SARCASTIC EXPRESSION IN THE NEWS OF MULAN LIVE-ACTION MOVIE BY CHINA UNCENSORED YOUTUBE CHANNEL

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Abstract

This study uncovers the types and functions of sarcastic expression used in the news of Disney Mulan Live-Action Movie by China Uncensored YouTube channel. The data used in this study is a transcript of the monologue videos taken from China Uncensored YouTube Channel with the title *Mulan Backlash: Why Disney's China Problem Just Got Worse,* which was published on September 15, 2020, and has been watched by 426,000 people until October 30, 2020. This study analyzed the types and functions of the sarcastic expressions using Camp's theory. The most frequently used sarcastic expression was proportional sarcasm with 45% out of 100%, illocutionary sarcasm 27%, lexical sarcasm 18% and the least used sarcasm is like-prefixed sarcasm, which was only 9%. Metaphor and irony appeared in the sarcastic expression of the speech to insult the Movie. The whole sarcastic expressions were used to change Disney's goals and criticize social and cultural systems.

Keywords: sarcasm, expressions, figurative language, Disney Mulan.

INTRODUCTION

Semantics is the systematic study of meaning, and semantic linguistics is the study of how language organizes and expresses meaning (Kreidler, 1998). Semanticist argues that sarcasm is a word or clause with a non-literal meaning that is encoded logically and semantically (Padmatantri & Sutrisno, 2020). Semantic sarcasm analysis starts from a general methodological bias that provides a systematic explanation to reveal the intuitive truth of utterances condition (Camp, 2011). Rhetorical forms such as sarcasm, irony, and satire in speaking and writing are used to persuade and influence the listener or reader (Halimah & Hilaliyah, 2019). The irony is achieved by directly mentioning the part of the situation without any specific target (Wang, 2013). Satire usually comments on society, while sarcasm aims to expose appropriate arguments or behaviour of influential individuals or groups humorously and playfully, such as politicians (Ziegele & Jost, 2016).

Sarcasm is a part of linguistic features that have opposite meaning of its literal meaning. Indeed, the relation between literal and sarcastic meanings is not just a simple

negation; because of its linguistic ambiguity, it is often hard to detect or comprehend sarcasm (Camp, 2011; Khan & Ali, 2020). The study of non-literal meanings, especially metaphors, has become much more important in recent years, and semanticists have begun to realize how common it is in everyday language (Hurford, Heasley, & Smith, 2007). Therefore, the purpose of this study is to unveil the sarcastic expression used in the news of the controversial Mulan Live-Action Movie by China Uncensored YouTube channel to understand the intention and purpose of the news by questioning the types and function of sarcasm portrayed in the news.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Disney Mulan live-action has been controversial as cultural issues lately both during the filming process and inside the film. Several studies have addressed this issue, such as Wang, Han, & Xu (2020). They criticized the plot and theme to seek the different cultural significance given by two different nationalities, Chinese and American, comparing Chinese and Disney versions of Mulan Movies. Meijuan, Hoon, & Ching (2020) also revealed the hybrid cultural identity in Disney's animated Mulan (1998)—adapted from China's folktale, The Ballad of Mulan—concerning with the reconstructed cultural identity that flowed from China to America by using Jameson's cultural identity model. Lastly, Xu & Tian (2013) also discussed the cultural adaptation between China and American culture in the film production reflected in the Chinese translation of the film. They examined the cultural deformation and cultural transformation because many cases indicate unfaithfulness and disrespect of China's origin culture.

From the theoretical perspective, there has been growing interest in the study of sarcastic expressions in movies and television series. Bachtiar & Hardjanto (2018) conducted the research of sarcastic expressions in the movies of Fantastic Four (2005) and its sequel Fantastic Four: Rise of the Silver Surfer (2008), by using Camp's theory and Leech's theory. The results indicated that the form of illocutionary sarcasm becomes the most dominant used in those two movies. Besides, the sarcastic expressions used for the collaborative purpose are outstandingly found. The study using the theory of Camp and Leech was also found in Padmatantri & Sutrisno (2020). They focused on the sarcastic expressions in the Simpsons movie resulting the same finding as Bachtiar & Hardjanto (2018), indicating the remarkable use of illocutionary sarcasm and the collaborative purpose as the functions of its sarcasm.

The other theories were also applied to assist the research of sarcastic expressions. Firstly, the theory from Grice and Attardo was chosen by Cahyani (2017) to analyze the American sitcom *The Big Bang Theory.* The results of this research were; the maxim of quality was the most frequently flouted and the sarcasm as a sophistication was also highly found in the sitcom. Secondy, Andriadi (2019) generated the research of sarcastic expressions on the television series *Homeland* using Brown and Levinson's politeness theory by uncovering the existence of sarcastic utterance and violated maxim. Lasty, Christiani (2016) also focused on sarcastic expressions in the television series entitled *Two*

Broke Girls using the theory of Failure of Detection by Attardo. The use of sarcastic utterances as sophistication purpose are remarkably found in this TV series.

