

UNIVERZITA PALACKÉHO V OLOMOUCI

Pedagogická fakulta

Katedra anglického jazyka

**JAN GREGAR**

III. ročník, prezenční studium

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**HUMOR OF THE AMERICAN SITCOM *HOW I MET YOUR MOTHER*, ITS  
TRANSLATION AND ACCEPTANCE BY THE CZECH AUDIENCE**

**Bakalářská práce**

Vedoucí závěrečné písemné práce: Mgr. Josef Nevařil, Ph.D.

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**Prohlašuji, že jsem závěrečnou práci vypracoval samostatně a použil jsem jen  
uvedených pramenů a literatury.**

V Olomouci 17.4.2013

.....  
vlastnoruční podpis

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## Abstract

This thesis compares American and Czech humor, it describes the possibility of translating humor and the practical part presents the attitude of the audience to the translation. In the practical part of the thesis was proved that the subtitled translation of the *How I Met Your Mother* series is more popular than the dubbed translation of the series as the majority of the respondents of the poll claimed to favor it. Furthermore, the research discovered the lack of cultural knowledge of the translators translating the series. In addition, the poll of the present thesis proved that the character *Barney Stinson*, whose protagonist, Neil Patrick Harris, has won an Emmy Award for this role, is also the most popular figure from this sitcom in the Czech Republic.

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# Introduction

*“The Humor is the salt of the soil. The one who is well salted keeps oneself fresh for a long time.”*

Karel Čapek<sup>[1]</sup>

Everybody has a sense of humor although it is sometimes hard for other people to recognize it. People tend to be serious, thoughtful, busy, therefore people's stresses should be smoothed by humor. The means of humor in language are essential in this thesis hence the language is essential in the communication of the mankind and the people need to understand even the comic and humorous aspects of everyday life. The words and sentences which form a perfect joke in one language do shift into a complete nonsense in the other when translated word by word.

The purpose of this thesis is to focus on the possibilities of the translation of humor, the possibility of a good translation and mainly, the differences between the original and translated texts (dialogues) in the American sitcom *How I Met Your Mother* which has been chosen as the material of the study. Since the author of present thesis is Czech, the differences between the (American) English original of the series (and its subtitles) and Czech subtitles will be presented and discussed.

The aim of this thesis is therefore to find answers to these questions:

- 1. Is there a way to make a good translation without losing the sense of original?*
- 2. Do the Czech audience know the series?*
- 3. Why does the Czech audience like the characters?*

In the theoretical part, the crucial terms for the practical part and hence for the whole thesis are described and analyzed. Furthermore, the selected sitcom itself is introduced as the object of study on many different levels (e.g. the characters, the humor of the series, etc.).

The practical part is divided into two larger sections: the subject of the first one is the description of the translation from English to Czech of the series through the subtitles illustrated on examples and the quality of the translation is also discussed. The subject of the other part is the poll, which was placed on the Internet and it is later evaluated and compared with the first part of the practical part. The respondents were asked if they like more original or subtitled version of films and series.

# Theoretical part

The theoretical part of the thesis is divided into six parts. The first one is devoted for the humor in general, describing the origin of the word etymologically and defining its meaning comparing different sources (mainly encyclopedias). This chapter contains two subsections about jokes and about the differences between a “verbal humor” and a “situational humor”.

The second part of the theoretical part is about the Czech and American language, later it is focused on humor, firstly general and secondly in stand-alone sections focusing on features of these different languages in terms of humor.

The third one is based on the theoretical analysis of the terms related to translation and translating. Furthermore, it explains the different techniques of translation and focuses on free, literal and word-by-word translation. Lastly, the translating process of humor is described.

The fourth chapter is also descriptive and analytical as it is related to the term *sitcom* and it contains not only the theory about the word itself but also about the history of sitcoms illustrated with some examples.

The fifth chapter is focused on the terms *catchphrase* and *catchword* as these terms are necessary for the following chapter.

The sixth and final chapter is about the sitcom *How I Met Your Mother* as it needs to be introduced as the study field of the practical part of the present thesis. This series is described in many different levels, e.g. the history of the series, its authors, a basic review of the plot and of course the authors and their language because it influences their sense and style of humor.

## 1.1 Humor

*“A person without a sense of humor is like a wagon without springs. It's jolted by every pebble on the road.”*

Henry Ward Beecher<sup>[2]</sup>

The meaning of the word “humor” is (similarly to any abstract word) rather vague as one person can see humor in a slapstick movie, another can name examples of humor in jokes and another can define humor in a term “sense of humor”. Therefore the thesis provides here different explanations of the term.

By many, the term *humor* in Northern-American English (henceforth NAmE) or *humour* in British English (henceforth BrE) is used for describing “the quality that makes something laughable or amusing” as The Free Dictionary states its definition of the term<sup>[3]</sup>. The others may use the word as a part of a term “(having) a sense of humor” meaning “*the trait of appreciating (and being able to express) the humorous*” according to dictionary.reference.com<sup>[4]</sup>.

