

Research Article

# Sarcasm in William Shakespeare's Drama *Much Ado About Nothing*

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**Abstract,** Sarcasm is a literary device and one of the most expressive forms of figurative language, often used to convey humor, criticism, or emotional tension in both daily conversation and literature. This study explores the use of sarcasm in William Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing* by applying Elizabeth Camp's (2011) typology, which classifies sarcasm into four types: propositional, lexical, illocutionary, and like-prefixed sarcasm. Using a qualitative descriptive method, the researchers collected all sarcastic utterances from the play, classified them according to Camp's framework, and analyzed their pragmatic functions in the dramatic context. The findings reveal a total of 50 sarcastic utterances, with propositional sarcasm being the most frequent (42%), followed by illocutionary sarcasm (28%), lexical sarcasm (24%), and like-prefixed sarcasm (6%). These results indicate that sarcasm serves as both a comedic and dramatic device, shaping character interactions, driving conflicts, and reinforcing Elizabethan cultural norms. Beatrice and Benedick's witty verbal duels exemplify how sarcasm fosters humor and intimacy, while Claudio's sarcasm highlights themes of honor and social tension. Overall, the study demonstrates that sarcasm in Shakespeare's play is not merely humorous banter but a sophisticated rhetorical strategy that enhances characterization, thematic depth, and audience engagement.

**Keywords:** Elizabeth Camp, *Much Ado About Nothing*, Pragmatic, Sarcasm, William Shakespeare.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Literature is the timeless artistic body of written and spoken works such as fiction, poetry, theater, and nonfiction. It is an artistic style that use words in novel ways to explore universal human concerns such as love, loss, identity, and conflict. According to Semiyeva (2025) "Literature not only reflects but shapes social life its narratives, using devices like symbolism or allegory, or even sarcasm, produce what might be called a circulation of social energy in modern culture.". Literature educates us empathy, maintains culture, examines society, and makes us think about what it means to be human by meticulously building stories, characters, and settings using figurative language and symbolism. It shows how other people think and feel, as well as how the outside world looks. This makes it one of the most important and lasting kind of art for people.

Drama combines text and performance, allowing the writer's script, the actors' portrayal of characters, and the audience's interpretation to collaborate in a memorable form. This is different from prose or poetry, which mainly engage readers through narration or verse. Hatchuel (2023) posits that drama operates as "a living narrative that materializes only through enactment and collective witnessing," highlighting its dual nature as both a literary artifact and a performative event. People use sarcasm as a "pragmatic strategy" when they say the opposite of what they mean to make a point, criticize someone without saying it directly, or get people to think. In drama, sarcasm frequently appears in dialogues where characters engage in humorous exchanges that are both entertaining and expose deeper meaning Gibbs (2020). William Shakespeare, an iconic figure in English literature, frequently used sarcasm in his plays, especially in his comedic works.

*Much Ado About Nothing* shows the impact of sarcasm on character interactions, the creation of tension, and the reflection of thought processes in Elizabethan England. Beatrice and Benedick serve as the two main characters in the play. Their relationship is characterized by a playful exchange of words, rich with sharp remarks that reveal their intellect, pride, and deep affection for one another. These discussions reveal that sarcasm extends beyond just jokes. It serves as a theatrical way for showing conflict, irony, and the complexities of human relationships. Elizabeth Camp (2011) offers a valuable taxonomy for the analysis of sarcasm, categorizing it into four principal types: propositional sarcasm, lexical sarcasm, illocutionary sarcasm, and like-prefixed sarcasm. Propositional sarcasm transpires when the literal interpretation of a statement directly opposes the intended interpretation. Lexical sarcasm is when you employ nice or flattering phrases that, in the right context, indicate something bad or insulting. Illocutionary sarcasm depends a lot on the situation, the tone, and the context. The sarcastic force comes from the whole speech act, not just the words themselves. Sarcasm is a style of language that uses irony or sharp satire to convey a message indirectly. The benefits of sarcasm in literary works include providing humor, subtle criticism, emphasizing conflict, and showing the cleverness of characters. Its purpose is not only to mock, but also to highlight social realities, express emotions, and create dynamic interactions between characters. In William Shakespeare's play *Much Ado About Nothing*, sarcasm is an important element in shaping characters, especially through the characters of Beatrice and Benedick. Their sarcastic dialogue not only provides comedy, but also depicts the emotional struggles and social conflicts that underlie the story. The study of sarcasm in this play aims to understand the role of language in creating humor, revealing the relationships between characters, and showing how Shakespeare combines criticism and entertainment in his work. One of the sarcasm theories relevant to *Much Ado About Nothing* is represented by the following dialog.

