Academics vs. American scriptwriters vs. academics: A battle over the etic and emic "sarcasm" and "irony"   labels

Marta Dynel

University of Łódź

The primary goal of this paper is to tease out the concepts denoted by the etic and emic labels "irony" and "sarcasm" (i.e. as they are viewed by linguists, and lay language users, here, primarily of American English). Several species of irony are elucidated, most importantly the rhetorical figure and situational irony. The author critically examines various competing academic (etic) approaches, some inspired by emic use, and the thorny relationship between the two focal notions, that is sarcasm and the rhetorical figure of irony. In the light of the different provenance of the two terms "irony" and "sarcasm" (originally operating as emic labels) and the original applications of the two linguistic tools they denote, the perspective advocated here is that sarcasm and irony should be deemed distinct phenomena, which may co-occur, yielding "sarcastic irony". The empirical study conducted on the basis of transcripts of the discourse of the American television series "House" adduces evidence that generally corroborates the previous findings on the focal emic (meta) pragmatic labels, which are partly not compatible with the preferred etic labels: in emic usage, "sarcasm" typically indicates the presence of the stylistic figure, whereas "irony" is usually reserved for situational irony. Interestingly, in the discourse of the television series, the "irony" label tends to be employed creatively for humorous purposes.

> *House: I was being sarcastic.*
> *Arlene: No, you weren't.*
> *House: Right, because people who are talking can't tell if they're being*
> *sarcastic. Arlene:That doesn't make any sense. Of course they can. But you   weren't.*
> Season 7, Episode 11

1. Introduction

There is an ongoing academic debate in linguistics on the definitions of, and the thorny relationship between, *irony* and *sarcasm*. One of the reasons why irony and sarcasm are associated (and mistaken for each other) may be that they tend to bring about humorous effects and are frequently seen as categories of conversational humour. It is thus hardly surprising that"irony" and "sarcasm" should reverberate across the interdisciplinary literature on humour. It needs to be   stressed,

nonetheless, that neither irony nor sarcasm is inherently humorous and both need to meet a few conditions to display hu- morous potential (see Dynel, 2013a, 2014 for discussion and references).

Clear differentiation between sarcasm and irony, it is here believed, is necessary, even if problematic. Brown (1980: 111) warns that sarcasm "is not a discrete logical or linguistic phenomenon." Indeed, even though it seems to have some intrinsic characteristics, "sarcasm" has fuzzy boundaries and escapes clear-cut linguistic definitions. It is a folk notion associated with popular (sometimes vulgar) language use. By contrast, irony is a clearly delineated rhetorical figure known since ancient times as a rhetorical tool used in elevated formal speeches. However, this figure does pose definitional problems given its complexity and internal diversity, which shows in the many competitive scholarly approaches. Nonetheless, such a commonsensical distinction between irony and sarcasm is not ubiquitously supported. As depicted in the academic literature in English (the lingua franca of academic discourse), the relationship between the rhetorical figure of irony and sarcasm is not unequivocal. First and foremost, a mismatch is observed between *emic* (language users') and *etic* (researchers') views.

The emic vs. etic distinction (for an overview, see Eelen, 2001; Haugh, 2012) is credited to Pike (1967) in anthropological linguistics. Essentially, as defined here, an emic unit is an item or system isolated and frequently named by *insiders*, that is participants in a given culture (Pike, 1990), whilst etic units are judged and dubbed by *outsiders*, here academics (Harris, 1990). The differentiation between emic and etic approaches is commonly used in anthropology, folklore studies and socio-behavioural sciences. In linguistics, it has been very popular in (im)politeness studies, for example, where the notion of *metalinguistic* or *metapragmatic labels* (which convey language users' evaluations of language use, see Section 4) has taken on great importance. This strand of research ties in with the classical view that scholars can investigate "the nature of X by discovering how we use the word 'X' and related words" (Bergmann, 1964: 177), "by exploring the ways in which the concept is manifested in [lay] uses of the words expressing that concept" (Black, 1975: 14–15).

In American English, which is the focus of attention here as the source of the emic labels, "sarcasm" is commonly used to denote the rhetorical figure of irony (Nunberg, 2001; Attardo et al., 2003). As Attardo (2013: 40) puts it, "the meaning of the word 'sarcasm' has taken over the meaning previously occupied by the word 'irony'. 'Irony' has shifted to mean something unfortunate." In this vein, Jones and Wilson (1987) report that language users have a tendency to overuse and abuse "irony" when referring to any odd events. This shows also in the famous song "Ironic" by Alanis Morissette (see Simpson, 2011). On the whole, there is an ongoing debate among language users about whether it is valid to refer to a situation as "ironic" when it

it involves something odd or unfortunate.[1] Be that as it may, in opposition to (many) researchers, laypeople "seem to perceive sarcasm as a linguistic device (i.e., something people do) and irony as a matter of fate (i.e., unexpected or surprising events that happen to people" (Creusere, 1999: 219; see also Kreuz and Glucksberg, 1989; Creusere, 2000). In a nutshell, the authors claim (likely, having American English in mind) that in popular parlance, that is in emic usage, "ironic" is used to mean "coincidental", whilst "sarcastic" is a label applied to utterances based on the rhetorical figure of irony. As will be shown here, this may manifest itself also in the discourse of contemporary films and television series created by scriptwriters, who are also lay language users, with fictional characters being their mouthpieces.

The label "sarcasm" used with reference to the rhetorical figure of irony has become prevalent also in the academic literature, admittedly under the influence of everyday American English. Consequently, the scope of irony called "sarcasm" is broadened. On the other hand, very frequently, the label "irony" is used in a lax manner with regard to conversational hu- mour, such as teasing, which involves overt untruthfulness typical of irony but does not exhibit its second key attribute, namely evaluative implicature (for an overview, see Dynel, 2014). Wilson (2016) rightly observes that a great proportion of the experimental research relies on broadened notions of irony, which leads to an important question concerning the rationale for the distinction between genuine cases of verbal irony and cases which do not constitute irony in a technical sense. Whilst the labels as such may be of secondary importance, what poses a real problem is the situation when the concepts of irony and sarcasm are (unwittingly) merged by scholars. This problem already exists, as evidenced by the many examples reverberating across the academic literature which the authors depict as irony but which do not pass the known tests for irony, i.e. they do not meet the necessary conditions (see e.g. Kapogianni, 2011, 2016b; Dynel, 2013b, 2014).

As Taylor (2015a: 131) aptly observes, the elusiveness of the distinction between irony and sarcasm "represents a sub- stantial challenge to research because it is not easy to distinguish exactly what construct a given paper is reporting on." Very frequently, researchers refer to the previous literature without recognising the fact that the quoted authors' understandings of irony and/or sarcasm are markedly different from their own. This has a bearing on the findings, which can sound contra- dictory, as is the case with the interpersonal consequences of irony (see Dynel, 2016a) or the denotation of irony (see Dynel, 2014). Terminological rigidity and the clarity of etic labels in academic writings are crucial for the epistemology of academic analyses (see Eelen, 2001). Thus, lay notions should not be elevated to status of technical terms and applied without much consideration (Haugh, 2016). If they are, this may lead to misconceptions about irony and/or sarcasm lying at the heart of otherwise insightful investigations. All that being said, popular parlance may become the topic of scholarly research. The analysis of emic/lay labels facilitates the recognition of language users' understandings of chosen linguistic phenomena, insofar as these labels may be indicative of metalinguistic use.

The primary objective of this article, which represents the field of pragmatics (broadly understood) is to investigate the constructs of "irony" and "sarcasm" from the etic perspective, notably as they are conceptualised and dubbed in the linguistic literature (within pragmatics and beyond) written in English, as well as from the emic perspective, with American English in

---

[1] e.g. http://www.metrotimes.com/Blogs/archives/2016/05/10/alanis-morissette-admits-theres-nothing-ironic-in-ironic.

the centre of attention. The study of emic (meta)pragmatic labels is based on corpus data culled from the transcripts of theAmerican television series "House".

This paper is structured as follows. In Section 2, the basic etic understandings of the polysemous term "irony" are surveyed, with the present focus being on situational irony and the rhetorical figure. Section 3 gives a critical account of the applicationof etic labels in the linguistic literature on sarcasm and the figure of irony. Section 4 offers a brief introduction to the notion ofmetalinguistic/metapragmatic labels and reports on the previous studies of the emic (meta)linguistic/(meta)pragmatic labels"irony" and "sarcasm". In Section 5, the methodology of the empirical investigation is elucidated. Sections 6 and 7 discuss thefindings on the emic use of the "irony" and "sarcasm" (meta)pragmatic labels in the discourse of the American medical dramaseries "House". In Section 8, some conclusions and final remarks are presented.

2. Types of irony

"Irony" tends to be used as an umbrella term for a number of distinct phenomena: *Socratic irony*, *dramatic irony*, *irony of fate*, or *situational irony*, and last but not least, a *trope*, also referred to as a *rhetorical/stylistic* figure (see e.g. Fowler, 1965; Beckson and Ganz, 1989; Haverkate, 1990; Kreuz and Roberts, 1993; Simpson, 2011). Some attempts have been made to account for more than one species of irony simultaneously given their similarities. The common denominators are, among other things: "breaking the pattern of expectation of the person faced with the ironic utterance or event" (Haverkate, 1990: 79), their inherent duality, such as incompatibility or opposition (Barbe, 1995) or the bisociative mechanism of evaluation reversal (Partington, 2006). However, each of the irony types is internally diversified (especially the rhetorical figure) and merits independent investigation.

"Socratic irony" refers to the rhetorical technique of feigning naiveté and ignorance (e.g. by asking silly questions) to reveal a flaw in the hearer's thinking. On the other hand, "dramatic irony", which may be seen as a type of "situational irony" (seeLucariello, 1994), pertains to the cases when the outside observer has the knowledge that an individual, such as a character ina fictional work (a novel or a film), does not have. Although these two types of irony may also invite (meta)pragmatic labels(e.g. in film critics' reviews), it is the other two types that will be in the centre of attention here, as these are the more naturalsources of such labels.

In general terms, "situational irony" refers to the state of affairs or events which is the reverse of, or incongruous with, what has been, or could have been, expected (see e.g. Fowler, 1965; Muecke, 1969; Littman and Mey, 1991; Lucariello, 1994;Shelley, 2001; Colston and Gibbs, 2007). Situational irony is sometimes called "irony of fate" but, technically, the latter seemsto be a subtype of situational irony that is not directly human-induced. Irony of fate "is not controlled by the intentionalbehavior of human beings; it is the irony of unforeseen processes and situations, which falsify the expectations of theobserver" (Haverkate, 1990: 7). However, very frequently, it is intentional human activity that is conducive to ironic effects,which is when the superordinate label "situational irony" appears to be more adequate. This type of irony has very many subtypes. Lucariello (1994) lists 8 primary groups of situational irony types and argues that situational-ironic schemata (altogether 26) are activated when any (one or ones) of the four features is/are discovered: unexpectedness, human frailty,outcome (the experience of loss or win), and opposition.[2] To date, the most well-founded classification of situational ironytypes comes from Shelley (2001), who takes as the departure point the bicoherence theory and presents several types ofsituational irony falling into two basic categories: "bicoherent class" and "bicoherent element".

From a pragma-linguistic perspective, what matters most is not the typology of situational irony but its impact on lan- guage use. As Kreuz and Roberts (1993: 9) observe, situationally ironic "utterances are usually signaled explicitly", by whichthey refer to the use of the "irony" label. In other words, situational irony "can be indicated by metareferential expressions" (Haverkate, 1990: 78). A crucial characteristic of situational irony is that it "concerns what it is about a situation that causespeople to describe it as ironic" (Shelley, 2001: 775). To cover these descriptions, Barbe (1993, 1995) coins the term *explicitirony* with reference to language users' verbal reflections on situations that they perceive as ironic and comment on by dint of*explicit irony markers*. These involve the use of the word "irony" or its derivates. Consequently, she dubs the respective rhetorical figure "implicit irony". This terminology is problematic. Implicitness inheres in the figure of irony. It is then a majorterminological and theoretical mistake to put an etic label "irony" on explicit verbalisations that invoke the "irony", thereby carrying people's acknowledgement of situational irony. What people do is not produce irony per se but comment on thesituation by using the lemma "irony". Importantly, these comments cannot usually be regarded as involving metalinguistic/ metapragmatic labels (cf. Haverkate's "metareferential expressions"), for they typically refer to extra-linguistic contexts, notlanguage use, which would motivate the "meta" prefix. These are then simply pragmatic labels (see Section 6).