Additionally, The Online Etymology Dictionary provides the etymological meaning of the word. *Humor* originally comes from Latin, meaning “*any of the four body fluids*”<sup>a</sup> which were fundamental for the *humorism* (a theory taking the body fluids as the major influences on human temperament and state of mind). The term was later shaped to be used as a *temporal* state of mind and it was not earlier than in 1680s that the term got the meaning of “funniness”<sup>[5]</sup>.

The definition of *humor* from Encyclopedia Britannica states that “humour can be simply defined as a type of stimulation that tends to elicit the laughter reflex. Spontaneous laughter is a motor reflex produced by the coordinated contraction of 15 facial muscles in a stereotyped pattern and accompanied by altered breathing”<sup>[6]</sup>, therefore we can see that the occurrence of smiling or laughter is really common or even typical for humor and as a result of watching a humorous dialogue in a film or in the television (henceforth TV).

Jeroen Vandaele (2002) of University of Oslo in his work “Humor in translation” defines the humor as something “what causes amusement, mirth, a spontaneous smile and laughter.”<sup>[7]</sup> Vandaele also points out that “laughter does not require a developed human mind” because the laughter is one of the first sounds human (human infant) produces.

Additionally, the third definition comes from the 7<sup>th</sup> Edition of Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary provides us a very simple definition of humor and it also gives examples of usage the term. It states that “(humour is) the quality in sth that makes it funny or amusing: a *story of gentle humour*”<sup>[8]</sup>

The Czech language also knows and uses the word *humor* meaning good and merry mood or fun<sup>[9]</sup>. Slovník jazyka českého defines *humor* as a good, merry mood, disposition for the amusement and joking<sup>[10]</sup>. Therefore, it can be claimed that Czech and English meaning of the word *humor* is virtually the same. Additionally, the idiom “(having) a sense of humor” also exists in both languages and means the same. In contrast, the term *humor* is in English still used for the body fluids. However, in Czech is more used the phrase *tělní tekutina* literally meaning the body fluid.

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a blood, phlegm, cholera, melancholy



In this thesis the word *humor* is understood as a feature of everyday conversation that can cause people laugh or it *can* just smooth the problems of life and it can repel the incoming depression. The most important word of this definition is the word *can* as the humor is not necessarily followed by laughter as the humor is frequently used in sarcastic comments (e.g. *black<sup>b</sup>* humor).

### 1.1.1 The types of humor

This chapter thesis now focuses on the division of types of humor. Encyclopedia Britannica divides humor in two types. However, according to Bečka, the humor can be divided into three groups<sup>[11]</sup>:

- situational
- verbal
- humor of thoughts

The **situational humor** is defined as a “lively depicted comical situation” and is denoted as the crucial for comedy plays and in some cases of prose<sup>[11]</sup>. Additionally, another definition states that this type of humor “comes from your own life” and that it “is based on a humorous situation you have experienced.”<sup>[12]</sup> To illustrate, one of the typical situational humor scene can be done by pieing<sup>c</sup> someone. This scene is also frequently used in slapstick<sup>d</sup>. Encyclopedia Britannica also mentions the *practical joke<sup>e</sup>* as the coarsest type of this type of humor e.g.: “pulling away the chair from under the dignitary’s lowered bottom”.<sup>[6]</sup> This feature can be interpreted also as an example of *physical humor<sup>[13]</sup>*.

Bečka defines the **verbal humor** as a type of humor which uses for humorous purpose only the language means<sup>[11]</sup>. Additionally, the book *The Language of Humor* by Alison Ross focuses on the verbal humor. Ross states there that even the “context for humour is crucial for determining whether an individual finds something amusing or not ... it is possible to examine the features of language that have potential to make people laugh.”<sup>[14]</sup> Ross's list of typical features of verbal humor contains e.g.:

- the structural ambiguity – illustrated on various levels of English (phonology – homophones, lexis - polysemy etc.)

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b Wikipedia (henceforth Wiki): “humor that makes light of otherwise solemn subject matter”

c Wiki: “the act of throwing a pie at a person or people.”

d The Free Dictionary (henceforth TFD) definition: “A boisterous form of comedy marked by chases, collisions, and crude practical jokes.”

e Wiki: mischievous trick or joke played on someone, typically causing the victim to experience embarrassment, indignity, or discomfort.

- incongruity of the language - irony<sup>f</sup> and sarcasm<sup>g</sup> being typical
- role of target of humor, etc.<sup>[14]</sup>

The **humor of thoughts** is described by Bečka as a humor created by the stylization of thoughts deliberately set in a way that the illogicality occurs or that the conclusion of the thoughts is clearly impossible<sup>[11]</sup>. Since all the thoughts have to be presented verbally (either in spoken or written form) to be humorous for more than one person, this case of humor can be classed as a special kind of verbal humor.

