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**VERBAL HUMOR IN TV SERIES**  
*Brooklyn Nine-Nine vs. The Office*  
Bakalářská diplomová práce

Anglický jazyk se zaměřením na vzdělávání/Výchova ke zdraví se zaměřením na vzdělávání

**Autor:** Barbora Konečná

**Vedoucí práce:** Mgr. Petra Charvátová

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Podpis .....

Barbora Konečná

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# Annotation

<b>Jméno a příjmení:</b>	<i>Barbora Konečná</i>
<b>Katedra:</b>	Ústav cizích jazyků
<b>Studijní program:</b>	<i>Anglický jazyk se zaměřením na vzdělávání / Výchova ke zdraví se zaměřením na vzdělávání</i>
<b>Vedoucí práce:</b>	<i>Mgr. Petra Charvátová</i>
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<b>Název práce:</b>	Verbální humor v televizních seriálech
<b>Anotace práce:</b>	Tato práce zkoumá verbální humor v seriálech „Brooklyn Nine-Nine“ a „The Office“. Analyzuje dialogy z obou seriálů pomocí kvalitativní metody a identifikuje různé formy humoru, jako jsou slovní hříčky, sarkasmus a situační komedie. Zjišťuje, že oba seriály úspěšně využívají humor k pobavení diváků, i když jejich přístup k humoru je odlišný. Tento výzkum podtrhuje bohatství a rozmanitost verbálního humoru v televizním vyprávění a jeho trvalý vliv na populární kulturu.
<b>Klíčová slova:</b>	Verbální humor, Brooklyn Nine-Nine, The Office
<b>Title of Thesis:</b>	Verbal Humor in TV series
<b>Annotation:</b>	This thesis examines verbal humor in the TV series “Brooklyn Nine-Nine” and “The Office”. It analyses dialogue from both series using a qualitative method and identifies different forms of humour such as puns, sarcasm, and situational comedy. Finds that both shows successfully use humor to entertain viewers, although their approaches to humor are different. This research underscores the richness and diversity of verbal humor in television storytelling and its enduring influence on popular culture.
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# Abstract

This bachelor's thesis focuses on an in-depth analysis of verbal humor in the popular television series *Brooklyn Nine-Nine* (2013) and *The Office* (2005). The main objective is to compare and evaluate how different forms of verbal humor are used in these series and how the dialogues are structured to achieve comic effect.

To achieve the objective, a qualitative method of analysis was used, focusing on a careful study of dialogue from selected episodes of both series. The dialogues were systematically analysed and categorised, identifying different forms of verbal humour, including puns, sarcasm, and situational comedy.

The results of the analysis suggest that both "*B99*" and "*The Office*" use verbal humor as a key element of their comedic narratives. While "*B99*" is characterized by a fast-paced and energetic style with frequent use of clever puns and absurd situations in the NYPD setting, "*The Office*" prefers a more subtle and sophisticated humor that finds comedy in common and awkward situations in the office environment.

A comparison of the two series shows that verbal humor takes different forms but is still a strong element of the comedy genre. This thesis provides a deeper understanding of the diversity and richness of verbal humor in television narrative. Key characteristics and strategies used by both series have been identified, which can serve as a foundation for further research in the comedic television genre.

# Introduction

Verbal humor is an integral part of television series and plays a key role in creating comic effects and engaging the audience. This bachelor thesis focuses on the analysis and exploration of verbal humor in television series, a topic that represents an important aspect of television art and communication. The choice of the topic "Verbal Humour in TV Series" was motivated by an interest in humor and its importance in television. Humor is a universal mode of communication that can connect people and bring joy into their lives. Television series have become an important medium for the dissemination of humor and are one of the best means for its analysis.

This thesis aims to conduct a thorough analysis of verbal humor in selected television series and identify the different techniques and styles that are used in this art form. Furthermore, these will focus on how verbal humor contributes to the creation of comic effect and character development in television series. This thesis is based on the belief that verbal humor is an important aspect of television production and analysing it can provide a deeper understanding of how it is used to reach and entertain audiences.

The treatment of this issue to date suggests the existence of a wide range of theoretical approaches to the analysis of verbal humor, but there is still scope for a deeper and more specific exploration of this topic in the context of television series. The methods that will be used in this thesis include a detailed analysis of selected scenes from television series in which verbal humor is used and the identification of different techniques and strategies used by the creators to achieve comic effect. Emphasis will be placed on qualitative analysis to enable an in-depth understanding of the strategies used.

The thesis will be structured into several main parts, including a theoretical framework, an analysis of selected television series, and a discussion of the results of the analysis. This bachelor's thesis does not deal with the specific social or cultural context in which television occurs, instead, it explores lightly the influence of verbal humor on viewers and their reactions to the verbal humor included in the dialogues. Through viewer reactions, this adds more extension to the analyses of this bachelor thesis.

# 1. Verbal Humor

“Humor is a performative pragmatic accomplishment involving a wide range of communication skills including, but not exclusively involving, language, gesture, the presentation of visual imagery, and situation management” (Beeman, p. 103). Beeman demonstrates that humor is not solely about words but rather encompasses a wide range of communication skills. Humor is a performance that requires the ability to utilize not only language but also gestures, visual presentation, and situation management. In the context of television series, where verbal humor is prevalent, understanding the multifaceted quality of humor is crucial for a comprehensive analysis, because recognizing the various aspects of humor, including non-verbal elements like gestures and visual presentation, helps us understand how comedic effect is achieved in television series.

When we compare verbal humor to this broader conception of humor, we can observe several differences. Verbal humor primarily focuses on wordplay, witty phrases, and sound effects conveyed through speech (Beeman, 1999). On the other hand, humor as performance includes a much wider array of elements such as gestures, facial expressions, or visual gags. Another distinction is that verbal humor can be rather static, whereas performance humor is often dynamic and interactive. A performing comedian can react to the audience, create different situations, and adjust their presentation according to the context – like in the stand – up comedy (It represents a genre in which a single comedian comes on stage with a microphone and starts a performance in front of an audience. (Schwarz, p. 17)). This type of humor thus requires the ability to read the audience and adapt accordingly.

Overall, verbal humor is one element of the broader concept of humor as performance, which encompasses various communication skills and allows the humourist to flexibly respond to different situation and audiences, usually with humorous style.

Verbal humor is a kind of entertainment that explores different areas of language or words. It has a lot of comic effects or situations to make their audience/viewers/listeners laugh. A few language aids are also needed for humor, helping to elicit laughter and pleasure. But it is also an area in which different phrases are explored that could be used in the humor itself.

Another statement is how the difference between verbal humour and reference humour, or ordinary humour overall, is conceived. “Verbal humor is wholly dependent on the language used, and regarded as not translatable into another language, whereas in referential humor, the

amusing substance is in what the jokes say – the events described, the characters, the situation – rather than the details of the language used” (Ritchie, p. 14). The statement therefore highlights what is the main and fundamental difference between these humours. Verbal humor, according to the author, is considered unchangeable into another language, and is dependent on the language used, and more emotions are also used. Whereas reference humor is all about how the situation is described and disregards the details of the language used.

Verbal humor is a fascinating area of communication that enriches our relationships and brings fun and lightness into our lives. It is made up of various elements such as puns, jokes, irony, and sarcasm that create a rich variety of humorous expressions. These different forms of verbal humor are important to our ability to express ourselves in creative and interesting ways and to bring a spark of joy and laughter into our everyday lives. The study of verbal humor allows us to better understand its mechanisms and its impact on our interpersonal relationships and communication.

## 1.1 Puns

Puns are a frequent element in spoken humor. They give the humor that colourful idea of the humor, and they also try to impress their audience or listeners. It can also be otherwise called a playful joke, which is a subtle form of language play where word-meaning games and double entendres appear most frequently.

Double entendres are the most infuriating element of puns and are used by almost everyone in everyday life because they add extra meaning to words, making them both amusing and thought-provoking, and are commonly used in everyday conversation and humor. Double entendres are described in the same way as puns in general, according to the Oxford Dictionary: “The clever or humorous use of a word that has more than one meaning, or of words that have different meanings but sound the same” (Oxford dictionary).

Double entendres are words that have more than one meaning, creating situations and scenes where listeners or readers can translate the same word or phrase differently. This leads to comical situations, often unexpected because that is what those words are understood to mean in other contexts. In English, it distinguishes five different puns that have different characteristics. These include Homophonic puns; Compound puns; Homographic puns; Visual puns; Recursive puns (Brown; Masterclass, 2021). Each of these species has different principles and different rules.

If we pick some examples, we pick the homophonic puns that are the most common. An example of a homophonic pun is:



*“A bicycle can't stand on its own because it is two-tired”* (Gunner, 2022).

