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PRAGMATICS OF IRONIC CRITICISM

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PRAGMATICS OF IRONIC CRITICISM

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by

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Graduate Program in Psychology

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Science

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Abstract

Previous studies have demonstrated that ironic criticism can either dilute or enhance a message and that it may provide a mnemonic advantage. This thesis investigated whether irony dilutes or enhances ironic criticism as a function of contrast or speaker orientation (whether an interpreter concentrates on speaker intention or social impact). Participants were asked to interpret the functions of direct and ironic criticisms in short written scenarios which each described a friendly conversation (study 1) or an argument (study 2) between close, same gender friends. Ratings of ironic criticism were not dependent on either contrast or interpreter orientation, nor was there evidence of a mnemonic advantage for ironic expression. Irony caused criticism to appear more mocking (enhancing the criticism of the message), while simultaneously causing the message to appear more humorous, polite, and less negative than direct expression (diluting negative regard in the message). Theoretical implications are discussed.

Keywords: Figurative Language, Irony, Comprehension, Sarcasm, Humor, Memory

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Pragmatics of Ironic Criticism

Ongoing efforts have sought to conceptualize the pragmatic functions which irony serves in discourse (see Dews & Winner, 1995; Colston, 1997,2002; Pexman & Olineck, 2002a; Ivanko & Pexman, 2003; Pexman, Whalen & Green, 2010; Bowes & Katz, 2011). This thesis investigates the influence of factors which have been posited as influencing the interpretation of ironic criticism. In ironic criticism, a positive surface meaning is articulated but a negative message containing criticism is actually intended, using a reversal of meaning. For example, if a speaker were to comment that “you are a great friend” the intended meaning might actually be to express that “you are a bad friend”. Without any relevant contextual information the default interpretation would most likely be that the speaker is being direct and positive. If, on the other hand, it is known that the expression was directed at an enemy of the speaker, an interpreter might start to suspect that the speaker is actually being ironic and is expressing a negative message.

Ironic criticism is often referred to synonymously with the term “sarcasm” in the cognitive literature. However, past research has distinguished sarcasm as a negative, caustic, and biting form of ironic communication typically directed at a specific target (Kreuz & Glucksberg, 1989; Katz & Lee, 2000; Bowes & Katz, 2011). For expositional reasons we refer to disapproval expressed through positive language as ironic criticism to avoid the assumption that ironic criticism is implicitly sarcastic, bitter, or caustic. Indeed, in the first study presented here, one can argue the ironic criticism employed is not especially caustic or bitter.

The Risk of Misinterpretation

The accurate interpretation of intended meaning in an ironic remark can be very difficult. The ability to process irony appears somewhat late in development, and is extremely difficult to master in a second language (Harris & Pexman, 2003; Glenwright & Pexman, 2010). Roberts and Kreuz (1994) conducted a large scale study in which participants were asked to list the pragmatic social goals which different figurative expressions can serve. Their participants indicated that irony can convey negative emotion (94% indicated this), humor (65%), that it can emphasize a point (35%), and it can provoke thought (29%). Roberts and Kreuz grouped participant ratings of the function of irony into 18 potential pragmatic functions. These results demonstrate that irony *can* serve most any pragmatic goal depending on the needs and intentions of the speaker using it. It is no wonder that proper interpretation of irony can actually be very difficult.

In order to properly interpret an ironic expression the interpreter must be able to recognize that an alternate meaning is intended, negate that surface meaning, substitute an alternate intended meaning for the expressed message, and simultaneously to understand the pragmatic goal which was served through a reversal of meaning in that context (Martin, 2007, p.245-7).

The standard pragmatic perspective as argued by Grice (1975) posits that the benefits of using intentionally ambiguous language must outweigh the risk of misinterpretation. Consistent with this argument, past research has demonstrated that contextual details which reduce either the probability of misunderstanding or the social consequences of a misinterpretation simultaneously increase the frequency and

appropriateness of ironic criticism (Pexman & Zvaigzne, 2004; Pexman, Whalen & Green, 2010).

Diluting or Enhancing the Message

The core focus of this thesis is to address an ongoing debate in the literature. Several studies have demonstrated that ironic expression can reduce the level of criticism expressed relative to an analogous criticism expressed non-ironically (Dews & Winner, 1995; Dews, Kaplan & Winner, 1995; Harris & Pexman, 2003; Bowes & Katz, 2011). These authors hypothesize that irony serves to “mute the meaning” which would otherwise convey a negative connotation. In other words, the negative intended message is diluted by the positive language through which it is expressed. According to this perspective, irony allows a speaker to tactfully express an intended negative message and to diminish consequent negative impact of negative expression (Jorgensen, 1996). However, the exact opposite pattern of results have also been demonstrated. Several studies demonstrated that irony can also add emphasis to a negative message, causing criticism to appear more mocking, condemning, offensive, and aggressive (Colston 1997; Toplak & Katz, 2000). Multiple explanations have been proposed to account for this discrepancy, but, as described below, we argue that these accounts are inadequate.

Mnemonic Function

A secondary focus of this thesis is to investigate mixed findings regarding a mnemonic function of irony. Ironic criticism contains many characteristics known to improve memory recall. For example, it is relatively atypical, emotionally charged, and it takes greater effort to comprehend than direct language. Consistent with this characterization, several studies have demonstrated superior recall for passages with

ironic forms of criticism in comparison to criticism expressed using direct language (Gibbs, 1986; Kreuz, Long & Church, 1991; Katz & Pexman, 1997; Gerrig & Goldvarg, 2000; Pexman & Olineck, 2002a). However, the impact of this mnemonic effect has only ever been minimal and often is not even statistically significant.

Gibbs (1986) demonstrated superior recognition memory recall for ironic criticism and found that memory was further enhanced when an item specifically echoed previously established information. Kreuz, Long and Church (1991) found a slight but non-significant memory advantage for ironic criticism by using a more stringent free recall memory task with delays of up to 24 hours between exposure and testing. The items with the best recall were those which were rated highly in levels of irritation, criticism, mocking, personal insult and humor. Kreuz et al. suggested that the mnemonic advantage for irony may only exist when it is used for specifically evaluative discourse goals. Pexman and Olineck (2002a) also found a small, albeit once again non-significant, advantage for their ironic items.

Overall, a mnemonic advantage would indicate that irony can make a message more durable and long lasting. Whether or not irony enhances or dilutes the intended message a mnemonic advantage would indicate that irony serves to makes criticism “stick”. This thesis investigates the possibility that ironic criticism may have a mnemonic function and examines the relationship between interpretation and recall for ironic criticism.

Context and Ironic Criticism

The most frequently investigated explanation for discrepant findings between past studies is that characteristics of the context in which ironic criticism is used will

determine whether it will serve to enhance or dilute criticism. Researchers typically create a series of short written scenarios describing an event in which a person performs some negative act and this act is subsequently criticized by another person using either ironic or direct language. One possibility which will be addressed in this thesis is that past studies may have been inconsistent in terms of the quality and quantity of contextual details provided in the scenarios used, and the extent to which each relevant contextual cue point towards the same, coherent, interpretation.

Necessary Details

Katz, Blasko, and Kazmerski (2004) posit that people rapidly collect all relevant contextual details in order to constrain possible interpretation of an ambiguous remark. They argued that interpretation will be delayed and will remain ambiguous when there are excessive conflicting contextual cues. From this perspective, providing excessive, unnecessary, or conflicting details may slow, obscure, or confuse interpretation. Moreover, insufficient context may lead an interpreter overlook an ironic interpretation altogether. Constructing effective stimuli for a study investigating the interpretation of ironic criticism is thus an extremely delicate process.

Colston (1997, 2000) argued that in order to recognize an ironic message it is essential that an irony violates conversational norms, refer to failed expectations (directed towards a negative situation, event outcome, or specific person), and that it creates a contrast between the failed expectations and reality. Colston (1997) demonstrated that irony enhances condemnation in criticism using scenarios with minimal contextual detail (three sentences). He argued that excessive or unnecessary contextual details could obscure the contrast between the failed expectations and reality. Dews and Winner

(1995), who found that ironic criticism reduces the level of criticism expressed, used considerably longer scenarios (each six sentences long) in which the time, place, social context are also introduced. The relatively high level of contextual detail provided by Dews and Winner was intended to reduce ambiguity of the criticisms rated by their participants. In the studies reported in this paper we constructed stimuli in which the quantity and conformity of contextual details are held constant. We argue that a moderate level of detail is acceptable as long as each available detail provides meaningful information and each detail points towards the same, coherent interpretation.

Contextual Factors of Importance

Tone. Dews and Winner (1995) used auditory, narrated scenarios in which direct criticism was spoken in an angry intonation while ironic criticism was spoken using a nasal mocking tone. Colston (1997) argued that holding the auditory tone constant between items may have been the critical factor which diluted condemnation. To address this confound Colston (1997) used written scenarios in four experiments. His participants were asked to imagine the tone which best fit the ironic or direct criticism. Colston's results persuasively demonstrated that auditory cues are not necessary for participants to consider an ironic interpretation. Subsequent studies investigating ironic criticism have used written scenarios to minimize tone of voice as a potential confound and have replicated both diluting (Pexman & Olineck, 2002a; Bowes & Katz, 2011) and enhancement effects of ironic criticism (Toplak & Katz, 2000).

Gender. Katz, Blasko, and Kazmerski (2004) report that it takes longer to recognize irony from a female speaker and argued that gender can be an indicator of literal or ironic intent. Past studies investigating the interaction between gender and irony

suggest that men are more likely to use irony in natural discourse, to use irony to express negative emotion, and consider the use of irony to be more polite than women (Gibbs, 2000; Ivanko, Pexman & Olineck, 2004). It has frequently been suggested that men may have a preference for risky and ambiguous language; however, Colston and Lee (2000) found that women were actually more likely than men to use irony to be rude, to de-emphasize, and to insult. The influence of gender on the pragmatic function of irony remains ambiguous but it is clear at minimum that it should be controlled as a potential confound.

Narrative Perspective. Toplak and Katz (2000) demonstrated that narrative perspective can influence the interpretation of ironic criticism. When taking on the perspective of an ironic speaker, their participants interpreted the exact same statement as being less negative than when participants took on the perspective of the individual being criticised. Moreover, when taking the perspective of an uninvolved third party, ironic criticism was interpreted as being less instructive, as well as an indicator of a poor social relationship (see also, Bowes & Katz, 2011). Given these results it is clearly important to assign a narrative point of view to participants interpreting the function of ironic criticism. Whereas Dews and Winner (1995) rated ironic criticism from a third person perspective, Colston (1997, 2000) used scenarios written from a first person perspective.

To minimize the influence of narrative perspective we asked our participants to interpret ironic and direct criticism from their own perspective. Participants in the current studies were asked to imagine that each of our scenarios actually happened in their own lives and to rate the function of ironic or direct criticism from their own first-person autobiographical perspective. Rather than taking on the point of view of an anonymous

character from a third party narrative perspective we asked our participants to rate direct and ironic criticism according to their own point of view.

Relational Distance. Close personal relationships have been shown to decrease the chance of misunderstanding and reduce the potential consequences of misinterpretation due to shared perspective (Gibbs, 1986; Pexman & Zvaigzne, 2004; Pexman, Whalen & Green, 2010). Pexman and Zvaigzne (2004) argued that “the perception of irony and its pragmatic functions will be stronger when the speaker and addressee have a solidarity relationship”. They found that ironic criticism was more humorous, more teasing, and had less impact on social status in the context of close relationships; moreover, they found that irony is produced more frequently and is rated as being more appropriate in the context of a close relationship. Overall, criticism (regardless of whether it was direct or ironic) was more frequent in the context of close relationships suggesting that it may be easier to express negative affect in this context.

Dependent Variables and Ironic Criticism

The second major possibility addressed in this thesis is that inconsistencies in how irony was rated in past studies led to discrepant results. Given that irony can potentially serve a wide range of pragmatic goals it is difficult to determine the most appropriate way to measure it. For example, whereas Dews and Winner (1995) asked participants to rate the level of criticism and speaker annoyance expressed in ironic and direct criticism, Colston (1997) asked speakers to rate the level of condemnation. To address this limitation, some subsequent studies investigating the interpretation of ironic criticism have used a wide range of outcome variables.

Toplak and Katz's (2000) study contained a large exploratory component in which over 19 dependent variables were tested. Ironic criticism was rated as being: more sarcastic, humorous, aggressive, mocking, unclear, offensive, more critical and less polite than direct criticism. Ironic speakers were rated as being more pleased with themselves and less sincere than speakers using direct language. Based on these results Toplak and Katz concluded that, overall, irony enhances the negative message expressed in criticism.

Bowes and Katz (2011) conducted a principle component analysis on 13 dependent variables that have been used in past studies to study ironic criticism. This analysis revealed four underlying factors, accounting for 67% of the total variance: a victimization factor (accounting for the impact on the target or victim of the comment), a relational aggression factor (the extent to which a speaker is intended to be humorous and socially aggressive), an effective hurtfulness factor (the extent to which the criticism communicates a clear and effective criticism), and closeness/resolution factor (which involves resolution of conflict as a result of a close, long-term friendship). Consistent with Toplak and Katz (2000), Bowes and Katz's results demonstrate that the function of ironic criticism depends on how it is measured, and the perspective from which it is perceived.

Pexman and her colleagues have also used a wide range of dependent variables in past studies. They have consistently found that ironic criticism is more sarcastic and mocking, yet also more polite than literal criticism (Ivanko & Pexman, 2003; Pexman & Olineck, 2002a; Pexman & Zvaigzne, 2004; Pexman, Whalen & Green, 2010). Ironic criticism is rated as being more positive (Pexman & Olineck, 2002a), more humorous, teasing, praising and clever (Pexman & Zvaigzne, 2004; Pexman, Whalen & Green,

2010). However, their participants were also less certain and confident in their ratings of ironic criticism in comparison to direct criticism (Ivanko & Pexman, 2003; Pexman & Zvaigzne, 2004).

