



The Interaction of Lexical Ambiguity and Irony in Barbie (2023): A Semantic–Pragmatic Study of Meaning Construction in Film Dialogue

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how lexical ambiguity and irony contribute to meaning construction in the dialogue of Barbie (2023). It aims to identify selected forms of lexical ambiguity, describe the types of irony employed in the film, and explain how these devices articulate social criticism concerning gender, identity, and power. The study adopted a qualitative descriptive design supported by directed qualitative content analysis. The data consisted of selected English dialogue exchanges from the film, which were verified through the screenplay and subtitles. Data analysis was conducted through identification, classification, contextual interpretation, and coding in a data matrix using a semantic–pragmatic approach. The findings indicate that lexical ambiguity is mainly realized through polysemy and literal–figurative extension, particularly in expressions such as perfect, real, dying, and played with. Verbal, situational, and dramatic irony are also used to expose tensions surrounding beauty ideals, gender roles, corporate empowerment, and masculine entitlement. In contrast, expressions such as ordinary, Dreamhouse, and box operate primarily as evaluative or symbolic re-framing within ironic contexts rather than as direct cases of lexical ambiguity. The novelty of this study lies in its integrated analysis of lexical ambiguity and irony within the same semantic–pragmatic framework, while also distinguishing lexical ambiguity from symbolic interpretation. The findings imply that film dialogue should be examined not only as a narrative device but also as a linguistic site where word meaning, contextual inference, and social ideology intersect. This study may therefore contribute to semantic–pragmatic studies, film discourse analysis, and future research on meaning construction in contemporary cinematic texts.

INTRODUCTION

Film dialogue is not merely a vehicle for presenting plot information; it is also a linguistic space in which meaning is formed, negotiated, and interpreted. In contemporary cinema, dialogue often carries layered meanings through lexical choice, contextual implication, humor, irony, and social criticism. Meaning in film therefore depends not only on what characters say, but also on how, when, and why an utterance is produced within a particular narrative situation (Elfrida, 2025). Film dialogue is particularly relevant to pragmatic analysis because characters' utterances can reveal communicative



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intentions, interpersonal relations, and narrative functions within specific contexts (Farwati et al., 2023). Previous research has also demonstrated that cinematic dialogue provides valuable linguistic material for examining how expressions acquire meaning through character interaction and narrative development (Khulel, 2020).

Barbie (2023), directed by Greta Gerwig, was selected as the object of this study because its dialogue is central to the film's construction of conflict, humor, and social criticism. Rather than relying solely on visual symbolism, the film repeatedly uses stylized conversations, narrator commentary, wordplay, and contrasts between Barbieland and the Real World to develop its central concerns. The dialogue moves between highly idealized expressions in Barbieland and more complex, uncomfortable, and contradictory exchanges in the Real World. This contrast creates a linguistically rich setting in which the same expressions may acquire different meanings as characters encounter changing social conditions. In addition, *Barbie* has become an important object of academic discussion because of its engagement with gender representation, femininity, masculinity, consumer culture, and social power (Gerwig, 2024). These characteristics make the film particularly suitable for a semantic-pragmatic study of how language produces layered meaning in contemporary cinematic discourse.

One linguistic phenomenon that supports meaning construction in *Barbie* is lexical ambiguity. Lexical ambiguity occurs when a word or expression allows more than one possible interpretation. Ambiguous expressions do not necessarily result in misunderstanding; instead, they may enrich interpretation when contextual information enables speakers and listeners to select, compare, or reconsider possible meanings (Trott & Bergen, 2021). Pimentel et al. (2020) argue that context plays an essential role in reducing uncertainty and guiding the interpretation of lexical meaning. In semantic studies, lexical ambiguity is commonly discussed through the distinction between polysemy and homonymy. Polysemy refers to a lexical form with several related meanings, whereas homonymy refers to identical lexical forms that carry unrelated meanings. Because the boundary between related and unrelated meanings may not always be absolute, lexical classification requires close attention to semantic relations and contextual evidence Haber and Poesio (2020).

