#### ФИЛОЛОГИЯ

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## СПОСОБЫ ВЫРАЖЕНИЯ САРКАЗМА В СОВРЕМЕННОЙ АНГЛИЙСКОЙ УСТНОЙ РЕЧИ

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Аннотация. Сарказм определяется как остроумно-едкое замечание, выражающее непрямую критику собеседника или третьего лица (его умственных способностей, черт характера, внешности, действий и поступков, социального статуса). Показано, что сарказм как стилистический приём основан на использовании различных усложнённых вариантов выражения мысли вместо простой и чёткой формулировки, при этом обязателен элемент комического, и характерно, что подобные выражения отличаются высокой степенью эмотивности и экспрессивности.

Ключевые слова: сарказм, устная речь, экспрессивные средства, стилистические приёмы, прагматика. Для цитирования: Молчанова С.Е. Способы выражения сарказма в современной английской устной речи // Гуманитарные и социальные науки. 2025. Т. 110. № 3. С. 106-112. doi: 10.18522/2070-1403-2025-110-3-106-112.

## PHILOLOGY

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Original article

## Ways of expressing sarcasm in modern English oral speech

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**Abstract.** Sarcasm is defined as a witty and caustic remark expressing indirect criticism of the interlocutor or a third person (his mental abilities, character traits, appearance, actions and deeds, social status). It is shown that sarcasm as a stylistic device is based on the use of various complicated ways of expressing thoughts instead of a simple and clear formulation, while an element of comic is required, and it is characteristic that such expressions are characterized by a high degree of emotivity and expressivity.

Key words: sarcasm, oral speech, expressive means, stylistic devices, pragmatics.

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#### Introduction

Sarcasm is one of the types of the comic. It is an unkind joke meant to express criticism towards the object of speech. The criticism is in most cases directed towards a person (their mental abilities, traits of character, actions, appearance, social status), sometimes towards an object or a situation. However, eventually the criticism lands on a person as the one who chooses the things he possesses and creates the situations that may seem so appalling to the speaker. Sarcasm is often employed with the aim of hurting, humiliating, embarrassing, mocking a person. A certain conflict is generally involved. In some cases it may get close to irony, but irony is more subtle, it is a kind of gentle hint while sarcasm is rather direct and obvious. But despite the fact sarcasm always involves a roundabout way of expression which distinguishes it from direct forms of rebuke. Unlike direct expression of criticism sarcasm has a milder impact on the relations between participants of

communication. In most cases sarcasm conveys indignation, irritation or anger of the speaker. It sounds quite witty, but witticism in contrast presupposes harmless humor, keyed to sustain friendly atmosphere. Sarcasm can be universal (perceived by all people) and situational (known only to a group of people involved, for it alludes to some previous personal opinion or situation). It can require either a micro or a macro context to be properly understood. This article deals with the former type. There are many scientific works devoted to sarcasm but all of them are mostly focused on neural network models for sarcasm detection, on the description of the essence of the term and on analysis of random examples without an attempt to systematize them according to the ways sarcasm is verbalized. The object of the present study is film discourse. The subject is ways of expressing sarcasm. The material for the investigation was taken from the TV series "The Gossip Girl".

In spite of the fact that the use of sarcasm is a purely subjective creative process that is rather difficult to describe or systemize, a certain set of patterns can clearly be deduced. The most common of them are the ones that presuppose the employment of some stylistic devices and expressive means both lexical and syntactical. As sarcasm is often defined as an extreme degree of irony, it is unsurprising that sarcasm based on irony (expressing one thing while meaning the opposite) is the most frequent device in the majority of the analyzed examples.

