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THE LINGUISTIC FOUNDATIONS OF HUMOR IN FRIENDS TV SERIES

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INTRODUCTION

This paper introduces humor strategies implemented in everyday communication of American sitcom characters. It tends to explain the mechanism of the humor generation from the perspective of cognition and communication. Apart from this, it conducts a deep analysis of humorous dialogues with the aim to provide a deeper understanding of the nature and properties of presupposition as well as a fresh perspective for explaining the generative mechanism of verbal humor. This study concluded that humor can be either funny or cruel, so it is important for speakers to choose appropriate humor strategies to achieve their goals in the process of communication. The focus of this research is in the area of examining the language based on theoretical approach of humor and its evolution.

In terms of **relevance** the study is of considerable interest**.** There have been many theories of humor aiming to explain what humor is, what social function it serves, and what is considered to be humorous. A growing body of literature has examined the notion humor from various perspectives. Some preliminary work was carried out by Attardo introducing a commonly accepted classification of conventional theories of humor such as relief theory, superiority theory, and incongruity theory. The relief theory maintains that laughter is a homeostatic mechanism that can reduce psychological tension, which is thus welcomed by those who believe that laughter is beneficial to one's health. The superiority theory of humor dates back to Plato and Aristotle, who believed people laughed at others' misfortunes and hence demonstrated their superiority. The incongruity theory is conventionally recognized as the most influential one in humor research. In his critique of humor, a German philosopher Kant outlined laughter as 'an affection arising from sudden transformation of trained expectation into nothing'. Schopenhauer proposed a more explicit incongruity-based theory of humor which states that 'the cause of laugh in every case is simply the sudden perception of the incongruity between a concept and the real objects which have been thought through it in some relation, and the laughter itself is just the expression of this incongruity'. Morreall provided a simple and direct interpretation of this theory

'what we are enjoying is experiencing something that does not fit our mental patterns; and incongruity is a fancy name for a mismatch between what we expected and what we experience'. All things considered, it is quite vivid that humor involves creative or artistically polished language and the successful transmission of humor requires the participation of both a speaker to utter and a listener to perceive.

As a matter of fact, the misunderstanding of the speaker's implicature comes from the lack of the comprehending contextual resources on the part of a hearer in the course of a conversation. Sometimes the funniest characters' replicas are created by the communication breakdown while making a conversation (i.e. a speaker intends to convey a literal meaning, but a hearer mistakes a non-literal meaning with the most relevant interpretation). There are some specified rules that speakers have to follow in order to make a conversation continue effectively. Due to this fact, there arises the necessity of reconstructing the meaning of an utterance in order to save it from merely being a faulty conversational contribution. For example, self-evidently true or obviously false statements must be uttered for some other purposes rather than for simply conveying their stated meanings. In the daily conversation when a speaker violates the maxim of quality by saying something untrue, a hearer might happen to be uncertain about the veracity of a statement: yet, the sitcom's audience will hardly ever judge a speaker, because they usually can see a speaker's exaggerative facial expression and meanwhile hear a burst of canned laughter.

The major purpose of this paper is to study the linguistic foundations of humor in "Friends" TV series and to investigate the dominance of American culture within international mass media. To achieve this goal it is necessary to follow such objectives:

- to analyze the humor complexity and the problem of internal subdivision;
- to explore examples of linguistic and stylistic means of humor;

- to survey separate episodes of the series and make a general pragmatic explanation on humor.
- to develop the practical part of the research and investigate the linguistic and stylistic means of humor based on "Friends" TV series.

The object of the investigation is the linguistic aspect of language, verbal expressions of series' characters, their daily conversations and ironic statements.

The choice of the object of study is determined by the following factors: significant interest to the speech act and its structure; the need for a comprehensive study of the cultural background and its influence on the modern society; the need for further research of the evolution of humor and the development of linguistic functions of the language.

The subject of the research is a pragmatic approach of the functional equivalence and theoretical substantiation of the communicative functions of the humor.

Research methods are complex, due to the specifics of the material, as well as the purpose of its study. In the first place, humor appears when the audience perceives the contradiction between the presupposition uttered by a character and the fact or the speaker's true feelings; secondly, when a character utters something that cancels the presupposition formed by the audience based on previous plots. It is hoped the attempt to combine pragmatics and humor psychology here will be capable of providing some insights. Besides, the usage of a cooperative principle will help explain the humorous situations, since they might convey information.

The theoretical significance lies in further research of humor and laughter, their philosophical and psychological factors.

The practical value of the work is determined by the fact that this material provides an explanation of verbal humor of TV series "Friends", investigates all the peculiarities and problems of the linguistic language features inherent in the American spoken language.