This distinction is relevant to the dialogue of *Barbie*, where several expressions change in meaning as the narrative develops. Expressions such as *perfect*, *real*, *dying*, and *played with* may be interpreted differently according to the speaker, the situation, and the contrast between Barbieland and the Real World. For example, *perfect* may refer to an ideal condition, physical flawlessness, or conformity to a fixed Barbie identity. Similarly, *real* may refer to a physical world outside Barbieland while also suggesting emotional complexity, vulnerability, and social inequality. Such shifts illustrate how lexical meaning can develop through contextual use rather than remain fixed across different dialogue exchanges (Li and Joannis, 2021). In this study, context-dependent interpretation is treated as an interpretive condition that helps determine the meaning activated in a particular scene, rather than as an additional category equal to polysemy and homonymy.

Irony also plays an important role in the film's dialogue. Irony emerges when there is a discrepancy between literal wording and intended meaning, between expectation and outcome, or between what characters know and what audiences understand. Ghosh et al. (2015) explain that verbal irony requires hearers to infer meanings beyond the literal form of an utterance. This process makes irony closely related to pragmatics because ironic interpretation depends on contextual knowledge, speaker intention, evaluative stance, and audience inference (Mazzarella & Pouscoulous, 2023). In *Barbie*, irony does not function only as a source of comedy. It also provides an indirect way to expose contradictions surrounding beauty ideals, gender roles, corporate empowerment, masculinity, and social authority.

Recent studies have examined *Barbie* from several perspectives, but their focus remains largely separate from the semantic-pragmatic interaction investigated in this study. Rengganis and Pasopati (2024) discuss female superiority in the *Barbie* movie script and highlight gendered power relations in



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Barbieland. However, their study concentrates on representation rather than on the linguistic mechanisms through which dialogue constructs meaning. He (2024) examines feminism in the film through multimodal discourse analysis of the movie poster; consequently, the study emphasizes visual representation rather than lexical meaning or pragmatic inference in spoken dialogue. Marta et al. (2025) analyze sarcasm in *Barbie* by focusing on maxim flouting and implied criticism, but their discussion does not examine how ambiguous lexical forms may interact with irony. Yakalı (2023) investigates the deconstruction of hegemonic and toxic masculinity through satirical representation, yet the study gives limited attention to the semantic development of particular expressions in the dialogue. These studies establish that *Barbie* is a productive text for discussing gender and social criticism, but they leave open the question of how lexical ambiguity and irony jointly construct these meanings at the level of film dialogue.

The research gap, therefore, lies not merely in the limited discussion of ambiguity or irony separately, but in the absence of an integrated framework that connects semantic ambiguity with pragmatic irony in the same analysis. In film dialogue, ambiguous expressions may occur within ironic utterances or ironic situations, while irony may reshape the interpretation of a lexical item beyond its literal meaning. For instance, the word *perfect* may refer to physical beauty, social approval, emotional completeness, or an unrealistic identity standard. When it appears within an ironic narrative context, its meaning becomes more complex because audiences must interpret the lexical possibilities of the expression alongside the speaker's attitude, the situation, and the social criticism implied by the scene. Examining these two devices together is therefore necessary to explain how linguistic meaning operates across semantic and pragmatic levels.

The novelty of this study lies in its integrated semantic–pragmatic analysis of lexical ambiguity and irony in the dialogue of *Barbie* (2023). Unlike previous studies that focus primarily on gender representation, visual discourse, sarcasm, or masculinity, this study distinguishes direct lexical ambiguity from symbolic or evaluative re-framing and examines how ambiguous expressions operate within ironic contexts. The study addresses three research questions: (1) what forms of lexical ambiguity are found in the dialogue of *Barbie*; (2) what types of irony are used in the film; and (3) how do lexical ambiguity and irony interact in constructing meaning in *Barbie* (2023)?.

