



Oh, SO Sarcastic!

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Background

How do people make sarcastic meaning? We explored conscious strategies that people use to generate written sarcasm. Understanding how people generate sarcasm will allow researchers to improve tools that computationally evaluate meaning.

Method

- 24 post/response pairs from the Internet Argument Corpus (Walker et. al., 2012) rated by 5 mTurk workers as not sarcastic.
- 82 UC Santa Cruz undergraduates read a random selection of these non-sarcastic post/response pairs and rewrote the responses to be more sarcastic.
- Participants rated the difficulty (and their perceived success) after each rewrite.
- At the end of the experiment, they wrote about the strategies that they used to make the posts sarcastic.
- We investigated the degree to which people's reported strategies mirrored their sarcastic productions.
- We looked at both specific words and general strategies that people reported using to make something sarcastic.

Self-described Successful attempts

"Noooo it doesn't upset me at all. I think it's a good thing"

"It doesn't upset me at all; This might be the best thing ever."

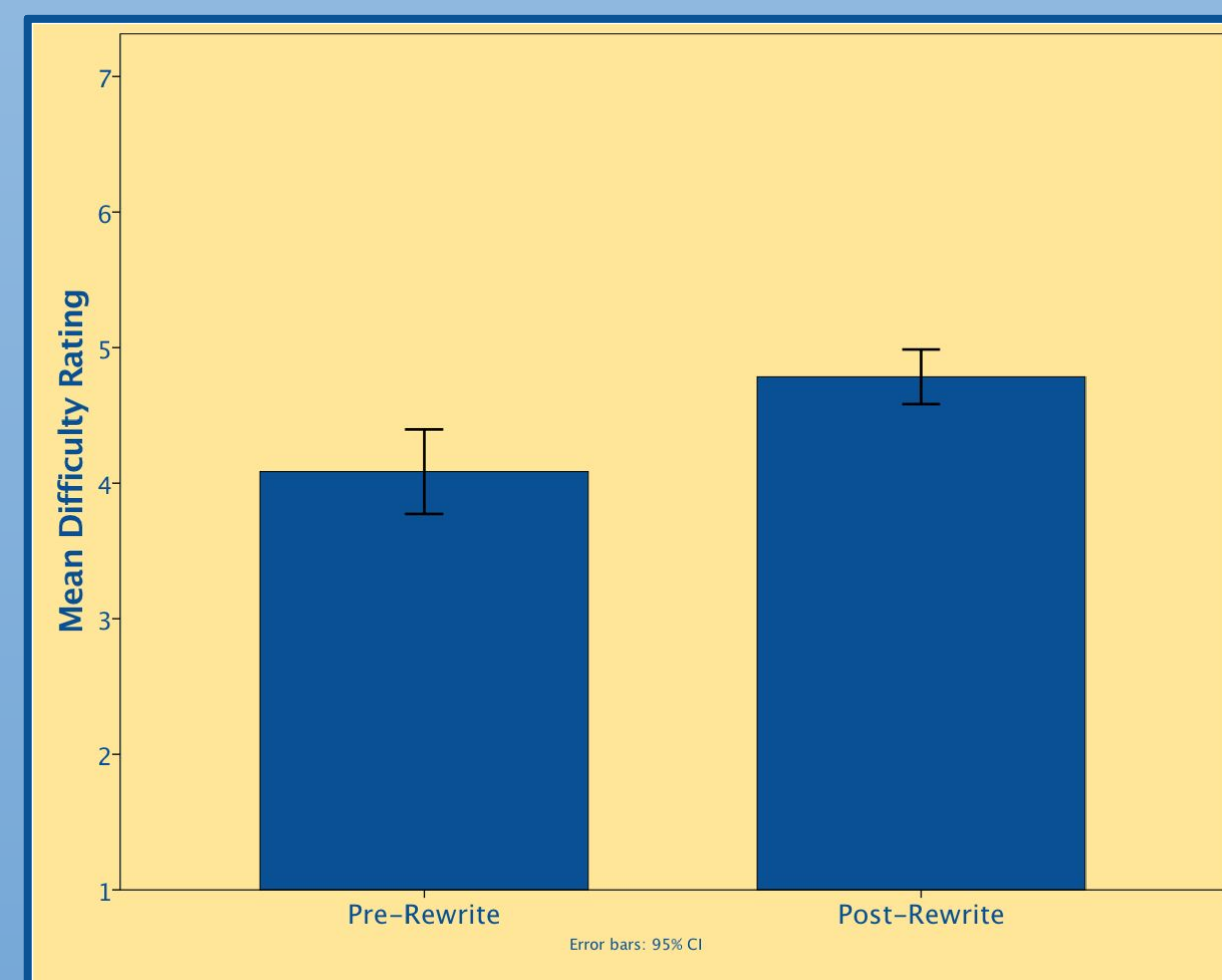
a colorado judge recently ruled that 15 year old girls can get married. i'd like to know if anyone *waves to jyoshu* is upset over this redefinition of marriage, or think that it's bad that this was decided by a judge, and not through a popular vote.

actually, yes it does "upset" me; i don't consider this a good thing at all.