Discussion

The word with the opposite meaning is often represented by a noun. For example: *Chuck:* You took away what I cared about most. To return the favor I'm going to take Columbia from you [4, 4]. The word with the opposite meaning can be an adjective. For example: Eric: Oh, don't tell me you detect a whiff of eau de damage control. Serena (his sister): Mom's classic scent brings back the fondest memories of childhood [4, 11]. In the given example sarcasm is combined with a sustained metaphor which makes it even more vivid. An interjection can also be the word with the opposite meaning. For example: Dan: What do you want? Blair: I'm about to explain, so if you remain silent until you hear the full story I'd appreciate it. Dan: This is not a good time. Blair: Wow. I'm not even close to done [3, 19]. A prepositional phrase acting as an adverbial modifier of reason may possess the opposite meaning. For example: Jack to Thorpe: And all this time, I thought you hated Bass because of his sunny personality (not because he did him a great wrong) [4, 21]. In some cases the speaker expresses agreement by disagreeing. For example: Lily: Dan, this party doesn't seem like your speed. Dan: <u>Are you kidding</u>? There are actually beers behind the bar I can pronounce [4, 12]. The prepositional phrases thanks to or thanks for may convey sarcasm based on the opposition of the expressed and the implied. It happens when the speaker thanks the interlocutor for some bad deed or for something the person didn't do. For example: Juliet: Thanks to you my brother is currently serving a 5-year sentence [4, 11]. Nate: My father's going to be all right. Thanks for asking [4, 6]. Sometimes the type of sarcasm under consideration may be prolonged. For example: Cici: Darling, you look lovely in your mug shot. It was smart of you to turn yourself in so you could make sure your hair was done. Lily (her daughter): Yes, mother, that is why I did it [4, 18].

Combinations of sarcasm with metaphors come second in frequency. In the majority of cases similarity is based on likeness of actions. For example: *Blair: If you're here to <u>deliver</u> any further <u>humiliation</u>, Dorota can <u>sign for it</u> [4, 6]. Ben: It's Serena. She <u>worms</u> her way out of everything [4, 10]. Blair: You'll be socially <u>guillotined</u> [4, 6]. Similarity may be founded on likeness of situations. For example: Blair to Dan: I need to speak to you about your behavior, privately. (She leaves). Dan to Charlie: What do you do <u>when corned by a bear</u>? [4, 19]. William (to his daughter Serena): Suddenly I found myself caught in the middle of a Civil War in Congo. Serena: You know, my 98 was, actually pretty similar. We were just coming out of <u>the Civil War between Lily and the Republic of Claus</u> (her mother's divorce from one of her husbands) [3, 19]. Sarcasm combined with metaphors can be grounded on similarities between notions. For example: Nate: You are Blair Waldorf. <u>"Punishment" is your middle name</u> [3, 18]. GG: I spy Chuck Bass returning from Paris with <u>a pretty new fall accessory</u> (a blond) [4, 3].* 

Speakers quite often employ set expressions to convey sarcasm. In most cases decomposition of set phrases is involved. In such transformations the use of pun may often be observed. For example: GG: Nate thought he and Humphrey were thick as thieves. Turns out Humphrey's a thief and Nate's just thick [4, 7]. In the prestigious buildings of Manhattan sometimes the doors we open belong to someone else [4, 4]. Apart from literal opening doors the metaphoric set expression means having advantages in various situations. The sarcastic effect is also achieved by such transformation as uniting parts of several sayings in one utterance. For example: GG: Poor V. Didn't she know that in love and war, a friend in need is willing to do most any deed [4, 4]. The sayings a friend in need is a friend indeed and all is fair in love and war are united. The speaker may resort to a sarcastic use of a famous proverb based on metaphor by making it a sustained one. For example: GG: They say you reap what you sow. Better get out your gardening gloves, Lily. Looks like you're going to have a bumper crop this year [4, 11]. The speaker may transform the initial saying to such an extent that it becomes a new one. For example: With enough smoke who cares if there is really a fire [4, 4]. The initial one goes as Where there's smoke, there's fire. Such colloquial expression as what the \*\*\*! reveals the speaker's irritation. It acquires sarcastic tinge if a proper noun phonographically similar to the swear word is used in it. For example: GG: What the Chuck! [5, 10]. Adding negations to clichés also contributes to achieving sarcasm. For example: Blair: It's been nice not being friends with you. Dan: Let's not do it again sometime [4, 17]. I look forward to never seeing you again [4, 6]. GG: Chuck Bass and Blair Waldorf, happily <u>never</u> after [4, 12].