The structure of the study: This research consists of the introduction, two chapters, conclusions, and bibliography (23 items). The total volume is 29.

CHAPTER I. THE THORETICAL BACKGROUND OF HUMOR AS AN OBJECT OF LINGUISTIC RESEARCH

1.1. The notion and structure of humor

There is humor in our conversations, in the movies, on the TV, in books, in newspapers, in magazines, in comic strips, in other words it is everywhere. There is no escaping humor and there is no subject, whether it is sex, marriage, politics, religion, education, workplace sports. Humans are the targets of the most elaborate and provoking jokes; in fact our nearly affectionate relationships, the most individual difficulties and sacred beliefs render humor and have done so for thousands of years. Linguists, psychologists, and anthropologists have taken humor to be an all-encompassing category, covering any event or object that elicits laughter, amuses, or is felt to be funny [4, p. 1]. Psychologists have tried to subcategorize humor on the basis of its subject matter (scatological, aggressive, sexual) or in some cases based on structural factors, as in Aubouin's attempt to distinguish humor and ridiculousness by the lack of 'justification' of the latter. In pursuit of identifying humor, the scholars referred to discriminating of humor essence consisting of incongruity alone and humor with incongruity and resolution [3, p. 4].

Humor is a subject that has attracted an interest and absorption of some of greatest minds, from Aristotle and Kant to Bergson and Freud. It has furthermore fascinated and played an essential role in the work some outstanding writers such as Cervantes, Shakespeare, Moliere, Swift and Twain. Despite the presence of a vast number of groundbreaking papers, yet, there is still an extreme deal of controversy about what humor is or why something is funny [4, p. 2]. A significant introductory transaction to the analysis of the practice of linguistic evaluation of humor is to determine what is meant by the term 'humor' and how it is delineated. The examination of this question calls for diverse ways of approaching the notion. The fundamental subdivision demonstrates that it is impossible to specify a *prior* class of humor: permit to supply extended comprehensive inner subdivisions. The

second subdivision declines the application of laughter as a shaping criterion for humor. Finally, the application of a 'humor competence as a working concept is advocated [16, p. 5].

The depiction of humor is likely to vary substantially; nevertheless, according to music, humor is obligated to undoubtedly include any implicit primal principles. For the material falling within the scope of the research of Pocheptsov, these principles dwell on particular linguistic phenomena and their prototypes of usage as detailed during the progression of centuries. Man is the only creature blessed with a concept of humor. According to additional features, this impression of humor ought to have highly-developed during the extensive progression of human evolution. Humor, especially linguistic humor, presumes a well formed understanding and can just exist inside the model of circumstantial sociolinguistic conditions, the virtually considerable in the midst of these being a love for the mother language and the aesthetic feeling derived from its use. Generally, two classifications of humor might be distinguished: situational humor and linguistic humor. Positions capable of eliciting a humorous response are innumerable. A monkey's clumsy representation of man's actions, a child's babbling, the similarity of an inactive object to an individual or vice versa – these and an innkeeper of other positions can produce individual smile or die laughing superficially or inwardly. In the illustrated positions we can study the discriminative individualism of humor. A child's babbling can institute a smile to its parents' lips, on the other hand a stranger may remain considerably indifferent to it. Linguistic humor as displayed in jokes, anecdotes – appears isomorphic with situational humor in that it seems also to have "three scenic components" [15, p.15].

1.2. The theories of humor

When humans regard something as being funny they normally mean that it seems funny or silly whereas it is clearly unsuccessful, unequable or pathetic in quality. The oldest theory of humor is indeed much *a theory of laughter*. Although,

today humor is usually viewed as a positive phenomenon, an integral custom of theorists have developed a few controversial attitudes towards it. Plato believed that the true constitution of the comic is self-ignorance. He argued that the funniest figures are portrayed as inferior. The ridiculous ones consider themselves supreme which rarely dovetails the reality [14, p. 153]. Hobbes, in a classic formulation, carried out the corresponding belief a bit further: 'the passion of laughter is nothing else than sudden glory arising from a sudden creation of eminence in ourselves by juxtaposition with the infirmity of others, or ourselves. The Hobbesian explanation of laughter became the prototypical configuration of *the superiority theor*y. Hobbes was primarily a political philosopher and it might seem strange for him to speculate about humor, but the relationship between humor and power is one that has attracted a considerable amount attention in recent years. In addition to the matter of superiority, Hobbes also mentions the importance of timing – the sudden glory that is based on a sudden conception [10, p.51].