Last but not least, irony is defined as a trope/rhetorical figure (see e.g. Colebrook, 2004), commonly termed also *verbal irony* outside linguistics, and sometimes also in linguistic studies (e.g. Haverkate, 1990; Wilson and Sperber, 1992; Kreuz andRoberts, 1993; Lucariello, 1994; Barbe, 1995; Colston, 2000; Wilson, 2006, 2016). This term may, however, be considered a tadmisleading, as the types of irony other than the rhetorical figure frequently involve verbalisations, too. The figure of irony hasgenerated a lot of scholarly interest across disciplines, inviting competing explanatory models in theoretical linguistics (for arepresentative sample, see e.g. Gibbs and Colston, 2007). Each of them has been challenged on the grounds of being inex- haustive and incapable of capturing all manifestations of irony. Here, a view is endorsed that, regardless of their specific

---

[2] The relationship between the types of irony and the characteristic features of ironic situations is ambivalent (see Shelley, 2001).

manifestations, ironic utterances are characterised by two intrinsic features: firstly, they involve overt untruthfulness, which may be explicit or implicit,[3] whereby speakers "make statements opposite to their beliefs" (Kreuz and Roberts, 1993: 99, see Haverkate, 1990); and secondly, they communicate implicit evaluation, which may be conceptualised as evaluative impli-

cature (see Dynel, 2013b and references therein). Prototypical (but not all) irony involves some kind of meaning reversal/opposition that is a direct or intermediate step leading to the speaker's implied intended evaluative meaning. Additionally, irony always involves implicitness and cannot be signalled before being produced along the lines of "I will be ironic". Nonetheless, with the benefit of hindsight, the producer and/or the hearer of an ironic utterance can make metalinguistic comments concerning the nature of the utterance or the speaker's intention. Interestingly, lay comments on the use of the figure may be anchored not in the "irony" but "sarcasm" label.

3. Different etic views on sarcasm vs. the rhetorical figure of irony

At a glance, the traditional emic and etic perspectives are unanimous in defining the term "sarcasm". This is because academic definitions frequently refer to etymological and contemporary dictionaries of the English language. As many authors report (e.g. Ball, 1981; Seckman and Couch, 1989; Berger, 1993; Partington, 2006; Rockwell, 2006), the word "sarcasm" has its origin in Greek words that mean "tearing flesh" or "speaking bitterly" and "bitter laugh". Sarcasm, as Rockwell (2006:

6) concludes, "is portrayed in most dictionary references as a negative behaviour; it is designed to wound, insult, or taunt. It is characterized as cutting and contemptuous". In this vein, referring to a dictionary definition, Partington (2006: 212) notes that sarcasm is a matter of "a sharp, bitter, or cutting expression or remark; a bitter gibe or taunt." Similarly, Berger (1993: 49) states that sarcasm resides in the use of *cutting, contemptuous,* and 'biting' remarks, delivered often in a hostile manner." It serves ridicule or mockery, and it is "a way of using language with the intent of hurting a listener" (Littman and Mey, 1991: 147). Sarcastic speakers' inherent goal is then to cause verbal harm, as many authors indicate (Ball, 1965; Fowler, 1965; Seckman and Couch, 1989; Berger, 1993; Littman and Mey, 1991; Partington, 2006). Thus, speakers are perceived as being sarcastic when they manifest the propensity towards using putdowns, make trenchant criticism, or are wittily malicious.

Haiman (1990: 188) claims that sarcastic remarks are "not just playful" but are "aggressive, and aimed at a target". Despite its "non-playfulness", understood as the ability to carry the speaker's truthful meaning, as well as its aggressive and disaffiliative potential, sarcasm is very frequently believed to invite humorous responses (e.g. Berger, 1993; Norrick, 1993; Jorgensen, 1996; Toplak and Katz, 2000; Partington, 2006; Dynel, 2013a, 2014, 2016a). However, it needs to be stressed that sarcasm need not always be humorous, and whether it is perceived as amusing depends heavily on the participation structure and who the *target*, i.e. the victim, of the sarcastic comment is (Gibbs, 1994; Dynel, 2013a, 2013c, 2016a). Essentially, sarcasm may induce humorous responses primarily in those hearers who are not the targets of the biting remarks. Therefore, sarcasm may be conceptualised as a form of *disparaging* or *disaffiliative humour* in multi-party interactions, including mass-media ones, where humour is devised primarily for the viewer's pleasure (Dynel, 2013c). Also, sarcasm typically does not consist merely in being abrupt but involves some conceptual and/or verbal innovation (e.g. when a very silly patient diagnosed with bacterial vaginosis asked House for how long she should not have sex, he replied, "On an evolutionary basis, I'd recommend forever"). This is why sarcasm testifies to the speaker's acerbic wit and verbal creativity, which may centre on implicitness, as the figure of irony always does.

The question concerning the relationship between the concepts of irony and sarcasm is a particularly thorny one. Given that, as an etic label, "irony" may cover not only the rhetorical figure but also other phenomena (notably, situational irony), some differences between irony and sarcasm are quite transparent and self-explanatory. Sarcasm is always associated with verbalisations and does not pertain to extra-linguistic phenomena, as does irony in its situational variant. Therefore, while situations can be only ironic (being extra-linguistic), people can be both ironic and sarcastic in their verbalisations (Haiman, 1998).

Claims are made that the feature distinguishing between sarcasm and irony (hereafter the focus is on the relevant rhetorical figure, unless the epithet "situational" or other is added) may be (lack of) the speaker's intention (Haiman, 1990, 1998; Gibbs et al., 1995; Gibbs, 2012). Haiman (1998: 25) presents sarcasm as an intentionally made rhetorical figure recruiting meaning reversal and communicating aggressive meanings: "sarcasm is characterized by the *intentional production* of an *overt and separate* metamessage 'I don't mean this' in which the speaker expresses hostility or ridicule of another speaker." Haiman (1990: 187) states that in contrast to sarcasm, "irony may be innocent. To be ironic, a speaker need not be aware that his words are 'false'." Thereby, Haiman (1990) suggests that it is the hearer that may interpret an utterance as being ironic, although it is not ironic by the speaker's devise. This postulate flies in the face of the traditional and still prevailing definition of irony as a purposefully employed rhetorical figure. Admittedly, Haiman (1990) makes this postulate only in order to be able to capture the intentionally produced rhetorical figure under "sarcasm", while reserving "irony" primarily for situational irony, which seems to encompass also the rare cases of unintended overt untruthfulness.

Similarly, proposing that irony does not have to be intentional, Gibbs (2012) unwittingly conflates situational irony with the rhetorical figure, as borne out by his example of "unintentional irony": "I would never be involved in any cheating" said by someone who has unknowingly been involved in cheating (Gibbs, 2012: 107). In actual fact, this is an example of situational

---

[3] Overt untruthfulness may be implicit when irony coincides with another figure, notably a metaphor (Dynel, 2016c), or in the case of *verisimilar irony*, that is when the literal reading of an utterance is truthful per se, but it does not exhaust the speaker's meaning (see Dynel, 2013b and references therein).

irony based on the speaker's obliviousness to some goings-on. Specifically, as Kapogianni (2016a) rightly observes, this is an instance of dramatic irony (see Lucariello, 1994), which involves a person whose expressed beliefs are in striking contrast with the actual state of affairs. The thrust of all this is that both irony and sarcasm need to be intentionally produced (even though the intention need not be conscious, and the speakers need not label their utterances the same as researchers do).

Interestingly, Camp (2012) seems to interpret sarcasm as a notion that encompasses irony, and generally amounts mainly to irony. She claims that her "analysis of sarcasm can accommodate most if not all of the cases described as verbal irony", even though she appears to differentiate between the two when she states that "sarcasm is typically more explicit than irony, and involves a simpler mapping from literal to figurative meaning" (Camp, 2012: 625). It is difficult to explain how these two features (explicitness and simplicity) are to be understood and measured. All irony is implicit but may indeed involve varied degrees of inferential effort, and sarcasm may also demand inferential effort even if it need not entail implicitness. On the whole, most examples of sarcasm that Camp (2012) addresses and the theory she quotes concern the figure of irony. At no point does she mention the inherent aggressiveness of sarcasm. This leads to a conclusion that she takes "sarcasm" as an etic label for irony (see other references below). Nevertheless, some of Camp's (2012) examples and categories, notably the "like"- prefixed sarcasm, cannot be classified as irony for they do not show the characteristics of irony, as Kapogianni (2016b) also notes.

Apart from the isolated claims quoted above, three prevalent perspectives can be discerned in the scholarship. Some authors perceive sarcasm as being independent from irony, others treat sarcasm as a subtype of irony, and still others use the label as a synonym for irony, or a substitute for irony. The members of the last group, even if cognisant of the fact that the denotation of irony is not precisely the same as that of sarcasm, seem to use the two labels, "sarcasm" and "irony", interchangeably as if they are synonyms, not specifying any distinguishing features between the two notions (e.g. Jorgensen, 1996; Gibbs, 1986; Toplak and Katz, 2000; Gerrig and Goldvarg, 2000; Long and Graesser, 1988; Gibbs and O'Brien, 1991; Giora, 1998; McDonald, 1999; Schwoebel et al., 2000; Attardo et al., 2003; Coulson, 2005; Fallis, 2009; Sanders, 2013; Drucker et al., 2014; Kunneman et al., 2015; Giora et al., 2015). Moreover, "sarcasm" appears to be given preference by these authors, even though they draw heavily on the literature on irony. This choice of the label may be dictated by the use of "sarcasm" by lay language users of English, notably the American variety.

Admittedly, the dominating view in the contemporary literature is that sarcasm is a type of irony. This is manifest in different strands of research, one of which concerns (im)politeness, specifically the notion of *mock politeness* (i.e. overtly pretended politeness) propounded as one of the strategies of impoliteness (see Culpeper, 1996, 2005; Culpeper et al., 2003; Bousfield, 2007, 2008; Taylor, 2015a, 2015b; Dynel, 2016b). Leech, the original proponent of mock politeness, conceives it as a synonym for "irony", understood as "an apparently friendly way of being offensive" (1983: 144). In his more recent work, Leech (2014: 232) presents "conversational irony" as being synonymous with "sarcasm". Developing on the notion of mock politeness, Culpeper (1996: 356) admits that he prefers "the term sarcasm to Leech's irony, since irony can be used for enjoyment and comedy" but his "understanding of sarcasm is close to Leech's (1983) conception of irony." Culpeper (1996: 356) thus associates sarcasm with "mock politeness for social disharmony" or the irony that exerts negative interpersonal effects (Culpeper in Dynel, 2013d). It should be stressed, however, that sarcasm can also be used for "enjoyment and comedy", i.e. for the sake of humour, but the humorous response can hardly be invited in the target (Gibbs, 1994; Dynel, 2013a). Generally, (im)politeness researchers' view of sarcasm as a vehicle for impoliteness ties in with the prevalent view of sarcasm as an aggressive verbal activity. They also deem sarcasm a type of irony, narrowing down its scope to overtly pretended politeness. As Taylor (2015a: 127) rightly concludes, equating mock politeness with irony/sarcasm is ill-advised since "the label of sarcasm is simultaneously too broad, because behaviours labelled as sarcastic do not always perform mock politeness, and too narrow because there are mock polite behaviours which would not be labelled as sarcastic in either the lay or ac-ademic/theoretical senses."