Unexpected answers to clichés questions can sound sarcastic. For example: *Dan: How are you? Blair: <u>Pregnant</u> (she was often sick)* [5, 2]. *Eric (to his sister): How are you feeling? Serena: <u>Betrayed</u>. <u>Thanks</u> [4, 10]. A similar effect is achieved when the speaker reacts to a question in such a way as if he had heard quite a different remark from the interlocutor. For example: <i>Blair: How dare you show your face here? Vanessa: <u>Oh, well, hello to you, too</u> [4, 18]. <i>Penelope: I'm sorry this is a private club. No has-beens allowed. Blair: <u>Penelope, good to see you, too. Long time</u> [4, 3].* 

Sarcasm can very often be combined with hyperbole when the speaker aims to criticize a person (his taste, social position) through the criticism of his belongings. For example the speaker may criticize a piece of clothing: Blair: Take off that hideous scarf, Penelope. You can see it from space [2, 25]. One can be critical of a cheap car, its slow speed in particular: Blair: I swear if I shove my feet through the floor, I could run faster [4, 11]. The size of a penthouse may be criticized: Ben's mother to Serena: Thank you for the tour (around the penthouse). Good thing you're serving lunch. <u>I'm hungry after all that walking</u> [4, 17]. Emphasis is laid on the inability of the people in possession of it to understand the problems of those less fortunate. The criticism of a situation may be conveyed by means of a hyperbole combined with sarcasm. For example: Serena: You have nuclear capability. Sooner or later, one of you is gonna press the other's button and we are gonna end up with nothing but cockroaches [4, 7]. The emphasis is focused on the conflict of the two characters and the consequences that it can lead to. Jenny: It (girls from a prestigious school passing by without paying any kind of attention to her) was like I didn't even exist. Dan: Welcome to my world. It's not so bad once you get used to birds flying into your head and automatic doors never opening [2, 4]. The emphasis is on the fact that those who live in Brooklyn are totally ignored by everyone and everything in Manhattan. One can come across the criticism of relations between members of a family. For example: Serena: She (her aunt) hasn't even walked through the door, and you guys are already at each other's throats. Carol (entering the room): I wouldn't recognize you guys if it were any other way [4, 18]. The intensity of a negative feeling is often exaggerated. For example: What I need is Zofran. All this disingenuous generosity is making me want to vomit [3, 18]. The interlocutor's interest in something can be mocked at. For example: Serena: I always knew you'd read too much Shakespeare to be sane [4, 16]. Psychological problems of the interlocutor may be exaggerated. For example: Blair to Dan in a rehabilitation center (they are visiting; he mentions some insignificant problem): Humphrey, they treat people in here for less serious complexes than

*that* [4, 11]. The use of some parentheses, denoting frequency which is exaggerated, adds sarcastic effect to an utterance. For example: *Dan to Blair: Ten bucks whatever brain scheme you're cooking up blows up in your face, <u>as per usual</u> [4, 18]. <i>Rufus: Having Carol would be stressful for Lily. William: Rufus does make a point ... for once* [4, 18]. The idea of frequency may be conveyed by grammatical means. For example: *Blair to Dan: Follow My lead. You're <u>used to doing that</u> [4, 11]. Using an understatement can downplay the gravity or significance of something, for example a threat: <i>Chuck to Jack (his uncle): Your attempt to destroy me will have to wait. I have a meeting* [4, 22]. *Blair: You twisted manipulative psychopath. Chuck: <u>You're going to have to be a tad more specific.</u> <i>It's been a busy few days* [3, 19].

One of the means quite frequently employed for creating sarcastic effect is allusion. In most cases the reference is made to a famous literary work or a character from a book. For example: *Epperly: I'm going to Bali with my friend. Blair: You're leaving the magazine for <u>"Eat, Pray, Love"</u>? [4, 14]. Vanessa: Oh, my God. Dan Humphrey's been seduced by wealth. It had to happen. <i>Even Frodo eventually gave in to the power of the Ring* [3, 1]. The reference to the Bible is also rather frequent. For example: *Blair to Chuck and Jenny: Tell me there is an explanation that doesn't involve apocalypse that the two of you are here together* [3, 21]. Dan: Epperly asked me to pull the lemon Louboutins. Blair: Oh, you poor lost lamb. Let me help you [4, 13]. False sympathy is expressed. Famous and well-known people or phenomena are sometimes alluded to. For example: Dan: So how are you enjoying your first day? Blair: Well, what should be perfection has now been tainted by a run-in with Brooklyn's <u>Benedict Arnold</u> (a traitor) [4, 13]. Employer to Serena: You can look at your phone. I don't run a <u>Gulag</u> [5, 3].