This example is a good illustration of how puns are thought. An example shows that a bike cannot stand by itself because it only has two wheels, but since it is a pun, it is thought it is too tired. Words: "two-tired" sounds like "too tired," which is supposed to make a funny pun and it creates a humorous play on words.

Puns are widely used in literature, stand-up comedy, TV shows, and everyday conversation. Their main aim is to entertain and bring joy by surprising and brightening up a communication situation as they are tools of creativity that highlight the playful and subtle side of language and words.

In conclusion, puns are a major and important tool of verbal humor and cannot be omitted due to their ability to add depth and creativity to communication. They are designed to deliberately make listeners or readers laugh and add a melting special colour to a humorous situation as they are used almost everywhere, also to lighten the situation, as well as jokes.

## 1.2 Jokes

In the realm of verbal humor, jokes are most common, which is the most popular form of entertainment that exists. Jokes are short stories, anecdotes, or formulations intended unexpectedly to bring about a special twist that contains a comic punchline. The jokes mostly contain absurdity and an unexpected twist, and this is a key element for humor and is often also used in context in comic book narration.

Jokes contain unexpectedness when the end part of a joke occurs, most of the time the audience learns the key twist, which is comical and should elicit laughter or comic surprise from that audience. Anyway, the jokes are not short, they can also be longer and larger, but they are not that common, as the listener often stops perceiving them after a long talk. Jokes are based on absurdity, exaggeration, or irony, and parody also can be based on character behaviour. Jokes are a prominent part of stand-up comedy, television shows, humor books, and everyday conversation. Their purpose is not only to entertain but also to relieve tension and bring joy as they are a tool that allows people to share laughter and positive emotions and contribute to creating a relaxed and comical environment.

There are countless jokes in the world, and they are all very different. An example of such a joke might be:

*“How does the ocean say hi? It waves!”*

This example shows that waving and waves have the same word. That is why this joke says it waves because it has waves. It uses the word “waves” to mean both the action of waving and the movement of ocean waves, creating a clever play on words.

Overall, jokes are found everywhere in the everyday, until they are already in stand-up comedies or television. Otherwise, the jokes also point easily toward sarcasm, a so-called articulation of statements with elements of criticism and irony. This means that sarcasm acts as an element of disapproval or mockery, which is why it is fleetingly linked to jokes.

### 1.3 Sarcasm

“Verbal irony can be defined as expressions in which the intended meaning of the words is different from or the direct opposite of their usual sense; these expressions serve numerous functions in communication“ (Cheang, Henry S.; Pell, Marc D., p. 366). The statement author defines the essence of verbal sarcasm, or also verbal irony, as some form of expression, where a given meaning of a word differs from their normal meaning or is directly opposite that meaning. This form plays a significant role in various communications, where less criticism or different attitudes and humor prevail. The author also suggests that this is an important aspect of communication, where it acts as a relief element.

Sarcasm is a form of someone saying something with the opposite meaning to what is meant. This draws a contrast between what is said and what the speaker means. As mentioned, sarcasm contains lighter criticism or irony and acts as an element of derision and dissent, increasing the entertainment in each conversation. Viewers are enticed to try to discern the disparity between the literal expression and the actual intent of the speaker and to add to the entertainment. An example could be:

*“I work forty hours a week for me to be this poor.”*

In this case, the opposite of what was said is expressed, which is what makes for a humorous situation. This is sarcastic because it suggests that working forty hours a week should lead to financial stability, yet the speaker sarcastically remarks on their ongoing financial struggles despite their full-time job.

Sarcasm requires a certain degree of linguistic awareness and understanding of context because its effect depends on knowing the difference between what is said and what is meant. Sarcasm is also often accompanied by intonation or gestures that indicate that the statement is ironic or sarcastic. According to that statement: “Sarcasm is generally considered a nasty, mean – spirited or just relatively negative form of verbal irony, used on occasion to enhance the



negativity expressed relative to direct, non – figurative criticism” (Colston, 1997; quotes Salvatore Attardo). These names of statements show that this is sarcasm closely dormant with verbal irony but is not the overall element of irony as sarcasm is often perceived as a form of verbal irony characterized by its negative tone and intent. While closely related to verbal irony, sarcasm is distinguished by its use to convey negativity or criticism on a direct and sometimes harsh manner.

## 1.4 Irony

Irony has a similar meaning to sarcasm. Some would say it is the same, and it does not have any differences with each other. The irony is also an element where sometimes something is said with the opposite significance to what is meant and creates a kind of contact between what is said and what is meant by the author. The difference between irony and sarcasm is this: Irony tends to seek a broader and subtler commentary on situations, while sarcasm is more direct, potentially containing elements of criticism or mockery. (Brown; Masterclass, 2021) Irony seeks to bring more comedians into communication, making it the most popular element of verbal humor. According to different statement: “Sarcasm is often considered a specific case of irony, often more negative and "biting." In other approaches, it is defined as synonymous with verbal irony” (Ling; Klinger, 2016). This is how the difference between irony and sarcasm is described in the publication. It is clear, then, that irony and sarcasm may be taken as synonymous, but they differ in some respects. Irony can most often be heard in spoken conversation, where it comes naturally. An example of irony could be:

*“A fire station burns down.”*

This example means that the fire chief would be late letting his firehouse burn down, as they are firefighters, and put out water, which is why it is weird and unexpected.

Irony is a castle with a language where a bit of linguistic awareness and understanding of a context is needed. Irony is mostly used similarly to sarcasm. It is used in a way of criticism, satire, parody, or ridicule (Malewitz, 2023). The irony of being used badly as some specific tool to create humorous communication is often used as a major element in literature, theatres, or mainly films.

## 1.5 Word play

Word play is a multifaceted element of verbal humor that aims to playfully manipulate words and language, creating comic effects and opportunities for amusement. But word play also contains different elements that differ from each other. This includes Anagrams or Palindromes.

*Anagrams*: “a word or phrase made by using the letters of another word or phrase in a different order” (Cambridge Dictionary). It is a more complicated rearrangement of the letters of an existing word, and that creates a new word. Anagrams can be simple or extremely hard, but you can learn to solve it.

Examples: flow - wolf; parks - spark; gold and silver - grand old evils

*Palindromes*: “a word or group of words that is the same when you read it forwards from the beginning or backward from the end” (Cambridge Dictionary). It is a linguistic quirk that is more difficult to come up with, but it is also manageable to learn.

Examples: mom; Borrow or rob; bird rib

Wordplay also includes combining words to create “blend words” or portmanteau (Nordquist, 2020). It means that two existing words come together to form a new word that contains elements of the two original words. It is part of wordplay because it can create funny new words that are very creative, and these terms can be used to express absurd or unexpected ideas.

Examples: Hangry = hungry + angry; Brunch = breakfast + lunch; sitcom = situation + comedy

In conclusion, verbal humor is an engaging and multifaceted form of expression that crosses cultural and linguistic boundaries, which is particularly evident in the context of television series. Through complex language play, subtle humor, jokes, sarcasm, irony, and unexpected turns of phrase, it can entertain, make connections, and even challenge our perceptions. Verbal humor encompasses a wide range of styles, from puns and wordplay to clever observations and satire, making it a dynamic and accessible means of communication. So verbal humor is an everyday element in conversation, even if a lot of people do not realize it. It can also express criticism or rethinking ideas. It uses double meanings or other linguistic quirks that can create humorous, comic moments.

It is also important to mention that verbal humor plays an important role in strengthening social bonds, as laughter occurs to people connecting and creating a common understanding (Martin; Ford, p. 261 - 263). However, it is essential to recognize the subjective nature of humor and realize that what may amuse one viewer may not resonate with another.

## 2. Verbal Humor in Brooklyn Nine – Nine (B99)

### 2.1 Background; development and production of the series B99

B99 is an American sitcom that, since 2013, has slowly become one of the funniest sitcoms in the world (Firefly, 2021), thanks to the versatile humor that is regularly and almost always used. The script – that is, the creation of the entire series – is written by two men – Dan Goor and Michael Schur (Rodríguez Boedor; 2020). Michael Schur was likewise involved in the creation of the series "The Office", where he even played a minor role (Urbánek; ČSFD). On the other hand, the exclusive, i.e. main producer is Marshall Boone, but it is also worth mentioning one of the show's leads who is a producer of the series, and that is Andy Samberg.