Outside (im)politeness studies, sarcasm is commonly defined as irony that carries severe criticism (e.g. Long and Graesser, 1988; Gibbs and O'Brien, 1991; Barbe, 1995; Gibbs, 2000; Caucci and Kreuz, 2012). Sarcasm is thus perceived as the "crudest" form of irony (Muecke, 1969: 20) or "an especially negative form of irony" (Gibbs, 1994: 384). Gibbs seems to concede that irony and sarcasm are independent notions when he remarks that "it is possible to make sarcastic remarks without being ironic" but claims that "most sarcasm uses irony to get its bitter or caustic effect" (1994: 108).[4] Based on a dictionary definition, Gibbs states that "sarcasm depends for its effect on bitter, caustic, and *other ironic* language that is usually directed against an individual" (1994: 108, my emphasis). Haiman espouses a belief that the essential feature of sarcasm "is that it is overt irony[5] *intentionally used by the speaker as a form of verbal aggression*" (1998: 21, italics in original). Importantly, the goal

---

[4] At the same time, Gibbs (1994) refers to Seckman and Couch (1989), who claim that sarcasm may be bitter or mild, hence manifesting different degrees of intensity. Even more interestingly, Gibbs (1994) abandons the sarcasm vs. irony distinction when he claims that there are two prominent kinds of irony: "jocularity and sarcasm", the former being produced in "a jesting manner" and the latter being "bitter and caustic" (Gibbs, 1994: 372). On this reading, the term "jocularity" should not be equated with what seems to be the default reading: humour devoid of serious propositional meaning. Disregarding the parlance, Gibbs (1994) differentiates between two forms of irony, one benevolent and humorous, and the other hostility-oriented. He also rightly indicates that one instance of irony may show both aspects depending on a given hearer's perspective. Incidentally, later in his work, Gibbs (2000) gives a very broad view of "irony" as a blanket term for jocularity, sarcasm, hyperbole, rhetorical questions and understatements. These are distinct notions that cannot be rashly subsumed under "irony", although they may serve irony (on humour, see Dynel, 2014; on rhetorical figures, see Dynel, 2016c; Neuhaus, 2016 and references therein).

[5] All irony is overt in a sense that the hearer must recognise its presence to infer the intended meaning.

of such aggressive irony (i.e. sarcasm) is to deprecate or even ridicule the victim (see Kreuz and Glucksberg, 1989; Lee and Katz, 1998; Channon et al., 2005; Shamay-Tsoory et al., 2005; Bowes and Katz, 2011).

Supportive of the aggressive nature of sarcasm, a few authors explicitly ascribe to sarcasm meaning opposition typically associated with (standard) irony. For example, Haiman (1990: 181) claims that a sarcastic speaker "intends to mean theopposite of what his message would normally mean." Similarly, Rockwell writes that "both sarcasm and irony describe utterances that express the opposite of the speaker's true intent" (2006: 6) and conceptualises sarcasm as a subtype of irony, "asharply mocking or contemptuous ironic remark intended to wound another" (2000: 485). For their part, Leggitt and Gibbs (2000: 5) propose that sarcasm "clearly contradicts the knowable state of affairs", which irony does as well. Leggitt and Gibbs
(2000) see sarcasm as more pointed and critical than irony but differentiate between the two also depending on who an utterance is critical of. Irony, they claim, is not directly critical of the addressee,[6] whilst sarcasm is. Contrary to what the two authors claim, the participatory status of the target (a hearer or non-participant) of a negatively evaluative utterance does not
appear to be a solid criterion helping discriminate between the two notions. It is impossible to tell why an utterance cannot besarcastic, i.e. bitingly critical, about someone who cannot hear it.

The proponents of what may be considered a "weaker view" aver that sarcasm is a subtype of irony which expresses any kind of negative attitude, the premise of its severity and face damaging effects being marginalised (Kreuz and Glucksberg, 1989; Kreuz and Roberts, 1993). By the same token, Alba-Juez and Attardo (2014: 100) define sarcasm as negative irony, which concerns cases "where an apparently positive comment expresses a negative criticism [sic] or judgement of a person, a thing or a situation." This line of reasoning is not tenable, inasmuch as all irony is intrinsically critical, even if some positive evaluation of a different referent should also be communicated as well (see Garmendia, 2010, 2014; Dynel, 2013b, 2016a on the myth of positive irony). It is indeed the case, though, that whilst aggression inheres in sarcasm, irony, albeit communicating negative evaluation, does not need to involve aggression and may even mitigate criticism (see Dynel, 2016a for an overview of findings). Finally, a number of researchers endorse a view, which is the one championed here, that sarcasm and irony are independent but potentially co-occurring notions. As Kreuz and Glucksberg (1989: 374) rightly note, people "can use verbal irony without being sarcastic and can also be sarcastic without being ironic". The same distinction is made in two influential works on the English language. Partridge (1957: 160) warns against confusing irony with sarcasm, "which is direct: sarcasm means precisely what it says, but in a sharp, bitter, cutting, caustic, or acerb manner; it is the instrument of indignation, a weapon of offense, whereas irony is one of the vehicles of wit." What Partridge (1957) appears to communicate under the "direct" and "means precisely what it says" claim is that sarcasm does not involve the implicitness typical of irony, which may be defined as originating in overt untruthfulness (and the flouting of the Gricean first maxim of Quality). However, there is no reason to believe that sarcasm cannot entail implicitness of other kinds (e.g. seen as resting on flouting any of the other Gricean maxims, or even the first maxim of Quality yet not conducive to irony but metaphor, for example). Unlike Partridge's (1957), Fowler's (1965) perspective on the sarcasm vs. irony distinction does not give rise to any misgivings. Fowler (1965: 535) states that sarcasm "does not necessarily involve irony, [and] irony has often no touch of sarcasm. But irony [.] is so often made the vehicle of sarcasm or the utterance of things designed to hurt the feelings, that in popular use the two are much confused." He concludes that the "essence of sarcasm is the intention of giving pain by (ironical or other) bitter words" (Fowler, 1965: 535). In the teeth of the prevailing sarcasm-as-irony view, a distinction between the two concepts is also drawn in contemporary literature. For example, Rockwell (2006: 6) claims that the two notions "differ in content in that sarcasm, is generally used to offer criticism, particularly to insult; whereas irony can be used for making any type of comment – positive or negative." Unfortunately, this explanation seems to conflate two issues: the type of evaluation that irony carries with the interpersonal consequences that the use of sarcasm and irony invites. As stated above, all irony carries implicit negative evaluation. Glenwright and Pexman (2010: 432) aptly observe that both sarcasm and irony serve the expression of "a critical attitude with humor but sarcasm serves an additional ridiculing function that irony does not," adding that "the target of sarcastic criticism is a person while the target of ironic criticism is not personal." A disclaimer needs to be made that irony may be person-directed as well, but the critical evaluation need not be produced with a view to offending the evaluated
individual.

Another proposal for differentiation between the two constructs comes from Reyes et al. (2013). They rightly state that sarcasm "is more often concerned with biting delivery and savage putdowns" (Reyes et al., 2013: 242) and that "sarcasm has an obviously mocking tone that is used against another" (Reyes et al., 2013: 260). However, less convincingly, Reyes et al. claim that "irony is often more sophisticated, more subtle and ambiguous, and even self-deprecating" (2013: 260) and that it often coincides with "playful pretense" (2013: 241). "Sophistication" is a feature that may equally apply to sarcasm and to irony, and both may lack sophistication (e.g. conventional irony "Oh, nice!" and conventional sarcasm "Like I care!"). The feature of ambiguity is vague, too. Irony does involve the utterance vs. meaning distinction, but the speaker typically intends the hearer to infer the implied meaning, rather than invite the two alternative interpretations, and hence ambiguity. Finally, irony needs to be differentiated from *playful pretense* understood as jocularity that does not promote truthful meanings. Whilst irony is sometimes conceptualised as a type of pretense, it does communicate non-jocular truthful meanings (see Dynel, 2017a).

---

[6] Admittedly, Leggitt and Gibbs (2000) see this as a generic notion pertaining to any ratified hearer type, not accounting for the different (un)ratified hearer types (see e.g. Dynel, 2011b).

Yet another solution to the question about how irony can be differentiated from sarcasm comes from Kapogianni (2011), whose postulate is closest to the one put forward here. According to Kapogianni (2011), "counterfactuality" is the basic criterion discriminating between irony and *non-ironic sarcasm*, which encompasses negatively evaluative comments not conflicting with reality/the truth. In the neo-Gricean approach supported here, the focus is not on "the truth", but on the speaker's belief about what the reality is, as reflected by the first maxim of Quality "Do not say what you believe to be false (Grice, 1989: 35). In standard irony, this maxim is flouted, and thus the utterance is overtly untruthful. In *verisimilar irony* (which does involve saying what one believes to be true, as in "I appreciate drivers who signal" uttered by a driver after another one has just changed lanes without signalling), the maxim is observed at the level of what is said, but it may be seen to be flouted at the level of *as if implicature* (see Dynel, 2013b). As already mentioned, however, sarcasm can also be manifest in utterances which reside in implicitness that stems from the floutings of the Gricean maxims, inclusive of the first Quality maxim, thereby also showing non-ironic overt untruthfulness. This is why sarcastic meaning may not amount to the Gricean "what is said" when an utterance is couched in metaphor or hyperbole, for instance. In other words, non-ironic sarcastic utterances may also involve floutings of the first maxim of Quality, coinciding with overt untruthfulness conducive to a negatively evaluating implicature which does not necessitate meaning negation typical of standard irony based on overt explicit untruthfulness.

Let us take stock. The perspective promoted here is that sarcasm and irony are distinct phenomena, which may co-occur. The distinguishing feature of sarcasm is its aggressive nature or, to use different parlance, impolite, disaffiliative, disparaging or ridiculing potential. By contrast, irony, albeit inherently carrying implicit negative evaluation, may be benign and serve politeness (for an overview, see Dynel, 2016a). The hallmark of irony is the overt untruthfulness that fosters the focal evaluative implicature. This feature is not intrinsic to sarcasm. The thrust of all this is that sarcasm does not need to evince the characteristics of irony and vice versa. Consequently, the interchangeable use of the labels "sarcasm" and "(sarcastic) irony" is not regarded here as being cogent, even if this practice is not entirely unfounded, given the frequent concomitance of the two phenomena (see Brown, 1980; Kreuz and Glucksberg, 1989). What most researchers who discuss sarcasm as the aggressive form of irony seem to have in mind is, technically, a combination of irony and sarcasm, which may be (more properly) called *sarcastic irony*.

Sarcastic irony hence comes into being when sarcasm and irony mesh. Therefore, sarcastic irony has the characteristics of both irony and sarcasm, and it may be defined as a subtype of irony which is necessarily directed at a victim and intended to express biting criticism to disparage the victim, i.e. the targeted individual(s) (for similar views, see Kreuz and Glucksberg, 1989; Kumon-Nakamura et al. 1995; Dews et al., 1995; Barbe, 1995; Jorgensen, 1996; Gibbs, 2000; Utsumi, 2000; Toplak and Katz, 2000; Campbell and Katz, 2012; see also Muecke, 1969).[7] Like pure sarcasm, sarcastic irony is deployed primarily to deprecate and even ridicule the target, as reflected by the studies that adduce evidence in favour of irony being a vehicle for scathing criticism (for an overview and references, see Dynel, 2016a), as well as possibly also to promote humorous effects for other participants in an interaction. For example, Bowes and Katz (2011) testify that the victim does not perceive a sarcastically ironic barb as humorous, as opposed to the speaker. Frequently, it is also a non-victimised hearer (an interlocutor or viewer) that may be expected to find a sarcastically ironic utterance amusing.

4. "Sarcasm" and "irony" as (meta)pragmatic labels

Recent years have seen the influx of studies on *metapragmatics* (for the different definitions, see Caffi, 1994; Verschueren, 2004; Hübler and Bublitz, 2007), encompassed by *metalinguistics*, which has its roots in Jakobson's (1960) notion of *meta-language*. The focus of metalinguistics is the analysis of language users' expressions describing a chosen communicative phenomenon, whilst metapragmatics appertains specifically to the understandings of behaviours that give rise to these labels (Taylor, 2015b). As Verschueren (1999: 188) defines it, metapragmatics is concerned with the "metalevel, where indicators of reflexive awareness are to be found in the actual choice-making that constitutes language use." Metapragmatic research has addressed different topics, such as the (im)politeness frameworks (e.g. Culpeper, 2011; Taylor, 2015a, 2015b; Sinkeviciute, this special issue), where it has been concerned with "the judgements of appropriateness on one's own and other people's communicative behavior" (Caffi, 1994: 2461). However, metapragmatics concerns not only appropriateness but also, more generally, evaluation/judgements and labelling of people's communicative behaviours, based on their knowledge of pragmatic phenomena. What seems relevant in this context is Lucy's (1993) notion of *reflexive language*, which corresponds to Jakobson's (1960) *metalingual function*. To use language reflexively is "to speak about speech, that is, to use language to communicate about the activity of using language" (Lucy, 1993: 9). Such reflexive language use comes into being when "speakers remark on language, report utterances, index and describe aspects of the speech event, invoke conventional names, and guide listeners in the proper interpretation of their utterances" (Lucy, 1993: 11).