The following chapter focuses on the crucial concept of the verbal humor – a joke.

### 1.1.2 Joke

Since the occurrence of the term *practical joke* in the thesis in the previous chapter, it is necessary to define the term *joke* itself.

The term *joke*, according to Online Etymology Dictionary, comes from the Latin word *iocus* meaning “joke, sport, pastime” However, the history of this word may be ancient as the Latin word is derived from the Proto-Indo-European root *yek-* meaning “to speak”<sup>[15]</sup>.

Since the word *joke* can be polysemic, the different interpretations of the meaning of the word are presented.

Merriam and Webster Free Dictionary describes the joke as “something said or done to provoke laughter; *especially*: a brief oral narrative with a climactic humorous twist”<sup>[16]</sup>. This definition corresponds with a Czech definition from Czech Wikipedia which also adds that typical joke is based on absurdity, double meaning or paradox, that it is brief and it needs a distinctive punch-line<sup>h[17]</sup>.

Additionally, dictionary.com provides another definition of the word *joke* describing it as “something that is amusing or ridiculous, especially because of being ludicrously inadequate or a sham” and it illustrates this definition on an example of: “An officer with no ability to command is a joke.”<sup>[18]</sup> Therefore, not all of the jokes have to be artificially constructed and to have a punch-line.

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f Wiki: “a rhetorical device, literary technique, or situation in which there is an incongruity between the literal and the implied meaning“

g TFD: “A cutting, often ironic remark intended to wound.”

h Wiki: “the final part of a joke, comedy sketch, or profound statement, usually the word, sentence or exchange of sentences which is intended to be funny or to provoke laughter or thought from listeners.“

Furthermore, the word *joke* can be also used to describe “a matter that need not be taken very seriously” or “something very easy”<sup>[18]</sup>.

The joke is within the thesis understood as either a brief part of speech used just to make people laugh or as a situation that makes people laugh, i.e. *gag*.

## 1.2 The differences between English (American) and Czech language

*“Never make fun of someone who speaks broken English. It means they know another language.”*

H. Jackson Brown, Jr.<sup>[19]</sup>

English and Czech are very different languages. They differ in their history, the number of people speaking the language, grammar, syntax, vocabulary. As the thesis deals with the differences between Czech and American humor and the translation of humor, the American English and British English are in this chapter considered as one language: English. The differences between Czech and English are briefly presented below.

Linguistically, the English language belongs to a family of (West-)Germanic languages<sup>[20]</sup> contrary to the Czech language belonging to a language family of (West-)Slavic languages<sup>[21]</sup>. In terms of history of these languages, the roots of English are considered to be from 5<sup>th</sup> century AD when three Germanic tribes invaded (in that time) Celtic Britain<sup>[22]</sup>. To compare, the Czech language is considered to have 1200 years' history when the missionaries apart from Christianity brought also the simplified Greek alphabet<sup>[23][24]</sup>.

The number of people speaking English as the first language is estimated to be 335 million<sup>[25]</sup> as the total number of English speakers reaches 1,5 billion speakers<sup>[25][26]</sup> in the UK, US and other English speaking countries e.g. India, Pakistan, Australia, Ireland, Jamaica, New Zealand, etc.<sup>[25]</sup> The estimated number of Czech speakers differs from 9,5<sup>[27]</sup> to 11 million<sup>[28]</sup> speakers.

Although English is considered to be “the king of languages”<sup>[29]</sup> due to its domination in the world, according to the article on *aktualne.cz* site from June 2008 quoting the *Eurobarometr* research, only 27 per cent of Czech population consider their knowledge of English language as basic which is not sufficient to be used in regular conversation. Additionally, only 11.07 per cent of population of Czech Republic consider themselves to have a good or very good knowledge of English knowledge<sup>[30]</sup>.

Furthermore, the alphabet of English is simpler than the Czech one as the English alphabet consists of 26 graphemes<sup>[31]</sup> and Czech alphabet consists of total 42 graphemes<sup>[21]</sup>.

In terms of grammatical differences, in English two noun cases are used while the Czech language uses seven cases. To illustrate, the Czech language has a “vocative”, the case having an appellative function just for addressing (people)<sup>[21]</sup>. Additionally, every Czech noun belongs to one of grammatical gender category: masculine (animate or inanimate), feminine or neuter<sup>[21]</sup>. On the other hand, English uses in some cases the natural gender<sup>[32]</sup>.

The syntax of these two languages differs as well. The structure of English sentence is fixed and therefore the passive voice is used frequently. However, the sentence structure in Czech is not fixed<sup>[33]</sup>.

Additional differences include e.g. the differences in usage of verb tenses, sentence stress and intonation, usage of negation etc.<sup>[33]</sup>

### **1.2.1 The differences between American and Czech humor**

As Baran sums in her foreword to the *Electronic Journal of Folklore*, (folk) humor can be seen as a part of the folklore. To be more accurate, the jokes are included in the larger folder of “short forms of folklore”<sup>[34]</sup>. Since the folklore and the histories of Czech and American nations unexceptionably differs also their sense of humor and even the structures of jokes do.