The first episode was released on September 17, 2013, to great acclaim, kicking off many series of this humorous series (Rodríguez Boedor; 2020). The sitcom has a total of 153 episodes – the last is the 8th series, and most of them are 22 episodes each. Anyway the B99 was cancelled in 2018 on the streaming channel FOX (Rodríguez Boedor; 2020), which received criticism from both fans and the actors who starred in this series. Despite this, fans started a campaign to get the series renewed, which helped, and in the same year, the 6th season and two more seasons of this successful show started filming again and streaming on Netflix and NBC channels (BBC News; 2018). The entire series was terminated in 2021 (White; 2021), which was the year when the delayed episode of the Brooklyn 99 was aired on September 16. The last series of B99 contained only 10 final episodes which is a much shorter series than the previous one.

The sitcom is set in the Brooklyn borough of Nine-Nine, hence its title. The whole series focuses on police officers, specifically the lives of the detectives who solve various cases, and more, it focuses a lot on their private lives. They all work in NYPD, which is a special precinct of a police department. The main character is Jake Peralta (played by Andy Samberg), who acts a bit like a child but adds the biggest dose of humor to the series. His captain, Raymond Holt, plays a big role too, and the two form a special friendship over the course of the sitcom. Another key highlight includes the relationship between Jake and Amy, who get married and start a family over the course of the sitcom.

Overall, the main cast has a total of 9 actors who appear in almost every episode. Unfortunately, several of the lead roles did not return after production resumed after the original end of the series. Those who have returned, only as guests.

## 2.2 Genre and style characteristics of B99

B99 is considered an action police drama or comedy (Vandewalle, 2018). In more detail, it is reported to be a crime drama a stand-alone drama. There is a lot depicted from the world of the NYPD, specifically the police humor they have in their police environment. In my opinion, this is one of the funniest sitcoms ever made together with "The Office" or "The Big Bang Theory", when these two shows, The Office, and The Big Bang Theory became famous as well.

The dialogue used in B99 is very well thought out. As could be seen how the writers try to use humor in every dialogue, which is meant to lighten up every situation. There is great use of irony and mocking humor, especially from Jake Peralta, as he is considered a big kid, and he does not take most things and situations seriously, as he should. Anyway there is a hint of dark humor or a high amount of awkward humor to pause over. It adds a greater range of humor to the series, not just one-sided humor.

Because the sitcom over the course of the series has a lot of interconnected humor, where elements of humor perfectly connect to each other, it maintains its ratings and popularity even years after the filming ended. Judging by the response (ČSFD) to the show, it is typical of the personal and professional humor that many people could experience.

The series mainly focuses on entertaining the audience, which is why the writers have built up wacky characters that the audience can identify with, but the show tries to point out social issues, like sexism or police brutality, and make people aware of these problems.

Absurdity, sarcasm, or mocking colleagues is the main aspect of verbal humor in this sitcom. Audiences, thanks to B99, can find out how many ways are there to use humor, and how humor can be used in every situation.

In conclusion, B99 is a distinctive humorous series describing police/detective life in the Brooklyn area. It brims with action-crime drama and police humor. Simple and understandable dialogues containing sarcasm and insults to its colleagues provoke successful responses. Black humor, wordplay, and hyperbole are also the order of the day in most dialogues unless it is a more serious conversation between fellow detectives in the NYPD area.

## 2.3 Verbal Humor in B99

The following subchapter will analyse two different dialogues in two episodes from random series. Verbal humor will be analysed and the elements are used in the two dialogues below. Elements or aspects of humor will be described in more detail and in addition, the

characters and their position in these dialogues will be briefly described, as well as the relationships that the main characters have with each other, and how they use verbal humor.

### **Analysis of selected scenes and dialogues**

For my first initial analysis of verbal humour in the show, I chose a scene from the third Halloween episode of the third season, '99 Kitchen', filmed in 2016. It is a conversation between two characters, Charles Boyle, and Gina Linetti. It is a scene in which the two of them are guarding a suitcase that contains a prize, a prize for the annual Halloween game.

#### **Selected part of the script of the episode Halloween III. (from season 3; 2016; 3:34):**

<p><b>Boyle:</b> So, I see you've been assigned to guard the briefcase too.</p> <p><b>Gina:</b> Yup. I'm not supposed to let it or you out of my sight, if that even is you.</p> <p><b>Boyle:</b> Ow, that's my face!</p> <p><b>Gina:</b> Oh, sorry, I thought it was a cheap, rubber mask.</p> <p><b>Boyle:</b> Well, I have exciting news. I found the perfect guy to set you up with.</p> <p><b>Gina:</b> After zero consideration, I'm happy to say, "hard pass."</p> <p><b>Boyle:</b> Come on. Our parents are married. Genevieve and I are dating. I want you to have someone too. You shouldn't have to slow dance alone after family dinner.</p> <p><b>Gina:</b> How did my life come to this? Charles, it's very sweet that you want to set me up with someone, but I do not trust your taste in guys at all.</p> <p><b>Boyle:</b> I have spectacular taste in men. You would love Nadia.</p> <p><b>Gina:</b> His name is Nadia?</p> <p><b>Boyle:</b> Oh, all of a sudden Nadia's not a cool name? You are impossible.</p>
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In the scene, various elements of verbal humor are utilized, contributing to the comedic atmosphere of the dialogue. What follows is list of all the elements of humour found in the dialogue, discussed, and described them in more detail:

#### **2.3.1 Mocking and Sarcasm**

The first is the phrase (sentence) when Gina says, "I thought it was a cheap, rubber mask." Here Gina is clearly saying simple irony and mocking Boyle. In the scene, Gina gives Charles a small slap on the face, to which Boyle then responds: "Ow, that is my face!". Gina responds with a mocking "cheap, rubber mask" where she implies that his face looks like that. The word "cheap" adds such sarcasms to the Charles that his face is not worth anything. This phrase can be considered an insulting and mocking remark. In the scene, Gina says it with a serious face, which adds more humor.

Another aspect of the verbal humor in this dialogue is the phrase spoken again by Gina: “After zero consideration, I’m happy to say, “hard pass.” The sentence “after zero consideration” is again a mockery. It implies that she ignored his offer and did not even think about listening to the details of Charles' offer. It is humorous since there is a “zero” because any time you think about something (in this case thinking about the perfect man Charles found for Gina), there must be at least some percentage of consideration about the “offer.”

The sentence, “I’m happy to say, “hard pass” is a continuation of the previous sentence (after zero consideration). We note the mockery and irony here because Gina says the word “happy” which in this context means that she is happy to say that she doesn't want anything from him. This is closely followed by the phrase “hard pass” or “I will happily avoid it.” It is a simple refusal. Gina used it in this context in the style of “leave me alone and mind your own business” which is why it is humorous in this situation.

Gina Linetti is a very funny character throughout the B99 series. She is known for her sarcastic nature. She takes nothing seriously and often responds with disinterest and condescension. Even in this dialogue, she exudes total disinterest in other people, and sarcastic dismissal. Gina is a typical character for sarcastic humor, so she may be a favourite for girls.

### 2.3.2 Double entendre

The final aspect of verbal humour in this scene is the line “I have spectacular taste in men” spoken by Charles Boyle. This line is extremely humorous because Charles is unaware of what he has just said, and because he seems to be interested in men rather than women. The whole line is deliberately ambiguous (double entendre), and because Charles is unaware of the ambiguity, it adds further comedy to the scene. This moment is a form of humorous misunderstanding, which is a common element of humour. Charles' ignorance and lack of awareness of what he is saying adds to the comic effect of the scene. He makes the audience laugh, because they are aware (or at least they should be) of what he is saying.

Charles Boyle is a well-known figure, thanks to his delight in trivia to the point of being embarrassing and pointless. He stupidly tries every time to help others (to please others), to be nice to everyone. His behaviour is often ridiculous, as can be seen in this dialogue, where he uses an afterthought that he himself is unaware of.

In conclusion, this dialogue between Gina Linetti and Charles Boyle from Brooklyn Nine-Nine shows different forms of verbal humor that are humorous to the audience.



Gina Linetti is a character who is characterised by her sarcastic humour and disinterest in others. Her ironic and mocking remarks add to the comedy of the dialogue. For example, when Boyle responds to her light slap by saying "Ow, that's my face!", Gina responds by saying "I thought it was a cheap rubber mask", a clear irony and mockery of Boyle's face.

Another example is her reaction to Boyle's partner's suggestion when she says, "After zero consideration, I'm happy to say, "hard pass". This sentence again shows her sarcastic attitude and mocks Boyle's efforts.

Charles Boyle, on the other hand, is a character known for his naivety and desire to help others, although he often carries out his good intentions unwisely. His statement "I have spectacular taste in men" is ambiguous and adds to the humour of the scene by not acknowledging its ambiguity. This unconscious humour is typical of Boyle's character and adds another comic dimension to the scene.