Kádár and Haugh (2013: 192) list three approaches to analysing metalanguage in the literature on politeness: corpus analysis, lexical/conceptual mapping, and metapragmatic interviews/questionnaires. However, this can hardly be interpreted as a proper taxonomy of approaches, for they are not distinguished according to one criterion and are not mutually exclusive. Importantly, the second approach refers to a specific theory applied in analysis, whilst the other two represent data collection methods that may actually overlap (interviews may yield corpora data). Basically, within corpora studies on metalinguistic/

---

[7] Sarcastic irony is also sometimes defined more narrowly as a seemingly positive verbalisation expressing intended negative evaluation of a victim (Jorgensen, 1996; Colston and Gibbs, 2007; Anolli et al., 2002). This view is not supported here, however, since positive evaluation need not be present on the level of expression.

metapragmatic labels, a distinction can be drawn between elicitation-based experimental studies and studies of naturallyoccurring discourse, with the data coming from different sources (written or spoken, pre-existing corpora or corpora compiled by the researchers). The research on "irony" and "sarcasm" conducted so far represents primarily the latter strand, as the following sub-section will bear out.

4.1. Studies on "sarcasm" and "irony" as emic labels

A lot of pragma-cognitive corpus-based studies have focused on the cues for sarcasm and irony that help detect these phenomena in discourse. Some of these cues, rather than being (optional) concomitants of irony (e.g. intonation, facial expressions or verbal cues, such as hyperbole), can be conceived of as being metapragmatic labels, which attest to language users' metapragmatic awareness. Most recently, some attention has been paid to *hashtag* as a marker of irony (Reyes et al.,2012, 2013) or sarcasm in tweets (Kunneman et al., 2015). This is because these irony- or sarcasm-indicating hashtags are used as categorising labels or metadata that signal the use of irony/sarcasm when nonverbal cues that typically accompany orally produced irony, such as tone of voice (see e.g. Bryant and Fox Tree, 2005; Rockwell, 2007) are absent. Whilst these non- verbal cues may be used only subconsciously, the use of "#sarcasm" or "#irony" is the indication of conscious metapragmaticlabelling of one's utterance at the time of production.

On the whole, the "irony" or "sarcasm" labels may occur in discourse after an act of irony or sarcasm has been performed or observed, with the evaluation being made by an interlocutor in a natural conversation, or an experiment participant. In their study based on response elicitation, Jorgensen et al. (1984: 117) take participants' metapragmatic labels "joking, teasing, fooling, humouring, amusing or playing a game" in reference to potentially ironic utterances as failures to perceive the irony, which the researchers have expected to be called "ironic, sarcastic or facetious." This methodology does not appear to have been properly formed. Jorgensen et al. (1984) focus on only three labels, with the "facetious" label being doubt-provoking. The fact that the participants saw humour in ironic utterances does not mean that they failed to recognise their ironic character or the implicit meaning. The elicitation-based studies of Kreuz and Glucksberg (1989) and Dress et al. (2008) are much more solid.

In Kreuz and Glucksberg's (1989) experiment, subjects (native speakers of English studying at Princeton University) were asked to explain in their own words what sarcasm and irony meant to them. Altogether, the findings testify that, to laylanguage users, "sarcasm" stands for the rhetorical figure, whilst "irony" denotes irony of fate. Sarcasm is shown to be verbal,as 95% of the subjects confirmed this, while irony was perceived as such only by 30% of subjects. Sarcasm is also believed to be counterfactual (68%), unlike irony (25%); hurtful (53%), unlike irony (0%); and intentional (23%), unlike irony (0%). On the other hand, irony is reported to have been regarded as involving surprising or unexpected events (50%), unlike sarcasm (0%). Similarly, Dress et al.'s (2008) study indicates that US subjects' definitions of "irony" correspond to situational irony, whereas "sarcasm" is associated with features ascribed by researchers to the figure of irony (statement vs. intended meaningmismatch, negative evaluation, and humour, with the last feature varying for the participants from Northern and Southern states).

There seems to be a bit more research on "irony" and "sarcasm" labels that capitalises on naturally occurring discourse. Barbe's (1995: 132) analysis, admittedly qualitative only, of "explicit irony" markers (e.g. "isn't it ironic?") in the letters-to- the-editor section in two American newspapers demonstrates that these markers signal "an additional semantic feature *coincidence*" (Barbe, 1995), which is central to situational irony. However as Shelley's (2001) careful examination bears out, situational irony may involve other factors. Shelley's (2001) study took as its departure point an assumption that the use of the term "irony" would yield instances of situational irony. However, the research conducted on the basis of newspaper articles in English (whose variety is not explicitly stated) submitted results that included examples of non-situational irony (which were discarded by the author), and hence where the label pertained, among other things, to "remarks, commentary, speeches" (Shelley, 2001: 786). Indirectly, this reveals the fact that the "irony" label is not restricted to situational irony, even if it should be only intermittently used with reference to the rhetorical figure.

For his part, Partington (2006) examined the use of "explicit markers of irony" (Barbe, 1993, 1995) in spoken political corpora, specifically White House press conferences (briefings) in American English, as well as British news interviews. Among other things, he made concordances of the words "*irony, ironical* and *ironically*". Partington's (2006: 193) study adduces evidence that the labels, appearing only nine times in the very large corpora, "are not simply metalinguistic flags, noting and bringing to the readers' attention some ironic potential pre-existing in the discourse at some particular point. Instead, and far more creatively, they are rhetorical structures and are organized purposefully by an author to construct an argument with a specific critical message." What these findings really show is then that the applications of the "irony" label are not metalinguistic indications of the use of the rhetorical figure. Instead, they are assertions concerning situational irony, of which the speakers are critical. In Partington's (2006) data, the acknowledgement of situational irony is orientated towards the criticism of chosen individuals (e.g. their self-contradiction). However, this should not be mistaken for the implicit criticism necessarily conveyed by the figure of irony.

Simpson's (2011) observations concerning nominal group patterns in the British National Corpus suggest that irony is considered by language users to be gradable and diversified, given the different modifiers that precede it, such as: "heavy" or "bitter" (next to the categories of irony, such as "dramatic"). It is here argued that these findings are not to be taken to mean that language users see irony as a gradable construct. Rather, the collocation-based labels found in the corpus represent the different degrees of the heaviness of criticism, whilst the irony vs. non-irony dichotomy will stay intact.

Simpson (2011) also observes that many modifiers denoting a strongly affective negative stance eclipse the few positive ones, such as "delicious" or "pleasant". Finally, whilst Simpson (2011) does not explicate the rationale for some modifiers that he lists, such as "curious" or "final", it may be extrapolated that these pragmatic labels pertain to the verbal acknowledgement of situational irony.

Most recently, Taylor (2015b) conducts a careful cross-cultural corpus-based study of the metapragmatic labels "irony" and "sarcasm" in English and Italian, based on data collected from Internet forums. Taylor (2015b) reports that in the English data, the *ironic* and *sarcastic* metapragmatic labels inherently express negative evaluation. At the same time, she makes a disclaimer that the findings concerning the "ironic" label are less clear, since very few recoverable referent behaviours could be found. On the other hand, as Taylor (2015b) concludes, the uses of the Italian counterpart of "sarcastic" typically represent negative evaluation, and the counterpart of "ironic" may express negative evaluation. All the same, in a number of cases (around 20%), it concerns also sexually charged or "non-serious" behaviours. Overall, these findings do not account for the presence of labels signalling situational irony in the data, which was beyond the focus of the (im)politeness research project.

5.   Methodology of the present study

The present study on emic labels uses data taken from the discourse of a television series, premised on an assumption that language use at the *characters' level of communication* in contemporary films and series, in many ways, reflects real-life language use (see Dynel, 2011a, 2017b for discussion and references). Scripted and fictional as they may be, filmed interactions constitute *naturally occurring data* that "has not been elicited by the researcher for the purpose of his or her research project but that occurs for communicative reasons outside of the research project for which it is used" (Jucker, 2009: 1615). Albeit prefabricated, characters' exchanges operate in similar ways as real-life ones, even if particular phenomena may differ qualitatively or quantitatively. This concerns also the use of irony, which may exhibit peculiarities and exceptional frequencies, such as fictional speakers' creativity or fictional hearers' irony blindness, both conducive to humorous effects brought about for the viewers' sake (see Dynel, 2013a; Kapogianni, 2014). This, however, should have no bearing on the emic labelling of utterances and situations as "ironic" or "sarcastic", which will be indicative of real-life language use.

Essentially, scriptwriters (and the other members of the production crew) design characters' utterances, based on the (tacit) norms pertaining to real-life language use with which they are familiar, so that the target audiences can understand the characters' interactions and find them plausible and natural. Scriptwriters need to show great sensitivity to language use, being capable of forming the idiolects of the different characters, including the characters' labelling of communicative phenomena. Consequently, the role of metapragmatic awareness (Verschueren, 2004) seems to be particularly salient in the case of scriptwriters' construction of fictional discourse that they carefully devise with a view to making it available to mass audiences. Thus, the pragmatic labels (concerning situations) and metapragmatic labels (concerning utterances), based on "sarcasm" and "irony", in the characters' discourse will be the result of scriptwriters' intuitions and/or careful consideration, sometimes validated by other production crew members (e.g. actors and directors). Essentially, the metapragmatic labels in fictional discourse may be regarded as being more carefully considered (and discussed) than those in spontaneous real-life interactions, where corrections are unlikely to be made in retrospect. This is not to suggest that scriptwriters must consciously ponder on or discuss why they are choosing a particular label to be used by a given character or consciously recognise the presence of the focal rhetorical figure.

The corpus for the present study comes from the American television series entitled "House" and produced by Paul Attanasio and David Shore for the Fox network (8 seasons run November 2004–May 2012). The plot of this medical drama series revolves around the life and work of a maverick diagnostician (performed by Hugh Laurie) and fellow doctors. The eight seasons totalled 177 episodes (each comprised of 6500–7500 words), in which altogether 30 scriptwriters were involved.[8] The dataset is sourced from peer corrected fan transcripts published at http://clinic-duty.livejournal.com/.

All the episode transcripts for the 8 seasons were manually searched for the lemmas "irony" and "sarcasm" and their derivatives: "ironic, "ironical", and "ironically", as well as "sarcastic", and "sarcastically", hereafter captured collectively as "irony*" and "sarcasm*" respectively. Relevant instances were found in the transcripts in the characters' utterances, as well as transcribers' evaluations about the on-screen interactions. The latter were duly deleted from the corpus so that it should encompass only the use of "irony*" and "sarcasm*" labels in characters' utterances, i.e. in the discourse of "House" per se. A few examples were duly discarded when the labels were used without sufficient context or clarification that would help determine the referent of the (meta)pragmatic label, as in this instance:

Example 1[9]
[House has been confiding in Wilson, his friend, about the behavior of Stacey, House's ex-fiancée, who is now working for the hospital.]
1. House: She was unbelievably pissy 3 hours ago.
2. Wilson: Hmm! Pissy with you, happy with her husband. Yes there could only be one possible explanation.
3. House:

> When she's angry, she gets sarcastic. When she's annoyed, she's funny, but when she's frustrated, she gets pissy.
>
> Season 2, Episode 6

The "sarcastic" label mentioned in (3) cannot be attributed to any specific behaviour, whether verbal or non-verbal, because the woman has manifested a different kind of behaviour observable from House's and the viewer's perspective.

Table 1 presents the numerical data concerning the emic (meta)pragmatic labels on the characters' level of communication:

Table 1
Emic labels in the discourse of "House".

	"irony*"	"sarcasm*"
Number of all instances	32	24
Number of discarded instances	1	5

The following two sections will elucidate the ways in which the emic (meta)pragmatic labels are used in the interactions held by the characters of the American television series, as devised by the scriptwriters. Although the focus is on the labels produced by fictional characters, it must be borne in mind that they are the product of real lay language users, native speakers of American English. The analysis of emic labels is conducted against the backdrop of the academic (etic) understandings advocated here. Essentially, irony is a polysemous notion that encompasses several discrete constructs (notably, the rhetorical figure and situational irony), and sarcasm and the figure of irony (that are sometimes conflated in the academic literature) are distinct linguistic phenomena.