There is another theory that is very likely to be widespread among other explanations of humor. This is **the incongruity theory** of humor which argues that each humorous statement includes some kind of a difference between what individual expects and what he/she gets. The term 'incongruity' has various contrary meanings such as inconsistent, not harmonious, lacking propriety and not conforming, so there are a number of possible implications. Incongruity theories are realized within the intellectual capacity, for we have to identify an incongruity before manifesting any reactions. One of the most striking and controversial theories of humor is derived from the studies of Freud. The psychoanalytic conception of humor argues that humor is masked aggression (often of a sexual nature) which gives us gratifications we desperately crave for. As Freud indicated in his classic publication 'Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious' jokes may represent both lustful and hostile intentions. To the scholar's way of thinking, one may manifest a tremendous scope of various emotions by means of humor. Freud's psychoanalysis of humor devotes a good deal of interest to the formal or structural properties of jokes. The mastery of joking is not solely dependent on the subjects

that are determining, but also the techniques they employ, such as wordplay, condensation and displacement [8, p.74].

The conceptual (or semiotic) theory is also worthy of interest. It argues that humor is best accepted as dealing with communication, paradox, play and the resolution of logical problems. Semiotics seeks to determine humor by analyzing and eliciting the polar oppositions (or sets of paired opposites) implicit in any work. Furthermore, it aims at distinguishing the way the narrative functions. These two operations involve investigating the paradigmatic (or appositional) and the syntagmatic (or linear, narrative) aspects of the text [4, p.7].

1.3. Humor and the processes of cognition

In the light of recent events, there has been a vast amount of literature concerning the cognitive processing involved in attaining a humorous experience. These studies appear to be influenced by the strength of the incongruity-based approaches in philosophy. An argument has occurred as to whether incongruity alone is obligatory for humor, or whether humor requires a stage where some resolution of the perceived incongruity takes place. Rothbart, Pien and Nerhardt have claimed that resolution is not necessary, as 'incongruity perceived in a safe context is sufficient for humor to be experienced'. [18, p. 54]. Suls and Schultz, though, have argued for an incongruity-resolution model. Suls, in particular, has suggested a two-stage model of humorous processing, whereas, Schultz suggested an incongruity-resolution model, where incongruity is characterized as 'a conflict between what is expected and what actually occurs in jokes' and resolution is 'a second, more subtle aspect of jokes which renders incongruousness substantial or appropriate by resolving or explaining it' [20, p. 82].
 From the point of view of a psychological theory of humor, the two attitudes are hard to assess.

For creatures capable of learning from their experience, encountering novelty and incongruity is crucial. Organisms with a learning competence are skillful to compare current stimuli with past stimuli so that patterns are recognized,

and associations are accompanied by expectations. Consequently, it promotes intimacy with the environment, for one is capable of determining whether circumstances are secure or precarious. Learning occurs when some background is not familiar; basically it is either new or discrepant from previously acquired patterns. The crucial factor of incongruity is not a mere potential to recognize the notion, but also the ability to respond to it.

The animals of the higher class possess an integral readiness for new and unusual knowledge which demonstrates itself in curiosity and exploratory behavior. An animal that has no curiosity is not able to become familiar with its surroundings and will thus be at a drawback for survival. However, limitless curiosity may place any organism at constant risk, hence restricting its chances of survival. So, the reaction that balances curiosity when encountering incongruity is fear. Yet, curiosity most likely originated in the orienting reflex found in lower animals and happens to be the precursor of all varieties of puzzlement, that is another feasible reaction triggered by incongruity in humans and other higher animals. In these cases, what we perceive as discrepant affects not so much our emotional system, but our cognition, and we feel the need to explain what is incongruous. The surprising factor we have identified as a common feature of humor is a further indicator of its evolutionary origins since it frequently precipitates puzzlement and negative reactions as well. Extreme strangeness is likely to produce fear in the animal; moderate strangeness – curiosity. Both negative emotion and puzzlement involve uneasiness with the essence of some things and our motives to modify them. While experiencing negative emotions, one aspires to tolerate an incongruous situation, while puzzled feelings stimulate the desire to alter the comprehension of it. Such a practical motivation arises in all cases from a perceived sense of control loss [6, p, 23].

1.4. The linguistic and stylistic means of humor

Naming or describing one and the same object or situation differently often turns out to be pragmatically significant because this feature of linguistic utterance

can make an addressee view an object as a speaker intends him to. Thanks to new interpretations, now and then one may witness the original motivation of a word or phrase obscured by long usage. Although, in this respect, jokes vary considerably with regard to the nature of linguistic items involved and the mechanism of linguistic relativity, they all display an untraditional use of language and a speaker's personality [15, p. 45].