Overall, then, the combination of these elements - sarcasm, irony, ambiguity, and unconscious humour - creates a humorous scene that makes the dialogue entertaining and enjoyable for the Brooklyn Nine-Nine viewers.

For the second scene analysis, I have selected an episode titled "M.E. Time" from the second season, filmed in 2014. Specifically, I have focused on a scene known as the "Briefing Room." This moment features all the detectives gathered in the briefing room, engaging in discussions about various actions and cases. Each detective brings their own insights and perspectives, creating a dynamic interaction and tension among the characters.

### **Selected part of the script of the episode M.E. Time (from season 1; 2014; 3:34):**

**Jake:** And with a record five felonies solved in one week, Peralta pulls ahead. Did you guys hear that I solved five felonies in a week?

**Amy:** We heard.

**Jake:** Really? How?

**Jake:** Five felonies in one week! Light'em up, Boyle.

**Jake:** That is the sweet taste of triumph.

**Rosa:** You should shower more.

**Jake:** Yep

**Terry:** Updates on open cases

**Charles:** I just got DOA on Bessemer Street.

**Terry:** You are primary, you are in charge. Take Diaz and Peralta

**Boyle:** Yes. My fantasy threesome. Of cops on a case.

**Captain Holt:** Detectives, our monthly crime statistics are due. I want all paperwork on your closed cases by tomorrow. Scully, you can just write “I do not close any” on a piece of paper.

**Scully:** You got it.

**Amy:** I already got my paperwork in, Captain.

**Captain Holt:** Then I guess this little reminder is not for you.

**Jake:** Wow looks like he hates you even more than me.

**Amy:** No, he does not. We have a good relationship. We are on the same page.

**Holt:** Something to share with the rest of us, Santiago?

**Amy:** No, sir, I was not... Peralta was the one that was talking.

**Jake:** God, you must have been the worst fourth grader ever.

**Amy:** Joke is on you. I skipped fourth grade.

**Holt:** Santiago, anything else?

**Santiago:** No.

**Holt:** No?

**Santiago:** Uh-uh.

**Holt:** Dismissed.

### 2.3.3 Double entendre

*“My fantasy threesome.”*

Here again, it could be seen, as in the first dialogue discussed, Charles's misunderstanding, which he proudly said. Charles enthusiastically said the phrase: “My fantasy threesome.” The word “threesome” in this context clearly conveys ambiguity. In this context, it is specifically a sexual double entendre that should not be used in a work environment. Charles is unaware of this statement of his, which is why it is a humorous incident. The whole “My fantasy threesome” line is absurd. The phrase “my fantasy” adds to the fact that he likes “threesome.” In the recorded scene, you can clearly see the looks his colleagues give at his statement. Fantasy is a word that expresses that he often dreams about it and would like to experience it, which is why this situation sounds a bit strange.

However, Charles has made a mockery of himself with this because he doesn't know what he said that was ridiculous and ambiguous.

### 2.3.4 Dry Wit

*“Scully, you can just write “I do not close any”.*

Captain Holt's dry humor is a prime example of a joke that others might want to emulate. The joke is trying to point out Scully's inability to function properly. This joke also shows that Scully has never solved many cases and is not at all reliable in this job. For a short period of



time, because the captain is like that, Captain Holt saw this and could afford to make this witty remark. On the other hand, it adds to the joke that Scully took the insult/joke with complete calmness and did not react to it except with words: “You got me.” So, the joke is funny. It should be funny to viewers, as Scully is expected to defend himself against the captain's impertinent remark. Instead, Scully dares to say, “You got me.” His laziness is so great that his colleagues already know he will never do anything, and he will eat and sleep at work, and everyone is used to Detective Scully being lazy and without pretensions.

Captain Holt is one of the main characters. He was not very popular with the detectives at first because he had different behaviour, principles, and morals than the captain before him. Anyway, Holt is known as the curmudgeon who never smiles, if he does, something is wrong.

### 2.3.5 Sarcasm

*“Joke is on you. I skipped fourth grade.”*

Amy Santiago has a quick mocking reaction to Jake's comments. Her reaction is: “The joke's on you. I skipped fourth grade.” The answer “Jokes on you” is an idiom where his job is to make a joke or try to cheat on someone, but in the end, he is the victim of a joke or a trick. In this way, their own error and a failed attempt at trickery are emphasized and contain an unexpected twist. There is a depiction of a violation of the stereotype. Amy's answer breaks the stereotype that fourth grade is an important stage in everyone's life and shows that even if someone skips a year, it does not necessarily affect their future. It adds absurdity to the dialogue, and Amy is considered a “nerd”.

Amy is the cleverest detective in the precinct, she likes to follow the rules and that is why everyone mocks her and does not take her seriously. She supports the captain and may potentially betray her friend Jake. Amy is the model snitch and “nerd” of the NYPD, which brings several hilarious annoyances to the episode.

In Conclusion, the overall humour in this series is very broad. We can find dry jokes or sexual double entendres. It depends a lot on the characterization of the characters. Their personality gives us clues and predicts how each character will react.

## 2.4 Thematic and genre elements of humor

### 2.4.1 Analysis of the various comic themes and genres in the series

B99 is a humorous series full of verbal humor. In any dialogue, whether serious or less serious conversation between colleagues, there is some that kind of verbal humor.

The most common kind of humor in the show *B99* is *absurdity* and *insults*, which are taken with a grain of salt, and most colleagues in precinct accept them as a fact. The whole sitcom is built on this.

Each character featured in the sitcom has a different kind of humor, also known as Character-driven comedy (ability to find the moments and laughs that come out of your character's point-of-view). For example, when two characters are having fun, they have a strange conversation that is usually humorous or awkward, strange is because we do not often see them having chat or solving any problems in NYPD. That is why it may seem a little strange to the audience.

For example: Detective Rosa is considered a tough woman, and it is assumed that most of her humor will be dark humor.

Another example is Gina Linetti, Holt's secretary, who routinely uses ironic language, and you never know when she's joking or is serious. If we heard the conversation of these two main characters, the audience should smile. Both of these colleagues have different humours, and most of the time they do not understand each other because they also have different vocabularies. Most of the time, they do not have much to talk about, which is why it exudes a funny vibe.

However, in almost every dialogue, there is at least one outlier that is associated with humor, in this case, verbal humor. Writers should consider a more frequent, casual conversation without humorous expressions. If there are too many jokes, the show loses its seriousness and can be boring for someone. Anyway, for most viewers, this series is a success, and the writers have managed to use verbal humor.

## 3. Verbal Humor in *The Office*

### 3.1 Background; development and production of the series

The Office, another series that is one of the most famous in the world. The series is based on the original version of the same name, “The Office,” which aired for only two years, from 2001 to 2003. Anyway the newer version gained significantly more popularity, adding to its acclaim with additional seasons, unlike its predecessor which starred Ricky Gervais or Martin Freeman in leading roles. The only difference between the two identical shows is that the original version of *Office* is from the UK, and the newer *Office* is American. The series from 2001 was created by two producers, Ricky Gervais, who even starred in this show, and Stephen Merchant. After the release of the British version of The Office, the Americans were quick to try and surpass its popularity, which they did. The Americans are used to being much more successful, so they tried to come up with a better script than the British one (Totušek, 2021). According to the Author and viewers, the American *Office* is much more humorous and sophisticated. The worst case is that the first six-part series, the American author copied it, but luckily the next series already had an original script, which made it more popular.

*The Office* itself was created and filmed on American television by Greg Daniels. “*Office* is a 21-minute sitcom produced by the Deedle-Dee Productions and Reveille Productions in association with NBC” (Fandom, 2013). The first series was released in March 2005, and lasted until May 2013 (The Futon Critic, 2013). It contains 9 series, and of those series, that is a total of 201 aired episodes. The series mainly appeared on the NBC streaming station, which was only accessible in America. Later, however, the series went global. Now we can only see the series on a streaming service, Netflix.

After the broadcast ended, it became a huge hit, which continues to this day, and is among the most popular shows according to reviews on the IMBd Charts (<https://www.imdb.com/chart/top/>)

The whole story takes place in the office setting of the Dunder Mifflin Paper Company in Scranton, Pennsylvania. The entire series is treated as a mockumentary sitcom, or documentary, where characters turn to the viewer (the camera) and comment on situations that have happened. The main theme of the series is the daily lives of the office staff, their personal or professional challenges, and the situations, mostly funny, they encounter. The main characters include office manager Michael Scott (Steve Carell), who often tries to be funny and popular; Jim Halpert (John Krasinski), Dwight Schrut (Rainn Wilson); and Pam Beesly (Jenna Fischer). I consider these characters to be the main ones, and they cannot be left out.