Rhetorical questions can be accompanied by sarcasm. For example: Why am I not surprised? [4, 3]. Eric: (a teenager) to Lily (his mother): I didn't wanna share a huge fact from my life. <u>I wonder where I got that gene from?</u> (he found out she also had quite a lot of secrets of her own) [4, 13]. A rhetorical question can contain a pretence surprise or an expectation against common sense. For example: Blair: I had a contract drawn up. Jack: Now suddenly you don't trust me? (the person has cheated in so many ways) [3, 17]. Thorpe to Lily: You didn't wanna wear that gift (a convict's orange uniform) I sent you this morning? Orange is so your color [4, 17]. The inclusion of an ironic tinge into an argument can lead the audience to a desired thought, which as a result seems to be quite obvious. For example: GG: I received a few tips about Blair seeing a movie with Dan Humphrey. So it could just be a coincidence. I mean who doesn't love documentaries about French orangutans? [4, 11]. The desired thought is that their meeting is not a coincidence. Very close to rhetorical questions stand interrogative utterances which anticipate the interlocutor by suggesting a possible answer to a question or developing a previously stated thought. The sarcastic suggestion is intentionally false. For example: What do you do for fun? <u>Polish your knife collection?</u> [3, 4]. Blair: Is everything okay? Dan: I've been walking around the city all night with one allconsuming paralyzing thought. Blair: <u>Why am I walking around the city when I live in</u> <u>Brooklyn?</u> [4, 17].

Sarcasm can be combined with similes. There are utterances in which people are compared to animals to emphasize how stupid or bad-looking they are. For example: *Eleanor: My goodness, getting models to do anything, it's <u>like herding cats</u> [3, 13]. The use of a comparison mixed with sarcasm has practically the same purpose: <i>Epperly: The Suttons are next (to be photographed). They want to be shot with their English setters. Blair: <u>The setters are better-looking than the Suttons</u> [4, 18]. The absurdity of fulfilling an action may be underlined by comparing it to another even more absurd action. For example: <i>Blair: I am an arbiter of taste. If I were to stand behind some lame Humphrey lamentation (his article), then <u>it would be like showing up at an accessories shoot in Crocs [4, 15]</u>.* 

Changing the image of a word is one of the means of creating sarcastic effect. It consists in replacing a part of it with an unpredictable word. For example: *Blair: I'm not going to let anything interrupt my week of relaxation, resting, and serenity. Especially not Chuck Bass'*  <u>faux</u>-lanthropy (philanthropy) [5, 7]. Blair: As you can see I don't have time to read <u>faux</u>ticles (articles) by wannabe writers [4, 15]. The means under study has several variations with the first one occurring in set expressions and involving the use of a negative prefix: For example: Chuck to Georgina: To what do I owe the <u>displeasure?</u> [4, 6]. There is another variation of the means: the use of words with similar parts. For example: Blair: But it's our job to remain civilized. Serena: So you're gonna let Chuck have the assistant position then? Blair: I said "civilized" not "lobotomized" [4, 4]. Blair: That revelation would result in mutual distraction. You may be <u>homicidal</u> but you're not <u>suicidal</u> [4, 5].

Sometimes sarcasm may be combined with epithets. For example: Chuck: When it comes to me Blair has a <u>nasty</u> habit of never being wrong [4, 14]. Serena: Underneath the pretty, they're all just <u>starving</u> wannabes [4, 3]. The use of words in unusual and unpredictable collocations can sound sarcastic. For example: Serena: For your information, we just stayed up talking all night. Blair: Oh, so does this <u>chatty insomniac</u> have a name? [4, 6].