Humor has a significant role in everyday life of an ordinary American although they may not mean their sentences sarcastically, ironically or humorously. Stephanie Faul illustrates this by the American uttering: “I always hated that kitchen.” in situation when they are looking at their earthquake-ravaged house<sup>[35]</sup> as the “feel-good” factor, as Faul tends to name this phenomenon, of Americans (or even English people) is proverbial<sup>[35]</sup>. In the same book Faul adds that the Americans tend not to make fun of other races, foreign or disabled people, at least not in public<sup>[35]</sup>.

The humor of Czech people is often very dark and biting. The Czechs (unlike the Americans) are not that afraid of taking other nationalities into their jokes as the Czech people are proud to be Czech and care less about history of their family (contrary to the Americans proudly saying to be Italian when they had Italian great-granduncle<sup>[35]</sup>).

### **1.2.2 The features of American humor**

*Q: “What do you have when you have two lawyers buried up to their necks in sand?”*

*A: “Not enough sand.”*

As mentioned in the Chapter 1.2.1, the Americans are afraid of mentioning some other nation or minority in their jokes since they are afraid of insulting their distant ancestor or a some long lost cousin<sup>[35]</sup>.

However, they are not afraid making fun of professions<sup>[35]</sup>. Since the lawyers are present in the depressing situation of Americans' lives, they are seen as the people with the most hated and irritating job, therefore the lawyers are one of the jobs often used in jokes. Others jobs being made fun of are politicians<sup>[35]</sup>, farmers (mainly *rednecks*<sup>i</sup>)... The sense of humor differs even within the US as the Texan people joke about cowboys<sup>[36]</sup> as well as the people from Georgia or American South in general joke about rednecks<sup>[37]</sup>.

American humor and comic furthermore most commonly contains elements of slapstick<sup>j</sup> (e.g. Charlie Chaplin<sup>k</sup>, the Marx Brothers<sup>l</sup> or Laurel&Hardy<sup>m</sup>), and physical comedy<sup>[38]</sup>.

### 1.2.3 The features of Czech humor

*Mom decided that she needed to start exercising when she was sixty and started walking 5 kilometers a day. She is now ninety and we have no idea where she is.*

Ryan Scott, the Australian journalist for expats.cz<sup>[39]</sup>, dealt with the Czech humor in his eponymous article from March 2009. Scott argues there: “Czechs pride themselves on their comedy. Many of them believe their humor is unique and that it is a defining element of their character.”<sup>[40]</sup> He mentions the character of Josef Švejk from the Jaroslav Hašek's series of books *The Good Soldier Švejk* to be particularly important for the Czech humor.

This immensely popular work contains the features of Czech humor which Scott claims to be the key to understanding the Czech mentality<sup>[40]</sup>. Radko Pytlík, Czech literal historian and editor<sup>[41]</sup>, pointed out that Hašek's humor is an image of “utmost confrontations of our century<sup>n</sup>” and therefore here the comicality with tragicalness blend as well as the slapstick with sarcasm and

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- i Urban Dictionary (henceforth UD): “Mildly offensive term for a lower class white person from the southeastern states of the United States (henceforth US). Derives from someone who spent a lot of time on manual labour outside and so received a "red neck" from the sun.”
- j The Free Dictionary (henceforth TFD) definition: “A boisterous form of comedy marked by chases, collisions, and crude practical jokes.”
- k Although born in London, became famous because of his American silent films.
- l Wiki: “a family comedy act, originally from New York City, that enjoyed success in vaudeville, on Broadway, and in motion pictures from 1905 to 1949.”
- m Wiki: “one of the most popular and critically acclaimed comedy double acts of the early Classical Hollywood era of American cinema. Composed of thin Englishman Stan Laurel (1890–1965) and large American Oliver Hardy (1892–1957)”
- n He meant the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

irony.”<sup>[42]</sup> It is argued that the concept of a small man against the machinery of war later influenced Joseph Heller in his *Catch 22*<sup>[43]</sup>.

Ryan Scott also adds more pure Czech humorous characters and people involved in Czech humoristic activity<sup>[40]</sup>:

- Jára (da) Cimrman (a fictional master-mind created by Zdeněk Svěrák and Jiří Šebánek in late sixties, who was even awarded as the Greatest Czech<sup>[44]</sup>)
- Petr Zelenka (a director of mockumentaries<sup>o</sup> and dark-humorous films<sup>[40]</sup>)
- David Černý (a sculptor, creator of e.g. a pink tank – soviet WWII tank T34<sup>[45]</sup>)

### 1.3 Translation

The following chapter focuses on the word *translation*, its origin and meaning as well as its purpose and means.