Self-described Unsuccessful attempts

"It is a very good idea to let children who can't even drive get married"

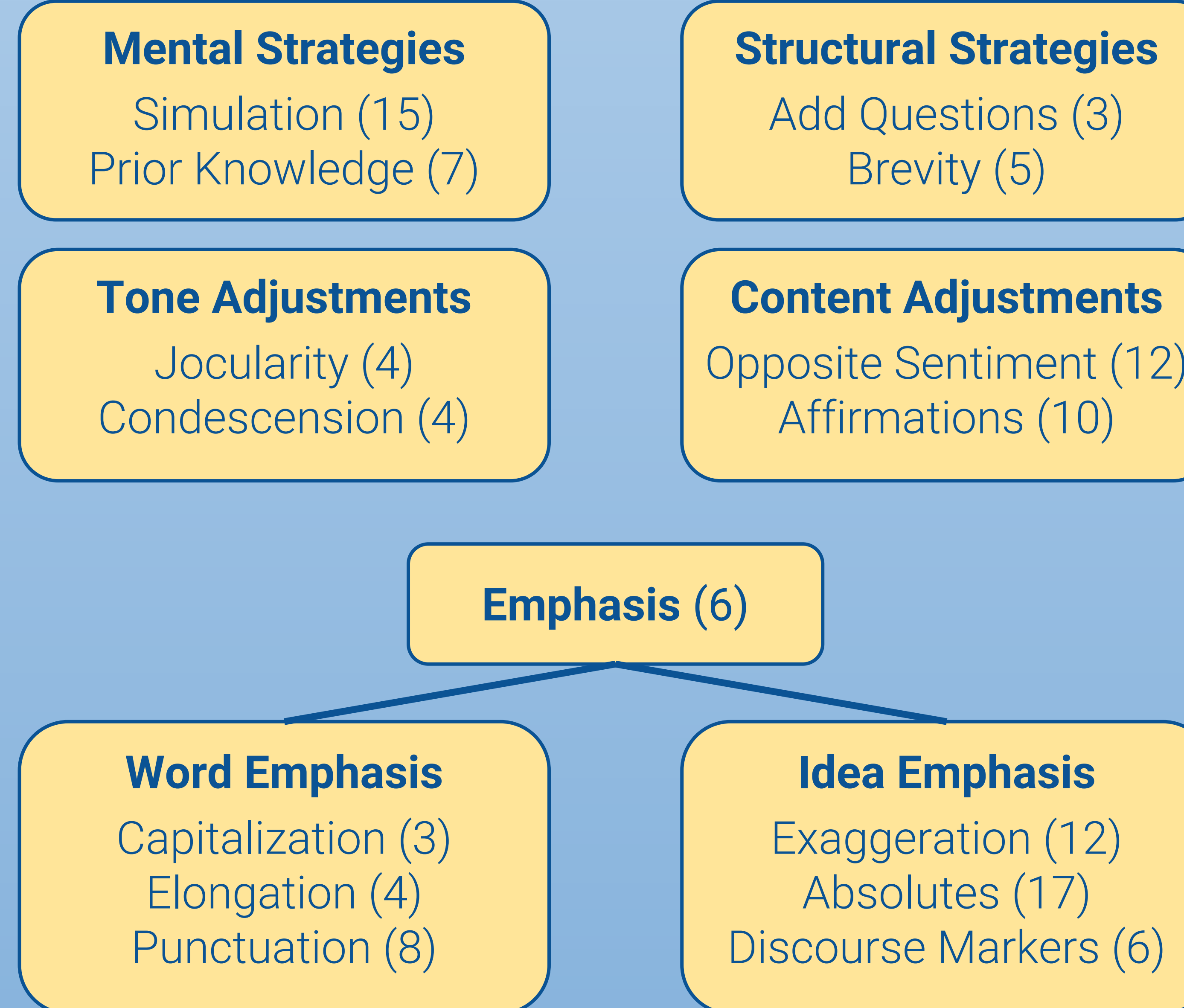
"It does make me happy, it is a great thing"



Reported Strategies

Participants' reported strategies fell into 15 distinct categories (shown below). For nearly all participants, we found examples of all assessable reported strategies. We could not assess the strategies *Simulation* (i.e., "saying it in my head to see if it sounds sarcastic") and *Prior Knowledge* (i.e., "I would recall some of the obvious sarcastic comments I have read on YouTube or Reddit and try to replicate the tone or phrases I have seen").

Numbers in parentheses are the number of participants who reported this strategy.



Specific words/phrases participants reported using to create sarcasm: *um, yeah, so, totally, well, of course, oh yeah, as if, literally, like, always, for sure, surely that's right, obviously, absolutely, really, and clearly*. These showed up a total of 471 times in the 599 rewritings.

Findings

Participants were generally aware of the strategies they used to create sarcasm, including both strategies of using specific words and general strategies.

Participants judged the tasks as significantly more difficult in their post-generation assessment, $M = 4.78$ ($SD = 0.92$), than in their pre-generation assessment, $M = 4.09$ ($SD = 1.43$), on a 7-point scale, $t(81) = 4.21$, $p < .001$; 95% CI [.37, 1.03].

One interesting thing to note is that our 82 participants' total count of reported strategies was merely 116, or about 1.4 per participant. Despite this, there were a wide variety of responses given, suggesting that conscious strategies for creating sarcasm are quite diverse.