Linguistic reflection on humor is important because humor covers many aspects of human life and is one of the conditions for the normal functioning of society. Humor is a universal phenomenon and at the same time a national peculiarity. When we study humor in different linguistic communities we find both common and specific features of the attitudes of native speakers. The study of humor in different linguistic communities reveals both common and specific attitudes of speakers and helps distinguish the ethno-cultural value system of a given society [22, p. 232]. The American humor has evolved from classic English humor and undergone a number of major modifications in semantics and stylistics, as well as in its communicative aspects [23].

From a linguistic point of view, a special kind of American humor is American slang; this phenomenon is actively formed in American English, 'exploiting' the whole symbolic system of native language, its semantics, syntax and pragmatics [21, p. 44]. The hallmark of American slang, which is actively used both in everyday communication and in media as well, is quite objective. It has become an increasingly important phenomenon in contemporary linguistics and communication theory. Although not all accounts of verbal humor make their assumptions explicit, linguistics entails or presupposes some viewpoint on language and communication. A remarkable number of studies tends to concentrate on the structural aspects of language, viewed as a code that may be used to produce a humorous effect. Typically, they describe how phonological, morphological, and syntactic categories are manipulated to produce ambiguities that get exploited in different contextual formats, such as, questions and answers to generate riddles. As a result, there has been generated a considerable interest in the

study of different genres of linguistic humor. An outstanding example of studies can be traced in the works of Hockett where a distinction between prosaic and poetic jokes is drawn. Prosaic jokes do not involve linguistic manipulation, but rather play upon cultural situations, institutions and interactions, and may be translatable. Poetic jokes, by contrast, play upon what Hockett called 'accidents in the design of English', and hence, are normally untranslatable.

Hockett classified these under two headings: **puns** and **non-puns**. So called *'perfect puns'* involve homophony (*"Cohen and Son", "Tailor and Attorney". "Let Us Press Your Suit"),* while *'imperfect puns'* partially concern homophony *("What's the difference between a fisherman and a dunce? One baits hooks, the other hates books"*).

In the category of non-puns, Hockett includes certain cases that rely on stress and contiguity, such as in the following:

"What do you do with a stiff neck" (What do you do with a stiff? Neck?);

"What's that rolling down the road ahead?" (What is that rolling down the road? A head?)

Hockett thus provided taxonomy of linguistic jokes, and thereby contributed a descriptive rather than an explanatory account of verbal humor. Pragmatic inference plays a role at quite early stages of processing, when a hearer decides what proposition a punning utterance expresses [6, p. 65].

Another essential linguistic feature is **wordplay**. It is the general name indicating various textual phenomena exploited so as to establish a communicatively significant, (near)-simultaneous confrontation of at least two linguistic structures with more or less dissimilar meanings and forms. There are many different kinds of wordplays and it depends on the scholar whether they want to define the term in a broader or narrower way. According to Chiaro "the term word play includes every conceivable way in which language is used with the intent to amuse" [5, p.201]. Delabastita, on the other hand, identifies four types, namely homonymy, homophony, homography, and paronymy.

Homonyms are words that are spelled and pronounced in the same way, but have two different meanings. These words are a result of the constant progression of language and the consequent derivation of new terms. Examples are the words *head* (as in the body part or the head of an organization) and *march* (either the month or to march as a troop).

Homophones are words that sound the same but are spelled differently and therefore have different meanings. Alexander claims that due to the structure of the language, "homophones are the source of the most widespread puns in English". Two examples are the words *feat* and *feet*, as well as *marshal* and *martial* [1, p.23].

Homographs are the exact opposites of homophones, meaning words that are spelled in the same way but pronounced differently. An example is the word *tear*, which can either be a noun [tɪə], or a verb [teə], based on the pronunciation of the word and its placement in the sentence. They are acoustically distinguishable, but not optically and are therefore not very common in TV shows for they would have to be in some written form.

Paronyms are words that differ slightly in both pronunciation and spelling and can therefore easily be mixed up. An example is the phrase "*adding in salt/insult to injury*."

Another form of wordplay that should be added here is *rhyme*. It is a combination of two words that are similar in sound, usually because they end in the same syllable [7, p. 156].