Those three studies give the next researcher a clue that the cultural phenomenon is happening in that movie and becomes the main problem. Another five studies concerned on the sarcastic expressions in movies and television series are reflected using the theory from Camp, Leech, Attardo, Grice, Brown and Levinson. Identifying the previous studies, the researcher ensures to fill the research gap on sarcastic expressions that appear on YouTube channels discussing a problematic movie. Therefore, this study focused on Disney Mulan Live-Action Movie's news to uncover the type and functions of sarcastic expressions used by China Uncensored news on their YouTube channel.

This study's result can be slightly similar to the results of those previous studies of Mulan Movies that reflected cultural issues between China and America, which become the basis for sarcastic expressions in the news. The data were taken from China Uncensored (2020) YouTube channel entitled *Mulan Backlash: Why Disney's China Problem Just Got Worse* since YouTube is becoming the third most popular online destination for people to search for informative videos easily (Holland, 2016). China Uncensored Channel focuses on solid research as satirical humor of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), and give a touch of comedy to make china news more engaging for the viewers since 2012 (Stevanovic, 2012).

The data used in this study was the transcript of one monologue video taken from China Uncensored YouTube Channel under the title *Mulan Backlash: Why Disney's China Problem Just Got Worse,* which was published on September 15, 2020, and 426.000 people had viewed it until October 30, 2020. Automatic subtitles also assist the process of transcription on the YouTube channel itself. The researcher expects that the result of the study may contribute to fill the gap of sarcastic studies.

Since this study aims at classifying and analyzing the sarcastic expressions under semantics perspectives, the researcher decided to carry out the theory of four classes by Camp (2011). Camp in Padmatantri & Sutrisno (2020) holds the statement that classifying sarcastic utterances can be supported by sematicism's point of view. Hopefully, this study's result can be a valuable reference and an example for future researchers interested in discussing sarcastic expression in online media and unveiling the media's meaning and intention of using sarcastic expression when delivering the news.

Camp's four classes of sarcasm are used in this study to classify the sarcastic expression in the transcript. Based on Camp's (2011) theory of sarcasm is divided into four classes:

1. Propositional sarcasm. This type is the most direct type of sarcasm. Some of the propositional sarcasm also lies on the single adjective, and it is funny for someone else but not for the target of utterance. The speaker pretends to assert the opposite sentence of what a sincere sentence is supposed to be. As the example of an utterance "oh you have such a good voice." This statement sarcastically tells the truth by saying something opposite; good is the opposite of bad.

2. Like-prefixed sarcasm. This type is usually found in the declarative sentence to indicate that the speaker denial the context by using 'like' as a feature to mark the sarcasm. Such as "like that's a good idea" (Camp, 2011). This utterance becomes an obvious act of denying by asserting the 'like' to oppose the 'good idea.'

3. Lexical sarcasm. This type of sarcasm focuses on contradicting words or clauses in one sentence. For example, someone says, "you should join a singing competition because your voice could break the glass." The clause 'you should join singing competition' has a positive intention but it becomes a sarcastic utterance when the speakers pairs it with 'your voice could break the glass' which has a negative intention.

4. Illocutionary sarcasm. This type is mostly used to assert the illocutionary force to the targeted sarcastic expression. For instance, "thank you for your understanding." In this utterance, the speaker chooses to be thankful as the sarcastic expression of misunderstanding.

This study analyzes the literal and non-literal meaning (the figurative language) of sarcasm data. The literal meaning of the text is the surface meaning of the context of the speaker. The non-literal or figurative meaning is the meaning that deviates from the literal meaning, and it can only be seen from the language used in that context; therefore, to identify the function of the figurative meaning is essential to understand the context behind the sarcasm used by the speaker (McArthur, 1992; Wijana & Rohmadi, 2017) The speaker uses literal positive meaning to communicate negative messages and vice versa (Huang, Gino, & Galinsky, 2015). McArthur (1992) argue that sarcasm is categorized as one of thirteen types of figurative language. The use of figurative language in sarcasm emphasizes the touch of humor with the satirical intention of the news (Frain & Wubben, 2016).

METHODOLOGY

The data were collected in several steps. This study's primary step was content viewing, followed by writing the transcript from China Uncensored YouTube Channel under the title *Mulan Backlash: Why Disney's China Problem Just Got Worse.* Then, the researcher classifies the utterances in the form of propositional, lexical, like- prefixed, and illocutionary sarcasm, which indicated sarcasm in the transcript. Next, the researcher identifies the messages of sarcastic expression on the transcript to understand the speaker's uttering intentions. The data were classified using Camp's (2011) four classes into propositional, lexical, like-prefixed, and illocutionary sarcasm. Then, the researcher examines the literal and figurative meaning of the classified sarcastic. Next, the researcher analyzes the function of the classified data. Lastly, conclude the result of the study to show the intention and purpose of the news.