**Benedick:** "If Signior Leonato was her father, she would not have his head on her shoulders for all Messina, as like him as she is."

**Beatrice:** "I wonder if you will still be talking, Signior Benedick, nobody marks you."

**Benedick:** "What, my dear Lady Disdain! Are you still living?"

**Beatrice:** "Is it possible disdain should die while she hath such meat food to feed it as

Signior Benedick? Courtesy itself must convert to disdain if you come in her presence.”

When Beatrice replies, *"I wonder if you will still be talking, Signior Benedick, nobody marks you,"* she is being quite sarcastic. She makes it sound like she is mildly surprised that Benedick keeps talking. But the actual power of the line comes from the phrase *"nobody marks you,"* which is the propositional mockery. Here, Beatrice completely ignores Benedick, suggesting that his comments don't matter because no one is listening. This moment shows how clever she is and how much she is in charge of their conversation. Elisabeth Camp's theory about sarcasm elucidates this complex statement. Camp asserts that sarcasm communicates a twofold message: a literal surface statement and the speaker's intentional evaluative stance (Camp, 2012, p. 18). Beatrice's surface meaning is that she wonders at Benedick's perseverance, but the audience is supposed to understand the covert meaning of ridicule that his speech is meaningless because *"nobody marks"* it. So, what seems like a simple comment turns into a harsh insult. Camp's framework shows how sarcasm here conveys not only knowledge but also Beatrice's arrogant attitude and her feeling of superiority over Benedick.

Recent studies have investigated sarcasm and irony in literature, drama, and popular media. Initially, Yaghoobian, Arabnia, and Rasheed (2020) in “A Comparative Analysis of Sarcasm Detection Models Based on Contextual and Pragmatic Theories of Figurative Language” executed a comparative analysis of sarcasm detection models, elucidating the reliance of computational methodologies on contextual and pragmatic theories of figurative language. Second, Karimi, Jalilifar, and Bagheri (2021) in “Gender-Based Analysis of Impoliteness and Sarcasm Strategies in Persian and American Comedy Series” examined sarcasm in a gender-based study of impoliteness strategies in Persian and American Comedy Series. Third, Ulandari, Sari, and Indria (2022) in “Sarcasm in Warintil Episode 186: The Function of Insult in Conversational Contexts” discovered that sarcastic remarks frequently functioned as insults in particular conversational settings. Fourth, Syamsul, B. and Fauziah, K.L. (2023) in “Types and Functions of Sarcasm in Humor and Social Interaction in Television Shows” examined different types of sarcasm and how sarcasm is used for humor and social interaction in the show. Fifth, Azizi and Fitrawati (2024) in “An Analysis of Sarcasm in Ryan Reynolds' YouTube Videos: Propositional Sarcasm and Mocking Functions” analyzed sarcasm in Ryan Reynolds' YouTube videos, illustrating that propositional sarcasm and mocking functions predominated in his performances. Lastly, McAuley and Glenwright (2025) in “The Relationship Between Humor Styles and Self- Reported Sarcasm Usage: Personality Traits and Motivations” examined the correlation between humor styles and self-reported sarcasm usage, demonstrating that personality traits significantly influence the manner and rationale behind individuals' use of sarcasm in daily interactions.