Both studies conducted and discussed in this thesis employed six dependent variables. We asked participants to rate the level of negativity in the negative event targeted by criticism in each of our scenarios and to rate the extent to which direct and ironic criticism is sarcastic, humorous, polite, and mocking. These measures are employed to address specific hypotheses in the literature described next.

Orientation Hypothesis: Speaker Intention and Social Impression

Pexman and Olineck (2002a) hypothesized that past discrepancies in ratings of ironic criticism may have been caused by a systematic difference in how irony has been rated between past studies. They noted that past studies which found that irony enhances the level of expressed criticism have asked participants to rate the speaker's intent (the underlying motivation for making a statement), whereas studies which found a muting effect used ratings of the social impression of the comment (the impact of the comment on the target of the remark or bystanders).

Pexman and Olineck argued that in order to determine a speaker's intent it is necessary to attend to the targeted negative situation which is being criticized (such as a mistake, an ill-conceived action, a personal characteristic, etc.). According to this hypothesis the shift of attention to the targeted negative event causes the ironic comment to appear negative. On the other hand, Pexman and Olineck argue that ratings of social impression need not rely on a judgement of the negative event being criticized. Thus,

ratings of social impression for ironic criticism would put greater weight on the positive surface meaning of the remark causing it to appear less negative than direct criticism.

Pexman and Olineck (2002a) demonstrated that ironic criticism is rated as more mocking and sarcastic, and more polite and positive than direct criticism. They take this pattern of results as supportive of their position. The critical problem with their results is that they assume that ratings of sarcasm and mockery are inherently measures of speaker intention, whereas ratings of politeness and positivity are measures of social impression. The factor analysis conducted by Bowes and Katz (2011) did not support this implicit distinction. Nonetheless, the orientation hypothesis warrants further analysis as there is empirical evidence suggesting that orientation to speaker intention or social impression should influence people's interpretation of ironic criticism. For example, Toplak and Katz (2000) found that ironic criticism serves a broader range of functions when rating intention (in study 1) than when rating the impact of ironic criticism (study 2).

In the current study we explicitly assign participants to rate either the speaker intention or the social impression of criticism. An interaction between the participant's orientation condition (speaker intention or social impression) and form of language (ironic or direct) would provide critical support for Pexman and Olineck's (2002a) speaker intention/social impression hypothesis. Ironic criticism should enhance the level of negativity expressed for ratings of speaker intention yet it should also reduce the level of negativity expressed for ratings of social impression. Significant main effects of orientation will also be of interest as they indicate that our participants believe the criticisms rated would have a significantly different impact (social impression) than they would intend (speaker intention) for each dependent variable.

Contrast and Ironic Criticism

Colston (2002) hypothesized that ironic criticism achieves its pragmatic function via its influence over people's perceptions of the situation being criticized. He argued that in certain circumstances irony should make the target situation being criticized to appear more negative. In other circumstances, irony should make the target event appear less negative than it would appear if the event was criticized with direct language. Thus, when irony makes the target appear worse, it should enhance criticism and when it makes the target appear less negative, it should dilute criticism.

Colston (2002) argued that "contrast" and "assimilation" perceptual biasing effects determine when irony will make the targeted negative situation appear more or less negative. Contrast and assimilation effects are very robust and have been replicated across a wide range of domains including judgments of size, weight, and more recently, in judgments of social situations (Watson, 1957; Parducci & Marshall, 1962; Colston, 2002). Therefore, it is reasonable to suggest that they may also bias people's interpretation of language.

Contrast effects occur when there is a large difference between a target which is being rated and biasing information. A large contrast causes perception to be influenced away from the direction of the biasing information. For example, a small object (the target being rated) will appear physically smaller in the presence of a large object (which is providing biasing information; Watson, 1957).

Assimilation effects occur when there is a small difference between a target being judged and biasing information. For example, a small object (a target being rated) will

appear slightly physically larger in the presence of an object which is only slightly larger than the target (which is providing biasing information; Watson, 1957).

Colston hypothesized that irony can serve as a perceptual bias in language interpretation. Colston (2002) manipulated the level of contrast expressed in ironic criticism using hyperbole. Hyperbole is a rhetorical device which exaggerates the meaning expressed in a remark through quantity modifiers such as “extremely”, “incredibly”, or “absolutely”. Colston argued that hyperbolic exaggeration enhances the magnitude of the contrast between ironic criticism and the referent negative situation targeted by the remark. He predicted that ironic criticism with hyperbole should generate contrast effects. The exaggerated positive language in the ironic criticism should serve as a bias causing the targeted situation to appear more negative. The positive language in ironic criticism which does not contain additional exaggeration should create a small contrast; causing situation to appear less negative through assimilation effects. In other words, irony should appear to enhance the message when it causes the targeted situation to appear more negative (through contrast effects), and it should dilute the message when it causes the targeted situation to appear less negative (through assimilation effects).

Colston (2002) analyzed his results using one-way repeated measures Analyses of Variance with four levels of criticism (direct criticism with hyperbole, direct criticism without hyperbole, ironic criticism with hyperbole, and ironic criticism without hyperbole). Post hoc tests revealed that ironic criticism without hyperbole made the target criticized situation (which involved random characters with built up and failed expectations in each scenario) appear less negative than did direct criticism, but that this effect was not significant for ironic criticism with hyperbole. His second study

demonstrated that ironic criticism is overall less condemning than direct criticism and that hyperbole made ironic criticism seem significantly more condemning.

An alternate and more parsimonious explanation for the pattern of results obtained by Colston (2002) is that exaggeration enhances the level of condemnation expressed, irrespective of so-called perceptual effects. To rule out this possibility, Ivanko and Pexman (2003) tested whether contrast and assimilation effects influence people's interpretation of ironic criticism by manipulating the level of negativity in the event which is being targeted by criticism. They asked participants to rate ironic or direct criticism in the context of scenarios which could contain a strongly negative, a weakly negative or a neutral negative event (for example, getting a poor grade, getting an average grade, or simply discussing an exam). Consistent with contrast and assimilation theory, they obtained a significant interaction between the form of language (ironic or direct) and situation contrast (strong or weak). Ironic criticism with a large contrast was more sarcastic, mocking, and less polite than ironic criticism with small contrast; there were no significant effects for direct criticism. Ivanko and Pexman (2003) argue that their results support the key prediction of the contrast and assimilation hypothesis: that ironic criticism which creates a large contrast should be more positive than ironic criticism which creates a small contrast and that there should be no effect of contrast on ratings of direct language. This failure to find effects with direct criticism would be expected insomuch as direct criticism is an accurate description of the referent negative situation.

In the current study, we asked participants to rate the function of ironic criticism with and without the presence of hyperbole. In our analyses, we will factorially manipulate the form of language (ironic or direct) and contrast magnitude through the use

of hyperbole (the presence or absence of a modifier exaggerating the criticism).

According to Colston's (2002) contrast and assimilation hypothesis, there should be an interaction between these two effects: large contrast through hyperbole in ironic criticism should appear relatively negative, whereas ironic criticism without hyperbole should reduce the level of negativity expressed. However, if hyperbole has an equal influence on both direct and ironic language it is unlikely that contrast and assimilation effects are a driving force in people's interpretation of criticism.

Study 1

In study 1, we provide participants with a series of scenarios in which a close personal friend commits a mildly negative act which is criticized either ironically or directly. Available contextual details will be held constant between each scenario while simultaneously providing a rigorous test of the contrast and assimilation hypothesis (Colston, 2002), the orientation hypothesis (Pexman & Olineck, 2002a) and the mnemonic advantage hypothesis (Gibbs, 1986; Kreuz, Long & Church, 1991). The data will be analyzed contrasting language form (direct or ironic language used in criticism), hyperbole (exaggeration or no exaggeration in the criticism), and interpreter orientation (participants instructed to rate speaker intentions or the social impression of criticism) as factors of interest.

In the scenarios created for this study we control for gender, relational distance, and narrative perspective to make the use of ironic criticism as appropriate as possible and to decrease the likelihood that the results we obtain will reflect simple misinterpretation. In each scenario we ask participants to imagine that each comment expressing criticism was made from their own narrative perspective if they were the

“speaker” and directed at a same gender, close personal friend. The stimuli were designed according to a strict template in which we held constant the level of contextual detail, ensuring a high level of appropriateness for ironic criticism and minimizing ambiguity of meaning in the irony.

Method

Participants

Sixty-four participants from the University of Western Ontario (32 male, 32 female) were recruited from either the undergraduate participant pool in exchange for course credit, or from the summer participant pool in exchange for \$10 compensation. Participant age was not examined as a factor of interest. The only requirement for participation was that English must be the participant’s first language. We constructed male and female versions of our questionnaire booklets so that the gendered pronouns correctly refer to same gender close friends (she or he, his or her, etc.). Half of each gender was assigned to rate the materials for speaker intent and the other half were assigned to rate speaker impression. In preliminary analyses gender was examined as a factor of interest, but it did not significantly influence participant’s interpretation of ironic criticism according to the outcome variables. Consequently, in all analyses reported below, analyses were collapsed across participant gender.

Materials

Each of the twenty-four scenarios used in this study were constructed according to a template (The template and sample item shown in Table 1. The complete list of scenarios used in study 1 is presented in Appendix B). As can be seen, scenarios were

Table 1. Template used to Construct Scenarios for Study 1 and Sample Item

Line 1: General description of a negative situation which happens to a close friend

Line 2: The close friend explains his/her problem to you

Line 3: You express disapproval of your friend's situation

Line 4: Your friend recognizes he/she made a mistake and takes responsibility

Line 5

Form 1: *Direct criticism with hyperbole*

Form 2: *Direct criticism without hyperbole*

Form 3: *Ironic criticism without hyperbole*

Form 4: *Ironic criticism with hyperbole*

Sample Scenario:

Your close friend gets lost

Your close friend needs to visit you but he/she is unfamiliar with the building that you are in and he/she gets hopelessly lost on the way. As a result, he/she has to call you for directions.

"I am completely lost" your friend admits to you.

"The building is not really that complicated, how did you manage to get lost?" you ask.

"I took a wrong turn and got thoroughly confused" he/she admits.

Given this situation, you comment that:

(One of four possible comments appear)

- a. (extremely negative literal) "*You have an absolutely pathetic sense of direction*"
- b. (moderately negative literal) "*You have a weak sense of direction*"
- c. (moderately positive ironic) "*You have a strong sense of direction*"
- d. (extremely positive ironic) "*You have an absolutely perfect sense of direction*"

constructed as written dialogues designed to be as analogous, to actual conversation as possible. Each scenario starts with a general description of a negative event in the second line of the scenario. In the third line disapproval is expressed from the participants point of view, in the fourth line the friend accepts responsibility for his/her negative situation and in the final line criticism is expressed from the participant's point of view in one of four forms: direct criticism with hyperbole, direct criticism without hyperbole, ironic criticism without hyperbole, or ironic criticism with hyperbole. A common template was used in order to ensure that each scenario contains the same level of detail: we know that the close friend understands why he/she is being criticized and recognizes his/her fault. We know that the speaker disapproves of the friend's negative situation, and therefore that the speaker is criticizing his or her close friend.

We tested the function of ironic language relative to direct language through the use of direct negations (such as "honest" in comparison to "dishonest") or the use of antonyms (such as "polite" in comparison to "rude"). Each booklet contained twelve instances of direct criticism and twelve instances of ironic criticism.

We manipulated the magnitude of contrast contained in ironic and direct criticisms through the use of hyperbole (by including modifiers such as "extremely", "incredibly", etc. to the criticisms). For the purpose of both studies discussed in the current paper, the inclusion of hyperbole is assumed to enhance the size of the perceptual contrast between ironic criticism and the targeted negative situation. Inasmuch that direct criticism represents an accurate description of a negative situation exaggeration through hyperbole should not create a perceptual contrast. Each booklet contained twelve instances of criticism with hyperbole and twelve instances of criticism without hyperbole.

Booklet Structure

Each of the twenty-four scenarios appear in a booklet only once, with one scenario per page. Each scenario concludes with one comment expressing criticism in one of four possible forms: direct criticism with hyperbole (such as “you an incredibly unreliable friend”), direct criticism without hyperbole (such as “you are an unreliable friend”), ironic criticism without hyperbole (such as “you are a reliable friend”), and ironic criticism with hyperbole (such as “you are an incredibly reliable friend”). Four booklet versions were created such that scenarios contained a different form of criticism between versions. Each booklet contained six instances of the four criticism forms. The order in which scenarios and criticism forms appeared was counterbalanced across booklets. Following each scenario were the set of dependent variables, described below.

Dependent Variables

The first question following each scenario asked participants to rate the level of negativity they perceive in situation targeted by the criticism on a scale from 1 (not negative at all) to 7 (extremely negative). According to Colston’s (2002) contrast and assimilation hypothesis, people’s perception of the target of ironic criticism should be an important predictor of the pragmatic discourse function it serves. The remaining 5 dependent variables asked participants to interpret the comment expressing criticism according to 7-point Likert scales. Participants rated the extent to which the criticism in each scenario was humorous, sarcastic, mocking, and polite using Likert scales range from 1 (not at all), to 7 (extremely); and the extent to which the comment is negative (1) to positive (7) with the middle (4) being a neutral assessment of the comment.

Design and Instructions

Written instructions in the letter of information (which were verbally reiterated prior to starting the experiment) were provided in which the participant was asked to imagine a real life, same gender friend and to consider that to be the person referenced in each of the scenarios for the sake of consistency. Participants were asked also to try to put themselves into each of the scenarios as much as possible and to imagine the events described as actually occurring. In other words, they were required to rate the comments as if they, themselves were the “speaker” who expressed criticism directed at a close friend. Participants were informed that there will be additional questions after they complete their booklet, but were not informed that the second part of the study is, in fact, a free recall memory task for the comments they are rating.

As discussed above, slightly alternate versions of the scenario booklets were constructed to contain gender appropriate pronouns referring to a same-gender friend for male and female participants (“his” vs. “her”, etc.). Participants were also randomly assigned to complete one of the four versions of the scenario booklet according to either speaker intention or social impression. Participants in the speaker intention condition were verbally instructed to consider their own underlying motivation for expressing the criticism in each scenario prior to starting the experiment. There was also written instructions on each page of speaker intention booklets which asked them to consider how their close friend would interpret each criticism. Participants in the social impression condition were verbally asked to consider how a close friend (the one they are imagining from their own lives) would interpret the criticism expressed in the scenario on each page prior to starting the experiment. Participants in the social impression condition

also received booklets with appropriate written instructions on each page asking them to consider how their close friend would interpret the criticism expressed in the scenario.