Theoretically, this study contributes to semantic research by clarifying the role of polysemy, literal–figurative extension, and contextual interpretation in film dialogue. It also contributes to pragmatics by showing how irony depends on speaker stance, narrative expectation, and audience inference. For film discourse studies, the findings demonstrate that dialogue should be examined not only as narrative support, but also as a site where linguistic choices communicate ideological tensions related to gender, identity, power, and institutional control. Practically, this study may provide a reference for students, researchers, and film analysts who wish to apply semantic and pragmatic approaches to contemporary cinematic texts, particularly films that combine entertainment with social commentary.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design supported by directed qualitative content analysis. A qualitative descriptive design was selected because the study aimed to identify, classify, and interpret lexical ambiguity and irony as they occur in film dialogue without measuring audience responses or testing statistical relationships. This design is appropriate for studies that seek a clear and context-sensitive description of linguistic phenomena in naturally occurring discourse (Doyle et al., 2020).



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Directed qualitative content analysis was used because the initial coding categories were informed by established semantic and pragmatic concepts, while the interpretation of each item remained grounded in the dialogue and narrative context of the film (Alyaqoub et al, 2024).

The study applied a semantic–pragmatic perspective. The semantic dimension examined whether a lexical item allowed more than one defensible interpretation, whereas the pragmatic dimension examined how contextual information, speaker stance, narrative events, and audience knowledge shaped the intended meaning. This perspective was necessary because lexical meaning in film dialogue cannot be separated from the situation in which an utterance is spoken or from the social implication it creates (Pimentel et al., 2020).

Data Source and Unit of Analysis

The primary data source was the English dialogue in *Barbie* (2023), directed by Greta Gerwig. The film was treated as the main source because the interpretation of dialogue depends on verbal expression, tone, character relation, visual situation, and narrative development. The screenplay and English subtitles were used as supporting materials to verify the wording of selected utterances and reduce transcription errors. When there was a difference between written material and spoken dialogue, the spoken dialogue in the film was treated as the primary reference.

The unit of analysis was an utterance, dialogue exchange, or scene containing lexical ambiguity, irony, or both phenomena. An item was selected only when sufficient linguistic and contextual evidence was available to support the analysis. Expressions were not classified as lexical ambiguity merely because they were symbolic, emotionally significant, or related to the film's gender themes.

Data Collection Technique

The data were collected through repeated viewings of the film and systematic examination of the screenplay. First, the researchers watched the film to understand the plot, character relationships, and major narrative conflicts. Second, the film was reviewed again to identify dialogue exchanges that potentially contained lexical ambiguity or irony. Third, each selected utterance was transcribed and checked against the screenplay and subtitles. Fourth, the selected data were entered into a coding matrix containing the data number, speaker, screenplay page, dialogue excerpt, lexical item, possible meanings, irony type, contextual evidence, and analytical decision.

Purposive sampling was applied after the researchers examined the dialogue throughout the film. Only utterances relevant to the research questions were retained. The final number of lexical ambiguity cases and irony cases was reported after all data had been rechecked through the coding matrix. Cases containing both lexical ambiguity and irony were recorded as overlapping interactional cases and were not counted as an additional category.

Operational Definition and Coding Criteria

Lexical ambiguity was identified when one lexical form allowed two or more plausible meanings within the relevant utterance or scene. The classification focused on polysemy and homonymy. Polysemy refers to a lexical item with several related meanings, while homonymy refers to identical lexical forms with unrelated meanings. Recent research indicates that the relationship between polysemous senses and homonymous meanings may occur on a continuum; therefore, each classification must be supported by clear semantic and contextual evidence rather than by a rigid assumption (Haber & Poesio, 2021).

Context was treated as an interpretive condition rather than as a separate type of lexical ambiguity. Context helps determine which meaning is activated in a particular utterance, but a context-dependent interpretation was not automatically counted as an additional lexical ambiguity category. This decision was based on the view that contextual information plays a central role in reducing uncertainty and guiding the interpretation of ambiguous lexical items (Pimentel et al., 2020).



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Irony was classified into verbal irony, situational irony, and dramatic irony. Verbal irony was identified when the literal proposition differed from the speaker's intended attitude or evaluation. Situational irony was identified when the actual outcome contradicted an established expectation. Dramatic irony was identified when the audience possessed relevant knowledge unavailable to one or more characters. The classification considered not only literal wording, but also speaker stance, contextual information, and the evaluative meaning implied by the utterance (Mazzarella & Pouscoulous, 2023).