From the review of previous studies, it can be stated that most existing research on sarcasm focuses on its use in modern contexts such as films, television series, or online media (Yaghoobian et al., 2020; Karimi et al., 2021; Ulandari et al., 2022; Azizi & Fitrawati, 2024). These studies generally examine sarcasm from the perspective of impoliteness

strategies, gender differences, or humor functions, but very few have explored sarcasm in classical literary works especially in Shakespearean drama. Moreover, although several scholars have discussed sarcasm using pragmatic or linguistic theories, the specific application of Elizabeth Camp's (2011) typology which divides sarcasm into propositional, lexical, illocutionary, and like-prefixed types has rarely been used as the main analytical framework in the study of Shakespeare's texts. Therefore, this study fills that gap by applying Camp's typology to analyze the types and functions of sarcasm in *Much Ado About Nothing*. This research aims to contribute both theoretically and practically: theoretically, by extending the use of Camp's framework to classical drama; and practically, by revealing how sarcasm in Shakespeare's work functions not only as a comedic device but also as a means of social critique, character development, and emotional expression within the Elizabethan context.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Sarcasm is a form of indirect communication in which people say things that aren't what they mean. Sarcasm is a rhetorical tool that lets people criticize, reject, or show their displeasure in a subtle and sharp way. Colston and Gibbs (2002) say that it is an echoic reference to a position or statement that is repeated in a critical or mocking way. Sarcasm can be funny, but it can also be used to deal with complicated social circumstances, point out contradictions, and show emotional tension. Sarcasm is a good way to communicate with other people and make art since it can be funny and serious at the same time. Sarcasm is an important part of literature and drama because it makes conversations more interesting and strengthens relationships between characters. Playwrights can show hidden feelings, start fights, and talk about bigger social issues through caustic dialogue. After that, the audience is asked to think about meanings that aren't evident. Sarcasm in dramatic literature should be recognized as a multifaceted literary device that influences characterization and enhances thematic complexity, rather than being merely characterized as simple irony or ridicule. Elizabeth Camp (2012) presents a thorough typology that establishes a robust theoretical framework for the analysis of sarcasm. The four basic types of sarcasm she talks about propositional, lexical, illocutionary, and like-prefixed show how complicated sarcastic communication can be. This classification illustrates the functioning of sarcasm at the pragmatic and performative dimensions of communication acts, alongside the semantic dimension of words and propositions. Camp's paradigm serves as an effective foundation for comprehending the role of sarcasm in dramatic texts as a mechanism for social commentary, conflict creation, and critique, alongside its function as a stylistic feature.

**1. Propositional Sarcasm**, is when the literal meaning of a remark is very different from what the speaker really means. In this category, the remark makes one obvious point usually one that is neutral or positive while also making the opposite point, usually to make fun of or criticize it. One essential way that sarcasm creates irony and an evaluative posture in conversation is by making the audience see the contradiction, which is what makes propositional sarcasm so powerful. For example, the movie *Dictator* from 2012:

**Nadal:** “No. Your guy wears an American flag sweatsuit and a sheriff's badge.”

**Aladeen:** “I need the sheriff's badge.”

**Nadal: “For what? You're the sheriff of American douche-town!” Aladeen: "Yo! Average American shopper!"**

Nadal tells Aladeen that his disguise is wrong and that he should wear a sheriff's badge and an American flag sweatsuit instead. He then makes a simple comment that makes fun of Aladeen for being showy and full of himself by adding, *"You're the sheriff of American douche-town."* This is an example of propositional sarcasm since the literal meaning of the statement seems serious yet the intended meaning is the reverse.

**2. Lexical Sarcasm**, is a type of sarcasm that makes fun of a word choice or a specific lexical statement. When someone employs particular words or phrases in a sarcastic way that doesn't fit what they really mean, that's sarcasm. If you take the chosen statements at face value, they could look good, neutral, or even nice. But in this case, they are supposed to portray a bad, insulting, or mocking point of view. Lexical sarcasm is when the speaker's intended meaning is different from the word's usual meaning. For example, in the play *Wednesday* (2022):

**Enid:** “I made you a friendship bracelet.”

**Wednesday: “Oh, Enid, this is far too unique to wear to something like class. I suggest we wait for a more special occasion, like a funeral.”**

**Enid:** “Wow, that’s pretty harsh.”

**Wednesday:** “The truth can be sharp, like my stiletto.”

Enid gifts Wednesday a friendship bracelet to show how much they care for each other, but Wednesday says things like *"too unique"* and *"special occasion,"* which are meant to make fun of the present and make it seem less precious. The usage of a *"funeral"* makes the irony even more by showing how polite language may disguise contempt. This exchange is an example of lexical sarcasm because the sarcastic effect comes from using words that have hidden meaning that goes against what they generally mean.