Memory Test

Once participants completed their assigned questionnaire booklet, they completed a 5 minute distracter task (watching 5 minutes of a YouTube clip). After watching the 5 minute clip they were asked to free recall the comments expressing criticism as accurately as possible. We considered a recalled item to be correct when it had the same state of hyperbole as an original item (correctly including or not including a hyperbole modifier), when it included the correct use ironic or direct language, and contained general gist of meaning that allowed us to match the comment recalled to an original item. For example, a recalled comment “It was extraordinarily inconsiderate of you” would be marked as correct if the booklet version they completed had direct criticism with hyperbole for scenario #1 (see complete list of scenarios and possible criticism forms in Appendix B).

Results and Discussion

Separate 2 (direct/ironic) x2 (no hyperbole/hyperbole) x2 (intention/impression) split plot analyses of variance were conducted for each of our dependent variables (situation negativity, sarcasm, humor, politeness, mockery, positivity-negativity). Separate analyses for each dependent variable were conducted across subjects (F_1) and items (F_2). Item analyses demonstrate that the results obtained are robust across the stimuli used in this study. However, as in past studies in this field, greater emphasis is placed on subject analyses due to the greater experimental power of these analyses. We

corrected for the problem of multiple comparisons in our analyses using Bonferroni adjustment.

Correlation Amongst the Dependent variables

Table 2 contains the correlations between each of the dependent variables separated by the form of language rated (direct / ironic). Some similar effects were found for both ironic and direct forms of criticism. Ratings of politeness and mockery were not meaningfully associated for both ratings of direct ($r=.06, p< .10$) and ironic language ($r=.07, p< .10$). There was an overall strong positive correlation between ratings of politeness and positivity for both ratings of direct ($r=.71, p< .001$) and ironic language ($r=.69, p< .001$). The association between sarcasm and mockery for direct language ($r=.40, p<.001$), was also found with ironic criticism ($r=.46, p< .001$). Humor ratings were moderately to strongly associated with all other dependent variables for ratings of both ironic and direct language ($.30 <r < .70, p<.001$).

There are also some differences in the intercorrelations amongst ratings between direct and ironic forms of expression. With few exceptions the correlations amongst ratings for direct language were stronger than the correlations amongst ratings for ironic language. There were moderate positive correlations between ratings of sarcasm and humor ($r=.70, p< .001$), politeness ($r=.32, p< .001$), and positivity ($r=.44, p< .001$) for direct criticism: comments with greater perceived sarcasm were also perceived as being more humorous, polite, mocking and positive. For ironic language the correlation between sarcasm and ratings of humor was notably lower ($r=.31, p< .001$) and there was no longer an association between sarcasm and ratings of politeness ($r=-.04, ns$) or positivity ($r=.03, ns$).

Table 2. Intercorrelation Amongst Dependent Variables for ratings of Direct and Ironic Language for Study 1

<u>Direct Language Correlations</u>						
	Situation	Sarcasm	Humor	Polite	Mocking	Positivity
Situation	--	-0.10	-0.26*	-0.12*	-0.07	-0.18*
Sarcasm		--	0.70*	0.32*	0.40*	0.44*
Humor			--	0.46*	0.44*	0.53*
Polite				--	0.06	0.71*
Mocking					--	0.14*
Positivity						--

<u>Ironic Language Correlations</u>						
	Situation	Sarcasm	Humor	Polite	Mocking	Positivity
Situation	--	-0.02	-0.25*	-0.14*	0.01	-0.26*
Sarcasm		--	0.41*	-0.04	0.46*	-0.03
Humor			--	0.44*	0.30*	0.46*
Polite				--	-0.07	0.69*
Mocking					--	-0.05
Positivity						--

Bonferroni Correction $p = .001$

* $p < .001$

Contrasts as a function of manipulated conditions

Recall that the basic ANOVA design is a 2 (direct/ironic) x2 (no hyperbole/hyperbole) x2 (intention/impression) split plot analysis of variance. Separate analyses conducted on each of the dependent variables. The means and standard errors for each condition, for each dependent variable are presented in Table 3.

Situational Negativity

Participants were asked to rate the level of negativity they perceive in their friend's negativity situation which is targeted by criticism in each scenario (for example, your friend getting lost or having his/her cell phone ring in the middle of a lecture). Ratings of the level negativity in the situation targeted by criticism were unique inasmuch that all other measures asked participants to interpret the critical comment at the end of each scenario. This situational negativity measure was employed to test Colston's (2002) argument that the pragmatic discourse function of ironic criticism depends on how it influences people's perception of the referent situation. Accordingly, his position leads to the expectation that hyperbole should play an important role with ironic criticism but not with direct criticism.

We find a significant main effect of language form (ironic/direct) for participant ratings of the level of negativity in the situations targeted by criticism $F_1(1, 62) = 8.61$, $p < .01$, $F_2(1, 23) = 8.27$, $p < .01$. Scenarios with ironic criticism ($M = 3.44$, $SE = .10$) were rated as being significantly less negative than scenarios with direct criticism ($M = 3.64$, $SE = .11$). There were no statistically significant main effects of the interpreter orientation manipulation (speaker intention/ social impression) or contrast magnitude (hyperbole modifier present or absent) and none of the interactions were reliable.

Table 3. Mean and Standard Error According to Language form (Ironic or direct), Contrast Magnitude (hyperbole modifier present or absent), and Orientation (ratings of speaker intention or social impression) for Study 1

Ironic Criticism								
Ratings	<u>Criticism without a hyperbole modifier</u>				<u>Criticism with a hyperbole modifier</u>			
	<u>Speaker Intention</u>		<u>Social Impression</u>		<u>Speaker Intention</u>		<u>Social Impression</u>	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SE</i>
Situation Negativity	3.34	0.17	3.48	0.17	3.47	0.15	3.45	0.15
Sarcasm	5.44	0.13	5.76	0.13	5.56	0.14	5.70	0.14
Humor	4.54	0.17	4.10	0.17	4.50	0.18	4.03	0.18
Politeness	3.50	0.18	2.72	0.18	3.43	0.18	2.56	0.18
Mocking	4.62	0.16	4.28	0.16	4.67	0.17	4.38	0.17
Positivity	4.11	0.16	3.20	0.16	3.93	0.17	3.07	0.17

Direct Criticism								
Ratings	<u>Criticism without a hyperbole modifier</u>				<u>Criticism with a hyperbole modifier</u>			
	<u>Speaker Intention</u>		<u>Social Impression</u>		<u>Speaker Intention</u>		<u>Social Impression</u>	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SE</i>
Situation Negativity	3.72	0.16	3.55	0.16	3.63	0.18	3.64	0.18
Sarcasm	3.14	0.19	2.06	0.19	3.43	0.21	2.22	0.21
Humor	3.12	0.17	2.06	0.17	3.34	0.21	2.27	0.21
Politeness	3.21	0.18	2.18	0.18	3.02	0.17	2.10	0.17
Mocking	3.34	0.20	2.89	0.20	3.73	0.21	3.18	0.21
Positivity	3.53	0.16	2.35	0.16	3.41	0.15	2.44	0.15

Thus, we find that ironic criticism makes the targeted situation look less negative than does direct criticism. Moreover, there were small yet statistically significant negative correlations between situation ratings and comment positivity-negativity (see Table 2) for both direct ($r=-0.18, p<.001$) and ironic forms of criticism ($r=-.26, p<.001$). Positivity perceived in criticism (regardless of ironic or direct forms of expression) is associated with lower ratings of negativity in the situation targeted by a remark.

These results support Colston's hypothesis that interpretation of ironic criticism depends on how it impacts the targeted situation. However, because there was no significant interaction between the level of contrast through hyperbole and the form of language used (ironic/direct), it is unlikely that Colston's preferred explanation, contrast and assimilation effects, were causing the effect noted here.

Positivity-Negativity

Consistent with Dews and Winner's (1995) hypothesis that irony mutes the message, there was a significant main effect of language form (ironic/direct) on participant rating of the positivity-negativity $F_1(1, 62) = 35.19, p < .001, F_2(1, 23) = 39.26, p < .001$. Ironic criticism ($M = 3.58, SE = .11$) was rated as being significantly less negative than direct criticism ($M = 2.93, SE = .10$). There was also a significant main effect of interpreter orientation manipulation (speaker intention/social impression), $F_1(1, 62) = 30.50, p < .001, F_2(1, 23) = 205.54, p < .001$. Ratings of speaker intention ($M = 3.74, SE = .13$) were significantly more positive than ratings of social impression ($M = 2.77, SE = .13$). There was no significant main effect of hyperbole on ratings of positivity-negativity and there were no significant interactions.

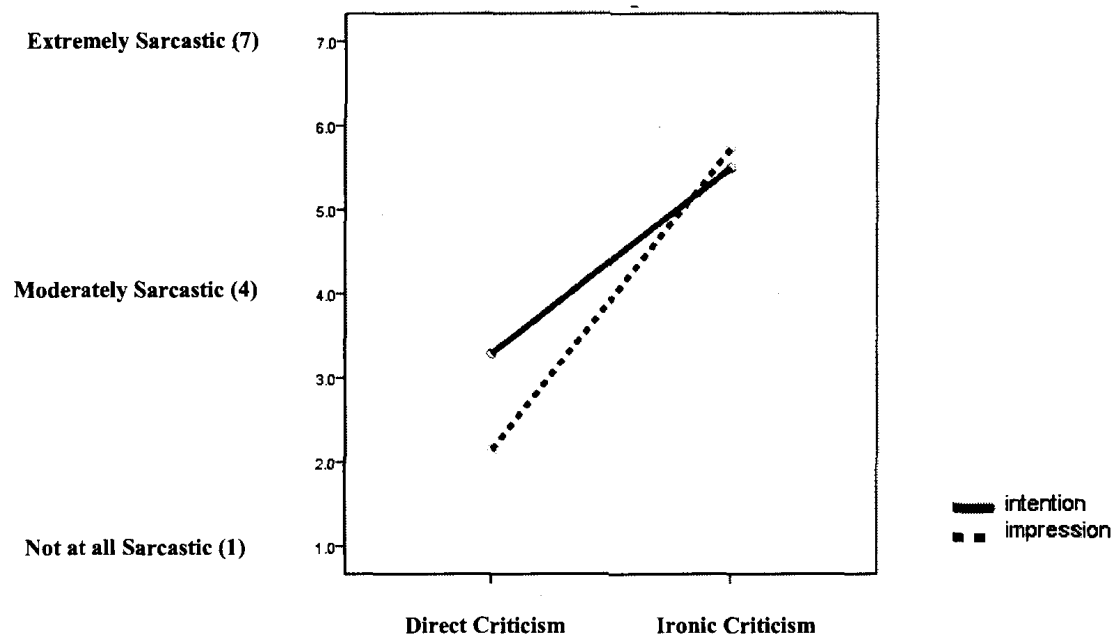
In summary, the two analyses described above indicate that ironic criticism has an overall positive discourse function: irony makes criticism seem less negative than direct

language and it causes the situation targeted by criticism appear less negative. However, we were not able to demonstrate that these effects are modified by orientation to speaker intention, social impression, or by contrast magnitude in ironic criticism.

Sarcasm

There was a significant main effect of language form (ironic/direct) for the perception of sarcasm in the critical comment $F_1(1, 62) = 346.558, p < .001, F_2(1, 23) = 319.09, p < .001$. Ironic criticism ($M = 5.61, SE = .08$) was rated as being significantly more sarcastic than direct criticism ($M = 2.71, SE = .13$). There was also a significant main effect of the interpreter orientation manipulation (speaker intention/social impression) $F_1(1, 62) = 8.87, p < .01, F_2(1, 23) = 87.98, p < .001$. Ratings of speaker intention ($M = 4.39, SE = .11$) were significantly more sarcastic than ratings of the social impression of criticism ($M = 3.93, SE = .11$). There was a significant two-way interaction between language form (direct/ironic) criticism and the interpreter orientation manipulation $F_1(1, 62) = 19.37, p < .001, F_2(1, 23) = 109.53, p < .001$ (shown in figure 1). Post hoc analyses revealed that participants rating speaker intention ($M = 3.28, SE = .19$) considered direct criticism to be significantly more sarcastic than participants rating social impression ($M = 2.14, SE = .19, t(62) = 4.33, p < .001$). In other words, our participants believe that direct criticism will be perceived as being less sarcastic than they would intend. It is important to note that this pattern of results did not hold for ironic criticism. With ironic criticism, participants in the speaker intention condition ($M = 5.50, SE = .12$) rated ironic criticism as being equally sarcastic as did participants in the social impression condition ($M = 5.73, SE = .12$). There was no significant main effect of hyperbole and there were no further significant interactions.

Figure 1. Interaction of sarcasm ratings as a function of language form (ironic/ direct) and interpreter orientation (speaker intention/social impression).