Table 1 presents the coding criteria applied in this study.

Table 1. Coding criteria applied in this study.

Category	Coding Criterion	Analytical Focus
Polysemy	One word or expression has two or more related meanings.	Semantic relationship between the possible meanings.
Homonymy	One lexical form has unrelated meanings.	Clear semantic separation between meanings.
Context-dependent interpretation	Context determines which possible meaning is activated.	Speaker, scene, tone, and narrative situation.
Verbal irony	Literal wording differs from the speaker's intended stance.	Speaker attitude and implied evaluation.
Situational irony	An event or outcome contradicts an established expectation.	Contrast between expectation and outcome.
Dramatic irony	The audience knows information unavailable to one or more characters.	Difference between audience knowledge and character knowledge.
Interactional case	Lexical ambiguity and irony occur in the same utterance or scene.	Combined semantic and pragmatic effect.

Data Analysis Procedure

The analysis was conducted in four stages. First, the researchers identified candidate utterances containing lexical ambiguity, irony, or both. Second, each item was classified according to the coding criteria presented above. In the lexical analysis, the researchers examined the lexical form, possible meanings, semantic relationship between meanings, and contextual evidence. In the pragmatic analysis, the researchers examined the literal meaning, speaker intention, implied meaning, narrative expectation, and audience knowledge.

Third, the researchers interpreted the function of each item in relation to character development, gender representation, power relations, and social criticism in the film. This stage did not assume that every ambiguous word automatically produced ideological meaning. Such interpretations were made only when the dialogue and scene provided sufficient evidence. Finally, the researchers examined interactional cases in which lexical ambiguity occurred within an ironic utterance or ironic situation. These cases were analyzed as overlapping data to explain how semantic complexity and pragmatic inference jointly contributed to meaning construction.

Trustworthiness of the Analysis

Several procedures were applied to strengthen the trustworthiness of the analysis. The researchers reviewed selected scenes repeatedly to confirm the verbal and situational context of each item. The transcription of dialogue was checked against the screenplay and subtitles. A coding matrix was maintained to document the reason for including, excluding, and classifying each item. Clear documentation of coding decisions is important because it improves the transparency and communicability of qualitative analysis (O'Connor & Joffe, 2020).



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The coding results were also reviewed by another researcher with knowledge of semantics and pragmatics. Differences in interpretation were discussed by returning to the dialogue, scene context, and coding criteria. This procedure was used to reduce unsupported classification and improve analytical consistency. The use of systematic documentation, contextual checking, and peer review supports credibility and methodological rigor in qualitative research (Johnson et al., 2020).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Lexical Ambiguity in *Barbie* (2023)

The selected data show that lexical ambiguity in *Barbie* (2023) is primarily realized through polysemy and literal figurative extension. Clear cases of homonymy were not foregrounded in the present discussion because a homonymous classification requires evidence that the relevant meanings are semantically unrelated. Instead, the analysis focuses on expressions whose meanings shift according to the speaker, narrative situation, and contrast between Barbieland and the Real World. This approach is consistent with the view that the interpretation of potentially ambiguous lexical items depends on both semantic relations and contextual evidence (Haber & Poesio, 2021).

Table 2 presents selected examples of lexical ambiguity and context-dependent lexical interpretation. The final column distinguishes expressions that meet the criteria for lexical ambiguity from those that remain analytically relevant but function primarily as evaluative re-framing.

Table 2. Selected Examples of Lexical Ambiguity and Context-Dependent Lexical Interpretation in *Barbie* (2023)

No.	Dialogue Excerpt	Target Expression	Relevant Readings	Analytical Classification	Counted as Lexical Ambiguity
1	"Gosh this night is just perfect!" / "I used to be perfect."	perfect	an ideal and pleasurable condition; physical flawlessness; conformity to a fixed Barbie identity	Polysemy	Yes
2	"The Real World isn't what I thought it was."	real	the world outside Barbieland; a world associated with authentic, difficult, and emotionally complex experience	Polysemy	Yes
3	"Do you ever think about dying?" / "I'm just dying to dance!"	dying	literal death; an idiomatic expression of strong desire or eagerness	Polysemy and idiomatic extension	Yes