Etymologically, the noun *translation* (or the verb *to translate*) comes from Latin prefix *trans-* meaning *across, beyond*<sup>[46]</sup> and the word *latum* which is an irregular form of the Latin verb *fero* meaning *to carry*<sup>[47]</sup>. Therefore, the verb *to translate* means *to carry* (e.g. the *meaning*) across.

#### 1.3.1 Translation in general

In Knittlová's book *Teorie překladau* the purpose of translation is defined as a conversion of the entire information from the text of original language to the text of the target language<sup>[48]</sup>. The next definition of translation comes from Catford, since Knittlová admits her inspiration in Catford's works. Catford states that “Translation is an operation performed on languages: a process of substituting a text in one language for a text in another.”<sup>[49]</sup>

To sum up, comparing these two definitions, Knittlová's definition appears to be preferable since the specification of the languages as the *original* one and the *target* one and the word *substitution* being replaced by the word *conversion* which indicates that the words in original and target language does not need to have the same meaning or denotation. Nevertheless, they can have the same connotation<sup>[48]</sup>.

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<sup>o</sup> Wiki: “a type of film or TV show in which fictional events are presented in documentary style to create a parody”

The process of translation can be done by various techniques, e.g. thru:

- **transcription**, which means only the transfer the word (most frequently the name) from the original language to the target language; the transliteration (overwriting the words with another alphabet) frequently needs to be done as well<sup>[48]</sup>.
  - Example: from Chinese script 毛泽东 transliterated to English as Mao Tse-tung, in English Mao Zedong<sup>[50]</sup>
- **modulation**, which means the change of the point of view<sup>[48]</sup>, “consists of using a phrase that is different in the source and target languages to convey the same idea.”<sup>[51]</sup>
  - Example: I have learned from him a big deal. / He has taught me a big deal.
- **equivalence**, which means the substitution of word which the translator considers inappropriate with less expressive term<sup>[48]</sup>.
  - Example: kulat’oučké jablíčko – round little apple (Jan Werich<sup>[52]</sup>)

There are more different techniques of translation. However, the “popular terms”<sup>[49]</sup> are here to present the main approaches to translation: *the free, literal and word-by-word* translation.

- The free translation means that the translator reproduces the general meaning of the original text, however, it may or may not closely follow the form or organization of the original<sup>[53]</sup>.
- The word-by-word translation – means exactly what it says, thus that the translation is done word by word not taking in account any grammatical or syntactical rules of the target language<sup>[49]</sup>
- The literal translation – lies between those two, the process starts as a word-by-word translation but the grammar of the utterance is then adjusted to function within the target language's grammatical rules<sup>[49]</sup>

The usage of word-by-word translation is very limited since the meaning can be changed by changing the sentence structure<sup>[54]</sup>. The free translation may be seen as “the best” technique from the three above, however, the knowledge of the form of the original is in some cases (e.g. poetry) crucial.

To sum up, “the best” way of translation seems to be the literal translation, nevertheless, the translator has to cross the rules when it is really necessary.

### 1.3.2 Translation of humor

*“Translation is at best an echo.”*

George Borrow<sup>[55]</sup>

Translation is not an easy task when translating a “serious” text and this is not different when translating a humorous text or a dialogue. The literal translation is in case of humor nearly impossible as the culture of the people included in the joke differ.

As Jascha Hoffman says in his article for the New York Times (henceforth NYT), David Bellos, the professor of French and comparative literature of Princeton, remarks that the idea of “perfect fidelity” when translating jokes needs to be abandoned and therefore the act of translation needs to be done through the means of trying “to find a joke that rings some of the same bells as the original. By this standard, many simple punch lines, from the morbid to the absurd, are not that much harder to translate than the weather.”<sup>[56]</sup>

Hoffman mentions also two of possible problematic fields within the translation of humor: puns (wordplay) and cultural references but in the same breath adds the remark of Gary Shteyngart: “Nothing is worse than killing the joke by over-explaining.”<sup>[56]</sup> This means that the reader should be motivated to detect the meaning (the humor, comic) in the humorous situation.

To illustrate this feature of the difficulty of humor translating, Karl Stefanovic (K.S.), the news anchor, interviewed Dalai Lama (D.L.) in the Australian “Today” show on 8<sup>th</sup> June 2011 (according to his twitter account<sup>[57]</sup>) and to “break the ice”, he used the joke about His Holiness:

*K.S.: “So the Dalai Lama walks into a pizza shop, and says, ‘Can you make me one with everything?’”<sup>[58][59]</sup>*

*D.L.: confusion, awkward silence,*

*K.S. staring at D.L., repeating the punch line: “And he says ‘Can you make me one with everything?’”*

*D.L.: confusion, uncertain laughter*

*K.S. using gestures to intensify the meaning, remarking: “Oh, I knew it wouldn't work.”<sup>[60]</sup>*

As the UD states: “The joke is a play on words, as the oft-quoted Buddhist “motto” is to “be at one” or “be at peace” with everything natural in the world.”<sup>[61]</sup>

Non-native speakers of English, such as His Holiness, often find these word-plays difficult to understand and even with the presence of the interpreter, they do not laugh at these jokes since they are really difficult or even impossible to translate due to “metalinguistic communication in



which the form matters.”<sup>[8]</sup> Therefore, this incident raises the question whether to use the joke, humorous in the narrator's language, in conversation between foreigners who need and interpreter if there is a risk of being misunderstood or not understood at all.