CONCLUSIONS TO THE CHAPTER I

After the thorough analysis, it is plausible to admit that humor is quite an intricate notion. It has various effects, whether these are intentional or not. Doubtless, it might be implemented not merely for the sake of laughter. In recent years, humor has achieved more and more attention and is studied by people widely. It can be seen that humor involves creative or artistically polished language and the successful transmission of humor requires the participation of both a speaker to utter and a listener to perceive. Although laughter is not a necessary or sufficient condition of humor, from a commonsense point of view it's a useful starting point for a definition. Humor may be thought of as a peripheral, leisure activity which lacks the more obvious significance of literature, advertising and the media. It is worth noting the basic theories approached by the most influential scholars in this field. These are incongruity-resolution theory and superiority or disagreement theory that view the concept of humor from completely polar perspectives. The social aspect of humor has proven to be not only a vastly interesting field, but also related to the more theoretical aspects of the linguistic inquiry (e.g., the politeness and cooperation issues). The interaction of the pragmatic analysis and of the discourse analysis of humorous exchanges will also prove fruitful.

CHAPTER II. THE PRACTICAL IMPLEMENTATION OF HUMOR IN "FRIENDS" TV SERIES

2.1. "Friends" and the global influence of American media

The United States of America are famous for creating fascinating entertaining shows or programs which influence general public all over the world. One of the most recognizable thrilling examples is the sitcom *"Friends"*. It has inspired a large number of contemporary sitcoms that revolve on all sides of the same core idea of a group of friends living in a big city, who help each other through everyday struggles with their employments or relationship situations. The virtually obvious illustration is another sitcom *"How I met your Mother"*, which premiered only one year after the final episode of Friends was aired. The show also depicts a group of friends who live in New York City and get together at their regular meeting place, a bar instead of a coffee shop. Other bright illustrations are *"New Girl"* and *"The Big Bang Theory and Girls"*.

This actually provides the response to the previously mentioned issue on the influence of the American television industry on the world market. The major remarkable feature of American media is estimable understanding of the consumer demand matched with the ability to quickly and efficiently prepare and produce new shows according to these changing demands.

The best way to produce a new fortunate television show is to firstly recognize the components responsible for the success of previous shows, and secondly to identify the thin line between complete changing and plain copying of existing format [8, p, 156].

2.2. The linguistic means of creating a humorous effect

The sitcom 'Friends' owes much not only to the talented cast, but also to the script writers. In their production, the writers seem to grasp a certain handwriting style that many people appreciate. It is urgent to mention the way characters treat each other and what kind of humorous effects are reached. One of the most

remarkable peculiarities of the sitcom is so-called 'fragile coherence', where the smooth transition of characters' lines is so vague and obscure, almost invisible that it becomes a real challenge for the participants to find it. Logically, this behavior is again uncooperative: the communication process is disrupted through the unreasonable demands of excessive elaboration of the utterance. In the following situation Monica is very upset about yet another disappointment from the behavior of men towards her:

> **Monica:** *I hate men! I hate men!*
>
> **Phoebe**: *Oh no, don't hate, you don't want to put that out into the universe.*
>
> **Monica**: *Is it me? Is it like I have some sort of beacon that only dogs and men with severe emotional problems can hear?*
>
> **Phoebe:** *All right, come here, give me your feet.*

Most of the viewers of the sitcom will probably accept Phoebe's reaction as another one of her "out there" remarks without trying to decipher the unclear connection to Monica's problem. Taking a closer look, however, and with regard to Phoebe's alternative way of life, her "hippie" and "aromatherapy" inclinations, we can assume that she wants to help Monica by massaging her feet. This sort of help is not direct; it will not eliminate the cause of her agitation – massaging should probably release the accumulated tension and hatred and help her embrace the problem. This might be clear to her friends who have known her for some time (Monica immediately sits down and lets Phoebe massage her feet) but not to the audience.

The use of idioms, mainly idioms of encoding, is very frequent in colloquial speech, thus it is found in the sitcom as well.

A bright example is Rachel speaking with her father and trying to explain to him why she left her fiancé at the altar:

> **Rachel:** *I stopped and said, "What if I don't wanna be a shoe? What if I want to be a purse? Or a hat?" I don't want you to buy me a hat!* (Season 1, Episode 1)

In the first sentence, Rachel uses the idiomatic expression 'to be a shoe', meaning 'to lead a life in which everybody else decides what one should do'. As the monologue proceeds, the expression is modified. Shoe – as a part of clothes – is substituted by other accessories – a purse and a hat. The motive for the substitution is an emphasis on the urge of change of Rachel's life. Nevertheless, the intentional modification is not understood by her father. Despite the fact that the idiom is not translated, but substituted for a similar expression, the translation can be considered successful because the formal and functional aspects are maintained.

The next example is taken from the episode in which Ross explains the situation between him and Rachel to Paolo.