6. "Irony*"

From among the corpus of 31 relevant instances of "irony*", 29 serve as indications of situational irony, which ties in with the findings reported in the previous research on the emic labels. Interestingly, the label "irony*" is used in 2 cases to demonstrate the presence of the rhetorical figure in a preceding utterance. These two uses of "irony*" can be seen as met-apragmatic labels, inasmuch as they concern language use.

> Example 2
> [Doctor Kutner has committed suicide. Everybody is shocked and House is intent on figuring out why Kutner has killed himself. In a previous scene, in Foreman's presence, House offended Kutner's parents, blaming them for their adopted son's unhappiness and death. The team, including Doctor Foreman, are now in the diagnostics conference room to discuss the current patient called Charlotte.]
> 1. House: So, what can shred an epiglottis and make muscle disappear?
> 2. Foreman: Mr. and Mrs. Kutner. They caused Kutner's death. Why not Charlotte's?
> 3. House: Mourning period's over. Foreman's sense of irony is back. I was wrong about the ethnic reason.
>   **(.)**
> Season 5, Episode 20

Foreman's reply (2) to House's question concerning the patient (1) is topically irrelevant and overtly untruthful, in etic terms, being couched in the figure of irony. Foreman cannot possibly be willing to suggest that the late colleague's parents are responsible for their patient's illness, or even for Kutner's suicide. Foreman is not genuinely making this nonsensical suggestion about the patient and means only to communicate implicitly his negative evaluation of House's previous behaviour towards Kutner's parents. House indirectly puts a metapragmatic "irony" label on Foreman's verbal behaviour consequent upon his "sense of irony" (3). Interestingly, House does not call it "sarcasm", even though Foreman's referent utterance seems to carry biting criticism, which is associated with sarcasm, as understood in etic terms. This may have to do with the fact that "sense of sarcasm" is not a well-formed lexical unit. House uses the notion "sense of irony" as a parallel to "sense of humour", likely meaning the general skill of producing what is sometimes deemed the figure of irony in folk knowledge, i.e. "saying something different/opposite to what you mean" (see Dynel, 2014). This is what is manifest in Foreman's utterance that has inspired this metapragmatic comment. The following example represents a similar case where the emic and etic un-derstandings of "irony" as a trope are compatible.

> Example 3
> [The hospital is being inspected. Earlier in this episode, House demanded that Doctor Lisa Cuddy, Dean of Medicine, allow him to watch TV in the hospital (for diagnostic purposes), but she refused. House is now eating a sandwich in the morgue, when Cuddy enters. As we learn from the interaction between the two, they both know that Conway, the inspector, will come to the morgue any minute.]

---
[9] All the examples given here are preceded by the description of the context added by the author.

1. Cuddy:	You're going to get me fired over a sandwich?
2. House:	No. Over a TV. And you're not gonna get fired because you're gonna fold.
3. Cuddy:	No, I won't.
4. House:	But you're gonna push it. So we need a safe word. So you can signal your unconditional surrender. Call me "Sweet Sauce." [Conway enters] [House smiles at Conway and shakes his hand] Dr. House. I don't think we've met.
5. Conway:	Dr. Jaime Conway. I've heard your name.
6. House:	Most people have. It's also a noun. [pause] I sometimes come down here to relax, unwind. Maybe grab a –
7. Cuddy:	Sweet Sauce. [Conway stares]
8. House:	It's a nickname.
9. Cuddy:	An ironic nickname. Wow. It is almost two. Aren't you supposed to be.

Season 4, Episode 14

Cuddy uses the previously determined safe word "sweet sauce" (7) to prevent House from compromising her in front of the inspector by saying that he tends to come to the morgue to have a sandwich (6). As the safe word seems irrelevant in the context if taken on the most salient reading (i.e. food-related), House makes up an explanation for it, namely that this is his nickname, allegedly coined by others (i.e. "sweet sauce" means colloquially, "someone attractive or admi-rable") (8). In her witty response (9), Cuddy retroactively imposes what may be etically dubbed an "ironic" interpretation on the nickname that she is claimed to have used (7). She genuinely sees the positive appellation as being overtly untruthful, thereby implicating that she finds House an unattractive or despicable man. This is also a message that

Cuddy must be willing to communicate to House given the successful blackmail that he has just committed.[10] Most

importantly here, the emic label "ironic" indicates Cuddy's recognition of a phenomenon that, technically, corresponds with the rhetorical figure of irony, which she retroactively makes overt to her interlocutors. The relevance of this labelling for the present discussion is not affected by the fact that Cuddy cannot have meant her original utterance (7) to communicate any ironic nickname, and the metacomment on this utterance (9) involves deception of one of the conversationalists (Conway).

Except for these two examples of the "irony*" label being used with regard to the trope, all the other instances, and thus the overwhelming majority, of "irony*" in the data represent the characters' recognition of what amounts to situational irony in etic terms. Rather than account for the sources and/or mechanics of situational irony as discussed in the previous studies, the analysis that follows focuses on the creative methods of using the labels in question. In the discourse of "House", the use of the "irony*" label frequently transcends conventionalised expressions, such as "Isn't it ironic" or "The irony is that". Here are a few examples, by no means isolated instances, that illustrate the creative, and therefore humorous, use of "irony*" labels in characters' interactions. On the whole, 14 cases of the characters' acknowledging situational irony exhibit this potential.

Example 4
[A patient's room. His ex-wife, daughter, and girlfriend are with him, together with Doctor Wilson.]

1. Wilson:	You have acute lymphoblastic leukemia. A.L.L.
2. Ex-wife:	So, it is a recurrence.
3. Wilson:	No. It's different. It's a second leukemia. Probably caused by the chemotherapy we gave him five years ago.
4. Patient:	That's why you didn't see it. Maybe they can rename it ironic leukemia.

Season 6, Episode 10

The second leukaemia with which the patient has been diagnosed is not merely a matter of recurrence, for the leukaemia was caused by the very treatment of the previous occurrence of the same disease. To capture this standard situational irony in a nutshell, the patient coins a term "ironic leukaemia" (4). The adjective "ironic" popular in everyday discourse is jocularly elevated to the status of a medical term. In a similar example below, the speaker purports to give the name of an entity, while evaluating the situation, in actual fact.

Example 5
[Doctors Chase, Masters, and Taub are in the MRI control room. Taub, a womaniser, has been confiding in the two that his wife has met a man.]

---

[10] An anonymous referee points out that "ironic" does not refer to the origin of the nickname (as in "whoever named him Sweet Sauce did so with the intention of verbal irony"), but rather to the fact that the nickname is ironically (in the sense of situational irony) different from his general disposition/ attitude. I cannot find this interpretation tenable. This nickname does not exist, being only a deceptive explanation retroactively imposed on the secret code that the interactant who is not in the know will find uncanny. It would be irrational of any (imaginary) individual that Cuddy can conceive of to give House this nickname, on the understanding that this person knows House and his awful demeanour (and nicknames are not given by strangers). Since the actual evaluation of the "nickname" is made by Cuddy, she cannot possibly be suggesting that the nickname might have been given non-ironically to House by someone else, but that it is (ironically) inadequate, in her opinion only.

1. Taub:	Chickens aren't roosting. She's just got a friend. A guy she met in an online support group for cheating spouses.
2. Chase:	I've heard of that group. It's called irony.
3. Taub:	You think she's cheating on her spouse with someone from a cheating spouse support group? Season

7, Episode 8

Suspecting that Taub's wife has found more than a male friend in the support group, Chase leads Taub down the garden path in order to spring a surprise on him rhetorically (2). Rather than giving the actual name of the online group that Taub's wife has joined, Chase points to the situational irony, which Taub duly explicates (3). In yet another example, "irony" is used as if it were a physical entity.

Example 6
[House and his team are discussing the medical history of a patient, whom they discover to have had prophylactic double mastectomy and reconstructive surgery 10 years before in order to avoid breast cancer, with which her mother had been diagnosed.]

1. Kutner:	Okay, we can rule out breast cancer.
2. Taub:	Actually, I was going to rule it in. Paralysis could be paraneoplastic. Even the best surgeon can't remove every cell of breast tissue.
3. House:	MRI what's left of her chest. Set the machine to scan for irony. [sets his cup down, pausing] I'm going to go redo the patient history.

Season 4, Episode 10

If validated, the hypothesis that the patient is suffering from breast cancer (2) even though she underwent the most drastic preventative surgery may be considered irony of fate. As House makes the decision to verify this diagnosis (3), he uses the label "irony" as a regular noun in the object position, a noun denoting a palpable entity. The label "irony" is thus used as a metaphor for cancer cells.

Whilst in the previous three examples, the creativity resides in the semantics and grammar of the labels, in the following case, the creativity concerns the interactional realisation thereof.

Example 7
[On the pretext that he had cancer and depression consequent upon it, House extorted antidepressants in an outpatient procedure. On discovering part of the truth, Wilson and House's team laboured under a misapprehension that House really was suffering from cancer and depression, which is why House had to reveal the truth to everybody so that they should stop worrying. House is now talking to his friend, Doctor Wilson.]

1. Wilson:	You made people think that you were going to die!
2. House:	I didn't make them! I tried to hide it! You idiots needed to get into my business.
3. [Wilson is about to say something, but just starts laughing.]	
4. House:	I'm sure I'll regret asking, but why are you laughing?
5. Wilson:	It's ironic.
6. House:	I'm sure I'll regret asking, but why _ ?
7. Wilson:	Depression in cancer patients is not as common as you think. It's not the dying that gets to people. It's the dying alone. The patients with family, with friends. they tend to do okay. You don't have cancer. You do have people who give a damn. So what do you do? [laughs again] you fake the cancer, then push the people who care away.

Season 3, Episode 15

Wilson uses the label "ironic" (5) when commenting on House's behaviour and its repercussions, which Wilson finds preposterous to the extent of being amusing. The rationale for this kind of evaluation appears to be elusive to House (6). In his consecutive turn, Wilson provides the insightful explanation (7). In other words, he explains the complex situational irony that he has recognised, which concerns a mismatch between House's deception and antisocial behaviour and cancer patients' plight. In all the previous examples, each speaker acknowledges a state of affairs, dubbing it "irony*", which needs to be seen, it is here argued, as a pragmatic label, not a metapragmatic label, insofar as no evaluation of language use is made. The majority, 25 cases, of "irony*", function as such pragmatic labels indicating situational irony not contingent on any particular linguistic expression, even if inspired by utterances that communicate the surprisingly contradictory/compatible notions. The pragmatic labels testify to individuals' recognition of situational irony, which is essentially an extra-linguistic phenomenon. Nonetheless, situational irony can also be (un)intentionally induced by the speaker by dint of verbal expressions. Among the 29 instances of "irony*" pointing to situational irony, 4 represent this category. These four cases necessitate speakers' focus on language use per se. The speaker is not only the observer of the situational irony, but also its source, thanks to the verbal expression he/she deploys, whether or not initially envisaging the situational irony that will arise thanks to it in a given context, on which he/she duly comments. Essentially, the speaker makes a verbalisation couched in a punning (i.e. humorously ambiguous, thanks to polysemy or homonymy) lexical item only to recognise some coincidence/mismatch consequent upon one of the meanings and the situation at hand. However, even if created with the use of language, situational irony is not a linguistic property, so no references to it can technically be regarded as being metalinguistic/metapragmatic.

Example 8

[House and his team are brainstorming. House is adamant that the patient has cancer.]

1. Foreman: You need it to be cancer so you have an excuse to talk to Wilson.
2. House: Give me something else that explains this constellation of patients, then you can call me an ass.
3. Foreman: I didn't call you an ass.
4. Kutner: Perforated intestine. If this thing started as normal bacteria living in the intestines but got into a blood vessel through a vascular anomaly in the bowel wall, then they would affect every organ through the blood stream. It screws up everything. For   everyone.
5. House: Okay. It's a long shot. It is possible that I'm an ass. Ironically, we need to do a colonoscopy to confirm.