#### 1.4 Sitcom

Focusing on the TV series *How I Met Your Mother*, the explanation of the term *sitcom* is necessary in this part of the thesis.

To explain the word, the Online Etymological Dictionary states that the word *sitcom* is a compound created from words *situation* and *comedy* from the period of time from 1960-1964 when it was shortened from the term *situation comedy* which was used in 1953 for the first time<sup>[62]</sup>.

The Free Dictionary provides us the first definition of meaning of the *sitcom* while it can be defined as “a humorous drama based on situations that might arise in day-to-day life”<sup>[63]</sup> This definition is confirmed by Slunčák who wrote in his booklet *Sitcom: Vývoj a realizace* that “(The sitcom) introduces a particular group of characters which is confronted with a particular situation which needs to be solved.”<sup>[64]</sup>

Furthermore, Encyclopedia Britannica provides a definition that *sitcom* is “radio or television series that involves a continuing cast of characters in a succession of episodes.”<sup>[65]</sup> It also states that the sitcoms are half an hour in length and are taped in studio with audience<sup>[65]</sup>.

In his book, Slunčák additionally mentions the crucial features of a sitcom<sup>[64]</sup>:

- the viewers' familiarity with the protagonists and the environment
- the protagonists having the apparent character, they are considerably typified
- the majority of characters in sitcom being likeable by the audience
- the viewers identifying with them and their problems
- traditional sitcoms are taped by multiple-camera setup<sup>p</sup> in front of audience in studio

Taking all of the above in account, the sitcom can be defined as:

a TV or radio series from a familiar environment with a group of protagonists which the audience tend to like. The crucial for the comic of the series are the situations the group (or the

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p Wiki: “Several cameras—either film or professional video cameras—are employed on the set and simultaneously record or broadcast a scene.” This setup allows the director to switch between the cameras taping the scene without cutting the scene running.

individuals of the group) has to solve as the humor occurs in the way the group solves the situations. The episodes are up to half an hour long and are taped in studio with audience.

One of the features of the sitcom can also be the *canned laughter* which is a sound of a laughter mixed in the audio track of the episode to emulate the authenticity of the live broadcasting<sup>[64]</sup>. However, in co-temporary sitcoms is the canned laughter replaced by the real laughter of the studio audience. Other reasons to use the canned laughter include the fact that the viewer does not like to laugh alone or the reason to make the joke more humorous than it actually is. Also the usage of the laughter differs from country to country as e.g. the popular series *M\*A\*S\*H* was mixed with the laughter at first, nevertheless, for the UK audience the laughter was erased since seen as inappropriate<sup>[64]</sup>. Therefore the occurrence of the canned laughter cannot be seen as the *typical* feature.

The history of sitcoms started in late 1940s in the UK as a radio genre<sup>[64]</sup>. Nevertheless, the first real sitcom having all the features listed above was a TV sitcom *I Love Lucy*, the American sitcom by CBS from 1951<sup>[64][66]</sup>. This sitcom gained many fans and was followed by many more sitcoms.

To illustrate the genre of sitcom, the list of most popular American sitcoms is presented:

1. Friends
2. Seinfeld
3. The Big Bang Theory
4. How I Met Your Mother
5. That 70's Show
6. Two and a Half Men
7. Family Guy
8. Everybody Loves Raymond
9. The Simpsons
10. Scrubs

*The authors of this list claimed that it was voted on over 23,000 people.*<sup>[67]</sup>

The sitcom is not very known in Czech environment. *Taková normální rodinka* is the series from 1971 which can be classed as a sitcom<sup>[64]</sup>. It is a story of the three generations' family living in one house<sup>[68]</sup>. However, although the UK and US sitcoms are broadcasted, only a few of Czech projects were made since 1989, to name a few: *Nováci*, *Hospoda*, *Comeback*, all made by Nova TV<sup>[64]</sup>.

## 1.5 Catchwords, catchphrases and running jokes

Since the thesis is focused on humor of the sitcoms, the definition of the term *catchphrase* is necessary considering the forthcoming chapters.

Etymologically, the definition of the word *catchword* is “the first word of the following page inserted at the lower right-hand corner of each page of a book”<sup>[69]</sup>. This entry from the dictionary also contains the information of the extinction of the literal meaning of the word from 1730. It can be argued that the extinction may be caused due to use of this word in connection with bookbinding<sup>[70]</sup> as the profession is now very rare. Additionally, The Online Etymological Dictionary states the extended meaning being “word caught up and repeated”<sup>[69]</sup>.