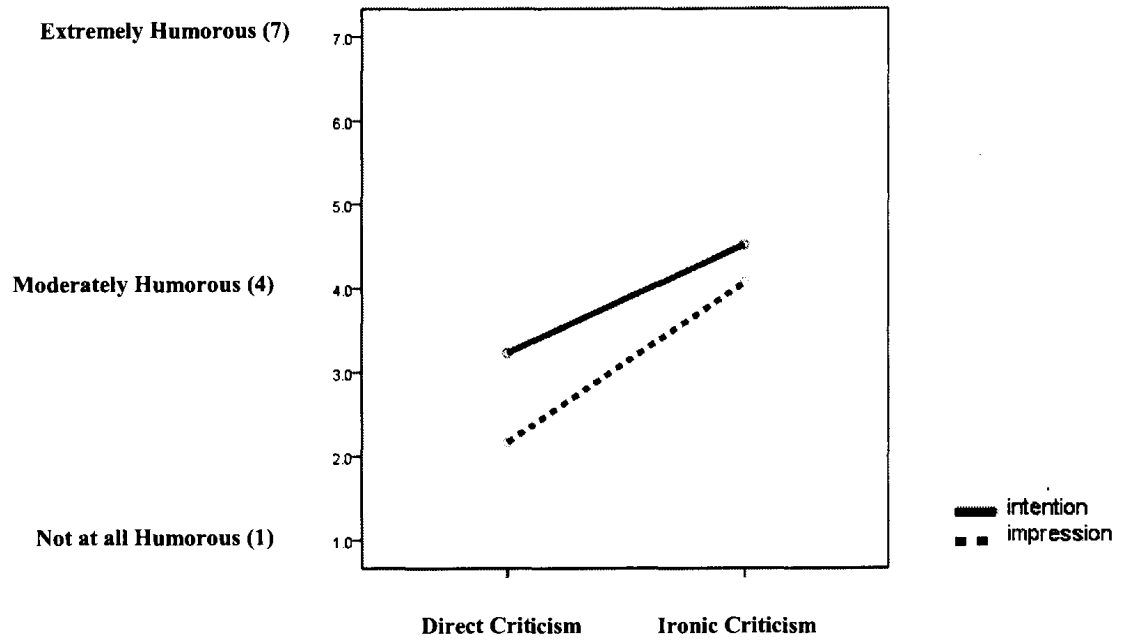


In summary, ironic criticism is reliably rated as being more sarcastic than direct criticism; moreover, our participants believe that sarcasm in ironic criticism will be accurately interpreted as intended. These results also demonstrate that people actually intend to be seen as moderately sarcastic when expressing criticism using direct language, but that they believe that sarcasm in direct criticism will not be accurately interpreted.

Humor

There was a significant main effect of language form (ironic/direct) on participant interpretation of humor in criticism, $F_1(1, 62) = 197.16, p < .001, F_2(1, 23) = 270.19, p < .001$. Ironic criticism ($M = 4.28, SE = 0.13$) was rated as being significantly more humorous than direct criticism ($M = 2.70, SE = 0.12$). There was also a significant main effect of the interpreter orientation manipulation (speaker intention/social impression) $F_1(1, 62) = 14.83, p < .001, F_2(1, 23) = 193.02, p < .001$. Post hoc analyses revealed that participants rating speaker intentions ($M = 3.87, SE = 0.14$) considered criticism to be more humorous than participants rating social impression ($M = 3.11, SE = 0.11$). There is also a significant interaction between interpreter orientation and language form $F_1(1, 62) = 7.28, p < .01, F_2(1, 23) = 20.93, p < .001$ (shown in figure 2). Post hoc analyses revealed that participants in the speaker intention condition rated direct criticism ($M = 3.23, SE = 0.17$) as being more humorous than participants in the social impression condition ($M = 2.17, SE = 0.17$), $t(62) = 4.77, p < .001$. However, once again, the effect of speaker intention and social impression was only significant for direct language. Ironic criticism was rated as being approximately equally humorous by participants in the speaker intention

Figure 2. Interaction of humor ratings as a function of language form (ironic/direct) and interpreter orientation (speaker intention/social impression).



($M=4.52$, $SE=0.16$) and social impression ($M=4.07$, $SE=0.16$) conditions. There was no significant main effect of hyperbole for humor ratings and there were no further significant interactions.

In summary, ironic criticism is reliably perceived as being more humorous than direct criticism and our participants believe that the humor of ironic criticism will be accurately interpreted as intended. Participants still intended to be moderately humorous when expressing direct criticism, but believe that the intended humor will not be accurately perceived.

Politeness

Each of the three main effects was significant for ratings of politeness. Ironic criticism ($M=3.04$, $SE=.09$) was rated as being significantly more polite than direct criticism ($M=2.634$, $SE=0.11$), $F_1(1, 62)=18.91$, $p<.001$, $F_2(1, 23)=20.90$, $p<.001$. Participants rating speaker intention ($M=3.29$, $SE=.10$) considered the criticism to be more polite than did participants rating social impression ($M=2.39$, $SE=.09$), $F_1(1, 62)=17.48$, $p<.001$, $F_2(1, 23)=193.02$, $p<.001$. Finally, hyperbole makes criticism seem less polite ($M=2.90$, $SE=.11$) than criticism which does not contain hyperbole ($M=2.78$, $SE=.08$), $F_1(1, 62)=4.33$, $p<.001$, $F_2(1, 23)=1.82$, *ns*. There were no significant interactions.

Mocking

Once again, each of the three main effects was significant. Ironic criticism ($M=4.49$, $SE=.11$) was rated as being significantly more mocking than direct criticism ($M=3.29$, $SE=.14$), $F_1(1, 62)=87.23$, $p<.001$, $F_2(1, 23)=108.71$, $p<.001$. Participant ratings of mockery were higher when rated for speaker intentions ($M=4.09$, $SE=.15$)

than for ratings of social impression ($M = 3.68$, $SE = .15$), $F_1(1, 62) = 3.85$, $p < .10$, $F_2(1, 23) = 42.28$, $p < .001$. Finally, there was a significant main effect of hyperbole $F_1(1, 62) = 9.61$, $p < .01$, $F_2(1, 23) = 5.08$, $p < .05$. Criticism with hyperbole ($M = 3.99$, $SE = .12$) was rated as being significantly more mocking than criticism without hyperbole ($M = 3.78$, $SE = .10$). Again, there were no significant interactions between these three significant main effects.

It is interesting to note that, on average, ironic criticism is rated as being both more mocking and more polite than direct criticism, but that there was no meaningful association between ratings of politeness and mocking for direct ($r = .06$, *ns*) or ironic criticism ($r = .07$, *ns*). This pattern of results suggests that ironic criticism induces a sense of mocking and of politeness but either effect is not dependent on the other.

Free Recall Memory Task

Following a 5 minute distractor task participants were asked to free recall as many of the comments expressing criticism as possible, as accurately as possible. A 2 (direct/ironic) x 2 (hyperbole/no hyperbole) x 2 (intention/impression) split plot analysis of variance was conducted on participants recall of comments expressing criticism.

Language form and hyperbole were within subject factors while the orientation manipulation was a between subjects factor. Overall, participants were able to recall an average of 4.92 items out of a total of 24 correctly, with a standard error of .37.

There was no significant recall advantage for criticism with ironic language over criticism with direct language, $F(1, 62) = .80$, *ns*. Direct criticism ($M = 1.28$, $SE = .11$) was actually recalled slightly but not significantly more frequently than ironic criticism ($M = 1.18$, $SE = .10$). There was a significant main effect of hyperbole $F(1, 62) = 13.98$,

$p < .001$, such that criticisms without hyperbole ($M = 1.51, SE = .12$) were reliably recalled more frequently than criticism with hyperbole ($M = .95, SE = .11$). Finally, there was a significant interaction between hyperbole and language form $F(1, 62) = 4.82, p < .05$ (Shown in Figure 3). As can be seen, where there was no hyperbole, recall for direct criticism ($M = 1.70, SE = .16$) was slightly, yet not significantly, superior to recall for ironic criticism ($M = 1.31, SE = .15$) $t(62) = .98, ns$. However, the opposite pattern was found for comments with hyperbole. There was a slight, yet not statistically significant, recall advantage for ironic criticism with hyperbole ($M = 1.04, SE = .14$) over ironic criticism which does not contain hyperbole ($M = 0.85, SE = .14$) $t(62) = .47, ns$.

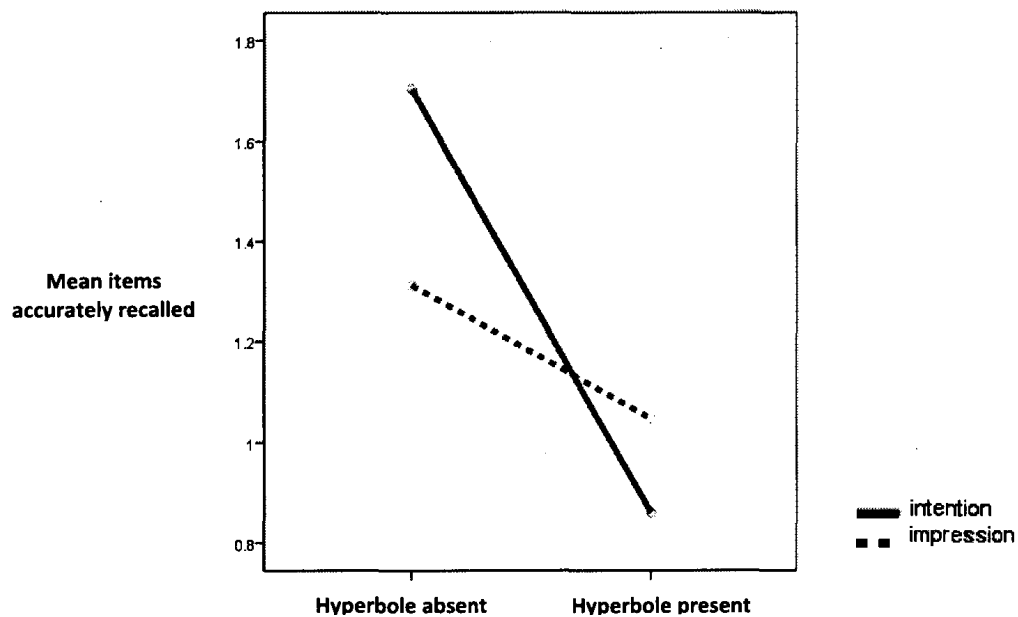
The average number of mistakes (improper use of hyperbole, direct/ironic language confusion, or a comment that did not contain the general gist of an original item) was .94 with a standard error of .16. The relatively high error rate for comments with hyperbole prompted further analysis. A paired samples t-test was conducted on participant errors of omission and commission of hyperbole in the free recall memory test $t(63) = 6.57, p < .001$. Errors of omission ($M = 1.92, SE = .18$), in which participants fail to correctly include a hyperbole modifier, were about three times more frequent than errors of commission ($M = .57, SE = .09$), in which a hyperbole modifier was incorrectly included in a comment.

Study 1 Summary

Functions of Irony

Study 1 asked participants to consider the functions which can be served through ironic criticism in comparison to direct criticism from the perspective of the “speaker” in

Figure 3. Interaction of memory recall as a function of language form (direct/ironic) and contrast magnitude (hyperbole modifier present or absent).



the context of a conversation with a close, same-gender friend. Participants indicated that irony makes criticism appear more sarcastic and mocking, yet also more humorous, polite and positive in comparison to direct criticism. Moreover, although we were able to obtain support for Colston's (2002) notion that type of criticism influences how the situation is perceived, we were unable to support his conclusion that the functions served through ironic criticism depend on people's perceptions of the targeted situation (through contrast and assimilation). Although the correlation between situation ratings and criticism positivity was in the direction predicted by Colston, the magnitude of that association was relatively small, and the necessary interaction between hyperbole and language form was not observed.

Sarcasm is correlated with mockery and humor in both direct and ironic forms of expression; however sarcasm in direct language seems to have pro-social characteristics. Sarcasm in direct language was correlated with humor, mocking, but also politeness and positivity.

Speaker Intentions vs. Social Impression

The current study obtained results which are inconsistent with Pexman and Olineck's (2002a) interpreter orientation hypothesis. They claimed that ratings of speaker intention bias perception to the negative context causing ironic criticism to seem more negative, whereas ratings of social impression bias perception to the positive surface meaning of the ironic comment causing it seem more positive. They argued that their data supported their position; however, they compared ratings implicitly assumed to tap speaker intention and social impression. We replicated their finding that ironic criticism

is more mocking and sarcastic yet more polite and positive, but we demonstrated that speaker intention and social impression did not significantly influence these main effects.

We were also able to use ratings of speaker intention and social impression to determine whether people recognize that the impact of a remark will be different than they would intend. There was a significant main effect of our interpreter orientation (speaker intention/social impression) such that participants rating the social impression of criticism found it to be less sarcastic, humorous, polite, mocking, and positive than participants rating speaker intention.

With the exception of ratings of sarcasm and humor, the orientation manipulation did not significantly interact with the form of language used. Participants in the speaker intention condition rated direct criticism as being more sarcastic and humorous than participants in the social impression condition. Irony, and most other forms of figurative language, have traditionally been viewed as being intentionally opaque, and ambiguous (Grice, 1975). Our participants believe that ironic criticism will be interpreted as being sarcastic and humorous as intended; whereas intended sarcasm and humor will be misinterpreted in direct criticism.

Function of Hyperbole

The key predictions of the contrast and assimilation hypothesis is that ironic criticism with hyperbole should cause “contrast effects”, leading both the referent situation and the remark to appear negative. Ironic criticism without hyperbole should cause “assimilation effects” leading both the referent negative situation and the remark to appear positive. There should be no influence of contrast magnitude for ratings of direct language (Colston, 2002; Ivanko & Pexman, 2003).

We were unable to replicate contrast and assimilation effects by manipulating the level of contrast in language through hyperbole. Hyperbole did not significantly interact with the form of language (ironic/direct) used according to any of our dependent variables. Critically, hyperbole did not significantly influence participant interpretation of ironic criticism or the ratings the negative situation being referenced. Hyperbole had a straightforward function: it made criticism (regardless of whether it is ironic or direct) more mocking and less polite. In other words, the core (and more parsimonious) function of contrast as manipulated through hyperbole in the context of criticism is to enhance the message expressed.

Mnemonic Effect

There was no significant recall advantage for ironic criticism over direct criticism. In fact, direct criticism was successfully recalled slightly more frequently than ironic criticism. One surprising finding was that participants were rarely able to correctly recall comments with hyperbole. Errors of omission, in which participants failed to properly include a hyperbole modifier, were far more frequent than errors of commission in which hyperbole is erroneously included. However, there was a significant interaction between hyperbole and form of language (ironic/direct) in participant recall: hyperbole is harmful to the accurate recall of direct criticism but facilitated recall of ironic criticism. Given the current results, it is clearly possible that hyperbole provides unnecessary or redundant information in the context of criticism when directed at a close friend. Moreover, if people were simply not attending to hyperbole, it is unsurprising that it did not create a perceptual contrast which would be predicted by Colston (2002).