*The Office* is a similar series to *Brooklyn 99*, as it deals with many work and personal lives, just in a different setting, namely an office environment.

### 3.2 Genre and style characteristics of *The Office*

*The Office* is a documentary series, or mocumentary, where the characters know that they are being filmed and often speak directly to the camera (as some sort of interview). In general, the series is considered comedic. Anyway there are all the elements of humor, most often satire, wits or even irony. Most of these elements are used by the character Michael (the office boss), but most of the time he is not aware of them or does not realize that it can hurt the feelings of others. In my opinion the sitcom is also considered a cringe comedy, where often awkward and uncomfortable situations are used as a source of humor. Such situations often lead to misunderstandings between characters, as individuals typically find themselves unsure of what to do or say when faces with embarrassing circumstances.

*The Office* is focusing on the development of characters that change and evolve throughout the sitcom. Not only to the characters themselves, but to social relationships, or romances and mutual friendships with each other in and out of the workplace.

The series' script and the performances of the actors are highly realistic, capturing the essence of normal life. However, like most fictional storytelling, the narrative itself is fictional and may contain some unrealistic elements.

By speaking directly to the camera, the characters give the series a reality and authenticity. Beyond the prevailing humor, the series offers insights into the potential dynamics of real-life work environments, presenting an imaginative portrayal of office life. It shows elements of real life that employees change, too, with characters changing in the show. This aspect is significant as it adds depth and authenticity to the series, allowing viewers to connect with the characters' experiences and emotions as they evolve throughout the show.

The Overall series, thanks to its cringe and embarrassing elements, became entertaining. The awkward silence between the characters or between the various character dialogues adds to the comedic elements of the entire series. There is no question why it became a popular show around the world.

### 3.3 Verbal humor in *The Office*

In the following subsection, two different dialogues from different episodes of *The Office* will be discussed and analysed. Verbal humour and its aspects will be described in more detail. Plus, a short characterization of the characters that appear in the selected dialogues.

Analysis of selected scenes and dialogues

For my first analysis of verbal humor from “*The Office*” series, I chose dialogue from the third season and first episode titled “Gay Witch Hunt” filmed in 2006. In the dialogue, Michael Scott, who is the manager of the office branch, and Toby Flenderson, the HR manager, speak. These two disagree about their co-worker identifying as gay.

**Selected part of the script of the episode Gay Witch Hunt. (from season 3; 2006; 2:08):**

**Michael:** No! That is the fun of this place. I call everybody "faggie". Why would anybody find that offensive?  
**Toby:** OK I think Oscar would just like if you used "lame" or something like that.  
**Michael:** That's what faggie means!  
**Toby:** No not really...  
**Toby:** Apparently you called Oscar "faggie" for liking the movie Shakespeare in Love more than an action movie.  
**Michael:** It wasn't just an action movie, it was Die Hard!  
**Toby:** All right Michael, but Oscar's really gay.  
**Michael:** Exactly!  
**Toby:** I mean for real.  
**Michael:** Yeah, I know.  
**Toby:** No, I mean he's attracted to other men.  
**Michael:** OK, a little too far, crossed the line.  
**Toby:** OK, I am telling you, Oscar is an actual homo. Yeah, he told me this morning. And, obviously he hopes he can count on your discretion.  
**Michael:** I would have never called him that if I knew. You don't... You don't call retarded people "retards". It's bad taste. You call your friends "retards" when they're acting retarded. And I consider Oscar a friend.

In the scene, various elements of verbal humor are utilized, contributing to the comedic atmosphere of the dialogue. What follows is list of all the elements of humour found in the dialogue, discussed, and described them in more detail:

### 3.3.1 Bigotry and transgression

This scene raises complex questions about humor, language, and social norms, particularly in relation to the use of the “f-slur.”

*Michael's transgressive use of the word "faggie":*

The scene begins with Michael calling each of his colleagues faggie. Faggie is a very inappropriate word, let alone to his colleagues. His co-worker Toby corrects him and reminds

him to at least call them lame and not insult them when he does not know or understand their sexual orientation.

Michael replies, “*That's what faggie means!*” This sentence is a clear example of Michael unknowingly using offensive double-entendre. Crucial to the scene is the Michael’s knowledge of the meaning of the word. Portraying Michael as a bigoted ignoramus who uses the highly offensive f-slur as a synonym for lameness is the whole point of this “humorous” situation. His failure to know what the word means not only highlights his ignorance, but also serves to comment on the damaging effects of casual bigotry and insensitivity.

First, the scene reflects the ignorance and insensitivity of the character Michael Scott, rather than supporting or tolerating his behaviour. Michael’s use of the slur “faggie” is portrayed as inappropriate and offensive. Other characters, such as Toby, try to correct him.

However, the use of such language, even in a satirical or critical context, can still be hurtful and maintain offensive stereotypes. The humor of the scene relies on Michael’s lack of awareness and political correctness, which may not sit well with today’s viewers, especially those who are part of the LGBTQ+ community or its allies.

*Toby's transgression:*

In this dialogue Toby says, “OK, I am telling you, Oscar is an actual homo.” The scene touches on the issue of outing someone’s sexual orientation without their permission, which is a serious breach of privacy and trust. It is not only inappropriate but unethical for Toby to reveal Oscar’s sexual orientation to Michaels without Oscar’s permission.

Michael Scott is an ambitious man, but he is seen as an often inappropriate and timid manager. He tries to be popular with his colleagues but usually fails to do so because he often utters offensive sentences. Michael has a lack of social intelligence, and he gets into uncomfortable situations due to his inappropriate behaviour. Michael does not like to take criticism, which adds humor to his character as he tends to always offend people and return the criticism to them.

Michael does not just have bad qualities. He is warm and empathetic and can help his colleagues and friends when they are in a difficult situation.



### 3.3.2 Irony and absurdity

*"I would have never called him that if I knew. You don't... You don't call retarded people "retards". It's bad taste. You call your friends "retards" when they're acting retarded. And I consider Oscar a friend."* This whole sentence sounds very ironic because of the significant use of the word retarded. The word "*retarded*" is used here in a humorous sense. Michael tries to explain to Toby how the use of the word works, but to no avail.

He emphasizes here that people must not call retarded people retarded, but they must call their friends retarded. It is absurd and ironic because they are not allowed to call their colleagues that word. The sentence, "*And I considered Oscar a friend*" implies that he thinks he might think of him as a retarded because he acts like one. The use of this word is inappropriate, because in this context it could offend people.

It is ironic because Michael is saying something that is the opposite of what he understands or practices. Michael claims that he would never use an offensive term (retard), but at the same time, he uses the term and fails to realize its problematic nature. The paradox manifests itself on the nonsense of Michael's arguments, such as the claim that is OK to use offensive language if it is directed at friends. In a work environment where Michael, as a manager, is expected to maintain professional relationships with subordinates, it is not appropriate to view the relationships as symmetrical. This situation highlights the absurdity of Michael's behaviour and his inability to separate the personal from the professional.

Overall, The dialogue portrays Michael as an incompetent boss archetype. He behaves inappropriately, often misunderstanding the meaning of words and the context of conversations. His attempts to turn his mistakes into jokes usually fall flat, highlighting his lack of self-awareness and incompetence. This portrayal clearly aims to exaggerate and satirise the characteristics of an ineffective manager. Michael is meant to be seen as a humorous and exaggerated representation rather than a realistic representation of a competent leader. Here, he is seen to be more intolerant of other sexualities, and it shocks him that it is one of his colleagues. Indeed, Michael's reaction to Oscar's sexuality may indicate a lack of acceptance or discomfort with sexual diversity. It is important to note that without such intolerance, the reveal of Oscar's sexuality would not have provoked such a strong and childish reaction from Michael.

The phrases that are used here have a deeper meaning in verbal humour, and so are often understood sarcastically or with double meanings as well, which is why they are funny, as it is the second meaning that the viewer should understand. Michael's behaviour makes the situation

more comical because Michael is brimming with absurdity. If we focus on the relationship between the colleagues, it is known that Michael does not like Toby. Toby tells him what to do and what not to do, even though Michael is his superior, and this also adds to the comicality as there is a kind of tension between them.

For the second analysis, I have chosen one longer dialogue from the first series of *The Office*, the second episode of this series, called "Diversity Day," filmed in 2005. There are three characters in the dialogue (Michael Scott, Dwight Schrutt, and Mr. Brown), and these characters are talking about humans (race) and what is appropriate and inappropriate.

As the dialogue is quite long, it is split into two parts where a couple of sentences are omitted because it is not needed for the analysis of the verbal humor.