RESULTS and DISCUSSION

Types of Sarcasm

The propositional sarcasm is the most frequently used with 42% out of 100% in the news, which indicates the news anchor's intention to point out the satire utterance directly. Lexical sarcasm and illocutionary sarcasm have the same percentage, which means the tendency to use that sarcasm is equal. The least used sarcasm is like-prefixed sarcasm, with only 8% in the news with only one datum found.

Table 1. The Findings of the Types of Sarcasm in China Uncensored (2020) YouTube channel entitled Mulan Backlash: *Why Disney's China Problem Just Got Worse*.

Types of Sarcasm	Quantity	Percentage
Propositional Sarcasm	5	45%
Lexical Sarcasm	2	18%
Like-prefixed sarcasm	1	9%
Illocutionary Sarcasm	3	27%
Total	11	100%

Table 2. The Explanations of the Types and Meaning of Sarcasm in China Uncensored (2020) YouTube channel entitled Mulan Backlash: *Why Disney's China Problem Just Got Worse.*

No.	Sarcastic Expressions.	The Types of Sarcasm
1.	"The live-action Mulan movie is causing a lot of controversy for *more reasons than you might think."*	Prepositional Sarcasm
	This clause emphasizes the listeners and viewers to evaluate their perspective toward Mulan's news, by inserting '*more reasons than you might think*' which becomes the factor why does this datum become a part of prepositional sarcasm. The utterance '*more reasons than you might think*' pointed out the plentiful reasons of controversy that happened in the movie by sarcastically said the opposite assumption of the listeners and viewers. The news anchor tried to convince listeners or viewers about the scale of Mulan's controversy far beyond what we see on the surface. It is not only about the cultural problem you might think, and there are many more than it.	
2.	"Welcome to china uncensored. I'm Chris chapel; let's get down to the business to discuss Mulan, *no, not the good one, the live-action one, yeah."*	Lexical Sarcasm
	In this datum, the news anchor compares '*the good one*' with '*the live-action one,*' in one sentence. The use of '*the good one*' and '*the live-action one*' identified as a contradicting case in one sentence. News anchor tries to give an information to listeners and viewers that the live-action Mulan movie is the bad one by using lexical sarcasm in the utterance.	
3.	"There's been a lot of controversy about it, and *I'm not talking about the 30 bucks* you have to fork out to watch it on Disney plus where it has no Chinese subtitles, *I'm not even talking about the fact* that because we see Mulan leaning so strongly towards presenting as transmasculine	Illocutionary Sarcasm

	The news anchor pretends not to talk about the previous problem by saying *'I'm not talking,'* but actually he keeps talking, which is categorized as illocutionary sarcasm because he emphasizes his satirical intention of delivering the fact that Mulan's problem is a lot. The news anchor also uses the verb *'to fork out'* to give a negative connotation of 'to *taking out.'* The use of *'fork out'* is to point out the meaning that 30 dollars way too expensive to pay for Disney plus when you want to watch this kind of Mulan, especially without the Chinese subtitles in the movie, which ironically is an adaptation of Chinese folklore.	
4.	"Well, social media users described her as the real Mulan and our Mulan *unless she's dressed like a man and singing songs, she's not my Mulan."*	Like-prefixed Sarcasm
	This is the only data categorized as like-prefixed sarcasm because the news anchor use *'like'* to emphasize the opposite object and denial the arguments about the real Mulan is someone pictured in the movie. The news anchor stated that Mulan, who dresses like a man and sings a song, is the false interpretation of a heroic woman, and a real heroic woman is someone who fights against discrimination.	
5.	"But the problems with the live-action Mulan *go way beyond even the disgusting and craven way; it starts cozy up to the Chinese communist regime* because Disney filmed part of the movie in Xinjiang."	Lexical Sarcasm
	The word *disgusting*, *craven* and *cozy* is used as the scale to emphasize that Disney's position is under the Chinese communist regime explicitly and shows that Disney does not do a good action toward the cultural problem between China and Xinjiang.	
6.	*"Why? Because mickey mouse worships the almighty U.N."*	Propositional Sarcasm
	In this sentence, a mickey mouse is a metaphor for Disney because it's the first cartoon that Disney's made called Plane Crazy, which becomes an icon (BBC, 2018). On the other side, U.N is the metaphor for China because, in the past, China was reticent to play an active role in the organization and is now the second-largest contributor to the UN's regular budget. This contribution enables China to exert diplomatic and political influence globally (China Power Team, 2020).	
7.	"And china looked at the Walt Disney company quite favourably too. At least based on Chinese state-run media happily using the CEO for propaganda. *See, American companies, just be patient; your market access China will increase over time; Disney said so."*	Illocutionary Sarcasm
	In the sentence above, the news anchor is pretending to approve the positive input of what Disney does to increase American's advantage in China's market and make this data categorized as illocutionary sarcasm.	
8.	"Well, Daryl Morey tweeted his support for the Hongkong protest causing a huge amount of trouble for the NBA. And now, one year later, *Mulan is pretty much Disney's NBA moment."*	Propositional Sarcasm
	This is the irony reality behind the main character of Mulan live-action movie. The main character of Mulan Liu Yifei supports the brutality of the Hongkong police for beating up people while she filmed a character who is supposed to stand against oppression. The news anchor tries to addressee this issue straight forward by	