Utterances containing pun can have a sarcastic effect: For example: *Eric: I wished for <u>chill</u> on my birthday but not thanks to the flu* [4, 16]. *Chuck: <u>Good</u> morning, Waldorf. Blair: It was until now (when she met him)* [2, 1]. *Dan: Google "revenge", you'll get <u>Blairwaldorf.com</u> [2, 4].* 

Such stylistic device as gradation can enhance sarcasm. It can be enclosed in clauses, sentences and word combinations. For example: *Chuck to Dan: I feel nothing <u>when I see her</u> (the girl he loves) and Louis, or <u>when I jump off a building</u>, or <u>when I crash a motorcycle</u>. Even <u>you don't irritate me</u> [5, 2]. Blair to Dorota (her housekeeper): Did I not instruct you to send out invitations with the date, time and location clearly marked. Dorota: I did. All the invitations went out. Blair: Then how do you explain this (an empty hall)? <u>Did you send the invitations by carrier pigeon</u>? <u>Is the elevator broken</u>? <u>A meteor headed for Earth</u>? [3, 19]. Dan: You have to stay away from Chuck and Eva. <u>No plotting, no meddling, no blairwaldorfing</u> [4, 2]. Anticlimax can be sarcastic as well. For example: GG: Which is devious and pathetic, but let's face it, around here, it's just another Saturday night [4, 11].* 

Antithesis in rare cases may contain sarcasm. For example: *Blair: What are you still doing here? Shouldn't you be off living your <u>dream</u> with Serena? Dan: No, I'm staying here, so I'll be leaving out my <u>nightmare</u>, trapped in the city with only Blair Waldorf to talk to [4, 11]. Nate: You look like <u>hell</u> (after having drugs and alcohol to dull the pain). Chuck: A small price to pay to feel like <u>heaven</u> [3, 19].* 

Parallel constructions can be employed to add to the idea of sarcasm. For example: *Dan to Blair: How do you know it's lame? You haven't read it (his article).* <u>Maybe I've matured as a writer, or maybe you've matured as a person</u> and can help someone out who really needs it just because it's the right thing to do [4, 15].

Antonomasia can also sound sarcastic. For example: *Vanessa to Dan: If you wanna be with* <u>Miss Fun-all-the-time</u>, that's your choice [4, 4].

Tautology serving as one of the means of creating sarcasm can sometimes be observed. For example: *I'm gonna go to Nate's. Would've told you sooner, but your <u>intervention intervened</u> [4, 4].* 

Sarcasm is possible to achieve by the use of not frequent or rather formal words. For example: *Chuck: Humphrey, the <u>intricacies</u> of our war games are too complicated for a prole (derogatory from proletarian) like you to <u>fathom</u> [4, 7]. In the above example the words are employed against the background of a derogatory word.* 

The Subjunctive mood which renders the imaginary alternative can enhance sarcastic effect. For example: Serena to Georgina: <u>I'd ask how you are</u>, <u>but</u> I don't really care [4, 22]. GG: Seems like this couple can do no wrong. <u>I'd complain</u> about their perfectness <u>but</u> being green with envy is so not my color [3, 16]. Jack to Blair: <u>As much as I'd love to see you spear fishing</u>, I had another thought [6, 10]. Dan to Blair (when she kept coming to him for help): If I didn't know any better <u>I'd think you're starting to like Brooklyn</u> (being a snob she hates it) [5, 2]. Sarcastic advice can be rendered by the Subjunctive mood. For example: I don't like to see her upset. If I were you I'd invest in blindfolds [4, 3]. An implied conditional can convey an explanation why a person doesn't do something, providing a cause which is

no cause at all. For example: *Chuck to Louis (a prince of Monaco): Your royal highness, you'll forgive me if I'm too busy to bow (= If I weren't busy, I'd bow)* [4, 21].

Another pattern with the abovementioned grammatical form involves an unreal wish conveying criticism through recommendation what should be done with the object. For example: *Dan: By the way this tie was my grandfather's. Blair: If only <u>he'd been buried</u> in it [4, 12].* 

The modal verb *should* may be used to express sarcastic advice. For example: *Dan: Some* magazine editor called me to hire me to write an article on your prince and I backed out the minute I knew he was with you. Blair: <u>You should have been suspicious the minute someone wanted to pay</u> you for your writing [4, 19].