**3. Illocutionary Sarcasm**, function at the level of speech acts rather than only examining propositional content or lexical selection. expressing anything that actually serves a communicative goal, such expressing thank you, congratulations, or praise, shows the opposite meaning in this way. So, a comment that sounds nice or polite on the surface is really meant to be unpleasant, offensive, or disrespectful. How illocutionary sarcasm works depends on the situation and how well the listener understands what the speaker is saying. *The Analysis Of Sarcasm Utterances Found In Barbie 2023 Movie in Septyanasari (2024):*

**Barbie: “You know what? Um, before I get in the box, could I just run to the restroom and make sure my hair is perfect?”**

**CEO Mattel:** "Fine. Can you be speedy about it?"

**Barbie:** "Mmm-hmm."

**CEO Mattel:** "Get that Barbie!"

On the surface, the utterance functions as a polite request to go to the restroom. However, the actual intention is quite different: Barbie is not genuinely concerned about her hair, but rather she is trying to resist indirectly and find a way to escape. The sarcasm lies in the

pretense she pretends to care about her appearance while in fact mocking the situation and creating an excuse to flee. Thus, the illocutionary force (a polite request) contrasts with the real meaning (a refusal and subtle criticism of the situation).

**4. Like-Prefixed Sarcasm,** "Like," "as if," or its equivalents in other languages are examples of sarcasm. In this case, the sarcastic aspect comes from the beginning remark (prefix) that clearly shows doubt or rejection of a certain notion, not from the broad propositional substance or the use of a single word. So, the comment is meant to be satirical or make fun of a certain point of view; it shouldn't be taken literally. Because people who hear a statement that starts with "like" or "as if" know right away that it is not a factual statement but rather a sarcastic comment that makes the opposite point, the sarcastic effect of like-prefixed sarcasm depends a lot on whether or not the audience knows what the linguistic marker means. About the movie *The Dictator* from (2012):

**Zoey:** "You seem educated, Yes. I went to Amherst"

**Aladeen:** "I love it when women go to school, It's like seeing a monkey on roller skates"

**Zoey:** "That's very funny"

**Aladeen:** "I'm serious. It's kind of impressive how you managed to stay upright."

The term "It's like" is used in this conversation to make a very sexist and insulting analogy. Aladeen doesn't just utilize the analogy as a filler; he does it in a way that makes it plain that he is mocking the other person. This illustrates that his statement, which seems to show affection on the surface "*I love it...*" is really a clear insult. He is employing sarcasm to make Zoey's achievement seem less impressive by comparing an intelligent woman to a circus animal doing a silly trick for fun, which makes her IQ seem strange and funny.

### 3. METHOD

This study employs a qualitative descriptive method, as the data consist of utterances rather than numerical values, and such an approach allows for the exploration of meanings, concepts, and patterns within texts (Creswell, 2014). The primary data are all sarcastic utterances found in William Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing* (Folger Shakespeare Library edition). Data were collected through documentation by reading the full script, identifying and extracting dialogues that contain sarcasm, and classifying them into Camp's four categories: propositional, lexical, illocutionary, and like-prefixed sarcasm. The analysis proceeded by identifying sarcastic utterances, classifying them according to type, interpreting the contrast between literal and context meanings, and finally discussing their functions in the dramatic context while relating the findings to existing theories and prior research, in order to highlight the role of sarcasm in character dynamics and thematic development.

#### 4. RESULT & DISCUSSION

One of the essential components that frequently appears in communication and literature is sarcasm. Particularly in linguistic and literary studies, sarcasm serves as a rhetorical device that influences meaning, tone, and the dynamics between speakers or characters. Remarks delivered sarcastically often carry an implied meaning opposite to their literal expression, shaping interpretation and audience perception. According to Elizabeth's theory, sarcasm functions not only as a form of indirect expression but also as a tool for critique, humor, or social bonding. The analysis of sarcasm in *Much Ado About Nothing* identified a total of 48 sarcastic utterances categorized into four types according to Elizabeth Camp's (2011) typology: propositional, lexical, illocutionary, and like-prefixed sarcasm. The distribution is shown in the following table:

**Table 1.** Result

No	Types of Sarcasm	Quantity	Percentage
1	Propositional Sarcasm	21	42%
2	Lexical Sarcasm	12	24%
3	Illocutionary Sarcasm	14	28%
4	Like-Prefixed Sarcasm	3	6%
<b>Total</b>		50	100%

The findings highlight Shakespeare's strategic use of sarcasm as both a comedic and dramatic device in *Much Ado About Nothing*.