Ross: *Technically, the sex is not being had.* (Season 1, Episode 7)

Paolo asks him whether they have sex and Ross responds with a collocation (idiom of encoding) which does not follow the rules. In this case a passive voice is not acceptable because it is not a part of an idiom. The use of the passive voice however is justifiable – Ross wants to demonstrate that there is something more than sex going on between him and Rachel.

In order to see whether the in vitro fertilization was successful, Phoebe goes into the bathroom to take a pregnancy test. When she comes back, Monica asks her about the result:

Monica: *Well?*

Phoebe: *Nope, not knocked up, yet.* (Season 4, Episode 12)

"Knocked up" is slang for being pregnant and is usually used by the youth or to express a negative undertone. A woman like Phoebe would normally not use this term, especially not when she is talking about herself and wants to be pregnant. This is not an unusual way of saying this, so the humorous element gets lost completely.

The use of polysemy as a basis of wordplay is rather accidental and depends on one's interpretation as can be seen in the given example:

Ross: *Have you seen Monica?*

Chandler: *I'm not seeing Monica!* (Season 4, Episode 24)

Chandler understands the verb to see in its figurative meaning, while Ross uses the word in its literal meaning. Chandler's misinterpretation is caused by the immediate situational context, i.e. he and Monica have just had sex and no one was supposed to know it.

Another example of use of polysemy can be found in the episode where Rachel complains about being a waitress while her friends have very successful lives.

Rachel: *Everyone I know is either getting married or pregnant...or promoted. And I' m getting coffee.* (Season 1, Episode 4)

Rachel uses the verb to get in its two polysemous senses, i.e. as "a linking verb to reach a particular state or condition" and "to prepare a meal".

2.3. The stylistic means of creating a humorous effect

Linguistic items of distinct stylistic markedness cannot normally be used outside their proper environment. When placed in an alien context they may at best elicit a humorous effect. Sometimes it is not a particular item but the general selection of style made, consciously or unconsciously, by the language user which is unfortunate. In this case not only may language fail to function properly, but the^ inappropriateness of the style can be ridiculed. *S*tylistic incompatibility between linguistic items, whether words or larger units of discourse, and their context – linguistic or situational, characteristic of persons careless or insensitive to the use of language, underlies most of the jokes collected in this part.

Wordplay is a general name indicating various textual phenomena in which certain features inherent in the structure of the language are exploited in such a way so as to establish a communicatively significant, simultaneous confrontation of at least two linguistic structures with more or less dissimilar meanings and similar forms. There are many different kinds of wordplays and it depends on the scholar whether they want to define the term in a broader or narrower way. Chiaro,

for example, uses it as a blanket term: "the term word play includes every conceivable way in which language is used with the intent to amuse" [5, p.14].

In the sitcom the examples of wordplay based on phonological structure can be found. To illustrate we have analyzed the dialogue between Rachel and Joey. She helps him to look sophisticated for an audition and offers him a man's handbag which is 'unisex'.

Rachel: Exactly. Unisex!

Joey: Maybe you need sex. I had sex a couple days ago.

Rachel: No, Joey. U-N-I sex.

Joey: I ain't going to say no to that! (Season 5, Episode 13)

The word *unisex* in the first sentence is misleading for Joey because of his ignorance of fashion terms. What he hears is the phrase 'you need sex' in which the last consonant of *need* is unreleased. Rachel, trying to explain this term, spells letters individually '[ju] [en]-[aɪ] sex'. Joey, however, understands it as *you and I sex* because of the confusion of vowels – [e] (when Rachel spells the individual letters – [en]) instead of [æ] (pronunciation of 'and'), and supposed unreleased *d* in *and*.

Another example is a situation where Joey is dating two girls Kathie and Casie and Chandler is in love with Kathie. Chandler tries to convince Joey to choose between them, hoping he will choose Casie:

Chandler: Make a choice. Pick a lane.

Joey: Who's Elaine? (Season 4, Episode 7)

Here the wordplay is based on the pronunciation of 'a lane' and 'Elaine'. The only difference between these homophones is the stress placement, but in the colloquial speech it can be hardly noticeable.

Delabastita, on the other hand, identifies four types, namely homonymy, homophony, homography, and paronymy. Homonyms are words that are spelled and pronounced the exact same way but have two different meanings.

Ross: Oh oh oh and by the way: Y-O-U apostrophe R-E means you are, Y-O-U-R means your. (Season 1, Episode 4)

While it should be expected that an educated American knows the difference between the homonyms "you're" and "your," it is still a rather common mistake in writing. This scene references one of the issues in Ross's and Rachel's relationship, namely that he is better educated and earns more money as a paleontologist than she does as a personal shopper. However, it is not so much the fact that Rachel made this mistake that is foregrounded, but rather Ross's tendency to be a know-it-all, which is often critiqued by his friends.