Season 5, Episode 2

In this interaction, House challenges Foreman to call him names if he is wrong (2). Later, he tacitly admits that he may have been wrong, and uses the polysemous word "ass" (i.e. "fool") again in reference to himself (5). This prompts him to observe the situational irony that he regards as arising thanks to the topical coincidence of the vulgar sense of the word "ass" (i.e. "pos- terior") he has used and the medical procedure (i.e. "colonoscopy") that they need to perform in order to arrive at the diagnosis. Overall, in accord with previous research, the data bear out that in American English, "irony*" is primarily a label used to indicate the recognition of situational irony (See Table 2). This label is frequently wittily entwined into fictional interactions. However, at the same time, it cannot be concluded that the respective rhetorical figure is not ever metapragmatically called "irony*" in emic language use, as the two examples prove. Finally, it needs to be stressed that the use of the "irony*" label with

Table 2
Emic "irony*" labels in "House" in reference to the preferred etic understandings.

		Situational irony	Figure of irony
Number of emic labels (31)	Pragmatic labels	29	0
	Metapragmatic labels	0	2

regard to surprisingly incongruous or compatible events is not at odds with the academic etic use of the label and the un-derlying understanding. The difference is that, typically, in order not to conflate the distinct phenomena, academics choose to use the epithet "situational" in such cases, reserving bare "irony" for the figure.

7. "Sarcasm*"

Altogether, 19 valid "sarcasm*" labels (i.e. excluding unintelligible instances) were found in the transcripts pertaining to 16 referent utterances. This is because 3 cases entailed one utterance being called identically twice by two interlocutors in one interaction (see Example 9 below). All of the 19 labels, which can be seen as constituting 16 distinct examples (this number will be hereafter taken into account in the quantitative summaries), technically qualify as metapragmatic labels as they concern the previous or (in one case, see Example 11) following verbal behaviour. Interestingly enough, from among the 16 metapragmatic evaluations based on the label "sarcasm*", only 7 show any indication of being sarcastic in the etic sense, i.e. aimed to cause verbal harm or be offensive towards a chosen hearer, rather than merely carrying some (relatively mild) critical evaluation. This kind of evaluation can be made on the strength of verbal cues (e.g. semantic and pragmatic meaning of utterances) and non-verbal cues (e.g. facial expression) indicating the speaker's intent, as well as the hearers' reactions and underlying feelings as made available to the viewer (see Dynel, 2016b).

On a different axis, 13 out of the 16 metapragmatic "sarcasm*" labels pertain to utterances which centre on the rhetorical figure of irony. The remaining 3 instances represent different communicative mechanisms, which may also be seen as cases of the speaker "not meaning what he/she is saying", which coincides with how the figure of irony is sometimes explained in folktheory. Therefore, it may be that the emic use of "sarcasm*" in the 3 cases is supposed to have signalled the presence of the rhetorical figure too, given the overt untruthfulness present in the examples. However, none of them meets the second condition of irony, namely implicit critical evaluation. These three examples are worth examining, for they represent the salient cases of "sarcasm" in the emic understanding that is incompatible with the figure of irony in the etic understanding, the equation that appears to prevail, as corroborated by the previous studies. Specifically, one example involves an instance of conventional (non-ironic) sarcasm (Example 9), the second one presents an abrupt implicit remark that also qualifies as (non-ironic) sarcasm (Example 10), in both cases understood as the etic term supported here, whilst the third one (Example 11) concerns a playful response, which can be seen as friendly *teasing* (e.g. Dynel, 2014).

Example 9

[Lisa Cuddy has recently split up with House after a-few-month relationship. In her dining room, she is talking to her sister, Julia, who is encouraging her to start dating. Cuddy seems to be reluctant to meet a man her sister is telling her about.]

1. Julia: Is this about House?

2. Cuddy:	What? Like I secretly wish I could alter the laws of the universe, change who we are, and magically make it work out?
3. Julia:	Yes, that's exactly what I'm asking.
4. Cuddy:	My sarcasm indicated no.
5. Julia:	No, your sarcasm indicated you wanted to avoid actually saying anything. Look, Lisa. all I know is you seem stuck. And I don't like seeing you like that.

Season 7, Episode 23

Two consecutive turns are based on the metapragmatic label "sarcasm", with Cuddy making an evaluation (4) of her previous utterance (2), and Julia echoing this label in her reply (5), which implies her tacit agreement on the evaluation. The evaluated utterance hinges on a conventional form of sarcastic, in etic terms, use of the word "like" (synonymous with sarcastic "as if"). The sarcastic use of "like" or "as if" pivots on either of them being used as a prefix preceding a declarative sentence, whose communicative force is thereby conventionally reversed (see Camp and Hawthorne, 2008). This is a contemporary idiomatic expression that inherently signals negation-based meaning and carries disparagement of the hearer. Here, the message communicated in (2) is that the speaker does not wish something impossible, and thus that the preceding question (1) was silly. Camp and Hawthorne (2008) and Camp (2012) call this kind of expression "sarcasm", which they seem to equate with the figure "irony", as they make a reference to Quintilian, who addressed irony. It is argued, nevertheless, that the conventional sarcastic "like" or "as if" cannot be equated with irony, specifically conventional irony (e.g. Giora, 2003), such as "Nice!". This is because expressions that are conventionally used in ironic senses are always conducive to (at least theoretically, cancellable) conversational implicatures, and they can easily be applied in non-ironic utterances (e.g. "Nice!" may carry the explicit meaning and positive evaluation) just like unconventional irony. By contrast, in no way can the sarcastic "like"/"as if" prefixed sentences be used to convey non-negated literal meanings, which disqualifies them as conversational implicatures, and hence as the figure of irony.

Example 10
[The team are now diagnosing a family who seem to be suffering from smallpox. It's night. House is sitting at his desk, Doctors Foreman and Masters are in front of him.]

1. House:	Means I was wrong. But to be precise, I was right before I was wrong, so _
2. Masters:	So we just give up and go home?
3. Foreman:	Actually, somebody locked the front door, but, yeah, we _ give up.
4. Masters:	We might as well keepd
5. House:	[firmly] We have our diagnosis. If you're eager, you can go find us a new case.
6. Masters:	[leaves]
7. Foreman:	I guess she's eager or has a blind spot for sarcasm.

Season 7, Episode 7

After Masters has left (6), Foreman recognises "sarcasm" (7) in House's previous utterance (5), perhaps unlike Masters. Whilst in etic terms, House's utterance (5) can be viewed as "sarcastic", thanks to its offensiveness, it cannot be classified as the figure of irony, for it does not involve meaning reversal and evaluative implicature. House is overtly (at least to Foreman) untruthful since he does not truthfully mean that Masters should actually go and search for a new case, but only suggests that he is done talking with her. Despite its implicitness, House's utterance is quite abrupt and displays his hostility towards her, which is in conformity with the etic definition of sarcasm. Example 11 stands in marked contrast to this.

Example 11
[House and Wilson are in the cafeteria. House keeps thinking about his current case.]

1. Wilson:	You're an addict. And I'm an idiot for thinking that your addictions were limited to pills, anti-social behavior, and sarcasm.
2. House:	[burps loudly] Sorry. Vicodin repeating on me.
3. Wilson:	[unaffected] You're also addicted to puzzles. You show all the classic behaviors. Lying, neglecting responsibilities, and you can't stop, no matter how devastating the consequences.

Season 8, Episode 7

Wilson makes a critical evaluation of House's predilections, which involves a metapragmatic "sarcasm" label concerning his verbal behaviour (1). This conjecture can be made because sarcasm must be verbal, regardless of which of any known emic or etic approach is taken into account. Even though the referent of this evaluation cannot be specified, House's reaction (2) exhibits his understanding of Wilson's metapragmatic label. It is then House's metapragmatic understanding of Wilson's metapragmatic evaluation that can be addressed here. In his response to a three-fold critical utterance (1), House produces a partly non-verbal reply (2) that overtly flaunts two of the behaviours for which he has been criticised (anti-social behaviour and addiction to Vicodin), which is why the third one must be alluded to, as well. It may be surmised that the utterance "Vicodin repeating on me" addresses also the "sarcasm" component that Wilson has mentioned. Insofar as House has self-induced the burping, his statement comes over as being overtly untruthful. However, it can hardly be classified as irony in etic terms, because it does not convey any implicit negative evaluation. Nor does it qualify as a sarcastic, i.e. aggressive, remark, even though it may overtly pretend to be aggressive. In this jocular, albeit vulgar, response, House wishes to prove the

correctness of Wilson's evaluative comment and make light of it. As Wilson's reaction (3) shows, he is impervious to his friend's response and continues his blunt diatribe. This is, altogether, part of an interaction between bosom friends, who maybe painfully honest towards each other but, at the same time, will easily engage in friendly teasing.

The 13 instances where the figure of irony is dubbed "sarcasm" in scriptwriters' emic evaluations can be divided into several subtypes, based on the referent of the labels: evaluation of one's own turn, evaluation of the interlocutor's turn, and evaluation of a non-participant's turn. On a different axis, the emic metapragmatic labels also show different motivation on the speaker's part, notably: to avoid misunderstanding either by self-clarification or by a request for clarification; or to disparage the hearer. Sometimes, the use of the emic metalabel "sarcasm*" retroactively indicates (or leads to the indication) that the figure of irony has not been intended by the speakers. Here are three instances which exemplify these different applications of the focal metapragmatic label.

Example 12
[The team have been trying to diagnose a teenage patient, with the likely suspect being multiple sclerosis (MS). The previous night the boy escaped to the roof. Doctors Cameron and Chase are in House's office. House enters.]
1. House: Anybody tell the family that their boy almost stepped off a roof? They must be thrilled.
2. Cameron: They're not suing, but I think only because Chase asked them.
3. House: Why does everyone always think I'm being sarcastic? This is great news! He doesn't have MS. The parents should be thrilled, well, the mom anyway. Of course, the dad probably doesn't **know.**
4. Foreman: Why doesn't he have MS?
5. House: He was on the roof thinking he was on the lacrosse field, conscious, and therefore not a night terror **(.)**
Season 1, Episode 2

In this interaction, House feels obliged to make a self-evaluative metapragmatic comment, metalabelling himself as a "sarcastic" speaker (3), which indirectly concerns his previous utterance (1). Specifically, House makes a generalisation triggered by Cameron's utterance (2), which reveals that he has been misunderstood. Thereby, House implicitly denies his intent (in etic terms, ironic intent) to communicate implicit criticism of his team along the lines of: "The parents must be very angry that you allowed their son to nearly step off the roof." He explains that the parents must be happy that the patient is not suffering from the serious disease. Incidentally, House must have wanted his utterance to be understood as involving the rhetorical figure in order to deceive Cameron and Chase (for his own pleasure). This is because the parents could not possibly have extrapolated from the fact that their son climbed to the roof and nearly fell from it a conclusion that he is not suffering from MS.

Example 13
[Doctor Wilson has talked to a patient who is suffering from the same disease as his wife, whose symptoms are progressing faster than the man's. Wilson has tried in vain to convince him that his wife should undergo brain biopsy, dangerous as it is, so that he can be saved. The man refuses to be treated so that his symptoms develop faster and he is the one to sacrifice himself. Wilson meets House outside the patient's room.]
1. House: Great job! Why don't you just shoot him in the head?
2. Wilson: Hold on, that gives me an idea. You know what could save this couple? Lots of misdirected sarcasm.
3. House: They're dead. Yelling at you might prevent you from screwing up like this! Season
3, Episode 5

In (1), Houses produces two overtly untruthful utterances involving the figure of irony: he is not truly complimenting on Wilson's achievement, and he is not sincerely making the gory suggestion, both with a view to lambasting him for having failed to persuade the patient to make the right decision. In his reply (2), also couched in the figure of irony, Wilson puts a label on House's utterance, albeit not referring to it directly, by mentioning "sarcasm". Thereby, Wilson implicitly criticises House for having attacked him. The following example shows a similar way of inexplicit reference to the preceding turn, but is based on metalabelling of one's own utterance.

Example 14
[In the emergency room, Cameron, who has left House's team, is examining a very obese patient's leg. House approaches.]
1. House: Treating professional sports injuries now?
2. Patient: No, I'm not **d**
3. House: Familiar with the concept of sarcasm? Don't sweat it, it's new.
Season 5, Episode 1

In his humorous ice-breaking turn addressed to Cameron, House employs the figure of irony that carries implicit negative evaluation and even ridicule whose target is the patient (1). Making an overtly untruthful allusion to the man (for House cannot possibly believe that the obese man is a sportsman), House implicitly and meanly criticises the patient for his obesity.

The patient's attempt at responding (2) indicates that he has taken House's utterance at face value, which causes House to butt in and make an indirect self-evaluative comment on his previous utterance, simultaneously pointing out the patient's metapragmatic misunderstanding, and thus naiveté.