Study 2

The findings of Study 1 are inconsistent with the past research of Colston (2002), Ivanko & Pexman (2003), and Pexman & Olineck (2002a). Study 1 demonstrated that irony simultaneously dilutes and enhances different aspects of criticism regardless of contrast magnitude (through hyperbole) or interpreter orientation (speaker intention and social impression). Ironic criticism was more sarcastic, humorous, polite, mocking, and overall less negative than direct criticism. Recall that the scenarios used in study 1 were fairly mild and might not have been negative enough to require enhanced criticism. Given that humor ratings were so strongly associated with ratings of every other dependent variable in study 1 (for both ironic and direct language) it is possible that the criticism expressed in study 1 was perceived as being merely in jest. Thus, the aim in study 2 is to create stimuli analogous to those used in Study 1 but more characteristic of the negative argumentative tone found in everyday sarcastic usage (See Bowes and Katz, 2011).

Recall that in study 1, the participants were asked to rate the function of ironic and direct criticisms in the context of a supportive conversation with a close, same gender friend. In each scenario the close friend introduces a problem from his or her life, disapproval is expressed from the participant's point of view, and the friend accepts responsibility for the problem. In study 2 the same key contextual details are held constant: gender, relational distance, and narrative perspective. However, there are two important changes in study 2. First, instructions were provided prior to starting the experiment which emphasized that each scenario will involve an argument with a close friend (rather than in the context of a conversation, as in study 1). Second, whereas in study 1 the "close friend" character accepts responsibility for the mistake being criticized

(the 4th line of each scenario), in study 2 this line is changed: rather than accepting responsibility the close friend now refuses responsibility for his/her negative situation and places the blame on the participant. In other words, participants in study 2 were asked to rate the exact same criticism and negative situations used in the first experiment except now the criticism directed at a close friend is actually deserved: a close friend is refusing responsibility for his/her problems and is actually blaming the interpreter for his/her issues. There should now be less motivation to dilute criticism and sufficient social justification to express strong, enhanced criticism through irony.

Method

Participants

Fifty participants from the University of Western Ontario (20 male, 30 female) were recruited from the fall undergraduate participant pool in exchange for course credit. The only requirement for participation was that English was their first language. Male and female versions our questionnaire booklets were again used so that the gendered pronouns correctly refer to same gender close friends (she vs. he, his vs. her, etc.).

Materials and Procedure

The same experimental procedure and materials from study 1 were used with the exception of the modifications discussed above. Participants were still asked to rate ironic and direct criticism amongst close, same gender friends along the same dependent variables used in study 1 and once again these ratings were to be provided as if the participants themselves had actually directed it at a close friend. The only major change to the experimental procedure was that in participants in study 2 received explicit verbal and written (in the letter of information) instructions to interpret the function the criticism

in each scenario in the context of an argument (rather than in the context of a “conversation” as instructed in study 1).

In study 1, the participant’s close friend recognizes his/her mistake and accepts responsibility in the fourth line of every scenario. This was intended to minimize ambiguity of subsequent criticism and create a positive context. In study 2, the fourth line in each scenario was altered: rather than accepting responsibility the participant’s close friend now refuses responsibility for his/her problem and places blame on the participant. In contrast to study 1, there is now disagreement as to whether criticism is deserved, greater ambiguity as to whether a serious negative message would be intended, and social conflict between the participant and the close friend in each scenario. Participants were still informed that there will be additional questions after they complete their booklet, but were not informed that the second part of the study is, in fact, a free recall memory task for the comments they are rating. Each of the twenty-four scenarios used in this study were constructed according to a common template (see Table 4).

Manipulated and Measured Variables

Study 2 again investigates the influence of orientation (speaker intention/social impression), language form (direct/ironic), and contrast (hyperbole absent or present) on participant interpretation of criticism. The same seven dependent variables from study 1 were again used: participants were asked to rate the level of negativity in each negative situation being criticized and the level of sarcasm, humor, mocking, politeness, and positivity-negativity in the comment expressing criticism. Following a 5 minute distractor task, participants were still asked to list as many of the comments expressing criticism as they could remember using through free recall.

Table 4. Template Used to Construct Scenarios for Study 2 and Sample Item

Line 1: General description of a negative situation which happens to a close friend

Line 2: The close friend explains his/her problem to you

Line 3: You express disapproval of your friend's situation

Line 4:

Study 1: Your friend recognizes he/she made a mistake and takes responsibility

Study 2: Your friend refuses to take responsibility and blames the participant

Line 5

Form 1: *Direct criticism with hyperbole*

Form 2: *Direct criticism without hyperbole*

Form 3: *Ironic criticism without hyperbole*

Form 4: *Ironic criticism with hyperbole*

Sample Scenario from Study 2:

Your close friend forgot his ID and misses out on an event

Your close friend discovers that he is missing his ID and he cannot get into an event at a bar. He calls you from outside the bar to let you know about the problem.

"I did not notice that the ID was missing until it was too late", your friend says

"You really should have double checked that you had everything you needed" you respond

Study 1: "I was looking forward to the event and wasn't paying attention at the time" your friend explains.

Study 2: "You didn't tell me I needed an ID" your friend argues

Given this situation, you comment that:

(One of four possible comments appear)

- a. (extremely negative literal) *"You are such an incredibly unreliable friend"*
- b. (moderately negative literal) *"You are an unreliable friend"*
- c. (moderately positive ironic) *"You are a reliable friend"*
- d. (extremely positive ironic) *"You are such an incredibly reliable friend"*

Results

Separate 2 (direct/ironic) x2 (no hyperbole/hyperbole) x2 (intention/impression) split plot analyses of variance were again conducted for each of the dependent variables (situation negativity, sarcasm, humor, politeness, mocking, positivity-negativity). Note that each dependent variable was averaged across both subjects (F_1) and items (F_2). The problem of multiple comparisons was addressed again through Bonferroni adjustment.

Correlations Among Dependent Variables

Table 5 contains the correlations between each of the dependent variables separated by the form of language rated (direct / ironic) from study 2. The overall pattern of results was the same as study 1. Humor was still moderately correlated with every other dependent variable for both ironic and direct language ($.31 < r < .63, p < .001$). For direct language, sarcasm was again moderately correlated with humor ($r = .63, p < .001$), politeness ($r = .30, p < .001$), mocking ($r = .28, p < .001$), and positivity ($r = .44, p < .001$). With ironic language, sarcasm was correlated with humor ($r = .51, p < .001$) and mockery ($r = .39, p < .001$), but was unrelated to ratings of politeness ($r = .02, ns$) and positivity ($r = .11, p < .05$). There was again strong positive correlations between ratings of politeness and positivity for both direct ($r = .59, p < .001$) and ironic language ($r = .64, p < .001$). Politeness was uncorrelated with mockery for both direct ($r = -.01, ns$) and ironic language ($r = -.03, ns$).

Contrasts as a function of manipulated conditions

Recall that the basic ANOVA design is a 2 (direct/ironic) x2 (no hyperbole/hyperbole) x2 (intention/impression) split plot analysis of variance.

Table 5. Intercorrelation Amongst Dependent Variables for ratings of Direct and Ironic Language for study 2

	<u>Direct Language</u>					
	Situation	Sarcasm	Humor	Polite	Mocking	Positivity
Situation	--	-0.18*	-0.23*	-0.16*	-0.10	-0.23*
Sarcasm		--	0.63*	0.30*	0.28*	0.44*
Humor			--	0.36*	0.39*	0.53*
Polite				--	-0.01	0.59*
Mocking					--	0.14*
Positivity						--

	<u>Ironic Language</u>					
	Situation	Sarcasm	Humor	Polite	Mocking	Positivity
Situation	--	-0.12	-0.16*	-0.09	0.02	-0.19*
Sarcasm		--	0.51*	0.02	0.39*	0.11
Humor			--	0.31*	0.38*	0.39*
Polite				--	-0.03	0.64*
Mocking					--	0.06
Positivity						--

Bonferroni Correction $p = .001$

* $p < .001$

Separate analyses were conducted on each of the dependent variables. The means and standard errors for each condition, for each dependent variable are presented in Table 6.

Situational Negativity

There was a significant main effect of language (ironic/direct) for participant rating of the level of negativity in the situation being criticized in each scenario when averaged across subjects $F_1(1, 48) = 5.71, p < .05, F_2(1, 23) = 3.67, p < .10$. Replicating this key finding from study 1, scenarios with ironic criticism ($M = 3.34, SE = .10$) were rated as being significantly less negative than scenarios with direct criticism ($M = 3.53, SE = .11$). There was a significant main effect of the speaker intention/social impression manipulation, but only when averaged across items $F_1(1, 48) = .56, ns, F_2(1, 23) = 8.05, p < .01$. Participants rating speaker intention ($M = 3.52, SE = .14$) considered the situations being criticized to be significantly more negative than participants rating social impression ($M = 3.36, SE = .13$). As in Study 1, there was no significant main effect of hyperbole and there were no significant interactions.

Positivity-Negativity

There was a significant main effect of language (ironic/direct) on participant ratings of positivity-negativity in criticism $F_1(1, 48) = 32.30, p < .001, F_2(1, 23) = 41.21, p < .001$. Ironic criticism ($M = 3.59, SE = .13$) was rated as being significantly less negative than direct criticism ($M = 2.97, SE = .10$). There was a significant main effect of interpreter orientation (speaker intention/social impression) but this effect was only significant when it was averaged across items $F_1(1, 48) = 1.55, p < .25, F_2(1, 23) = 4.29, p < .05$. Ratings of speaker intention ($M = 3.37, SE = .10$) were significantly more

Table 6. Mean and Standard Error According to Language form (Ironic or direct), Contrast Magnitude (hyperbole modifier present or absent), and Orientation (ratings of speaker intention or social impression) for study 2

Ratings	Ironic Criticism							
	Criticism without a hyperbole modifier				Criticism with a hyperbole modifier			
	Speaker Intention		Social Impression		Speaker Intention		Social Impression	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SE</i>
Situation Negativity	3.43	0.17	3.32	0.17	3.54	0.15	3.23	0.15
Sarcasm	5.61	0.16	5.61	0.16	5.66	0.16	6.02	0.16
Humor	4.70	0.21	4.10	0.21	4.69	0.19	4.41	0.19
Politeness	3.11	0.15	2.87	0.15	3.14	0.17	2.95	0.17
Mocking	4.66	0.22	4.65	0.28	4.69	0.21	4.78	0.21
Positivity	3.75	0.21	3.54	0.21	3.71	0.19	3.37	0.19

Ratings	Direct Criticism							
	Criticism without a hyperbole modifier				Criticism with a hyperbole modifier			
	Speaker Intention		Social Impression		Speaker Intention		Social Impression	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SE</i>
Situation Negativity	3.45	0.15	3.43	0.15	3.69	0.17	3.55	0.17
Sarcasm	2.92	0.25	2.61	0.25	2.93	0.26	2.87	0.26
Humor	3.09	0.22	2.81	0.22	3.19	0.22	2.97	0.22
Politeness	2.77	0.16	2.47	0.16	2.70	0.16	2.43	0.16
Mocking	3.51	0.20	3.31	0.20	3.75	0.20	3.68	0.20
Positivity	3.15	0.18	2.87	0.18	3.01	0.16	2.85	0.16

negative than ratings of social impression ($M = 3.21$, $SE = .10$). There was no significant effect of hyperbole for ratings of positivity-negativity in criticism and there were no significant interactions.

Sarcasm

There was a significant main effect of language (ironic/direct) on participant interpretation of sarcasm in criticism $F_1(1, 48) = 230.71$, $p < .05$, $F_2(1, 23) = 174.66$, $p < .001$. Ironic criticism ($M = 5.73$, $SE = .10$) was rated as being significantly more sarcastic than direct criticism ($M = 2.83$, $SE = .17$). There was also a significant main effect of hyperbole for participant rating of sarcasm in criticism; however, this effect was only significant when averaged across subjects $F_1(1, 48) = 5.68$, $p < .05$, $F_2(1, 23) = 2.19$, $p < .20$. Criticism with hyperbole ($M = 4.37$, $SE = .11$) was rated as being slightly more sarcastic than criticism which did not contain hyperbole ($M = 4.19$, $SE = .11$). There was no significant main effect of interpreter orientation (speaker intention/social impression) and there were no significant interactions.

Humor

There was a significant main effect of language form (ironic/direct) on participant interpretation of humor in criticism $F_1(1, 48) = 110.46$, $p < .001$, $F_2(1, 23) = 95.87$, $p < .001$. Ironic criticism ($M = 4.48$, $SE = .12$) was rated as being significantly more humorous than direct criticism ($M = 3.02$, $SE = .14$). There was also a significant main effect of interpreter orientation (speaker intention/social impression) when averaged across items but it was not significant not by subjects $F_1(1, 48) = 2.45$, $p < .15$, $F_2(1, 23) = 8.82$, $p < .01$. Participants in the speaker intention condition ($M = 3.92$, $SE = .15$) rated criticism as being significantly more humorous than participants in the social impression

condition ($M=3.65$, $SE = .14$). There was no significant main effect of hyperbole for humor ratings and there were no longer any significant interactions.

Politeness

There was a significant main effect of language (ironic/direct) on participant ratings of politeness in criticism $F_1(1, 48) = 15.55$, $p < .001$, $F_2(1, 23) = 17.60$, $p < .001$. Ironic criticism ($M = 3.02$, $SE = .11$) was rated as being significantly more polite than direct criticism ($M = 2.59$, $SE = .10$). There was also a significant main effect of interpreter orientation (speaker intention/social impression) on participant ratings of politeness in criticism but the effect was only significant across items $F_1(1, 48) = 2.12$, $p < .20$, $F_2(1, 23) = 12.09$, $p < .005$. Participants rating speaker intention ($M = 2.93$, $SE = .13$) considered criticism to be more polite than participants rating social impression ($M = 2.68$, $SE = .12$). There was no effect of hyperbole on participant ratings of hyperbole and there were no significant interactions.