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4	“We’re all being played with!”	played with	handled as toys by children; affected by human emotions and imagination	Literal–figurative polysemy	Yes
5	“What about ‘Ordinary Barbie’?”	ordinary	unexceptional or socially insignificant; a legitimate and valid everyday identity	Context-dependent evaluative re-framing	No

Source: *Dialogue excerpts from Barbie (Gerwig, 2023).*

The expression perfect is central to Barbie’s development because its meaning changes throughout the narrative. At the beginning of the film, the word refers to a stable, pleasurable, and apparently flawless life in Barbieland. Barbie’s morning routine, appearance, friendships, and social environment are presented as perfect because they are predictable and free from discomfort. However, when Barbie later states, “I used to be perfect,” the expression no longer refers merely to beauty. It reflects her fear of losing the fixed identity associated with Stereotypical Barbie.

The shift in meaning becomes clearer when Ruth responds, “I don’t know, I think you’re just right.” The contrast between perfect and just right is significant. Perfection implies an ideal that must remain unchanged, whereas being “just right” suggests acceptance of change, imperfection, and individual experience. In this context, the semantic development of perfect supports the film’s criticism of rigid expectations surrounding feminine appearance and identity.

A similar semantic shift appears in the phrase the Real World. Initially, Barbie understands the Real World as a physical destination outside Barbieland. She expects that women there will be grateful because Barbie has supposedly helped them become happy and powerful. This expectation is challenged when Barbie encounters catcalling, objectification, emotional discomfort, and Sasha’s criticism. As a result, real develops beyond a geographical meaning. It comes to represent a social world marked by uncertainty, vulnerability, and unequal gender relations. This interpretation is consistent with Valenzuela et al., (2026), who argue that the contrast between Barbie Land and the Real World positions Barbie’s journey as a movement from idealized femininity toward an awareness of objectification, social constraints, and identity negotiation.

The expression dying provides a clearer example of lexical ambiguity through idiomatic extension. During the party scene, Barbie unexpectedly asks, “Do you ever think about dying?” After the other characters react with shock, she quickly changes her statement to “I’m just dying to dance!” The first use refers to mortality, whereas the second use is an idiomatic expression of eagerness. The contrast reveals Barbie’s attempt to restore the cheerful atmosphere of the party while also exposing the first disruption in her previously controlled identity.

The phrase played with also contains literal and figurative meanings. When Weird Barbie says, “We’re all being played with!”, the expression refers literally to dolls being handled by children. At the same time, it suggests that Barbie’s emotional condition is affected by Gloria’s sadness, memories, and imagination. The phrase therefore connects the physical relationship between dolls and players with the wider narrative idea that Barbie’s identity is shaped by human experience.

The term ordinary is retained in the analysis because its social value changes substantially in the dialogue. However, it is not automatically counted as lexical ambiguity. In the proposal for “Ordinary Barbie,” the word initially suggests something unexceptional or commercially unappealing. It later becomes a positive expression of everyday womanhood and freedom from impossible standards. Thus, ordinary is more accurately understood as context-dependent evaluative re-framing.

Irony as Social and Gender Critique

Irony in *Barbie* is used not only to create humor, but also to reveal contradictions between



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social ideals and lived realities. The interpretation of irony depends on the distance between literal wording, speaker attitude, narrative expectation, and audience knowledge. This emphasis on contextual inference is consistent with Huang et al. (2025), who explain that the interpretation of verbal irony requires readers or listeners to move beyond literal wording and recognize contextual incongruity as well as the speaker's intended evaluative stance. Because the data are taken from spoken film dialogue, prosodic delivery should also be treated as a supporting contextual cue in interpreting verbal irony. Bolyanatz et al. (2024) show that ironic utterances may be distinguished through prosodic patterns in addition to lexical and situational incongruity. Mazzarella & Pouscoulous (2023) explain, ironic meaning requires hearers to infer an evaluative stance that extends beyond the literal proposition.