On the other hand, a word *catchphrase* (also spelled a *catch phrase* or a *catch-phrase*) is, according to MacMillan dictionary, “a short phrase that many people know because a famous person often says it”<sup>[71]</sup>. The famous person can be a politician, therefore creating political catchphrases or slogans<sup>[72]</sup>, or e.g. a film or TV character.

To illustrate the political catchphrase, Barack Obama's frequently used phrase “Yes, we can” used also as a motto for his campaign can be a good example. To illustrate the catchphrase of a fictional character from movie screen, the character of James Bond often uses the *catchphrase* “Shaken, not stirred”<sup>[73]</sup> when describing the way of preparing his favorite cocktail.

The Czech meaning of the term is not very explicit. Nevertheless, the bilingual dictionary of Czech and English describes the meaning of a *catchword* as “heslo” meaning motto or slogan in English<sup>[74]</sup>. In sitcom connotation, the more appropriate translation is “hláška”<sup>[75]</sup>.

It is argued that the main role of character's catchphrases in sitcom is to introduce a character to the new audience and make the character memorable<sup>[76]</sup>.

To explain the “running joke”, the dictionary.reference.com describes the term as “a joke or humorous allusion used recurrently in a play, film, television skit, etc., for a cumulative comic effect”<sup>[77]</sup>. Therefore, a meaning of the word *catchphrase* can be interpreted as a special kind of running joke due to its frequent occurrence in the particular sitcoms.

## 1.6 How I Met Your Mother

In the following chapter, the sitcom *How I Met Your Mother* is introduced. Below follows the brief history and basic outline of the plot of the series. Additionally, the characters are introduced with their basic characteristics.

The sitcom *How I Met Your Mother* was started in the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century as a romantic-comedy sitcom on American TV channel of CBS<sup>[78]</sup>. The series, created by Carter Bays, Craig David Thomas and the director Pamela Fryman<sup>[79]</sup>, is based on the story how the main protagonist, architect Ted Mosby (played by Josh Radnor) met the mother of his children<sup>[80]</sup>. The concept of the series is that Ted retells the story to his children (and the audience) exactly from the point of view of twenty-five years in the future<sup>[81]</sup> while he tells the story in year 2030 and the series started in 2005<sup>[81]</sup>.

As the creators admitted, the characters are based on the real persons from their lives, e.g. Bays's wife or even themselves<sup>[82]</sup>.

In the beginning of the series, Ted is the fresh graduate of the university and worries about his future since he is still single at his 27 years of age<sup>[81]</sup>. Throughout the series, he struggles to find “the One” being the perfect wife for him<sup>[81]</sup> and during his desperate goal he even dates the same woman again<sup>[83]</sup>. The concept of this series is therefore Ted finding the One.

Marshall Eriksen (Jason Segel), his former room-mate on the college<sup>[81]</sup> and his best friend live with Ted in an apartment and is studying post-gradual on the Law school. The series starts with the scene in which Marshall practices on Ted the proposal of Lily Aldrin<sup>[81]</sup>. Marshall Eriksen comes from a tall family and he is the shortest child from three brothers<sup>[84]</sup>. He likes to play desk and card games<sup>[85]</sup> and even creates his own<sup>[86]</sup>. In later parts of the series, he becomes a thoughtful father of the son<sup>[87]</sup>.

The character of Barney Stinson (played by Neil Patrick Harris) reveals itself in the first episode as a “womanizer”<sup>q</sup> as Ted starts to think about his life when his best friend is getting engaged. Barney reminds Ted one of his *lessons*: “Don't even think about getting married 'till you're thirty.”<sup>[81]</sup>, then makes Ted say that he is his best friend<sup>r</sup> and Barney starts his game called *Have you met... Ted?* in which he asks random girl at the bar this particular question and leaves Ted with the girl alone.

Since the assumption is that the character of Barney is the most popular one not only in the US but also in the Czech Republic, the next two paragraphs are devoted to his style of language.

Barney built his popularity using a large variety of catch phrases and using of *high-five*<sup>s</sup> in many (even awkward) situations. These catchphrases include e.g. the word *legendary*, the word *bro* or

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q TFD: “a man who likes many women and has short sexual relationships with them”

r Another frequent running joke of the series.

s iM&W definition: “a slapping of upraised right hands by two people (as in celebration)”

the coined words containing the word *bro*<sup>t</sup> as a prefix (Broda<sup>[88]</sup>, similarly to Yoda, broath<sup>[89]</sup>, a bro + oath) or the phrase *suit up*<sup>[81]</sup> in many different occasions and variations.