Mocking

There was a significant main effect of language (ironic/direct) on participant ratings of mockery in criticism $F_1(1, 48) = 56.78$, $p < .001$, $F_2(1, 23) = 69.93$, $p < .001$. Ironic criticism ($M = 4.70$, $SE = .14$) was rated as being significantly more mocking than direct criticism ($M = 3.56$, $SE = .12$). There was also a significant main effect of hyperbole on participant rating of the level of mockery in criticism $F_1(1, 48) = 8.29$, $p < .01$, $F_2(1, 23) = 4.63$, $p < .05$. Criticism with hyperbole ($M = 4.23$, $SE = .12$) was rated as being significantly more mocking than criticism without hyperbole ($M = 4.03$, $SE = .12$). There was no significant main effect of speaker intention/social impression and there were no significant interactions.

Free Recall Memory Task

A 2 (recall for direct/ironic items) x2 (recall for comment with hyperbole/no hyperbole) x2 (intention/impression condition) split plot analysis of variance was conducted on participant's recall of comments expressing criticism. The free recall memory task was conducted according to the exact same experimental procedure and analyses as in study 1.

Overall, participants in study 2 were able to recall an average of 4.51 items out of a total of 24 correctly with a standard error of .45. The only significant recall effect in study 2 was that of hyperbole, $F(1, 62) = 7.96, p < .01$. Criticisms without hyperbole ($M = 1.37, SE = .13$) were recalled correctly reliably more frequently than criticisms with hyperbole ($M = .90, SE = .15$). There was still no significant recall advantage for criticism with ironic language over criticism with direct language $F(1, 62) = .80, ns$. Direct criticism ($M = 1.13, SE = .12$) was correctly recalled equally as frequent as ironic criticism ($M = 1.14, SE = .14$). There were no significant interactions.

The average number of mistakes (improper use of hyperbole, language form, or a comment that did not contain the general gist of an original item) made by participants in study 1 was 1.56 with a standard error of .24. A paired samples t-test was conducted on participant errors of omission and commission of hyperbole for study 2. Errors of omission ($M = 1.88, SE = .21$), in which participants fail to correctly include a hyperbole modifier were far more frequent than errors of commission ($M = .68, SE = .12$), in which a hyperbole modifier was incorrectly included in a comment $t(49) = 4.79, p < .001$.

Study 2 Summary

The pattern of results obtained in study 1 (within the context of a friendly conversation) was replicated in the argumentative context employed in Study 2. Ironic criticism was rated as being more positive, sarcastic, polite, mocking, and humorous than direct criticism. Ironic criticism again made the targeted negative situation appear less negative than direct criticism. These significant main effects were not significantly influenced by contrast magnitude (absence or presence of hyperbole), or interpreter orientation (speaker intention or social impression).

Participants in the speaker intention condition rated the targeted situation as being more negative and considered the criticism to be more humorous, polite, and positive than participants rating social impression. This effect was only significant when collapsed across items suggesting that there must have been greater variability of reactions between scenarios in study 2. When the variability between scenarios is accounted for in the item analyses the influence of the orientation manipulation became clear. Hyperbole once again had minimal impact on participant's ratings; however, it did make criticism more mocking and sarcastic. The perception of sarcasm in direct language was still strongly correlated with humor, politeness, and positivity whereas the perception of sarcasm in irony was less associated with humor and unassociated with politeness and positivity.

General discussion

An important implicit assumption of this research is that the reversal of meaning in irony provides unique discourse information which is not present in direct expression. There is considerable evidence that irony can enhance (Colston, 1997; Toplak & Katz, 2000) or dilute (Dews & Winner, 1995; Dews, Kaplan & Winner, 1995; Harris &

Pexman, 2003) negative regard expressed in criticism, but the mechanisms of this effect are poorly understood. The purpose of this thesis was to investigate the possibility that irony in criticism can serve multiple, seemingly opposite, discourse functions depending on the circumstances in which it is expressed. Our goal was to provide a stringent test of two critical, yet arguably insufficient, hypotheses proposed to account for discrepant findings in the literature. Participant orientation to speaker intention or social impression was not a significant predictor of the functions of ironic criticism and we were not able to replicate contrast and assimilation effects.

In Study 1 participants were asked to rate the function of criticism in the context of a friendly conversation whereas in study 2 they were asked to rate the function of criticism in the context of an argument. Despite the fact that ironic criticism was used for a different purpose between studies (criticizing a friend in the context of a friendly conversation vs. criticizing a friend who is provoking an argument) ironic criticism served the same pragmatic functions, at least as indexed by the dependent variables used here. Thus, contextual details such as time, place, and people involved (which were held constant between studies) may actually be more important to people's interpretation of irony than the speaker's purpose in expressing it.

Functions of Irony

Past research has demonstrated that irony can enhance or dilute a message. The current results demonstrate that irony can simultaneously enhance and dilute different aspects of criticism. Relative to direct criticism, some aspects of the negative intended message was enhanced (irony was more mocking and sarcastic) whereas other aspects were diluted (ironic criticism was less negative, more humorous, and more polite).

Moreover, we replicated Colston's (2002) finding that negative situations targeted by ironic criticism seem significantly less negative than situations with direct criticism.

Contrast magnitude (through the presence or absence of hyperbole) and the orientation of participant's ratings (to speaker intentions or social impressions) did influence people's perception of criticism; but neither factor significantly interacted with the form of language used (ironic or direct). Irony has traditionally been conceptualized as an intentionally ambiguous form of communication (Grice, 1975), however, our participants believe that a close friend will interpret irony accurately interpreted as they would intend. Inasmuch that past research has demonstrated that the people's perception of ironic criticisms are actually resistant to modulation (Kreuz, Kassler et al., 1999; Pexman & Olineck, 2002b; Pexman & Zvaigzne, 2004) it seems reasonable to hypothesize that people actually believe ironic criticism to be understood more accurately than direct criticism.

In both studies the independent variables had greater influence over people's interpretation of direct language than for ratings of ironic language. This finding was unexpected but not without precedent. For example, Pexman, Whalen & Green (2010) recently demonstrated that in scenarios with strong contrast, direct criticism is rated as being more sarcastic and humorous than indirect criticism.

In study 1, hyperbole was harmful to recall of direct criticism yet slightly beneficial to recall for ironic criticism. Participants the speaker intention condition found direct criticism to be more sarcastic and humorous than participants rating social impression. Moreover, in both studies, sarcasm in direct criticism was moderately

correlated with politeness and positivity; whereas sarcasm in ironic criticism was unassociated with politeness and positivity.

Sarcasm in Direct Language

Sarcasm has traditionally been conceptualized as a bitter, caustic form of ridicule (Lee & Katz, 199; Kreuz & Glucksberg, 1989). Consistent with this description, ratings of sarcasm in both ironic and direct language were moderately correlated with ratings of both humor and mockery. However, ratings of sarcasm in direct language were also moderately correlated with politeness and positivity, a seemingly paradoxical finding.

We assumed that criticism through direct language (such as “you sure are untrustworthy”) targeting a negative situation (such as disappointing a neighbour) would provoke a direct, literal interpretation that criticism is intended. However, the pattern of ratings we observe suggest that, for the scenarios employed here, the negative articulated message may have been interpreted as an ironic complement. In ironic complements, a negative surface meaning is articulated but a positive message intending praise is actually intended. For example, if a speaker were to comment that “you are incredibly slow” the intended meaning might actually be that “you are very fast” if directed to a person who has just won a challenging race. Pexman and Zvaigzne (2004) demonstrated that amongst close friends ironic complements (and not ironic insults) are rated as being polite and praising. This finding of Pexman and Zvaigzne is consistent with our correlational findings that sarcasm in direct language is associated with politeness and positivity. Thus, sarcasm in direct criticism here might reflect the perception of an ironic complement. Clearly, that is a speculative interpretation that requires direct testing.

There is another intriguing finding. In both studies reported here we find that humor is highly correlated with sarcasm (and furthermore that humor is moderately correlated with all other dependent variables) for both ironic and direct language. Given that the negative situations employed here are for the most part benign and the discussions are between close friends, one possibility is that sarcasm in these studies may simply reflect a playful, non-serious attitude, even in the more argumentative scenarios created for Study 2. A playful attitude when expressing criticism through direct language may cause it to appear more polite and positive; whereas a playful attitude when expressing criticism through positive language in irony would be redundant.

Speaker Intention vs. Social Impression

Pexman and Olineck (2002) hypothesized that past discrepancies in ratings of ironic criticism may have been caused by a systematic difference in how irony has been rated between past studies. The results of both studies in this thesis replicate their results. Ironic criticism is rated as being more mocking, sarcastic, polite and positive than direct criticism; however, we demonstrate that orientation to speaker intention or social impression does not influence these significant main effects of ironic language (discussed above). Participants in the speaker intention did rate direct criticism as being significantly more sarcastic and humorous in the context of a friendly conversation (study 1). However, these effects were no longer significant in the context of an argument (study 2).

In study 1, participants in the speaker intention condition rated criticism as being significantly more sarcastic, humorous, polite, and positive than participants rating social impression. In study 2, participants in the speaker intention condition rated the targeted negative situation as being less negative than participants in the social impression

condition. In the context of an argument (study 2) participants in the speaker intention condition rated criticism as being significantly more humorous, polite, and positive than those in the social impression condition (however, note that main effects in study 2 were statistically significant only when collapsed across items). In study 2 there was no longer a significant main effect of interpreter orientation for ratings of mockery or sarcasm: suggesting that in the context of an argument people expect that criticism will be interpreted as being as sarcastic and mocking as intended.

Function of Hyperbole

Ivanko & Pexman (2003) replicated contrast and assimilation effects through a manipulation of the level of negativity in the situation targeted by criticism in each of their scenarios. They obtained a significant interaction between language form (direct/ironic) and contrast magnitude (as manipulated through situational negativity). Ivanko and Pexman were able to demonstrate that ironic criticism is rated as being more sarcastic, mocking, and polite than direct criticism; however, ironic criticism was rated as being more sarcastic, mocking, and less polite in scenarios with a large contrast.

We found no evidence that the magnitude of the perceptual contrast (through the presence/absence of hyperbole) in ironic criticism can determine the pragmatic discourse functions of irony. A critical prediction of the contrast and assimilation hypothesis is that the magnitude of the contrast between ironic criticism and the targeted negative situation will determine the function of irony. The correlation between ratings of positivity-negativity in criticism and ratings of negativity perceived in the targeted situation was small, yet statistically significant, in both studies. We were able to demonstrate that irony is less negative than direct criticism and that positivity in criticism is associated with

lower negativity in the targeted situation; however, contrast magnitude did not significantly interact with language form (ironic/direct language) according to any of the dependent variable used here. It is therefore unlikely that contrast or assimilation effects determine the discourse functions served by ironic criticism.

In the context of a friendly conversation (study 1), hyperbole caused criticism to appear more mocking and less polite. In the context of an argument (study 2) hyperbole caused criticism to appear more mocking and sarcastic (consistent with Gerrig & Goldvarg, 2000). Overall, hyperbole did not produce contrast or assimilation biasing effects for participant ratings of irony. Our results suggest that hyperbole has the straightforward and parsimonious function of adding emphasis to an intended message (consistent with Robert and Kreuz's (1994) taxonomy of discourses goals which can be served through hyperbole).

Mnemonic Effect

Study 2 replicated the results of study 1: there was no recall advantage for criticism expressed with ironic language. There was a significant crossover interaction between hyperbole (present/absent) and language form (ironic/direct) in the recall data from study 1, yet post hoc comparisons were not statistically significant (See figure 3). Participant recall of direct criticism with hyperbole was slightly stronger than recall for direct criticism without hyperbole, but recall for ironic criticism with hyperbole was slightly stronger than participant recall of ironic criticism without hyperbole. In study 2 there was no longer a recall advantage for direct criticism with hyperbole and, as a result, this interaction was no longer significant in study 2. Study 2 replicated the low recall accuracy for criticism with hyperbole obtained in study 1; which was primarily a result of

errors of omission in both studies. Overall, there is no evidence that irony can improve people's recall of criticism. However, analyses of participant errors in both studies demonstrate that exaggeration through hyperbole may be redundant in the expression of criticism: it was routinely omitted in later recall of both ironic and direct criticisms

Conclusions

This thesis demonstrates that irony enhances the negative message (causing to appear more mocking and sarcastic) while simultaneously diluting negative aspects of the message (causing the expression to appear less negative, more humorous, and more polite). Ironic expression appears to be an effective yet socially acceptable technique to communicate criticism in the context of a friendly conversation or argument with a close, same gender friend. In other words, irony allows a speaker to express criticism while simultaneously saving face (Glucksberg, 1995; Jorgensen, 1996). Moreover, the current results were not significantly influenced by hyperbole, interpreter orientation (speaker intention/social impression), or the purpose of the speaker in expressing it (to express disapproval in a conversation or to reprimand a friend who is starting an argument).

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Appendix A: University of Western Ontario Ethical Approval form



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Use of Human Subjects - Ethics Approval Notice

Review Number	10 04 01	Approval Date	10 04 05
Principal Investigator	Albert Katz/James Boylan	End Date	10 10 31
Protocol Title	The social function of sarcasm		
Sponsor	n/a		

This is to notify you that The University of Western Ontario Department of Psychology Research Ethics Board (PREB) has granted expedited ethics approval to the above named research study on the date noted above.

The PREB is a sub-REB of The University of Western Ontario's Research Ethics Board for Non-Medical Research Involving Human Subjects (NMREB) which is organized and operates according to the Tri-Council Policy Statement and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario. (See Office of Research Ethics web site: <http://www.uwo.ca/research/ethics/>)

This approval shall remain valid until end date noted above assuming timely and acceptable responses to the University's periodic requests for surveillance and monitoring information.

During the course of the research, no deviations from, or changes to, the protocol or consent form may be initiated without prior written approval from the PREB except when necessary to eliminate immediate hazards to the subject or when the change(s) involve only logistical or administrative aspects of the study (e.g. change of research assistant, telephone number etc). Subjects must receive a copy of the information/consent documentation.