	highlighting that Mulan becomes Disney's NBA moment, which contains a massive amount of problems sams as the previous problems between the NBA and Hongkong.	
9.	*"Well, except for the fact that instead of silencing someone speaking out for human rights, they're filming in a place that's committing human rights atrocities. It is worse."*	Propositional Sarcasm
	'It is worse' is the most direct satire sentence, which indicates the news anchor's disappointment with Disney's action toward the oppression of human rights.	
10.	*"Disney CEO's going around praising china and putting lots of money in the China market. But it comes down to it; they gladly throw Disney under the bus."*	Propositional Sarcasm
	The sentence *'they gladly throw Disney under the bus'* has two different tendencies, it will be a joke for the listeners or viewers, and it is not a joke for Disney, it is more like a direct sarcasm for the targeted. *'throw Disney under the bus'* is an idiom which has a very powerful figurative meaning. The literal meaning is shoving someone under the large motor vehicle, but the figurative meaning is to blame, punish specifically to gain an advantage. The phrase *'under the bus'* itself is already used as a metaphor for someones' misfortune (Mirriam Webster, n.d.)	
11.	*"So there's only one thing Disney can do to solve their china problem, build a Disneyland in Xinjiang! And everyone will be happy."*	Illocutionary Sarcasm
	This datum informs the listeners or viewers that the news anchor pretends to agree with Disney's action to solve the problems by building Disneyland as the park for entertainment in Xinjiang to make everyone happy and forget about the cultural issues between Xinjiang and China. This comment is based on a fact that was shown in Uncensored China's news when the CEO of Disney made a stupid mistake in releasing 'Kundun' movies (which have a sensitive storyline about China) and built a Disneyland in shanghai as apologies, and as Chinese state-run media have said, China has become an important market for Disney (Uncensored China, 2020)	

The Function of Sarcasm

The function of sarcasm is to mock or joke about something or someone to convey insults, humorous purpose, or sometimes both (Bachtiar & Hardjanto, 2018; Khan & Ali, 2020). The goal of sarcastic words in humor is for social protest because it can distribute the inner tension about imbalanced social norms (Wijana, 2004). In the China Uncensored (2020) YouTube channel, the news entitled *Mulan Backlash: Why Disney's China Problem Just Got Worse* show the result that those sarcastic expressions are deliberately aiming to change Disney aggressive goal and to criticize the social and cultural systems of Disney and China, this argument is in line with Wijana (2004) statements that the positive function of humor is to change aggressive goal and to criticize the social systems. The function of the whole figurative meaning in the sarcastic expression in the data is also to insult Disney as a powerful group who used their power and invited China to cooperate without considering the social norms.

CONCLUSION

There are 12 sarcastic expressions in China Uncensored (2020) YouTube channel entitled *Mulan Backlash: Why Disney's China Problem Just Got Worse,* which runs for 12.17 minutes, and culture becomes the scope of the topic. Sarcastic expression in the news intends to criticize the cultural problems just like the research done by Wang, Han, & Xu (2020), Meijuan, Hoon, & Ching (2020), and Xu & Tian (2013), the cultural issue in Mulan's movie is still the most substantial topic to be studied because this issue is still happening, and Disney did not make a move to stop this issue. This fact is proved by the results of sarcastic expression's tendency of China Uncensored news anchor who mostly throw direct sarcastic statements towards the socio-cultural and discrimination issues.

The propositional sarcasm is often found in the news reports also approves that the purpose of this channel is to deliver sensitive news in a humorous but cynical way to comment on problems that are felt to have never been done. Then, Illocutionary sarcasm is used to emphasize the sarcastic expression of consent to pretend to agree with something and lexical sarcasm, which aims to evaluate the targeted expression and underscores the scale of comparing adjectives found in data after propositional sarcasm. The least sarcastic type used in the news is like-prefixed sarcasm. The function of this sarcastic expression as a whole is used to insult targets who take action to change goals and criticize their socio-cultural system so that it does not only benefit their business but also support against discrimination.

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