Paronyms are words that differ slightly in both pronunciation and spelling and can therefore easily be mixed up.

Phoebe: Hey maybe they meant "quiet bitch!" (Season 4, Episode 10)

Since the paronyms "quit" and "quiet" are only distinguishable by one letter, a spelling mistake can be assumed. It would be best to either find a different paronym that makes more sense within the context, or move away from the spelling mistake and find a situational paraphrase. For example, Phoebe could just comment on the fact that it is written in English and suggest that the person was not aware of what they were writing, or that they seem to be a foreigner and therefore might misunderstand what Monica is saying at work.

Another form of wordplay that should be added here is the rhyme. It is a combination of two words that are similar in sound, usually because they end in the same syllable. They are often used in songs, which occur quite a lot in *Friends* due to Phoebe, and pose a particularly difficult translation task [7, p.180].

Phoebe: Went to the store, sat on Santa's <u>lap</u>, asked him to bring my friends all kinds of <u>crap</u>. Said all you need is to write them a <u>song</u>, now you haven't heard it yet so don't try to sing <u>along</u>. No don't sing <u>along</u>. Monica, <u>Monica</u>, have a happy <u>Hanukkah</u>. Saw Santa <u>Claus</u>, he said hello to <u>Ross</u>. And please tell <u>Joey</u>, Christmas will be <u>snowy</u>. And Rachel and <u>Chandler</u>, *random syllables* has-nhm-haenggleer. (Season 4, Episode 10)

Here the thyme is well presented. Granted, the sentence does not make a lot of sense within this context but it still is a grammatical sentence.

A lot of puns make use of neologisms. In most cases there are more important means to form wordplay as demonstrated in sections below. Wordplay in the following example can be considered to represent the concept of neologism. A woman steals Monica's credit card. When Monica finds her, instead of informing police, she befriends her. Ross does not agree and utters the following wordplay:

Ross: *This woman stole from you! She stole! She's a stealer!* (Season 1, Episode 21)

The expression may seem to be correct – the derivational suffix *–er* is added to the verb *to steal* to signify a person who performs the action. Nevertheless, the wordplay lies in the fact that *stealer* is not a word of English – it is 'pre-empted' by the existence of an expression denoting the same meaning – *thief.* The ungrammatical construction of the noun *stealer* is highly unpredictable, thus it can be taken for a neologism.

Another example of wordplay that is blending, occurs when Ross lends Monica money. He gives her a check with dinosaurs on it. Monica takes this into consideration when she makes a hint to Ross' "generosity":

Monica: *Hey, you're a cheap-a-saurus!* (Season 2, Episode 14)

This wordplay represents Ross' stingy character. According to the check decoration, Ross is likened to a kind of dinosaur. In this case, the word *dinosaur* has to be abridged, otherwise the expression would not follow the rules according to which the individual dinosaurs were named.

Irony is another frequent stylistic device that occurs throughout the whole series. For the sake of illustration, let us consider the following scene: Ross was worrying about the date with a lady the next day because he did not know how to make himself look cool. Therefore, he was discussing with his friends what kind of outfit to choose for the date:

> **Ross:** *Damn it! I have this date tomorrow night and I have to look cool.*
>
> **Phoebe:** *Well, you know, if you want fashion help. Rachel and I are going shopping tomorrow. You are more than welcome to come to us, right?*

> *Ross: Really? That would be great. I mean, I have to do something. She kind of teased about how I dress.*
>
> *Joey: I can see why. Nice shirt.* (Season 10, Episode 9)

It is obvious that Joey did not really appreciate Ross's shirt when he said "nice shirt." It is due to the fact that Ross told his friends that he had been criticized on the style of his dressing by that lady. Looking at Ross's shirt scornfully, Joey told Ross that he understood the reason why that lady would make comments like that. However, the next utterance given by Joey was an appreciation of Ross's shirt, and this even appeared to be an act of insincerity. As a matter of fact, Joey's admiration statement of Ross's skirt was meant to tease Ross by implying that he did not have a good sense of fashion. Thus, the comment "nice shirt" said by Joey is an ironical expression to ridicule Ross's style.