Investigators must promptly also report to the PREB:

- a) changes increasing the risk to the participant(s) and/or affecting significantly the conduct of the study;
- b) all adverse and unexpected experiences or events that are both serious and unexpected;
- c) new information that may adversely affect the safety of the subjects or the conduct of the study.

If these changes/adverse events require a change to the information/consent documentation, and/or recruitment advertisement, the newly revised information/consent documentation, and/or advertisement, must be submitted to the PREB for approval.

Members of the PREB who are named as investigators in research studies, or declare a conflict of interest, do not participate in discussion related to, nor vote on, such studies when they are presented to the PREB.


 Clive Seligman Ph.D.

Chair, Psychology Expedited Research Ethics Board (PREB)

The other members of the 2009-2010 PREB are: David Dozois, Bill Fisher, Riley Hinson and Steve Lupker

CC: UWO Office of Research Ethics

This is an official document. Please retain the original in your files

Appendix B: Scenarios Used in Experiment 1

1. Your close friend forgot his/her ID and misses out on an event

Your close friend discovers that he/she is missing his/her ID and he/she cannot get into an event at a bar.

He/she calls you from outside the bar to let you know about the problem.

“I did not notice that the ID was missing until it was too late”, your friend says

“You really should have double checked that you had everything you needed” you respond

“I was looking forward to the event and wasn’t paying attention at the time” your friend explains.

Given this situation, you comment that

- a. (extremely negative literal) *“You are such an incredibly unreliable friend”*
- b. (moderately negative literal) *“You are an unreliable friend”*
- c. (moderately positive ironic) *“You are a reliable friend”*
- d. (extremely positive ironic) *“You are such an incredibly reliable friend”*

2. Your close friend gets lost

Your close friend needs to visit you but he/she is unfamiliar with the building that you are in and he/she gets hopelessly lost on the way. As a result, he/she has to call you for directions.

“I am completely lost” your friend admits to you.

“The building is not really that complicated, how did you manage to get lost?” you ask.

“I took a wrong turn and got thoroughly confused” he/she admits.

Given this situation, you comment that:

- a. (extremely negative literal) *“You have an absolutely pathetic sense of direction”*
- b. (moderately negative literal) *“You have a weak sense of direction”*
- c. (moderately positive ironic) *“You have a strong sense of direction”*
- d. (extremely positive ironic) *“You have an absolutely perfect sense of direction”*

3. Your close friend writes down the wrong time for an appointment

Your close friend accidentally shows up an hour early for a meeting with you and he/she is very frustrated by the time you arrive.

“I could have sworn that we agreed to get together earlier today” your close friend explains.

“I wrote the time down immediately after we set it, I am positive that I am right” you respond.

“I really hate making these sorts of mistakes; I should start writing these things down too” he/she says.

Given this situation, you comment that

- a. (extremely negative literal) *“You are utterly lacking in organization”*
- b. (moderately negative literal) *“You are lacking in organization”*
- c. (moderately positive ironic) *“You are well organized”*

d. (extremely positive ironic) *"You are totally well organized"*

4. Your close friend fails to notice a wet floor sign, falls on floor

You are walking down a corridor with your close friend. Your friend fails to notice a "wet floor" sign and consequently slips and falls on his/her back.

"Ouch! I can't believe I just did that" Your friend exclaims.

"It was so sudden that I didn't have any time to help" you respond.

"I fall and hurt myself far too often" he/she admits.

Given this situation, you comment that

a. (extremely negative literal) *"You certainly are incredibly clumsy"*

b. (moderately negative literal) *"You certainly are clumsy"*

c. (moderately positive ironic) *"You certainly are graceful"*

d. (extremely positive ironic) *"You certainly are incredibly graceful"*

5. Your close friend decides to stay up too late and can't concentrate at all the next day.

Your close friend stays up late watching a movie and is completely exhausted the next day as a result.

"It was not a good night to stay up late as I had to get up early today" your close friend later informs you.

"You look exhausted, why didn't you just watch the movie when you had more time?" you ask.

"Well, at the time watching it felt more important than sleep" he/she explains.

Given this situation, you comment that

a. (extremely negative literal) *"Your priorities are thoroughly awful"*

b. (moderately negative literal) *"You have bad priorities"*

c. (moderately positive ironic) *"You have good priorities"*

d. (extremely positive ironic) *"Your priorities are truly fantastic"*

6. Your close friend insults a stranger

You and your close friend are at a social gathering and you unintentionally offend someone you just met.

"I can't believe how thoughtless I just was" your close friend exclaim to you shortly after.

"You should really think before you speak" you respond.

"I guess I do not always make the best first impression" your friend admits.

Given this situation, you comment that

a. (extremely negative literal) *"You were clearly being very rude"*

b. (moderately negative literal) *"You were rude"*

c. (moderately positive ironic) *"You were polite"*

d. (extremely positive ironic) *"You were clearly being very polite"*

7. Your close friend forgets to take a shower and smells bad the rest of the day

Your close friend decided to go for a run one morning but lacked the time to have a shower afterwards. When he/she arrives at school you clearly notice his/her strong smell.

“Do I smell that bad? I tried my best to cover it up” Your close friend asks.

“You know, you really need to shower more often” you respond.

“Unfortunately, I won't have the chance to have one until late this evening” your friend informs you.

Given this situation, you comment that

- a. (extremely negative literal) “*You smell completely foul*”
- b. (moderately negative literal) “*You smell awful*”
- c. (moderately positive ironic) “*You smell pleasant*”
- d. (extremely positive ironic) “*You smell absolutely wonderful*”

8. Your close friend drops something in the toilet

One morning your close friend woke up and in a half-awake state he/she accidentally knocked his/her toothbrush off of his/her bathroom sink and it fell into the toilet.

“I can't believe that it would fall in there of all places!” Your close friend later informs you.

“I wonder what the odds are that such a thing would happen” you say in response.

“Actually it is pretty likely, this is not the first time that this has happened to me” your close friend explains.

Given this situation, you comment that

- a. (extremely negative literal) “*You are exceptionally unlucky*”
- b. (moderately negative literal) “*You are just unlucky*”
- c. (moderately positive ironic) “*you are quite lucky*”
- d. (extremely positive ironic) “*You are spectacularly lucky*”

9. Your close friend procrastinates on working a big paper and panic when it comes due.

The deadline is quickly approaching for one of your close friend's large and important projects and he/she is becoming quite stressed about his/her lack of progress.

“I failed to realize how long it would take to finish this project” Your close friend complains.

“You should always give yourself some extra time in case something like this happens” you respond.

“Honestly, I have been avoiding the project” he/she admits.

Given this situation, you comment that

- a. (extremely negative literal) “*Your work ethic is totally mediocre*”
- b. (moderately negative literal) “*You have a lousy work ethic*”
- c. (moderately positive ironic) “*You have a great work ethic*”
- d. (extremely positive ironic) “*Your work ethic is totally outstanding*”

10. Your close friend accidentally repeats something that he/she was not supposed to

Your close friend accidentally repeats something to you that was told to him/her in confidence. Unfortunately, he/she did not realize his/her mistake until he/she had finished talking.

"I should not have told you that" your friend says

"I guess that you aren't very good at people's secrets" you reply

"I forgot that I wasn't supposed to repeat it" he/she explains.

Given this situation, you comment that

- (extremely negative literal) "*You are an incredible gossip*"
- (moderately negative literal) "*You are quite the gossip*"
- (moderately positive ironic) "*You are quite tight-lipped*"
- (extremely positive ironic) "*You are exceptionally tight-lipped*"

11. Your close friend gets worn out by a staircase.

One day you and your close friend decide to take the staircase to get to the top floor of a building. By the time you get to the top your close friend is sweaty, and out of breath.

"Well, that was quite exhausting" your friend informs you

"It was pretty easy for me, I am surprised that you had so much trouble with it" you respond

"I really have not had much time to exercise lately" he/she explains.

Given this situation, you comment that

- (extremely negative literal) "*You are completely out of shape*"
- (moderately negative literal) "*You are out of shape*"
- (moderately positive ironic) "*You are in fine shape*"
- (extremely positive ironic) "*You are in surprisingly great shape*"

12. Your close friend makes a joke that isn't received well

Your close friend makes a joke at work that is not received well. He/she later explains the situation to you in search of feedback.

"Nobody laughed and a few people rolled their eyes at me" your friend informs you

"I bet that you were just trying too hard to be funny" you respond.

"I thought I was being very funny, I really don't get why nobody laughed" your friend says.

Given this situation, you comment that

- (extremely negative literal) "*You are extremely dull*"
- (moderately negative literal) "*You are one dull guy/girl*"
- (moderately positive ironic) "*You are one funny guy/girl*"
- (extremely positive ironic) "*You are absolutely hilarious*"

13. Your close friend's phone rings in the middle of class

You and your close friend are attending a large lecture with hundreds of other students. Your friend's phone goes off and everyone gives him a dirty look.

“I could have sworn that I had set it to vibrate” Your close friend whispers to you.

“If you are going to bring your phone to class you should be absolutely sure that it off”
you say in response

“I guess I wasn’t paying enough attention to the settings” your friend explains.

Given this situation, you comment that

- a. (extremely negative literal) *“It was extraordinarily inconsiderate of you”*
- b. (moderately negative literal) *“It was inconsiderate of you”*
- c. (moderately positive ironic) *“It was considerate of you”*
- d. (extremely positive ironic) *“It was extraordinarily considerate of you”*

14. Your close friend Failed to take good care of his/her neighbour’s dog

Your close friend promised to take care of his/her neighbor’s dog while he is out of town. However, your friend forgets about the dog and it makes of mess of his/her neighbor’s house.

“I can’t believe how much damage the dog did” Your friend later informs you.

“It was pretty irresponsible to forget” you respond.

“I guess that I really let my neighbour down” he/she admits.

Given this situation, you comment that

- a. (extremely negative literal) *“You are really very untrustworthy”*
- b. (moderately negative literal) *“You sure are untrustworthy”*
- c. (moderately positive ironic) *“You sure are trustworthy”*
- d. (extremely positive ironic) *“You are really very trustworthy”*

15. Your close friend is caught in a lie

Your close friend tells a lie to get out of a social event, but the lie is exposed and several people’s feelings are hurt. Your close friend later explains the situation to you.

“I thought it would be polite to tell a white lie” Your friend explains.

“You know, if you lie too often you will get a bad reputation” you warn

“But, sometimes It just seems easier to lie” he/she explains.

Given this situation, you comment that

- a. (extremely negative literal) *“You are such an incredibly dishonest person”*
- b. (moderately negative literal) *“You are such a dishonest person”*
- c. (moderately positive ironic) *“You are such an honest person”*
- d. (extremely positive ironic) *“You are such an incredibly dishonest person”*

16. Your close friend drifts off and ignores you while in a conversation

You are having a lengthy conversation with your close friend but he/she gets distracted and misses part of what you are saying.

"I am sorry I drifted off for a second could you repeat that?" your friend asks

"I guess that I am not interesting enough to hold your attention" you respond

"I was thinking of something off topic and got distracted," he/she admits.

Given this situation, you comment that

a. (extremely negative literal) "*You are an utterly horrendous listener*"

b. (moderately negative literal) "*You are a terrible listener*"

c. (moderately positive ironic) "*You are a terrific listener*"

d. (extremely positive ironic) "*You are a truly marvellous listener*"

17. Your close friend forgets to leave a tip

You go out for dinner with your close friend and he/she forgets to leave a tip for the waiter.

"Well that is embarrassing, the waiter really deserved a tip" your friend informs you

"I bet he will remember and be mad with you if we ever come back" you respond

"For some reason it just didn't occur to me to leave one" he/she explains

Given this situation, you comment that

a. (extremely negative literal) "*You sure can be extremely cheap at times*"

b. (moderately negative literal) "*That's pretty cheap of you*"

c. (moderately positive ironic) "*That's pretty generous of you*"

d. (extremely positive ironic) "*You sure can be extremely generous at times*"

18. Your close friend hurts his/her hand in the door

You and your close friend are leaving his/her house and on your way out he/she accidentally slams his/her front door shut on his/her hand.

"I can't believe I just did that!" your friend exclaims to you.

"You really should have noticed that your hand was still in the doorframe" you respond.

"You are right, if I paid more attention to what I am doing I would hurt myself less often" he/she admits.

Given this situation, you comment that

a. (extremely negative literal) "*You are excessively reckless*"

b. (moderately negative literal) "*You certainly are reckless*"

c. (moderately positive ironic) "*You certainly are cautious*"

d. (extremely positive ironic) "*You are impressively cautious*"

19. Your close friend forgets to cover his/her mouth while sneezing

You are eating lunch in a public place with your close friend. He/she suddenly need to sneeze and so he/she turns his/her head away from you but he/she does not cover his/her mouth in time.

“I hope nobody noticed that” your friend says.

“That was really gross, I hope that you don’t make anyone sick” you say in response.

“It was too sudden, I just didn’t have time to cover my mouth” he/she explains.

Given this situation, you comment that

- a. (extremely negative literal) *“That is frankly an awfully unhealthy habit”*
- b. (moderately negative literal) *“That is an unhealthy habit”*
- c. (moderately positive ironic) *“That is a healthy habit”*
- d. (extremely positive ironic) *“That is clearly a terrifically healthy habit”*

20. Your close friend forgets an acquaintance’s name

You and your close friend run into one of your close friend’s old acquaintances but your close friend clearly cannot remember the acquaintance’s name.

“For the life in me I cannot remember that person’s name” your friend later admits to you.

“Well he/she clearly remembered your name” you point out.

“I sometimes have difficult matching faces with names” he/she explain.

Given this situation, you comment that

- a. (extremely negative literal) *“You have a utterly horrendous memory”*
- b. (moderately negative literal) *“You have an unimpressive memory”*
- c. (moderately positive ironic) *“You have an impressive memory”*
- d. (extremely positive ironic) *“You have an entirely wonderful memory”*

21. Your close friend invites you over but didn’t have time to clean

You drop by your close friend’s house to visit only to find that his/her place is a complete mess.

“Sorry, I haven’t had time to clean up lately” your friend informs you.

“Wow, I am surprised at how bad you let things get around here” you respond

“I have just been too busy and things have gotten out of hand” he/she explains.