Table 3 gives the quantitative findings concerning the use of "sarcasm*" in the series.

Table 3
Emic "sarcasm*" metapragmatic labels in "House" in reference to the preferred etic understandings.

	Figure of irony		Non-ironic overt untruthfulness	
Number of emic metapragmatic labels (16)	Sarcastic irony	Non-sarcastic irony	Non-ironic sarcasm	Other
	5	8	2	1

8. Conclusions

This paper has attempted to tease out the different understandings of the "sarcasm" and "irony" labels as they emerge both in the relevant scholarly literature and in popular parlance, based on the discourse of the chosen American television series. Whilst the different understandings of the polysemous term "irony" can easily be distinguished, the relationship between the rhetorical figure of irony and sarcasm cannot be easily determined, which manifests itself in the etic labels found in the scholarship. As reported here, there are a few major tendencies in the academic literature concerning the use of etic labels and definitions of the focal phenomena. Given the etymology and original use of each term, as well as explanatory advantages, the perspective endorsed here is that the two linguistic phenomena need to be seen as distinct but co-occurring, irrespective of how they may be conceptualised and called by some academic and many lay language users (of American English).

Both sarcasm and irony are frequently recognised as categories of humour (in multi-party interactions), and both convey negative evaluation. However, the central hallmark of irony is overt untruthfulness (typically explicit but sometimes only implicit). Essentially, the ironic speaker clearly does not believe to be true what he/she seems to be communicating, which is conducive to the implicit meaning that carries negative evaluation. On the other hand, the hallmark of sarcasm is its aggressive nature and disaffiliative function, which are motivated by the speaker's intent to offend the hearer. When sarcasm and irony overlap in one utterance, sarcastic irony comes into being. This view does not necessarily correspond to lay interpretations.

Before the findings of the empirical study are summarised, a disclaimer is in order on its evident limitations. The discussion of emic labels is based on only one scripted programme, representing the views of its scriptwriters (altogether 30 authored the episodes in the series), and the numbers of relevant instances analysed are quite few, with 31 references to irony and 16 to sarcasm being made in the series. Nonetheless, these data suffice for the conclusions (cf. the paucity of similar data in Partington's 2006 corpus). Albeit few, the instances are particularly worthwhile analysing. Unlike in- stances of real-life discourse, where evaluations are made spontaneously, fictional discourse is well thought over and scrutinised by production crew members, being subject to modification. Thus, one (meta)pragmatic label is technically the product of a number of individuals who subscribe to the same opinion on how language is used and how it should be reflected in the characters' discourse. That being said, the topic of metapragmatic labels of sarcasm and irony is in need of further investigation based on more extensive datasets (whether scripted or real-life ones) to validate the conclusions drawn here.

In tune with the previous research, the study of emic labels, based on the discourse carefully constructed by American scriptwriters, corroborates that the label "irony*" is typically used with reference to situational irony, whereas "sarcasm*" denotes the presence of the rhetorical figure. Only intermittent labelling of the figure of irony as "irony*" can be found in the data. This is the labelling that corresponds to the etic labelling supported here. The prevailing emic practice of labelling the figure "sarcasm" may be explained by language users' tacit aim to avoid polysemous use of "irony*" label, which is eschewed in academic discourse when qualifiers are added (figure/trope of irony or situational irony). At the same time, it needs to be emphasised that this emic understanding of sarcasm has been enormously colouring one of the etic understandings, which substitute "sarcasm" for all "irony", notwithstanding its bitingly critical potential.

Interestingly, contrary to the prevalent view in the scholarly literature that sarcasm, whether or not ironic, promotes disharmony and conflict or is simply offensive by devise, over half of the examples presented as "sarcasm*" in the discourse of "House" seem to be perfectly innocuous. In other words, no indication of etic sarcasm can be detected in over half of the examples evaluated as "sarcasm*", representing both ironic and non-ironic species. This points to an important mismatch between the emic and etic understandings. Essentially, the emic label "sarcasm*" denotes even perfectly benign forms of the figure of irony, which carries no (intended or perceived) aggression. Even more interestingly the two instances of the trope of irony dubbed "irony*" evince aggressive potential. On the other hand, also quite unexpectedly, the label "sarcasm*" appears to have been ascribed to instances that do not qualify as irony in etic terms (i.e. the trope) but do centre on overt untruthfulness. A question then arises as to whether the figure of irony was (wrongly) recognised in these examples.

Below the emic "irony*" and "sarcasm*" labels found in "House" are tabulated and juxtaposed with etic descriptions in order to demonstrate what referents the emic labels concern in technical terms (See Table 4).

Table 4

The emic "irony*" and "sarcasm*" labels in "House" in reference to the preferred etic understandings.

Etic understandings		"irony*"	"sarcasm*"
Rhetorical figure of irony	Sarcastic	2	5
	Non-sarcastic	−	8
Non-ironic overt untruthfulness	Sarcastic	−	2
	Non-sarcastic	−	1
Situational irony		29	−

This paper may be concluded with a discussion of the complex example provided at its beginning. Based on the quoted interaction, Arlene, House's patient and Cuddy's mother, is diagnosed with a disease whose symptom is her failure to recognise the presence of the figure of irony. As can be seen, she denies the import of House's self-evaluative comment concerning his previous utterance which he considers "sarcastic" and she cannot recognise the figure of irony that underlies his response, also centred on the same metapragmatic label. Despite her inferential incapacity, to which she is oblivious, Arlene does make metapragmatic evaluations, which are not compatible with House's, even though they are embedded in the same rationale and the same understanding of the metapragmatic label "sarcasm*" denoting the figure of irony. In the case of misunderstandings, such as the hearer's not grasping the implicit, here ironic, meaning (capitalising on overt untruthfulness), speakers may indeed be capable of determining their previous intentions with the benefit of hindsight, but the emic labels they use may not coincide with the etic labels that, at least some, academics prefer. The emic-etic battle must go on.

Acknowledgements

References

Alba-Juez, L., Attardo, S., 2014. The evaluative palette of verbal irony. In: Thompson, G., Alba-Juez, L. (Eds.), Evaluation in Context. John Benjamins, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, pp. 93–116.

Anolli, L., Ciceri, R., Infantino, M.G., 2002. From 'blame by praise' to 'praise by blame': analysis of vocal patterns in ironic communication. Int. J. Psychol. 37, 266–276.

Attardo, S., 2013. Intentionality and irony. In: Ruiz Gurillo, L., Alvarado, B. (Eds.), Irony and Humor: From Pragmatics to Discourse. John Benjamins, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, pp. 39–57.

Attardo, S., Eisterhold, J., Hay, J., Poggi, I., 2003. Multimodal markers of irony and sarcasm. Humor 16 (2), 243–260. Ball, D.,

1965. Sarcasm as sociation: the rhetoric of interaction. Can. Rev. Sociol. Anthropol. 2, 190–198.

Ball, D.W., 1981. Sarcasm as sociation: the rhetoric of interaction. In: Stone, G.P., Farberman, H.A. (Eds.), Social Psychology through Symbolic Interaction, pp. 312–318.

Barbe, K., 1993. Isn't it ironic that.? Explicit irony markers. J. Pragmat. 20, 578–590. Barbe,

K., 1995. Irony in Context. John Benjamins, Amsterdam.

Beckson, K., Ganz, A., 1989. Literary Terms: a Dictionary, third ed. Noonday, New York. Berger,

A., 1993. An Anatomy of Humor. Transaction Publishers, New Brunswick, NJ. Bergmann, G., 1964.

Logic and Reality. The University of Wisconsin Press, Madison.

Black, M., 1975. Caveats and Critiques: Philosophical Essays in Language, Logic and Art. Cornell University Press, Ithaca. Bousfield, D., 2007.

Beginnings, middles and ends: a biopsy of the dynamics of impolite exchanges. J. Pragmat. 39, 2185–2216. Bousfield, D., 2008. Impoliteness

in Interaction. John Benjamins, Amsterdam.

Bowes, A., Katz, A., 2011. When sarcasm stings. Discourse Process. 48, 215–236.

Brown, R.L., 1980. The pragmatics of verbal irony. In: Shuy, R.W., Shnukal, A. (Eds.), Language Use and the Uses of Language. Georgetown University Press, Washington, DC, pp. 111–127.

Bryant, G.A., Fox Tree, J.E., 2005. Is there an ironic tone of voice? Lang. Speech 48 (3), 257–277.

Caffi, C., 1994. Metapragmatics. In: Encyclopedia of language and linguistics, vol. 5. Pergamon Press, Oxford/New York, pp. 2461–2466. Camp, E.,

2012. Sarcasm, pretense, and the semantics/pragmatics distinction. Noûs 46, 587–634.

Camp, E., Hawthorne, J., 2008. Sarcastic 'like': a case study in the interface of syntax and semantics. Noûs 42 (1), 1–21.

Campbell, J., Katz, A., 2012. Are there necessary conditions for inducing a sense of sarcastic irony? Discourse Process. 49, 459–480. Caucci, G., Kreuz,

R., 2012. Social and paralinguistic cues to sarcasm. Humor Int. J. Humor Res. 25 (1), 1–22.

Channon, S., Pellijeff, A., Rule, A., 2005. Social cognition after head injury: sarcasm and theory of mind. Brain Lang. 93, 123–134. Colebrook, C., 2004.

Irony. Taylor & Francis.

Colston, H., 2000. On necessary conditions for verbal irony comprehension. Pragmat. Cogn. 8, 277–324.

Colston, H., Gibbs, R., 2007. A brief history of irony. In: Gibbs, R., Colston, H. (Eds.), Irony in Language and Thought: a Cognitive Science Reader. Lawrence Erlbaum, New York, pp. 3–21.

Coulson, S., 2005. Sarcasm and the space structuring model. In: Coulson, S., Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk, B. (Eds.), The Literal and the Nonliteral in Language and Thought. Peter Lang, Berlin, pp. 129–144.

Creusere, M.A., 1999. Theories of adults' understanding and use of irony and sarcasm: applications to and evidence from research with children. Dev. Rev. 19 (2), 213–262.

Creusere, M., 2000. A developmental test of theoretical perspectives on the understanding of verbal irony: children's recognition of allusion and pragmatic insincerity. Metaphor Symbol 15, 29–45.

Culpeper, J., 2011. Impoliteness: Using Language to Cause Offence. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. Culpeper,

J., 1996. Towards an anatomy of impoliteness. J. Pragmat. 25, 349–367.

Culpeper, J., 2005. Impoliteness and entertainment in the television quiz show: the weakest link. J. Politeness Res. 1 (1), 35–72.

Culpeper, J., Bousfield, D., Wichmann, A., 2003. Impoliteness revisited: with special reference to dynamic and prosodic aspects. J. Pragmat. 35, 1545–1579.

Dews, S., Kaplan, J., Winner, E., 1995. Why not say it directly? The social functions of irony. Discourse Process. 19, 347–367. Dress, M.L.,

Kreuz, R.J., Link, K.E., Caucci, G.M., 2008. Regional variation in the use of sarcasm. J. Lang. Soc. Psychol. 27 (1), 71.

Drucker, A., Fein, O., Bergerbest, D., Giora, R., 2014. On sarcasm, social awareness, and gender. Humor Int. J. Humor Res. 24 (4), 551–573. Dynel, M., 2011a.

Stranger than fiction. A few methodological notes on linguistic research in film discourse. Brno Stud. Engl. 37.1, 41–61.

Dynel, M., 2011b. Revisiting Goffman's postulates on participant statuses in verbal interaction. Lang. Linguist. Compass Sociolinguist. 5 (7), 454–465. Dynel, M., 2013a.

When does irony tickle the hearer? Towards capturing the characteristics of humorous irony. In: Dynel, M. (Ed.), Developments in
    Linguistic Humour Theory. John Benjamins, Amsterdam/Philadelphia, pp. 298–320.

Dynel, M., 2013b. Irony from a neo-Gricean perspective: on untruthfulness and evaluative implicature. Intercult. Pragmat. 10, 403–431.

Dynel, M., 2013c. Impoliteness as disaffiliative humour in film talk. In: Dynel, M. (Ed.), Developments in Linguistic Humour Theory. John Benjamins,
    Amsterdam/Philadelphia, pp. 105–144.

