



## POSUDEK OPONENTA BAKALÁŘSKÉ PRÁCE

---

Studijní obor: **Anglický jazyk a literatura (dvouoborové studium)**

Název práce: ***Analysis of humour in the TV series Friends***

Autor/ka práce: **Anežka Literová A16046**

Vedoucí bakalářské práce: **Mgr. Petr Kos, Ph.D.**

Oponent/ka bakalářské práce: **Mgr. Helena Lohrová, Ph.D.**

---

### **Stručná charakteristika práce / Short characteristics of the thesis**

The aim of Anežka Literová's thesis was to analyse humour in the TV sitcom *Friends*, a famous American sitcom filmed and originally aired for ten seasons between 1994 and 2004. To undertake this task, Anežka first introduces the phenomenon of sitcoms and discusses the specificity of this film genre in the context of the TV series *Friends*.

Anežka then conceptualises the eclecticism of the notion of humour through the 1963 Schmidt-Hidding's schema of the semantic field of humour, after which she develops a discussion of some of the prominent theories of humour. Gradually, focus is centred on so-called language-based humour, the ultimate interest of this undergraduate dissertation. Drawing on Delabastita's classification of wordplay and Grice's maxims, the author proposes her own taxonomy/categorisation of jokes, which she subsequently applies in the analysis.

The analysis targets three episodes randomly chosen from the first three *Friends* film seasons. These include (p. 35):

1. Season 1, Episode 1: The One Where Monica Gets a Roommate
2. Season 2, Episode 14: The One With The Prom Video
3. Season 3, Episode 2: The One Where No One's Ready

Jokes identified across the three episodes fall, according to the author, into one of the four categories (p.38):

1. The joke is not language-based
2. The joke is based on maxim violation only
3. The joke is based on wordplay only
4. The joke is based on both maxim violation and wordplay

Jokes that are not language-based (category 1) are excluded from the analysis.

The key conclusion is that in the sitcom *Friends* humour is predominantly constituted through the

violation of Grice's maxims whilst wordplay has a considerably less significant role.

According to the author, flouting the maxim of quality which results in the creation of irony is the most frequently used device; in the series, it is put into operation by two characters in particular – Chandler and Phoebe.

### **Celkové zhodnocení / Overall assessment**



In linguistic studies, humour indeed constitutes a well-researched field, one that deserves attention as its findings contribute to our understanding of how, amongst other things, both socialisation as well as exclusion are enacted and maintained through verbal interaction.

Anežka has produced a solid and well-discussed piece of work. The choice to draw on genre studies (Slunčík, 2010 in this case) to conceptualise the underlying character of sitcom humour was well considered. Anežka's sound understanding of the specificity of this genre comes across, for example, in her discussion of canned humour. I am also very fond of Anežka's determination to champion her own classification of jokes, although I think it would be more appropriate to treat these as humorous situations rather than jokes; jokes typically refer to short one-speaker narratives that are concluded with a funny punchline.

The analysis is carried out carefully, with a clear effort to analyse and interpret the selected extracts. The underpinning discussions display a good command of English though which Anežka fluently formulates her arguments. My only stylistic reservation is the use of "royal we" for a work which is single authored.

Not as a critical remark but rather as an alternative research perspective, I would like to make a note in respect of the methodology adopted. Whilst I genuinely appreciate all the analytical work produced by the author, I would personally opt for a completely different research design; one based on the analysis of humour emerging dynamically from the script of sitcom participation frameworks in which sitcom viewers are treated as the main beneficiaries of the humour enacted, as for example in research by Marta Dynel (2011). For the analysis, this aspect is very important. As a sub-genre of film discourse, sitcom requires an analyst to account for the specific role of film-viewers for whom the episodes are scripted. A linguistic analysis of sitcom humour should therefore incorporate this interactional parameter as it is the viewers for whom sitcom humour is constructed and who, in this instance, act as ratified, official participants to the interaction, not just mere hearers. The notion of recipient design enables to conflate both the discursive and cinematic strategies employed in the construction of humour, and thus untangle better the linguistic strategies responsible for the outstanding humorous effect of the *Friends* sitcom series.

The set goal was met. The overall length and depth of the material also fully meet the requirements posed on undergraduate dissertations. I do recommend the thesis for defence and I propose the evaluation "excellent" (výborně).

#### Areas for discussion:

Having had the time to reflect on your analysis, how straightforward and ultimately relevant do you view the application of Grice's maxims and their violations to the interpretation of humour across the three sitcom episodes analysed? During the analysis, were there any extracts that you had difficulty categorising or interpreting? On the other hand, which aspects of your analysis did you find most enjoyable and why?

Práci **doporučuji** k obhajobě.



Filozofická  
fakulta  
Faculty  
of Arts

Jihočeská univerzita  
v Českých Budějovicích  
University of South Bohemia  
in České Budějovice

Navrhovaná klasifikace: **výborně**

08.06. 2020

Datum

Podpis