Sarcasm can be found in addresses in which the speaker shows a negative attitude to a person by singling him out when speaking to a group of people. For example: *Chuck: Goodbye, friends,* <u>Dan</u> [4, 11]. The idea of sarcastic exclusion may refer to an action. For example: *I'm just curious.* When was the last time you wrote anything? <u>And scribbling "D loves S" all over your journal</u> <u>doesn't count</u> [4, 11].

Stating the obvious may have a sarcastic effect as if the interlocutor were unable to see the simplest things. For example: *Nate: What are you doing in New York, at my house? Diana (leaving): Living by the look of it* [5, 2]. *Blair to Dorota: It's a lot easier to sneak up on someone when you're not 8 months pregnant and they're not standing in front of a full length mirror* [3, 18]. *Blair: The science is so behind in cloning technology that I can only be in one place at a time* [4, 16]. The use of the parallel construction enhances the sarcastic effect. Telling the ugly truth in situations when it's least expected sounds quite sarcastic. It reveals the speaker's disdain towards the interlocutors. There's no slightest attempt to hide a single detail of the truth. For example: *Acquaintances at a formal social event: So how did you two meet? Phil: Well that's a real romantic story. Georgina: Phil wanted a hot wife to impress his parents and I wanted a loft and a legacy at Yale for Milo (her son). Now, if you excuse me I'm going to get drunk enough to make you all seem interesting* [4, 22].

An attempt on the part of the speaker to find an advantage in a bad situation can have a sarcastic ring. For example: *Blair: We are both sick and twisted. If you think about it, we're incredibly fortunate to have even found each other. We've both hit rock bottom, Chuck, but we've hit it together. At least we won't be lonely in hell [3, 18]. Reina to Blair: I'm not gonna be able to do the profile (it was extremely important for Blair that she did it). Dan to Blair: Guess you'll have time to read my article now (she didn't want to do it) [4, 5].* 

An answer to a piece of advice that the person doesn't feel like following may have a sarcastic tinge. The speaker belittles the authority of the interlocutor and focuses on his faults. For example: *Dan: You deserve to be with someone who makes you happy. Blair: Well, coming as it does from someone who dates Vanessa Abrams, it means very little to me* [3, 18]. *Blair: What are you doing? Put that (the envelope he insists on her opening for it contains life defining information) away. Don't you have your own life to ruin* [5, 2].

The utterances in which the speaker emphasizes the fact that there is no way for him to make the situation worse sometimes contain sarcasm. For example: *Vanessa*: *You didn't need to have your cousin make me look like a crazy jealous b\*\*\*\* to Dan. Blair: Oh, <u>you don't need any help</u> <u>with that</u> [4, 21]. <i>Blair: None of these girls are worth humiliating.* <u>Looking in the mirror will do</u> <u>that for them</u> [3, 1].

Reference to mental diseases may be made to create sarcasm. For example: *Dan: Why didn't you sabotage me? You had every opportunity. Blair: Guess I must have some <u>undiagnosed brain injury</u> [4, 13]. <i>Blair: S, do you have <u>amnesia</u>? Juliet isn't your friend* [4, 7].

While providing an argument to the interlocutor the speaker may try to lessen the gravity of a situation by showing its participants in an unfavourable light. For example: *Chuck to Nate: You should know better than anyone that these stories are invented to sell papers to women who collect ceramic cats* [5, 10].

An unexpected request which is against common sense can reveal sarcasm as well. For example: Serena to Chuck: Remind me to kill you later for that [4, 12].

A derogatory remark coming before praise makes an utterance sarcastic. For example: *Blair* to Dan: Though the last thing you deserve is to hear these words – you're right [5, 10].

# Conclusions

The more educated and intelligent a person is the more elaborate and sophisticated sarcasm he tends to use involving employing words from different layers of the vocabulary in unusual combinations and communicative situations; word-building means, grammatical forms, various lexical and syntactical stylistic devices and expressive means: irony, metaphor, set expressions, hyperbole, allusion (to famous people, films, events, books and characters from them, scientific facts), rhetorical questions, simile, epithet, pun, gradation, antithesis, parallel constructions, antonomasia, tautology. Very often different means are combined. The analysis revealed a significant role of the communicative situation for sarcasm to be expressed and perceived.

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