Table 3. Selected Forms of Irony in *Barbie* (2023)

No.	Dialogue or Situation	Type of Irony	Function
1	"Thanks to Barbie all problems of feminism and equal rights have been solved!"	Verbal irony	The narrator immediately undermines the celebratory claim by explaining that this is only what the Barbies believe.
2	Barbie expects "good feminine energy" at a construction site but receives catcalling and sexual objectification.	Situational irony	The scene contrasts Barbie's expectation of female empowerment with the gendered treatment she experiences in the Real World.
3	Mattel executives repeatedly claim to empower women, yet all senior positions shown in the boardroom are held by men.	Verbal and situational irony	The contradiction exposes the gap between corporate empowerment language and institutional power.
4	Mattel asks Barbie to return to a box "so everything will be as it was."	Situational irony	The box is presented as a solution, although it would return Barbie to a controlled and restricted identity.
5	Ken concludes that patriarchy means that "men and horses run everything."	Verbal irony	Ken's simplistic interpretation parodies his limited understanding of power and masculinity.
6	The narrator suggests that Kens may one day have as much power in Barbieland as women have in the Real World.	Dramatic irony	The apparent promise of equality is undermined by the audience's awareness of persistent gender inequality in reality.

Source: *Dialogue excerpts and scenes from Barbie* (Gerwig, 2023).

The opening narration offers a clear example of verbal irony. The statement that Barbie has solved feminism and equal rights initially sounds triumphant. However, the narrator immediately weakens the statement by adding that this is only what the Barbies think. The irony establishes the central tension of the film: Barbieland appears to be a feminist utopia, but its harmony is based on a simplified reversal of gender hierarchy rather than a genuinely balanced social order.

The Real World scenes develop this tension further. Barbie expects recognition and appreciation, but she is confronted with unwanted attention and gendered objectification. In contrast, Ken interprets public attention as respect and personal validation. The situational irony emerges because the same environment produces different experiences for the two characters. Barbie feels



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threatened, whereas Ken feels empowered. This contrast demonstrates that social power is not experienced equally by people who occupy different gender positions. The importance of gendered roles in ironic interaction is also supported by Hess Zimmermann & Gloria (2024), who found that the gender of interlocutors may influence how ironic statements are interpreted within particular communicative situations.

Another important ironic pattern appears in the Mattel headquarters scenes. The CEO declares, “Always be empowering girls!” while the executive boardroom is dominated by men. When Barbie asks whether there are women in positions of authority, she repeatedly receives the same answer: another man holds the role. The scene does not merely criticize one company. It exposes a broader contradiction in corporate discourse, in which the language of empowerment may coexist with unequal decision-making structures.

Ken’s interpretation of patriarchy also functions ironically. His belief that patriarchy means that “men and horses run everything” reduces a complex system of social power to a superficial collection of masculine symbols. The humor arises from his misunderstanding, yet the scene also reveals how he associates power with visibility, admiration, and control. This interpretation becomes more significant when Ken transfers these ideas back to Barbieland and attempts to redefine its social order.

Interaction between Lexical Ambiguity and Irony

Lexical ambiguity and irony intersect when a word or expression develops multiple meanings within a situation that also contradicts an established expectation. In these cases, semantic interpretation cannot be separated from pragmatic inference. The meaning of the lexical item depends not only on its possible senses, but also on the ironic situation in which it occurs.

Table 4. Selected Interactional Cases between Lexical Ambiguity and Irony

No.	Key Expression	Lexical Interpretation	Ironic Context	Meaning Construction
1	perfect	ideal life, physical flawlessness, and conformity to a fixed identity	Barbie’s supposedly perfect life produces anxiety, shame, fear of death, and emotional crisis.	Perfection is revealed as fragile and restrictive rather than genuinely fulfilling.
2	real	the world outside Barbieland; authentic and emotionally difficult experience	Barbie expects the Real World to confirm Barbieland’s feminist ideals, but she encounters inequality and objectification.	The Real World becomes a space where Barbie recognizes social complexity rather than a place of automatic female empowerment.