Dynel, M., 2013d. On impoliteness and drama discourse: an interview with Jonathan Culpeper. Int. Rev. Pragmat. 5.1, 162–187. Dynel, M.,

2014. Isn't it ironic? Defining the scope of humorous irony. Humor Int. J. Humor Res. 27, 619–639.

Dynel, M., 2016a. Pejoration via sarcastic irony and sarcasm. In: Finkenbeiner, R., Meibauer, J., Wiese, H. (Eds.), Pejoration. John Benjamins, Amsterdam/Philadelphia,
    pp. 219–239.

Dynel, M., 2016b. Conceptualising conversational humour as (im)politeness: the case of film talk. J. Politeness Res. 12 (1), 117–147. Dynel, M.,

2016c. Two layers of overt untruthfulness: when irony meets metaphor, hyperbole, or meiosis. Pragmat. Cogn. 23 (2).

Dynel, M., 2017a. No child's play: a philosophical pragmatic view of overt pretence as a vehicle for conversational humour. In: Tsakona, Villy, Chovanec, Jan (Eds.), Creating
    and Negotiating Humor in Everyday Interactions. John Benjamins.

Dynel, M., 2017b. Impoliteness and telecinematic discourse. In: Locher, M.A., Jucker, A.H. (Eds.), Pragmatics of Fiction, Mouton de Gruyter Handbooks of Pragmatics, vol.
    12. Mouton de Gruyter.

Eelen, G., 2001. A Critique of Politeness Theories. St. Jermome Publishing, Manchester. Fallis,

D., 2009. What is lying? J. Philos. 106, 29–56.

Fowler, H.W., 1965. Fowler's Modern English Usage, second ed. Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Garmendia, J., 2010. Irony is critical. Pragmat. Cogn. 18, 397–421.

Garmendia, J., 2014. The clash: humor and critical attitude in verbal irony. Humor 27, 641–659.

Gerrig, R., Goldvarg, Y., 2000. Additive effects in the perception of sarcasm: situational disparity and echoic mention. Metaphor Symbol 15, 197–208. Gibbs, R.W.,

1986. On the psycholinguistics of sarcasm. J. Exp. Psychol. General 115, 3–15.

Gibbs, R., 1994. The Poetics of Mind: Figurative Thought, Language and Understanding. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Gibbs, R., Colston, H., 2007. The future of irony studies. In: Gibbs, R., Colston, Herbert (Eds.), Irony in Language and Thought: a Cognitive Science Reader.
    Erlbaum, New York, pp. 581–595.

Gibbs, R., O'Brien, J., Doolittle, S., 1995. Inferring meanings that are not intended: speakers' intentions and irony comprehension. Discourse Process. 20, 187–203.

Gibbs, R., O'Brien, J., 1991. Psychological aspects of irony understanding. J. Pragmat. 16, 523–530. Gibbs, R.,

2000. Irony in talk among friends. Metaphor Symbol 15, 5–27.

Gibbs, R., 2012. Are ironic acts deliberate? J. Pragmat. 44, 104–115.

Giora, R., 1998. Irony. In: Verschueren, J., Östman, J.-O., Blommaert, J., Bulcaen, C. (Eds.), Handbook of Pragmatics. John Benjamins, Amsterdam, pp. 1–21. Giora, R., 2003.

On Our Mind: Salience, Context, and Figurative Language. Oxford University Press, New York.

Giora, R., Drucker, A., Fein, O., Mendelson, I., 2015. Default sarcastic interpretations: on the priority of nonsalient interpretations. Discourse Process. 52 (3), 173–200.

Glenwright, M., Pexman, P., 2010. Development of children's ability to distinguish sarcasm and verbal irony. J. Child Lang. 37, 429–451. Grice, H.P.,

1989. Studies in the Way of Words. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass.

Haiman, J., 1990. Sarcasm as theater. Cogn. Linguist. 1, 181–203.

Haiman, J., 1998. Talk is Cheap: Sarcasm, Alienation and the Evolution of Language. Oxford University Press, New York.

Harris, M., 1990. Emics and etics revisited. In: Headland, T., Pike, K., Harris, M. (Eds.), Emics and Etics. The Insider/Outsider Debate. Sage, Newbury Park, pp.
    48–61.

Haugh, M., 2012. Epilogue: the first-order distinction in face and politeness research. J. Politeness Res. 8 (1), 111–134. Haugh, M.,

2016. "Just kidding": teasing and claims to non-serious intent. J. Pragmat. 95, 120–136.

Haverkate, H., 1990. A speech act analysis of irony. J. Pragmat. 14, 77–109.

Hübler, A., Bublitz, W., 2007. Introducing metapragmatics in use. In: Bublitz, W., Hübler, A. (Eds.), Metapragmatics in Use. John Benjamins, Amsterdam/New York, pp. 1–28.

Jakobson, R., 1960. Linguistics and poetics. In: Sebeok, T. (Ed.), Style in Language. M.I.T. Press, , Cambridge, MA, pp. 350–377. Jones, J.,

Wilson, W., 1987. An Incomplete Education. Ballantine, New York.

Jorgensen, J., 1996. The functions of sarcastic irony in speech. J. Pragmat. 26, 613–634.

Jorgensen, J., Miller, G., Sperber, D., 1984. Test of the mention theory of irony. J. Exp. Psychol. General 113, 112–120.

Jucker, A.H., 2009. Speech act research between armchair, field and laboratory: the case of compliments. J. Pragmat. 41, 1611–1635. Kádár, D.Z.,

Haugh, M., 2013. Understanding Politeness. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Kapogianni, E., 2011. Irony via 'surrealism'. In: Dynel, M. (Ed.), The Pragmatics of Humour across Discourse Domains. John Benjamins, Amsterdam/Phila- delphia, pp. 51–
    68.

Kapogianni, E., 2014. Differences in use and function of verbal irony between real and fictional discourse: (Mis)interpretation and irony blindness. Humor 27, 597–618.

Kapogianni, E., 2016a. The ironist's intentions: communicative priority and manifestness. Pragmat. Cogn. 23 (1), 150–173.

Kapogianni, E., 2016b. The ironic operation: revisiting the components of ironic meaning. J. Pragmat. 91, 16–28.

Kreuz, R., Roberts, R., 1993. On satire and parody: the importance of being ironic. Metaphor Symb. Act. 8, 97–109.

Kreuz, R., Glucksberg, S., 1989. How to be sarcastic: the echoic reminder theory of verbal irony. J. Exp. Psychol. General 118, 374–386.

Kumon-Nakamura, S., Glucksberg, S., Brown, M., 1995. How about another piece of pie: the allusional pretense theory of discourse irony. J. Exp. Psychol.
    General 124, 3–21.

Kunneman, F., Liebrecht, C., van Mulken, M., van den Bosch, A., 2015. Signaling sarcasm: from hyperbole to hashtag. Inf. Process. Manag. 51, 500–509. Lee, C., Katz,

A., 1998. The differential role of ridicule in sarcasm and irony. Metaphor Symbol 13, 1–15.

Leech, G., 1983. Principles of Pragmatics. Longman, London.

Leech, G., 2014. The Pragmatics of Politeness. Oxford University Press, Oxford & New York. Leggitt,

J., Gibbs, R., 2000. Emotional reactions to verbal irony. Discourse Process. 29, 1–24.

Littman, D., Mey, J., 1991. The nature of irony: toward a computational model of irony. J. Pragmat. 15, 131–151. Long, D.,

Graesser, A., 1988. Wit and humor in discourse processing. Discourse Process. 11, 35–60.

Lucariello, J., 1994. Situational irony: a concept of events gone awry. J. Exp. Psychol. General 123 (2), 129–145.

Lucy, J.A., 1993. Reflexive language and the human disciplines. In: Lucy, J.A. (Ed.), Reflexive Language. Reported Speech and Metapragmatics. Cambridge University Press,
    Cambridge, pp. 9–32.

McDonald, S., 1999. Exploring the process of inference generation in sarcasm: a review of normal and clinical studies. Brain Lang. 68, 486–506. Muecke, D., 1969.

The Compass of Irony. Methuen, London.

Neuhaus, L., 2016. On the relation of irony, understatement, and litotes. Pragmat. Cogn. 23 (1), 117–149.

Norrick, N., 1993. Conversational Joking: Humor in Everyday Talk. Indiana University Press, Bloomington. Nunberg, G., 2001.
The Way We Talk Now. Houghton Mifflin, Boston.

Partington, A., 2006. The Linguistics of Laughter. A Corpus-assisted Study of Laughter-talk. Routledge, Oxon. Partridge,
E., 1957. Usage and Abusage: a Guide to Good English. H. Hamilton, London.

Pike, K.L., 1967. Language in Relation to a Unified Theory of the Structure of Human Behaviour, second ed. Mouton de Gruyter, The Hague.

Pike, K.L., 1990. On the emics and etics of Pike and Harris. In: Headland, T., Kenneth Pike, K., Harris, M. (Eds.), Emics and Etics. The Insider/Outsider Debate.
Sage, Newbury Park, pp. 28–47.

Reyes, A., Rosso, P., Buscaldi, D., 2012. From humor recognition to irony detection: the figurative language of social media. Data Knowl. Eng. 74, 1–12. Reyes, A.,
Rosso, P., Veale, T., 2013. A multidimensional approach for detecting irony in twitter. Lang. Resour. Eval. 47 (1), 239–268.

Rockwell, P., 2000. Lower, slower, louder: vocal cues of sarcasm. J. Psycholinguist. Res. 29, 483–495.

Rockwell, P., 2006. Sarcasm and Other Mixed Messages: the Ambiguous Ways People Use Language. Edwin Mellen Press. Rockwell, P., 2007.
Vocal features of conversational sarcasm: a comparison of methods. J. Psycholinguist. Res. 36 (5), 361–369.

Sanders, R., 2013. The duality of speaker meaning: what makes self-repair, insincerity, and sarcasm possible. J. Pragmat. 48, 112–122.

Schwoebel, J., Dews, S., Winner, E., Srinivas, K., 2000. Obligatory processing of the literal meaning of ironic utterances: further evidence. Metaphor Symbol 15, 47–61.

Seckman, M., Couch, C., 1989. Jocularity, sarcasm, and relationships. J. Contemp. Ethnogr. 18, 327–344.

Shamay-Tsoory, S., Tomer, R., Aharon-Peretz, J., 2005. The neuroanatomical basis of understanding sarcasm and its relationship to social cognition.
Neuropsychology 19, 288–300.

Shelley, C., 2001. The bicoherence theory of situational irony. Cogn. Sci. 25, 775–818.

Simpson, P., 2011. "That's not ironic, that's just stupid": towards an eclectic account of the discourse of irony. In: Dynel, M. (Ed.), The Pragmatics of Humour across Discourse
Domains, Pragmatics and Beyond New Series. John Benjamins, Amsterdam, pp. 33–50.

Sinkeviciute, V., this special issue. Funniness and "the preferred reaction" to jocularity in Australian and British English: an analysis of interviewees' metapragmatic
comments. Lang. Commun.

Taylor, C., 2015a. Mock Politeness in English and Italian: a Corpus-assisted Study of the Metalanguage of Sarcasm and Irony. Lancaster University. Un-published PhD
dissertation.

Taylor, C., 2015b. Beyond sarcasm: the metalanguage and structures of mock politeness. J. Pragmat. 87, 127–141. Toplak, M.,
Katz, A., 2000. On the uses of sarcastic irony. J. Pragmat. 32, 1467–1488.

Utsumi, A., 2000. Verbal irony as implicit display of ironic environment: distinguishing ironic utterances from nonirony. J. Pragmat. 32, 1777–1806. Verschueren, J., 1999.
Understanding Pragmatics. Arnold, London; Oxford University Press, New York.

Verschueren, J., 2004. Notes on the role of metapragmatic awareness in language. In: Jaworski, A., Coupland, N., Galasiński, D. (Eds.), Metalanguage. Social
and Ideological Perspectives. Mouton de Gruyter, Berlin/New York, pp. 53–73.

Wilson, D., 2006. The pragmatics of verbal irony: echo or pretence? Lingua 116, 1722–1743.

Wilson, D., 2016. Irony, hyberbole, jokes and banter. In: Blochowiak, J., Grisot, C., Durrleman-Tame, S., Laenzlinger, C. (Eds.), Formal Models in the Study of Language.
Springer.

Wilson, D., Sperber, D., 1992. On verbal irony. Lingua 87, 53–76.