#### **Selected part of the script of the episode Diversity Day. (from season 1; 2005; 4:05):**

**Mr. Brown:** Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Great.  
**Michael:** Come on people, let's get 'em in. Get in the cards! Get in the cards!  
**Mr. Brown:** Thank you. Thank you very much. OK. Thanks for filling these out and I promise this'll be quick. At Diversity Today, our philosophy is about honesty and positive expectations. We believe that 99% of the problems in the workplace arise simply out of ignorance.  
**Michael:** You know what? This is a color-free-zone here. Stanley, I don't look at you as another race.  
**Mr. Brown:** Uh, see this is what I'm talking about. We don't have to pretend we're color-blind.  
**Michael:** Exactly, were not...  
**Mr. Brown:** That's fighting ignorance with more ignorance.  
**Michael:** With tolerance.  
**Mr. Brown:** No. With more ignorance.  
**Michael:** Ignorance.  
**Mr. Brown:** Right. Exactly. Uh, instead, we need to celebrate our diversity.  
**Michael:** Let's celebrate.  
**Mr. Brown:** Right. OK.  
**Michael:** Celebrate good times. Come on! Let's celebrate diversity. Right?  
**Mr. Brown:** Yes, exactly. Now here's what we're going to do. I've noticed that...  
**Michael:** You know what? Here's what we're going to do. Why don't we go around and everybody... everybody say a race that you are attracted to sexually. I will go last. Go.  
**Dwight:** I have two. White and Indian.

### 3.3.3 The contrasting approaches

In the dialogue, there is verbal humor in the different approaches to diversity and inclusivity taken by Mr. Brown and Michael, but a more diplomatic approach would be to



acknowledge and value the diversity of the workplace while seeking to promote dialogue, understanding and a respectful working environment. Mr. Brown confidently argues for honesty, positive expectations, and the celebration of diversity, promoting open dialogue and understanding as crucial elements in encouraging a respectful work environment. In contrast, Michael initially attempted to create a “colour-free zone”, stating that he did not see Stanley’s race. However, Mr. Brown criticises this idea as ignoring the reality of diversity, setting the stage for a humorous exchange between the two characters

Anyway, Michael’s misunderstanding of Mr. Brown’s message leads to comedic moments, such as when he tries to affirm tolerance, only to be corrected by Mr. Brown, who points out that it is a way of ignorance. For example, in Michael’s response of “With tolerance”, Mr. Brown’s reply of “No. With more ignorance,” emphasizes Michael’s lack of perspective. Michael’s repetition of the word “ignorance” in agreement with Mr. Brown further adds to the humor and shows his lack of understanding.

The contrasting approaches used in the scene emphasize the significance of open dialogue and comprehension when dealing with issues of diversity and inclusivity in the workplace. The lines in the dialogue highlight the comedic side of Michael’s character, who often misunderstands or misinterprets serious issues, leading to humorous exchanges with those around him.

**Selected part of the script of the episode Diversity Day. (from season 1; 2005; 4:05):**

**Mr. Brown:** Thank you. OK. Now, at the start of the session, I had you all write down an incident that you found offensive in the workplace. Now, what I’m going to do is choose one and we’re going to act it out.

**Dwight:** A few of the ground rules?

**Michael:** Hey, hey why don’t you run it by me, and I’ll run it by him.

**Dwight:** OK, can we steer away from gay people?

**Mr. Brown:** Um...

**Dwight:** I’m sorry. It’s an orientation. It’s not a race. Plus, a lot of other races are intolerant of gays, so...paradox.

**Mr. Brown:** Well, we only have an hour.

**Dwight:** I figured it would save time.

**Michael:** OK. Why don’t we just defer to Mr...

**Mr. Brown:** Mr. Brown.

**Michael:** Ah. Oh, right! OK. First test. I will not call you that.

**Mr. Brown:** Well, it’s my name. It’s not a test. OK? Um, so looking through the cards, I’ve noticed that many of you wrote down the same incident, which is ironic, because it’s the exact incident I was brought in here to respond to. Now, how many of you are familiar with the Chris Rock routine? Very good. OK.

### 3.3.4 Irony; Mocking

There are aspects of irony and some of Dwight's awkwardness in this short piece of dialogue. The first element is the entire sentence "*Can we steer away from gay people?*" This is an inappropriate suggestion of discomfort for people who are differently sexually oriented than Dwight himself. The words "*steer away*" are an idiomatic expression that means to avoid something. It is part of a double entendre that Dwight often uses without realizing it. Dwight recommends that we focus the sensitivity training discussion on topics that are less controversial. He suggests that we avoid discussing sexual orientation to prevent any potential discomfort or disagreement among participants.

It is important to note that the term "steer away" means to redirect from a specific topic. In this context, Dwight's use of the term accidentally reveals his own prejudice and discomfort with discussing LGBTQ+ issues, which adds to the humor of the situation.

"*It's an orientation. It's not a race*" is ironic, mocking Mr Brown in this context. Dwight is trying to explain to him something that is common knowledge, and he obviously treats it as a taboo subject.

The word "paradox" is taken as sarcasm because it is used to justify - in this case, to justify why you should avoid gay people. His logic that homosexuality is not a racial issue and that some nations are intolerant of homosexuals adds another layer of absurdity and sarcasm to the context of this dialogue.

The word "paradox" is often used to describe a situation where two things are not equal, and this makes for ironic situations.

Overall, Dwight Shrutt's character is rather too smart, and thinks he is right about everything. However, he often does not realize his oversights or the mistakes he makes and he is not able to take criticism to heart, but that is what makes him funny and beloved to the audience.

## 3.4 Thematic and genre elements of humor

### 3.4.1 Analysis of the comic themes and genres in the series

The office is known for its embarrassing humor, and that is what it prides itself on, and that is what makes it so successful. Most of all, the show features insults, awkward humor, and the irony itself (a common ironic simile) The main character who makes use of these humorous elements is Michael, his colleagues try to ignore it, but sometimes they cannot.

*The Office* prides itself on humor, which is called observational comedy, which means it deals with everyday life - here it is at the office, at various meetings, or even politics. Observational comedy is most used in stand-up comedy and addresses common topics that are not normally addressed (Sankey, p.53). Anyway, common topics are not normally addressed in certain contexts due to societal norms, taboos, or the potential for controversy. In comedy, for example, some subjects may be considered off-limits or sensitive, such as race, religion, or politics. Similarly, in art, there may be topics that are deemed too controversial or provocative to explore openly. “Normally” in this context refers to the conventional or expected boundaries and limitations within a particular form of expression or discourse, such as comedy or art.

Another element that is crucial to the humor in this sitcom is character - driven comedy, which is that everyone has a different type of humor, and everyone uses it differently. Examples include Michael using cringe humor or Jim making fun of his colleague Dwight. We must not forget the romantic comedy, which is also often here. Examples include the love between Jim and Pam, or Michael's failed attempts to find true love.

But in the end, it deals with the most important component, namely the parody of office life. It is a constant exploration and display of the boring stereotype of office life, with boring meetings, which are, for example, various presentations or unproductive discussions; artificial and useless bureaucracy, where employees must attend pointless procedures; and, finally, business politics, which is particularly boring (the series creates funny lines and situations because the employees are bored).

However, the office presents unique combination of humor. As a result of this approach, which incorporates several genres of humor, *The Office* has gained popularity with viewers worldwide.

## 4. Verbal humor in Confrontation: An analysis of Dialogue in Television Series

This chapter will analyse other dialogues of *B99* and *The Office*. In addition, aspects of verbal humor will be analysed according to these dialogues, as well as the dialogues in the previous chapters (see chapter two and three), to see what the two sitcoms have in common and what they have in difference. Overall, it will be a comparison of these sitcoms.

### 4.1 Dialogue Dynamics: A Comparison of Verbal Humour

For analysis and dialogue comparison, I chose *B99*, episode three, “Boyle's Hunch” filmed in 2015, where Rosa and Terry argue with Scully and Hitchcock about whether they have eaten.

The second dialogue is from *The Office*, season three, episode five, entitled "Initiation" filmed in 2006. This episode is about Ryan and Dwight having an ambiguous conversation.

#### **Selected part of the script of the episode Boyle's Hunch. (from season 3; 2015; 8:40):**

**Terry:** Diaz. Look what I found in Hitchcock and Scully's trash can: Ice cream spoon.  
**Rosa:** Son of a bitch. *You hungry, hungry hippos* ate my ice cream. Why was this in your trash?  
**Terry:** And who throws away a spoon? It's the easiest utensil to clean.  
**Scully:** I don't even think it's ice cream. It's probably medicine. You know, I'm on lots of medicines, Rosa. I'm sick all over.  
**Terry:** This is ice cream, and I'm gonna prove it.  
**Rosa:** Sarge, no. It's been in their mouths.  
**Terry:** What am I doing?  
**Hitchcock:** Well, I guess your little investigation has hit a dead end.  
**Rosa:** I'll be back. Don't move.  
**Scully:** Not a problem. I hate moving.  
**Terry:** Let it go. Let it go.