1. Propositional sarcasm (42%) was mainly found in Beatrice, Benedick, and Claudio's dialogues. Beatrice often mocks Benedick by reversing propositions (e.g., likening him to a plague), while Claudio employs it to shame Hero (e.g., "rotten orange"). This shows how sarcasm functions both as playful banter and as destructive accusation.
2. Illocutionary sarcasm (28%) appeared in farewells, denials, and challenges. For example, Beatrice's "You kill me to deny it. Farewell." expresses anger, not leavetaking, and Benedick's "You are a villain. I jest not." turns a jest into a serious duel challenge. These cases demonstrate how sarcasm reshapes the pragmatic force of utterances.
3. Lexical sarcasm (24%) was particularly prominent in Beatrice and Dogberry. Beatrice uses insulting epithets like "Prince's jester," while Dogberry's malapropisms ("everlasting redemption") produce comic sarcasm. This reflects the different social roles of characters: wit and insult among nobles, versus comedic ignorance among lower-class figures.
4. Like-prefixed sarcasm (6%) was least common. Examples include Claudio's dismissal of gossip and Beatrice/Benedick's hyperbolic comparisons (e.g., "A bird of my tongue is better than a beast of yours"). This suggests that the "like/as if" structure was less central to Shakespeare's sarcastic style in this play.

### Propositional Sarcasm

**Benedick:** “Do not you love me?”

**Beatrice:** “**Why no, no more than reason.**”

**Benedick:** “Why then, your uncle and the Prince and Claudio” Have been deceived. They swore you did.

**Beatrice:** “Do not you love me?”

#### *(Act 5, Scene 4)*

In this scene, Beatrice and Benedick’s dialogue demonstrates a clear distinction between literal meaning and intended meaning, which is essential to understanding propositional sarcasm. When Benedick asks, “Do not you love me?” and Beatrice replies, “Why no, no more than reason,” the literal proposition (P) conveyed by her words is a denial of love, effectively equivalent to saying, “I do not love you.” However, the intended meaning ( $\neg$ P) communicated through tone, irony, and context is the opposite “I do love you.” This inversion of meaning is the defining feature of propositional sarcasm. As Elisabeth Camp (2011) explains, propositional sarcasm occurs when “a speaker pretends to assert proposition P, but actually communicates its contrary  $\neg$ P, along with an evaluative attitude toward P.” In this case, both Beatrice and Benedick use sarcastic denial to mask genuine affection under a layer of wit and self-protection. The phrase “no more than reason” serves as a linguistic device that softens the denial while adding humor. It allows both characters to acknowledge their feelings indirectly, they can deny love “reasonably” while simultaneously implying that their emotions have, in fact, gone beyond reason. This duality creates a playful tension between what is said and what is meant, aligning perfectly with the play’s theme of deception, disguise, and verbal play. From a pragmatic perspective, the literal meaning (“I do not love you”) functions as the surface form, while the intended meaning (“I love you”) emerges through shared context and mutual understanding. Shakespeare thus uses propositional sarcasm not merely for humor, but as a way to express emotional truth through irony, allowing the characters to confess love while still maintaining their pride and wit.

#### **1. Lexical Sarcasm**

**Beatrice:** “He set up his bills here in Messina and challenged Cupid at the flight, and my uncle’s Fool, reading the challenge, subscribed for Cupid and challenged him at the bird-bolt. I pray you, how many hath he killed and eaten in these wars? But how many hath he killed? For indeed I promised to eat all of his killing.

**Leonato:** “Faith, niece, you tax Signior Benedick too much, but he’ll be meet with you, I doubt it not.”

**Messenger:** “He hath done good service, lady, in these wars.”

**Beatrice:** “**You had musty victual, and he hath holp to eat it. He is a very valiant trencherman; he hath an excellent stomach.**”

#### *(Act 1, Scene 1)*

In this dialogue, Beatrice, Leonato, and the Messenger engage in a conversation about Benedick, who has just returned from the war. Beatrice’s remarks, such as “challenged Cupid”

and calling Benedick “a valiant trencherman,” appear to be compliments at first glance praising his bravery and hearty appetite but they actually serve as subtle sarcasm.