The next example focuses on Chandler and Monica, who were asking Rachel if she could help them to write a recommendation letter to the adoption agency. They did not ask Joey to do this for them because they did not expect that Joey could do it well. *(Joey looked at them, disappointed about their decision)*

> *Monica: Yeah, it's just we don't think of you as really being so much "with the words".*
>
> *Joey: Whoo-weh hey weh-hey whoo hey!*
>
> *Monica: Clearly we were wrong.*
>
> *Joey: I gotta a lot of nice stuff to say about you guys, ok? And I know how much you wanna have a baby, you know, and I would love to help you get one.*
>
> *Monica: You know what? Then, Joey, we want you to do it.*
>
> *Joey: Thank you! Alright, let me see how I'm gonna start..."Dear baby adoption decider people".*
>
> *Chandler: So excited about your letter!*

Both Chandler and Monica understood that writing a formal recommendation letter was beyond Joey's capability, so they did not intend to ask

him to do this from the very beginning. What Joey said next had confirmed their belief, but Chandler still said that he was excited to see Joey's recommendation letter. The ironical nature of Chandler's last utterance is quite apparent.

2.4. Verbal humor from a perspective of pragmatics

The appropriateness of pragmatic presupposition is an important property ensuring successful communication. However, a speaker or a listener sometimes may violate the appropriateness by intentionally or unintentionally uttering something contradictory to a presupposition, thus triggering humorous effect. Generally, the appropriateness can be violated by misunderstanding or misusing presupposition [4, p, 104]. In this section we have analyzed three examples involving such violation.

The first example refers to the false presupposition about Phoebe feeling pity for the monkey:

Rachel: Oh, he is precious! Where did you get him?

Ross: My friend Bethel rescued him from some lab.

Phoebe: That is so cruel! Why? Why would a parent name their child Bethel?

Phoebe's next utterance is contradictory to this presupposition. In fact, she is just too surprised that someone is named as Bethel (a house of worship). It is worth noting that here the facial expression of the other characters showing unbelievable feelings complements the humor created by the contradiction. The facial expression and other gestures are usually employed to produce situational humor which belongs to nonverbal humor mentioned in the literature review part. Therefore, it can be seen that sitcoms and other TV programs usually combine verbal and nonverbal humor to enhance the hilarious effect. However, the present study focuses on verbal humor only and the following analysis omits situational humor. Moreover, the presupposition used here helps further impress the audience that Phoebe is really weird, thus also serving to enhance characters' personality.

Phoebe: God, what a great day. ...What? Weather-wise!

The phrase "what a great day" lets the audience presuppose that Phoebe is in a good mood. However, the background is the funeral of Ross and Monica's grandma, where people are normally deeply frustrated. Therefore, such a presupposition is inappropriate here due to its contraction to the reality.

The third example regards Monica's presupposition of Phoebe:

Rachel: *Look-look-look-look-look, my first paycheck! Look at the window, there's my name! Hi, me!*

Phoebe: *I remember the day I got my first paycheck. There was a cave-in in one of the mines, and eight people were killed.*

Monica: *Wow, you worked in a mine?*

Phoebe: *I worked in a Dairy Queen, why?*

Phoebe's response to Monica's question is contradictory to the presupposition of her working in a mine. By using "why" Phoebe feels it right to mention the casualties which have nothing to do with her work but lead to false presupposition when it comes to the first day of getting paid. Therefore, the use of presupposition strategy in this example also serves to enhance the weird characterization of Phoebe.

CONCLUSIONS TO THE CHAPTER II

Having scrutinized the data taken from the sitcom 'Friends', we have driven to some conclusions. The sitcom happens to be a profound basis for the research as it is extremely rich in bright examples of linguistic units and stylistic devices. Humor in 'Friends' is displayed with the help of both verbal and non-verbal means. The most frequent ones are examples of puns and irony. When there appears a sort of disparity between speakers' utterances and real feelings, the effects of humor are even enhanced. From the point of view of pragmatic study, the paper explores how humor is generated through presupposition.

The findings reveal that based on the property of presupposition, humor is created by violating the appropriateness and mutual knowledge. Meanwhile, it is found that pragmatic presupposition mainly generates verbal humor when the audience perceives the contradiction between the presuppositions uttered by a character and a speaker's true feelings. Moreover, the analysis reveals that presupposition also serves to enhance character's personality thus creating a humorous effect in the sitcom.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper studies the humor based on the conversation examples of "Friends" TV Series. According to the relevance theory, all of human's communications with no exception comply with the relevance principle. From the definition of humor, this paper elaborates the relationship between humor and relevance theory. Apart from this, based on this theory, we have tried to interpret the humor in Friends in detail. It is of great significance for the pragmatic study. Playing with words is a part of everyday communication that can be produced by everyone. It is a ceaseless process of creating new puns and new forms of words and phrases. Each individual is able to produce a differently structured wordplay according to their knowledge of language, creativity, current state of mind. Due to this fact this work contains a great range of stylistic and linguistic means that show the way character communicate in each episode.

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