#### 4.1.1 Insulting simile

Rosa Diaz is known for her dark side and almost never gives compliments.

In this dialogue, Rosa Diaz made an insulting simile between her two colleagues, Hitchcock, and Scully, based on a children's game. “Hungry Hungry Hippos” is a game where the hippos are starving and the player has to collect as many marbles as possible to feed them and stop their hunger. In this dialogue she called them: “hungry, hungry hippos”, and that is the exact name of the game. In this way, Rosa suggests that Hitchcock and Scully are like hungry hippos who are obsessed with food.

This kind of humor can be seen as ironic and sarcastic because Rosa is comparing his colleagues to hungry hippos, which is clearly and overstated and exaggerated comparison. At the same time, it is a type of confrontational humor because Rosa uses this comparison to mock her colleagues or to send a clear message about their incompetence or inappropriate behaviour at the workplace.

This type of verbal, humor is typical of Rosa Diaz's character in the *B99*, who is known for her rude and unpleasant behaviour. Her sarcastic communication style and ability to make sharp jokes are characteristic of her character and contribute to the dynamics and comedic effect of the sitcom.

**Selected part of the script of the episode Initiation. (from season 3; 2006; 7:14):**

<p><b>Dwight:</b> And just as you have planted your seed in the ground, <u>I'm going to plant my seed in you.</u></p> <p><b>Ryan:</b> I don't think you know what you're saying.</p> <p><b>Dwight:</b> Smells pretty bad, doesn't it?</p> <p><b>Ryan:</b> Uh huh.</p> <p><b>Dwight:</b> It's called bull crap and a client can smell it from a mile away.</p> <p><b>Ryan:</b> Gotcha.</p> <p><b>Dwight:</b> Oh hey, I forgot something in my car. I'll be right back.</p> <p><b>Ryan:</b> Ok. [Dwight drives away] Of course.</p>
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#### 4.1.3 Double entendre

There is a double entendre in this dialogue that Dwight said to Ryan.

The phrase is "*I'm going to plant my seed in you*". This sentence has two potential meanings - a figurative meaning and a sexual meaning. In this context, the sexual interpretation is also figurative. Dwight's statement about planting seeds is meant to be a metaphor for his assertiveness or domination in this situation, rather than a literal reference to sexual activity. The humor comes from the double entendre, where Dwight's words can be interpreted both literally and figuratively, giving to the dialogue a comical feeling. However, most people would probably assume the sexual meaning.

The phrase that Dwight said, "plant my seed", can have two meanings, one of which carries more weight than the other. In the context of the phrase used, "plant my seed" can have connotations both of transmitting an idea and performing a sexual act. In slang, the word "seed" can be associated with the term "sperm", which can lead to different interpretations. In

connection with the possessive pronoun “you”, the sexual interpretation gains some weight, especially given the inappropriate context of the whole sentence.

In conclusion *Brooklyn Nine-Nine's* dialogue features witty lines, quick exchanges, and clever wordplay.

The humour often comes from the interactions between the different characters, each with their own unique personality traits and comedic quirks. The dialogue is fast-paced and full of comedic timing, with characters dropping one-liners and punchlines with precise timing. In addition, the show uses absurd situations and comedic scenes to add to the comedy and create a sense of the unpredictable and the chaotic.

In contrast, *The Office* series relies heavily on dry wit, awkward humour and cringeworthy moments. Dialogue is often characterised by dry delivery, awkward pauses, and embarrassing silences, all of which contribute to the show's distinctive comedic style. The humour in *The Office* is based on the everyday routines of office life and the absurdity of the characters' relationships, with comic moments arising from the characters' awkwardness and social ineptitude.

All in all, both shows make very effective use of double-entendre humour, but in different ways. While *The Office* relies on dry wit and awkward humour, *B99* relies more on sharp dialogue and outright absurdity. Despite these differences, both shows excel at the delivery of memorable and entertaining dialogue that resonates with viewers.

## 4.2 Analysis of Techniques: Common Aspects of Verbal Humor in the *B99* and *The Office*

If we look more deeply at the two dialogues above, there are several elements and techniques that contribute to the funny situations, and these are:

### **Puns and double entendres:**

Double entendres and puns are frequently used in both *B99* and *The Office* to evoke humour and engage the viewer. Double entendres and puns are frequently used in both *B99* and *The Office* to evoke humour and engage the viewer. These linguistic devices are employed with confidence and skill, showcasing the writers' expertise in crafting humorous dialogue that resonates with the audience.

For example, in the series *B99*, Detective Jake Peralta often uses double entendres, such as when he remarks, "I'd like you to meet my worm. He's amazing with rods." This catchphrase

combines a literal interpretation regarding fishing with a suggestive allusion to relationships or dating.

Similarly, one memorable double entendre in the series *The Office* comes from Michael Scott's character, who frequently uses the phrase "That's what she said!" The phrase 'That's what she said' is often used to imply a sexual meaning to an innocent statement. The use of such catchphrases can provide a source of humor for the audience.

Furthermore, it is worth noting that both series employ puns to elevate their verbal humour. For instance, in the series *B99*, Captain Holt confidently remarks, "This pie is so good it's almost criminal", cleverly playing on the double meaning of 'criminal' as both illegal behaviour and exceptionally delicious.

Similarly, in *The Office*, Michael Scott asserts, "I'm not superstitious, but I am a little stitious", showcasing his confidence and wit. It is important to highlight the abundance of puns in *The Office*. This pun relies on the clever combination of the words 'superstitious' and 'superstition' to create a memorable and amusing play on words for the audience.

In addition, the use of double entendres and puns adds depth and complexity to the humour in *B99* and *The Office*, often requiring the audience to engage with the dialogue on multiple levels and enhancing the overall comedic experience.

### **Absurdity and exaggeration:**

*B99* and *The Office* series both feature characters with exaggerated traits who often find themselves in exaggerated situations. These elements combine to create enhanced comedic moments that set the mood for each show.

For example, in *B99*, characters like Captain Holt with his stoic demeanor or Jake Peralta with his exaggerated excesses contribute to the exaggerated quality of the show's scenarios, such as undercover missions or precinct-wide competitions.

The Office series expertly showcases the comedic potential of exaggerated office scenarios, featuring memorable characters like the incompetent boss Michael Scott and the eccentric Dwight Schutte. Through team exercises and failed office parties, the show highlights the unique qualities of these characters, resulting in hilarious scenes.

Both shows create a comedic atmosphere in which absurdity becomes the rule by combining exaggerated character traits with exaggerated situations, resulting in a truly memorable and entertaining viewing experience.



**Unexpectedness and irony:**

Both shows use incongruity and irony to create comedic tension and surprise, keeping the audience on the edge of their seats and entertained because they contain unexpected outcomes or ironic situations that subvert the expectations of the audience.

**Character-based humour:**

The characters in *B99* share several traits that fit into certain tropes or stereotypes. Jake Peralta is portrayed as a gifted detective who can be easily distracted, Captain Raymond Holt is a stern and serious superior, and Rosa Diaz is a tough and mysterious detective. However, these traits are used in a way that is different from stereotypes, and at the same time, the characters in the show are developed and unique enough to overcome these usual conventions.

The TV show *The Office* purposely relies on certain stereotypical traits in its characters. Michael Scott is portrayed as the “incompetent and attention-seeking manager”, Dwight Schutte as the “overly dedicated employee” and Pam Beesly as the “unflappable receptionist who dreams of a better life”. These traits are used to create humour and comedic situations throughout the series.

Both series develop their characters into complex and interesting individuals who break free from traditional expectations, creating interesting and genuine interactions and dialogue, although some of the characters may be based on tropes or stereotypes. Despite the presence of some stereotypes, the characters' depth and personality make their performances believable and enjoyable.

## 4.3 Differing Approaches: Unique Features of Each Series

### 4.3.1 The Brooklyn 99

The show *B99* makes a lot of use of verbal humour. In fact, it is used more often than in *The Office*. The use of verbal humour is usually simple and short, as it is often associated with quick jokes that are meant to be understood quickly. In a police department setting, there are quick jokes and nonsensical situations. Even when watched over a long period of time, this keeps the show lively and entertaining.

Admittedly, much of the verbal humor in *B99* is presented in the form of quick and easy jokes that are meant to be understood immediately. However, not all jokes are so quick. There are also "slow jokes" or jokes that are built on a gradual build-up of tension and a final punchline.