Rather than genuinely admiring him, Beatrice uses these expressions to mock Benedick’s stubbornness, his aversion to love, and his preoccupation with fighting and worldly pleasures. This misunderstanding becomes evident when Leonato and the Messenger take her comments literally, responding as if she were sincerely praising Benedick, while her true intent is the opposite. According to Elizabeth Camp’s (2012) concept of *lexical sarcasm*, this type of irony occurs when words with positive lexical meaning are used to convey a negative or mocking implication. In Beatrice’s case, the phrase “a valiant trencherman” functions as a veiled insult rather than genuine praise, using hyperbolic and exaggerated language to criticize Benedick’s character in a humorous yet cutting way. The humor and irony arise from the contrast between Beatrice’s intended meaning and the literal interpretation of her listeners. Thus, this exchange exemplifies lexical sarcasm in Shakespeare’s *Much Ado About Nothing*, where seemingly positive language is cleverly manipulated to express disdain and highlight Beatrice’s sharp wit and perceptive nature.

**2. Illocutionary Sarcasm Benedick:** “May a man do it?”

**Beatrice:** “It is a man’s office, but not yours.”

**Benedick:** “I do love nothing in the world so well as you. Is not that strange?” **Beatrice:** “As strange as the thing I know not. It were as possible for me to say I loved nothing so well as you, but believe me not, and yet I lie not; I confess nothing, nor I deny nothing.”

*(Act 4, Scene 1)*

In this exchange, illocutionary sarcasm is evident as Beatrice uses irony to convey meanings that contrast sharply with her literal words, turning language into a tool for both critique and control. When Benedick asks, “May a man do it?” Beatrice replies, “It is a man’s office, but not yours,” a sharp and ironic response that undermines his ability while maintaining a tone of playful wit. Her words go beyond simple mockery—they expose Benedick’s shortcomings and assert her dominance in their verbal interaction. According to Elizabeth Camp’s (2012) concept of *illocutionary sarcasm*, this form of irony performs a speech act whose communicative force contradicts its literal meaning. Beatrice’s sarcasm thus functions not only as an insult but also as a performative act of asserting intelligence and power, allowing her to challenge Benedick’s position and the traditional roles of men in love and relationships. When Benedick later confesses his love, Beatrice’s ambiguous and ironic reply further reinforces her control, keeping Benedick uncertain and emotionally vulnerable. Her use of illocutionary sarcasm reveals how irony can serve as a sophisticated linguistic strategy for negotiating social and emotional boundaries—mocking, testing, and connecting at once. Through this, Shakespeare presents Beatrice as a character who wields sarcasm not just for humor, but as a means of asserting agency, exposing societal norms, and deepening the tension and intimacy of her relationship with Benedick.

**3. Like-Prefixed Sarcasm**

**Benedick:** "You hear, Count Claudio, I can be secret as a dumb man, I would have you think so, but on my allegiance—mark you this, on my allegiance—he is in love. With who?"

Now, that is your Grace's part. Mark how short his answer is: with Hero, Leonato's short daughter."

**Claudio:** "If this were so, so were it uttered."

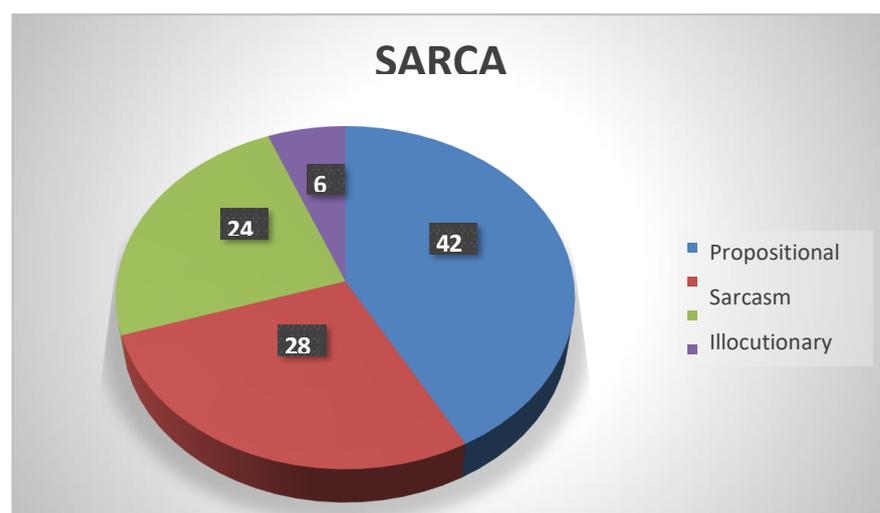
**Benedick:** "Like the old tale, my lord: "It is not so, nor 'twas not so, but, indeed, God forbid it should be so."