The interaction between *perfect* and irony is particularly important to Barbie’s character development. At the beginning of the film, perfection is associated with happiness, beauty, routine, and stability. Yet this ideal collapses when Barbie begins thinking about death, experiences embarrassment, discovers her flat feet, and confronts the realities of the human world. The irony lies in the fact that the world described as perfect cannot accommodate genuine feeling or personal change. Barbie becomes more emotionally aware only after her perfect identity begins to fail.

The expression *real* also gains meaning through situational irony. Barbie assumes that the Real World will reflect the success of Barbieland, especially in relation to women’s empowerment. Instead, she encounters a social environment in which women are still judged, objectified, and restricted by gendered expectations. The irony reshapes the meaning of *real*: it no longer refers only to a world outside Barbieland, but to a world in which social contradictions must be recognized and



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negotiated.

Symbolic and Evaluative Re-framing in Ironic Contexts

Some recurring expressions in the film are important for the discussion of power and identity but should not be treated as direct instances of lexical ambiguity. In particular, *Dreamhouse* and *box* function primarily as symbols that acquire expanded meanings through ironic contexts.

The Dreamhouse initially represents Barbie's personal space and autonomy in Barbieland. When Ken renames it "Ken's Mojo Dojo Casa House," the exaggerated re-labelling is humorous, but it also transforms the house into a symbol of contested ownership and gendered authority. The scene shows how language can be used to perform power: Ken does not merely occupy Barbie's home, but attempts to redefine its identity through naming.

Similarly, the box is literally a form of product packaging. However, its significance expands when Mattel presents it as a solution to Barbie's problems. The executives claim that returning to the box will restore order, yet the situation suggests that the box would also return Barbie to a controlled and marketable identity. The irony lies in the contrast between the language of protection and the practice of containment. A related analysis by Alifia et al. (2026) interprets the life-sized doll box as an institutional attempt to trap and silence Barbie, linking the scene to the film's criticism of objectification, patriarchal control, and the pressure placed on women to remain visibly cheerful despite restriction.

The proposal for "Ordinary Barbie" also involves evaluative re-framing. Gloria presents ordinariness as a valid alternative to exceptional beauty, achievement, and perfection. The Mattel executives initially reject the idea, but change their response when they discover that it could be profitable. This situation satirizes the tendency of corporate institutions to accept social criticism only when it can be converted into commercial value.

Overall, the analysis indicates that lexical ambiguity and irony work together to construct layered meanings in *Barbie*. Polysemous expressions such as *perfect*, *real*, *dying*, and *played with* develop through dialogue and narrative context, while irony exposes contradictions in gender roles, beauty ideals, corporate empowerment, and masculine entitlement. Other expressions, including *ordinary*, *Dreamhouse*, and *box*, function primarily as evaluative or symbolic re-framing within ironic contexts rather than as direct cases of lexical ambiguity. Through this combination, the film uses dialogue not only to advance the narrative and create humor, but also to question fixed assumptions about femininity, identity, power, and social roles.

This analysis differs from studies that focus primarily on maxim flouting or gender representation in *Barbie*. While those studies emphasize implicature, satire, or visual representation, the present study focuses on how lexical meaning and pragmatic inference operate together in selected dialogue exchanges. The findings show that the film's social criticism is constructed not only through narrative events, but also through the semantic shifts and ironic contrasts embedded in its dialogue.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This study concludes that meaning construction in *Barbie* (2023) is shaped by the interaction between lexical ambiguity and irony in the film's dialogue. The analysis indicates that polysemous expressions such as *perfect*, *real*, *dying*, and *played with* develop different meanings through speaker intention, narrative context, and the contrast between Barbieland and the Real World. Verbal, situational, and dramatic irony further expose contradictions related to gender roles, beauty ideals, corporate empowerment, and masculine entitlement. Meanwhile, expressions such as *ordinary*, *Dreamhouse*, and *box* function mainly as evaluative or symbolic re-framing within ironic contexts



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rather than as direct instances of lexical ambiguity. These findings show that the film uses dialogue not only to create humor and advance the narrative, but also to question fixed assumptions about femininity, identity, power, and social roles. Future studies may examine similar semantic-pragmatic patterns in other contemporary films, compare the use of ambiguity and irony across different genres, or investigate how audiences interpret these linguistic devices in relation to gendered social issues.

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