The difference between *B99* and traditional sitcoms like *The Office* may lie in the way verbal humor is used. *B99* often uses a dynamic and fast-paced style of humor that fits its genre



and pace. Conversely, *The Office* prefers more often slower, more dialogue-based humor that builds on repetitive situations and characters.

While both shows use verbal humor, their approaches may differ in speed, style, and presentation, which may affect their perception and impact on the viewer.

Almost every piece of dialogue that appears in the series contains at least one aspect of verbal humour, either puns or sarcasm (multiple aspects at once), and these aspects are based on the characters' personalities, so the characters are based on a certain type of humour and are expected to already have it.

Overall, the humour of this series is based on funny situations, of which there are quite a few. It manages to keep viewers glued to the screen for long periods of time and shows us how intelligent jokes and pranks can be.

#### 4.3.2 *The Office*

*The Office* series, however, focuses more on the absurdity and awkward humour of the work environment and interpersonal relationships (both professional and personal) in the office. Awkward humour is meant in the sense that the dialogue is usually clunky and often leads to awkward and uncomfortable situations, sometimes even embarrassing for the viewer. This also contributes to the sitcom's popularity.

The humour is further enhanced by the fact that the show is filmed in a mockumentary style. The characters speak directly to the camera, commenting on events that have happened or that they think are about to happen. This gives the audience the feeling that they are witnessing their real lives being lived.

#### 4.3.3 An analysis of how each series differs in its approach to creating and presenting humour.

*B99* and *The Office* are considered very similar shows, in that they share various subplots (dating life of Amy and Jake; and Pam and Jim) and the similar approaches.

The television series *B99* confidently features a subplot that centres around the romantic relationship between detectives Amy Santiago and Jake Peralta. This storyline is a main plot line of the series. Amy and Jake face various challenges and obstacles in their relationship, which brings humour and adventure to the audience. Similarly, in *The Office*, the subplot confidently focuses on the relationship between receptionist Pam Beesly and salesman Jim Halpert. The romantic plot is set in an office environment, and the dynamics of their relationship are influenced by the work environment.

However, there are also significant differences between them, not only in terms of the settings in which they take place, but also in terms of their style and approach to humour.

#### 4.3.3.1 *Setting:*

*B99* is set in the New York Police Department and portrays a variety of situations that often occur outside of the fictional series. The show's action-packed environment creates a naturally tense atmosphere that reflects the reality of police work. The police setting adds to the overall energy of the sitcom and affects the speed of the dialogue.

*The Office*, on the other hand, is a little more casual. It takes place in the office of the Dunder Mifflin stationery store in Scranton, Pennsylvania. It is a banal and stereotypical setting, nothing much happens there, so the writers make up funny and awkward situations that happen to ordinary people from such a quiet environment.

#### 4.3.3.2 *Style of humour:*

The style of humour of these series is very similar, but not the same, with differences when present.

*B99* is mainly focused on the quicker pace of the dialogue, and there is a high energy that comes from the dialogue, both the humour and the energy in general. This energy of humour is reinforced by the absurdity that the sitcom contains. The puns, jokes and pranks that appear are also rapid and energetic. This means that some of the characters, such as Detective Jake Peralta, are very energetic and can be described as always "rushing".

On the other hand, *The Office* relies on the sort of awkward situations that only occur in an office environment. The conversations are full of silences and pauses, which make them awkward. The "mockumentary" style of humour is another difference here, as it is an indirect narrative that is less uncomfortable than the direct narrative of the plot of this series.

Conclusions drawn from an analysis of the humour of both *B99*, and *The Office* reveal distinct but overlapping features.

While *B99* revels in fast-paced dialogue full of energetic humour and absurd situations, *The Office* relies on awkward office scenarios interrupted by pauses and silences. In contrast to *B99*'s more straightforward style, *The Office*'s mockumentary style of humour adds another layer of indirect storytelling.

#### 4.4 Conclusion: A Balance of Similarities and Differences

When analysing verbal humour in *B99* and *The Office*, both shows have their own unique style and approach to humour. *B99* uses fast-paced and energetic humour with clever wordplay and absurd situations in a police station setting, while *The Office* prefers more subtle

and sophisticated humour, often arising from every day and embarrassing situations in an office environment.

Both series successfully achieve their goal of entertaining the audience through comedic storytelling. They use various forms of verbal humour, such as puns, sarcasm, and situational comedy, to engage the audience. *B99* offers fast-paced and energetic humour, while *The Office* provides subtle and sophisticated humour. Both series navigate the many layers of humour and offer a wide range of comedic performances with confidence.

When comparing the two series, the diversity and range of verbal humour in television storytelling is extremely varied. *B99* and *The Office* have both made a significant influence on popular culture through their distinctive styles and use of humour as a universal language, as well as demonstrating the enduring appeal and influence of comedic storytelling on television. Both series have contributed significantly to the development of humour and artistic

## Conclusion

This bachelor thesis, entitled “Verbal Humor in TV series”, focused on the analysis of verbal humor in the TV series “*Brooklyn Nine-Nine*” and “*The Office*”. The main aim was to compare and evaluate in detail the different forms of verbal humor used in these series and to examine how the dialogue is structured to achieve a comic effect. To achieve this aim, a qualitative method of analysis was used, which focused on a detailed study of dialogue from selected episodes of both series. The objective of this analysis was to identify and categorise the various techniques and strategies employed by the creators of both series to elicit laughter and engage the audience. This would enable a more comprehensive understanding of the differences between the two series and the ways in which they utilise verbal humour to achieve their comedic objectives.

The analysis showed the following results: both series employ verbal humour as a key element of their comedic narrative, yet their approach to humour differs. “*Brooklyn Nine-Nine*” is characterised by a fast-paced and energetic style, often utilising clever puns and absurd situations within the context of a NYPD setting. “*The Office*”, in contrast, employs a more subtle and sophisticated humour, finding comedy in the ordinary and awkward situations of the office environment. Examples of specific techniques and strategies include scenes such as Michael's inappropriate response to a diversity lecture in the “Diversity Day” episode of “*The Office*” or Detective Boyle's attempt to force Gina to go on a date with his friend in the “Halloween III” episode of “*Brooklyn Nine-Nine*.”

A comparison of the two series reveals that the techniques and strategies employed are effective and align with the specific characteristics of the genre and setting. “*Brooklyn Nine-Nine*” prioritises dynamic and action-packed humour, whereas “*The Office*” emphasises the realism and naturalness of situations. However, both series have succeeded in achieving their objectives.

Verbal humour plays a significant role in both “*Brooklyn Nine-Nine*” and “*The Office*” and contributes to their success and popularity. This thesis has highlighted the variety of strategies and techniques used to create comic dialogue in television series through a detailed analysis of selected episodes. The analysis demonstrated that each show employs a distinct approach to humour. ‘*Brooklyn Nine-Nine*’ prioritises dynamic and action-packed humour, whereas ‘*The Office*’ emphasises the realism and naturalness of situations. The findings of this thesis provide a foundation for further research in the comedic television genre and contribute

to a more comprehensive understanding of how comic dialogue is constructed and how it influences viewers' perception and acceptance of series.

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## Résumé

Tato bakalářská práce se zaměřuje na hloubkovou analýzu slovního humoru v populárních televizních seriálech *Brooklyn Nine-Nine* (2013) a *The Office* (2005). Hlavním cílem je porovnat a zhodnotit, jak jsou v těchto seriálech využívány různé formy slovního humoru a jak jsou dialogy strukturovány, aby bylo dosaženo komického efektu.

K dosažení cíle byla použita kvalitativní metoda analýzy zaměřená na pečlivé studium dialogů z vybraných epizod obou seriálů. Dialogy byly systematicky analyzovány a kategorizovány, přičemž byly identifikovány různé formy slovního humoru, včetně slovních hříček, sarkasmu a situační komiky.

Výsledky analýzy naznačují, že jak seriál *B99*, tak seriál *Kancl* používají verbální humor jako klíčový prvek svých komediálních narativů. Zatímco seriál „*B99*“ se vyznačuje svižným a energickým stylem s častým používáním chytrých slovních hříček a absurdních situací v prostředí newyorské policie, „*The Office*“ dává přednost jemnějšímu a sofistikovanějšímu humoru, který nachází v běžných a trapných situacích v kancelářském prostředí.

Srovnání obou seriálů ukazuje, že slovní humor má různé podoby, ale stále je silným prvkem komediálního žánru. Tato práce umožňuje hlouběji pochopit rozmanitost a bohatost verbálního humoru v televizním vyprávění. Byly identifikovány klíčové charakteristiky a strategie používané oběma seriály, které mohou sloužit jako základ pro další výzkum komediálního televizního žánru.