**Claudio:** "If my passion change not shortly, God forbid it should be otherwise."

*(Act 1, Scene 1)*

In this scene, Benedick uses like-prefixed sarcasm when he says, "Like the old tale, my lord." Here, Benedick playfully mocks Claudio, who has just admitted his feelings for Hero but still tries to act calm and reasonable. Benedick's sarcastic tone shows that he finds Claudio's sudden change amusing, a soldier who now behaves like a man in love. By mentioning an "old tale," Benedick pretends to imitate the way people deny something that is clearly true, just as Claudio is trying to hide his emotions. His words reveal both humor and criticism, as he exposes Claudio's struggle between reason and affection. At the same time, Benedick's teasing also helps him keep his distance from romantic feelings, which he often claims to reject. According to Elizabeth Camp (2011), like-prefixed sarcasm happens when someone uses the word "like" to introduce a voice that is clearly not their own. This form of sarcasm involves pretending to speak as another person, usually to mock or criticize that person's attitude or belief.

In Benedick's line, "like" signals that he is not being serious, he is performing an imitation of someone who refuses to admit the truth. This playful imitation allows Benedick to make fun of Claudio's denial without saying it directly, keeping the tone light but still meaningful. Through this sarcastic remark, Benedick shows his sharp sense of humor and his tendency to hide deeper feelings behind wit, making his words both entertaining and revealing of his character.



#### **Types Of Sarcasm in *Much Ado About Nothing* Drama**

The analysis of sarcasm in *Much Ado About Nothing* revealed a total of 50 sarcastic utterances distributed across four types of sarcasm proposed by Camp (2011). The quantitative findings are summarized in Table 1. Result, Propositional sarcasm was the most

frequent type, with 21 occurrences (42%), followed by illocutionary sarcasm (14 occurrences; 28%), lexical sarcasm (12 occurrences; 24%), and like-prefixed sarcasm (3 occurrences; 6%). These results indicate that sarcasm in the play is dominated by utterances in which the entire proposition is inverted, while sarcasm relying on lexical choice or illocutionary force also plays a significant role. Like-prefixed sarcasm, however, is rare in the data.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The study of sarcasm in William Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing* reveals that sarcasm functions as a vital linguistic and dramatic element used to construct character relationships, generate humor, and convey social criticism. Based on Elizabeth Camp's (2011) typology, four types of sarcasm were identified in the play: propositional, lexical, illocutionary, and like-prefixed sarcasm. Among these, propositional sarcasm emerged as the most dominant (42%), followed by illocutionary (28%), lexical (24%), and like-prefixed sarcasm (6%). These findings suggest that Shakespeare employs sarcasm not only to entertain but also to articulate complex emotional and social dynamics. Beatrice and Benedick's exchanges, for instance, demonstrate how sarcasm can serve as both emotional defense and a sign of affection, while Claudio's harsher use of sarcasm reflects the moral and social tensions surrounding Elizabethan ideals of honor and virtue. Furthermore, the variation in sarcastic forms showcases Shakespeare's mastery of linguistic nuance, using shifts from subtle irony to overt mockery to expose class distinctions and social hierarchies. Overall, sarcasm in *Much Ado About Nothing* operates as both comedic relief and critical commentary, illustrating how Shakespeare intertwines humor with psychological depth and cultural insight. By applying Camp's typology, this research highlights the pragmatic and rhetorical dimensions of sarcasm, revealing how figurative language not only enhances dramatic expression but also shapes audience perception and deepens the play's exploration of human relationships and social discourse.

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