Given this situation, you comment that

- a. (extremely negative literal) *“Your place is completely disgusting”*
- b. (moderately negative literal) *“Your place is just gross”*
- c. (moderately positive ironic) *“Your place is just beautiful”*
- d. (extremely positive ironic) *“Your place is utterly gorgeous”*

22. Your close friend works too hard and catches a cold

Your close friend has been working too hard and staying out too late recently and he/she gets sick as a result. You call him/her to see how he/she is feeling.

"I wish I had taken better care of myself" your friend admits to you.

"You wouldn't get sick so much if you were more moderate in your habits" you say in response.

"Despite my best efforts I always end up overdoing things" he/she explains.

Given this situation, you comment that

- a. (extremely negative literal) *"You have an extremely unbalanced lifestyle"*
- b. (moderately negative literal) *"You have a unbalanced lifestyle"*
- c. (moderately positive ironic) *"You have a well-balanced lifestyle"*
- d. (extremely positive ironic) *"You have an extremely well balanced lifestyle"*

23. Your close friend is overly proud of a success

Your close friend did exceedingly well in school and he/she informs everyone about his/her academic success. Unfortunately, his/her excitement is mistaken for arrogance by most people.

"I wish I hadn't gone so overboard" your friend later informs you

"It did feel like you were bragging a bit" you respond

"Well, at the time I thought that everyone would be happy for me" he/she explains

Given this situation, you comment that

- a. (extremely negative literal) *"You come off as a tremendously vain person"*
- b. (moderately negative literal) *"You come off as a vain person"*
- c. (moderately positive ironic) *"You come off as a humble person"*
- d. (extremely positive ironic) *"You come off as a tremendously humble person"*

24. Your close friend is avoiding his/her boss

Your close friend's boss has been in a bad mood lately and has been taking it out on your close friend. As a result he/she has been avoiding his/her boss entirely.

"It seems easier to simply to retreat and hope it passes" your close friend informs you

"Things won't get better unless you learn to stand up for yourself more" your respond

"I would but I am afraid that doing so would make things worse" he/she explains.

Given this situation, you comment that

- a. (extremely negative literal) *"You are completely cowardly"*
- b. (moderately negative literal) *"You sure are cowardly"*
- c. (moderately positive ironic) *"You sure are brave"*
- d. (extremely positive ironic) *"You are impressively brave"*

Appendix C: Modifications to scenarios for study 2

1. Your close friend forgot his ID and misses out on an event

Your close friend discovers that he is missing his ID and he cannot get into an event at a bar.

He calls you from outside the bar to let you know about the problem.

“I did not notice that the ID was missing until it was too late”, your friend says

“You really should have double checked that you had everything you needed” you respond

Study 1: “I was looking forward to the event and wasn’t paying attention at the time” your friend explains.

Study 2: “You didn’t tell me I needed an ID” your friend argues

2. Your close friend gets lost

Your close friend needs to visit you but he is unfamiliar with the building that you are in and he gets hopelessly lost on the way. As a result, he has to call you for directions.

“I am completely lost” your friend admits to you.

“The building is not really that complicated, how did you manage to get lost?” you ask

Study 1: “I took a wrong turn and got thoroughly confused” he admits.

Study 2: “your directions were lousy” he argues

3. Your close friend confuses the meeting time for an appointment

Your close friend accidentally shows up an hour early for a meeting with you and he is very frustrated by the time you arrive.

“I could have sworn that we agreed to get together earlier today” your close friend explains.

“I wrote the time down immediately after we set it, I am positive that I am right” you respond.

Study 1: “I really hate making these sorts of mistakes; I should start writing these things down too” he says.

Study 2: “You should have told me to write the time down too” your friend argues

4. Your close friend fails to notice a wet floor sign and falls on the floor

You are walking down a corridor with your close friend. Your friend fails to notice a “wet floor” sign and consequently slips and falls on his back.

“Ouch! I can’t believe I just did that” Your friend exclaims.

“It was so sudden that I didn’t have any time to help” you respond.

Study 1: “I fall and hurt myself far too often” he admits.

Study 2: “This wouldn’t have happened if you were faster” he argues

5. Your close friend decides to stay up too late and can’t concentrate at all the next day.

Your close friend stays up late watching a movie and is completely exhausted the next day as a result.

“It was not a good night to stay up late as I had to get up early today” your close friend later informs you.

“You look exhausted, why didn’t you just watch the movie when you had more time?” you ask.

Study 1: “Well, at the time watching it felt more important than sleep” he explains.

Study 2: “You are the one who told me how good it was” he argues

6. Your close friend insults a stranger

You and your close friend are at a social gathering and he unintentionally offends someone he just met.

“I can’t believe how thoughtless I just was” your close friend exclaim to you shortly after.

“You should really think before you speak” you respond.

Study 1: “I guess I do not always make the best first impression” your friend admits.

Study 2: “I thought you would cover for me” your friend argues.

7. Your close friend forgets to take a shower and smells bad the rest of the day

Your close friend decided to go for a run one morning but lacked the time to have a shower afterwards. When he arrives at school you clearly notice his strong smell.

“Do I smell that bad? I tried my best to cover it up” Your close friend asks.

“You know, you really need to shower more often” You respond.

Study 1: “Unfortunately, I won’t have the chance to have one until late this evening” your friend informs you.

Study 2: “You of all people should not criticize” your friend argues

8. Your close friend drops something in the toilet

One morning your close friend woke up and in a half-awake state he accidentally knocked his toothbrush off of his bathroom sink and it fell into the toilet.

“I can’t believe that it would fall in there of all places!” Your close friend later informs you.

“I wonder what the odds are that such a thing would happen” you say in response.

Study 1: “Actually it is pretty likely, this is not the first time that this has happened to me” he explains.

Study 2: “I bet these things happen to you all the time” your friend argues.

9. Your close friend procrastinates on working on a big paper and panics when it comes due.

The deadline is quickly approaching for one of your close friend’s large and important projects and he is becoming quite stressed about his lack of progress.

“I failed to realize how long it would take to finish this project” Your close friend complains.

“You should always give yourself some extra time in case something like this happens” you respond.

Study 1: “Honestly, I have been avoiding the project” he admits.

Study 2: “You were actually a big distraction” he argues

10. Your close friend accidentally repeats something that he was not supposed to

Your close friend accidentally repeats something to you that was told to him in confidence. Unfortunately, he did not realize his mistake until he had finished talking.

“I should not have told you that” your friend says

“I guess that you aren’t very good at people’s secrets” you reply

Study 1: “I forgot that I wasn’t supposed to repeat it” he explains.

Study 2: “Somehow you dragged it out of me” he argues

11. Your close friend gets worn out by a staircase.

One day you and your close friend decide to take the staircase to get to the top floor of a building. By the time you get to the top your close friend is sweaty, and out of breath.

“Well, that was quite exhausting” your friend informs you

“It was pretty easy for me, I am surprised that you had so much trouble with it” you respond

Study 1: “I really have not had much time to exercise lately” he explains.

Study 2: “You are probably just trying to make me look bad” he argues.

12. Your close friend makes a joke that isn’t received well

Your close friend makes a joke at work that is not received well. He later explains the situation to you in search of feedback.

“Nobody laughed and a few people rolled their eyes at me” your friend informs you

“I bet that you were just trying too hard to be funny” you respond.

Study 1: “I thought I was being very funny, I really don’t get why nobody laughed” your friend says.

Study 2: “My friends seem to have a lousy sense of humor” he argues.

13. Your close friend’s phone rings in the middle of class

You and your close friend are attending a large lecture with hundreds of other students. Your friend’s phone goes off and everyone gives him a dirty look.

“I could have sworn that I had set it to vibrate” Your close friend whispers to you.

“If you are going to bring your phone to class you should be absolutely sure that it off” you say in response

Study 1: “I guess I wasn’t paying enough attention to the settings” your friend explains.

Study 2: “I wish you warned me before class” your friend argues.

14. Your close friend failed to take good care of his neighbor’s dog

Your close friend promised to take care of his neighbor’s dog while he is out of town.

However, your friend forgets about the dog and it makes of mess of his neighbor’s house.

“I can’t believe how much damage the dog did” Your friend later informs you.

“It was pretty irresponsible to forget” you respond.

Study 1 “I guess that I really let my neighbor down” he admits.

Study 2 “Maybe you should have just taken care of it” he argues.

15. Your close friend is caught in a lie

Your close friend tells a lie to get out of a social event, but the lie is exposed and several people’s feelings are hurt. Your close friend later explains the situation to you.

“I thought it would be polite to tell a white lie” Your friend explains.

“You know, if you lie too often you will get a bad reputation” you warn.

Study 1 “But, sometimes It just seems easier to lie” he explains.

Study 2 “but, you would have done the exact same thing” he argues.

16. Your close friend drifts off and ignores you while in a conversation

You are having a lengthy conversation with your close friend but he gets distracted and misses part of what you are saying.

“I am sorry I drifted off for a second could you repeat that?” your friend asks

“I guess that I am not interesting enough to hold your attention” you respond

Study 1 “I was thinking of something off topic and got distracted,” he admits.

Study 2 “You were actually being pretty boring” he argues.

17. Your close friend forgets to leave a tip

You go out for dinner with your close friend and he forgets to leave a tip for the waiter.

“Well that is embarrassing, the waiter really deserved a tip” your friend informs you

“I bet he will remember and be mad with you if we ever come back” you respond

Study 1 “For some reason it just didn’t occur to me to leave one” he explains.

Study 2 “You didn’t leave a tip either” he argues.

18. Your close friend hurts his hand in the door

You and your close friend are leaving his house and on your way out he accidentally slams his front door shut on his hand.

“I can’t believe I just did that!” your friend exclaims to you.

“You really should have noticed that your hand was still in the doorframe” you respond.

Study 1 “You are right, if I paid more attention to what I am doing I would hurt myself less often” he admits.

Study 2 “These accidents always seem to happen when you are around” he argues.

19. Your close friend forgets to cover his mouth while sneezing

You are eating lunch in a public place with your close friend. He suddenly needs to sneeze and so he turns his head away from you but he does not cover his mouth in time.

“I hope nobody noticed that” your friend says.

“That was really gross, I hope that you don’t make anyone sick” you say in response.

Study 1 “It was too sudden, I just didn’t have time to cover my mouth” he explains.

Study 2 “I have seen you do worse” he argues

20. Your close friend forgets an acquaintance’s name

You and your close friend run into one of your close friend’s old acquaintances but your close friend clearly cannot remember the acquaintance’s name.

“For the life in me I cannot remember that person’s name” your friend later admits to you.

“Well he clearly remembered your name” you point out.

Study 1 “I sometimes have difficult matching faces with names” he explains.

Study 2 “You were distracting me at the time” he argues

21. Your close friend invites you over but didn't have time to clean

You drop by your close friend's house to visit only to find that his place is a complete mess.

"Sorry, I haven't had time to clean up lately" your friend informs you.

"Wow, I am surprised at how bad you let things get around here" you respond

Study 1 "I have just been too busy and things have gotten out of hand" he explains.

Study 2 "I am surprised this sort of thing bothers you of all people" he argues

22. Your close friend works too hard and catches a cold

Your close friend has been working too hard and staying out too late recently and he gets sick as a result. You call him to see how he is feeling.

"I wish I had taken better care of myself" your friend admits to you.

"You wouldn't get sick so much if you were more moderate in your habits" you say in response.

Study 1 "Despite my best efforts I always end up overdoing things" he explains.

Study 2 "I learned my bad habits from you" he argues

23. Your close friend is overly proud of a success

Your close friend did exceedingly well in school and he informs everyone about his academic success. Unfortunately, his excitement is mistaken for arrogance by most people.

"I wish I hadn't gone so overboard" your friend later informs you

"It did feel like you were bragging a bit" you respond

Study 1 "Well, at the time I thought that everyone would be happy for me" he explains

Study 2 "You told me that everyone would be happy for me" he argues

24. Your close friend is avoiding his boss

Your close friend's boss has been in a bad mood lately and has been taking it out on your close friend. As a result he has been avoiding his boss entirely.

"It seems easier to simply to retreat and hope it passes" your close friend informs you

"Things won't get better unless you learn to stand up for yourself more" you respond

Study 1 "I would but I am afraid that doing so would make things worse" he explains.

Study 2 "But you would never do that" your friend argues

Appendix D: Evaluative Questions for Participants Rating Speaker Intention

	Not negative at all			Moderately Negative			Extremely Negative
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. How negative is your friend's situation?							

Image that you just made the comment in BOLD above
 What would your intention be in making this comment?

Please circle the number which best describes why you would make the comment

	Not sarcastic at all			Moderately sarcastic			Very sarcastic
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. To what extent would you intend to be sarcastic in making this comment?							

	Not humorous at all			Moderately humorous			Extremely Humorous
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. To what extent would you intend to be humorous in making the comment?							

	Not Polite at all			Moderately polite			Extremely polite
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. To what extent would you intend to be polite in making this comment?							

	Not Mocking at all			Moderately Mocking			Extremely mocking
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. To what extent would you intend to mock your friend in making this comment?							

	Negative			Neither positive nor negative			Positive
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. To what extent are you intending to be positive?							

Appendix E: Evaluative Questions for Participants Rating Social Impression

	Not negative at all			Moderately Negative			Extremely Negative
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. How negative is your friend's situation?							

Imagine that you just made the comment in BOLD above

How do you think that your close friend will interpret the comment?

Please circle the number which best describes the impression the comment would make on your friend

	Not sarcastic at all			Moderately sarcastic			Very sarcastic
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. To what extent would your friend think that you are being sarcastic in making this comment?							

	Not humorous at all			Moderately humorous			Extremely humorous
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. To what extent would your friend think that you are being humorous in making this comment?							

	Not Polite at all			Moderately polite			Extremely polite
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. To what extent would your friend think that you are being polite in making this comment?							

	Not Mocking at all			Moderately Mocking			Extremely mocking
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. To what extent will your friend think that you are mocking him/her?							

	Negative			Neither positive nor negative			Positive
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. To what extent will your friend think that you are being positive?							