and *rhetorical question*. Among these, rhetorical questions and metonymic inferencing appear more frequently, indicating that indirect criticism and associative references are commonly used to create humor and interpersonal tension in the series.

In addition, the analysis showed that sarcastic utterances are not always limited to a single category. Some instances demonstrate overlapping strategies, such as rhetorical questions combined with exaggeration and antithesis reinforced by non-verbal cues. This suggests that sarcasm operates in a multi-layered manner and often relies on contextual interpretation rather than solely on literal meaning.

Furthermore, the findings highlighted that sarcasm is not only expressed through verbal utterances but can also be conveyed through non-verbal elements, such as facial expressions and gestures. These features play a significant role in intensifying or clarifying the implied meaning of an utterance. This supports the pragmatic perspective that meaning in communication is strongly influenced by context, speaker intention, and interactional cues.

The current research also demonstrates that sarcasm in sitcom discourse frequently operates through multimodal and overlapping strategies. The findings show that sarcastic meaning is often strengthened through non-verbal cues, such as facial expressions and gestures. Therefore, this study not only applies Tabacaru's typology to a new dataset but also highlights the dynamic and layered nature of sarcasm in audiovisual media discourse.

Theoretically, this study contributes to pragmatic and media discourse studies by showing how Tabacaru's sarcasm typology can be applied to sitcom interactions, particularly in portraying humor, criticism, and character relationships. Practically, the findings may also help readers or students develop a better understanding of implied meaning, sarcasm, and contextual interpretation in everyday communication and audiovisual media.

Based on these findings, it can be concluded that sarcasm is a complex and dynamic phenomenon that cannot always be neatly categorized. Therefore, future research is suggested to explore sarcasm in different contexts, such as other genres, languages, or communicative settings, in order to further examine the applicability and limitations of existing typologies.

REFERENCES

- Al Anssari, R. S., & Hadi, H. A. N. (2021). A Pragmatic Study of Sarcasm in Selected TV Shows. *International Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Translation*, 4(7), 148–153.
- Camp, E. (2012). Sarcasm, Pretense, and The Semantics/Pragmatics Distinction. *NO ^ US*, 587–634.
- Chubaryan, A., & Danielyan, H. (2022). THE PRAGMATIC MODELS OF UNDERSTANDING SARCASM. *OLP7/FLHE*, 26(1), 15–26.
- Fadilah, I., & Wijayanto, A. (2024). Sarcasm in Social Media: A Study of Comments on Sam Smith's Instagram Posts. *Jurnal Onoma: Pendidikan, Bahasa Dan Sastra*, 10(1), 92–104.
- Fan, H. (2024). An Analysis of Verbal Humor from the Perspective of the Cooperative Principle—A Case Study of Young Sheldon. *Academic Journal of Humanities & Social Sciences*, 7(7), 203–209.
- Lee, C. J., & Katz, A. N. (1998). The differential role of ridicule in sarcasm and irony. *Metaphor and Symbol*, 13(1), 1–15.
- Olsen, J. M. H. (2015). Sarcasm Detection Using Grice's Maxims. *Undergraduate Journal of Humanistic Studies*, 1, 1–25.
- Oxford Learner's Dictionary. (n.d.). Retrieved January 14, 2026, from <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/gen-y?q=gen+y>
- Prša, L. (2019). *Construal of Sarcasm in The Big Bang Theory* [Master's Thesis]. University of Zagreb.
- Ramadhan, R. T., & Setiasari, W. (2022). A Study of Sarcasm of TV Series *Friends*. *TRANSFORM: Journal of English Language Teaching and Learning*, 11(4), 185–197.
- Saragih, S. D., Pasaribu, T. K., & Pasaribu, D. R. (2023). THE ANALYSIS OF SARCASM IN WEDNESDAY NETFLIX SERIES. *Jurnal Widya*, 4(2), 268–272.
- Sherin, S., & Sutrisno, A. (2019). Responses to Sarcasm in Three Star Trek Movies. *LEXICON*, 6(1), 11–20.
- Sirilakshmi, Y., T, Ashwini, Gogoi, B.P., Bhuyan, N., & Bunkar, R. C. (2024). CONTENT ANALYSIS IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH: IMPORTANCE AND APPLICATION. In *Exploring Narratives: A Guide to Qualitative Research Methods* (p. 82). P.K. Publishers & Distributors.

- Sui, S. (2024). A Conversation Analysis of Dialogues in “Young Sheldon” from the Perspective of Politeness Principle. *3rd International Conference on Interdisciplinary Humanities and Communication Studies*, 157–163.
- Sukarto, K. A., & Fauziah, F. (2022). Satire and Sarcasm on the “YouTube Got Talent” Video: A Case Study on Skinnyindonesian24 Channel. *ELS Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities*, 5(2), 374–386.
- Syafuruddin, Thaba, A., Rahim, A. R., Munirah, & Syahrudin. (2021). Indonesian People’s Sarcasm Culture: An Ethnolinguistic Research. *Linguistics and Culture Review*, 5(1), 160–179.
- Tabacaru, S. (2019). *A Multimodal Study of Sarcasm in Interactional Humor*. de Gruyter.
- Tenny, S., Brannan, J. M., & Brannan, G. D. (2022, September 18). *Qualitative Study*. StatPearls. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK470395/>
- Xiong, L. (2022). An Analysis of Humorous Utterances in Young Sheldon Based on Relevance Theory. *International Journal of Frontiers in Sociology*, 4(10), 81–85.
- Zhao, S. (2021). An Analysis of the Conversational Implicature of “Little Sheldon” from the Perspective of Violation of the Cooperative Principle. *OALib*, 08(01), 1–6. <https://doi.org/10.4236/oalib.1107115>