The word *legendary* is probably the most distinctive example of his language. Barney likes to use the word at times he thinks there is something important coming (“which he likes to split into two parts: legen – dary, putting some more words between the two, most notably “...wait for it...” or even longer structures such as “*It's gonna be legend-... wait for it... and I hope you're not lactose intolerant because the second half of that word is DAIRY!*”<sup>[90]</sup>

Marshall’s fiancée and future wife Lily (Allison Hannigan) works as a kindergarten teacher<sup>[81]</sup> and therefore she treats even other people like they were children, e.g. when she hid the baseball of her boss because he was being mean. She made a note in which the baseball claimed that he is leaving him because of him not being nice and threatened him that other things from his office may leave as well<sup>[91]</sup>. She is also an amateur painter<sup>[92]</sup>, later she becomes an art consultant<sup>[93]</sup>.

Robin Scherbatsky (Cobie Smulders) is the last person introduced as the member of the “gang”. She is working as a reporter and later as a news anchor in the local TV station<sup>[81]</sup>. She is a proud Canadian and frequently remarks some facts from Canadian culture although her friends does not know nothing about it and their response is always a blank stare<sup>[94]</sup>.

These people form a group of a typical sitcom since they have very different characteristics.

### 1.6.1 The humor of the series

The occurrence of running jokes is one of the crucial elements creating the humor of the series. This section provides the list of running jokes examples of the series and each one is described and explained in terms of its origin and reason of occurrence.

- The concept of “clean humor” - since the whole story is told to children<sup>[81]</sup> the swear words are altered<sup>[95]</sup> and e.g. the occurrence of *marijuana smoking* is translated to children as *eating a sandwich*<sup>[88]</sup> and the sandwich is really eaten on the screen.
- The frequent occurrence of the special websites corresponding with the series<sup>[96]</sup>; the Barney's blog<sup>[97]</sup>; the books mentioned in the series being actually printed out<sup>[98]</sup> etc.
- The rivalry between US and Canada, humorous anti-canadianism, e.g. illustrated on the belief that all Canadians suffer from nyctophobia<sup>[99][100]</sup>.

Summarily, the theoretical part of the thesis described the term humor and its differences in American and Czech culture. Furthermore, it explained the translation process in general and

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t UD: “close friends; buds; pals”

focusing on humor. Additionally, the term *catchphrase* was introduced as well as the sitcom *How I Met Your Mother*. The work now proceeds to the practical part in which the translation of the series is illustrated on examples and the poll devoted to the series is presented, described and analyzed.

# Practical part

In the following part of the thesis, the examples of scenes from the series are presented and then the differences between the original and the subtitled translated version are discussed. The poll, mentioned above in the introduction, is analyzed and the results are presented in the separate part of the practical part.

## 2.1 Translation of the series

To reach a broader TV audience in other countries than the country of origin of the sitcom, the sitcoms are either dubbed or broadcasted in original language with translated subtitles.

There are few translations of the *How I Met Your Mother* series ranging from a fan-based amateur translations e.g. from a man calling himself by Michal Grepl (also known by his pseudonym *jingspiral*) to the professional one used for Czech dubbing of the series for the TV channel Prima COOL.

The thesis focuses on the subtitled version from *jingspiral's* site *himym.cz* and it tries to compare the original dialogues, the translated version by him and other Czech translated versions which can be found and downloaded on the Czech server providing subtitles, *www.titulky.com*.

Grepl started translating the series in the second half of the second season<sup>[101]</sup> later became a main person of the aforementioned site and its owner.<sup>u</sup>

## 2.2 Translation of the dialogues

Two versions of translation were chosen to illustrate the different versions of the translation and to compare the translation with the original dialogues on the sample of the first episode of the series. One of the translations was downloaded from *titulky.com* (translation done by *KillerShot*) and the other one was downloaded from *himym.cz* (translation done by *Janewalk*). Both of the translations are presented on the attached CD.

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u Since Grepl's subtitles are the most downloaded Czech subtitles of the series on the Czech internet as every episode subtitles' reach est. ten thousand downloads, the official permission was necessary to avoid any possible problems due to the usage of the work that can be interpreted as the work protected by the Copyright Act. For the email permitting the usage of the subtitles from the *himym.cz* site, see Appendix 1 or the attached CD for the file *jingspiral\_email.xps*.

The first two episodes were chosen due to a fact that the translations have been made eight years ago when the team of *himym.cz* was not experienced enough to create a precise translation (*01x01 – Janewalk.txt* on the CD). However, the translation from *titulky.com* was made six years later and the quality of the translation is also better (*01x01 – KS.txt* on the CD)<sup>[102]</sup>.

The first scene to illustrate the differences between the translations is the scene of Marshall and Lily laying down on the kitchen floor<sup>[81]</sup>. Originally, they say:

**Marshall:** I promised Ted we wouldn't do that.

**Lily:** Did you know there's a Pop-Tart under your fridge?

**Marshall:** No, but dibs. Where's that Champagne? I wanna drink a toast with my fiancée.

*Janewalk* translated this scene as follows:

**Marchall:** Slíbil jsem Tedovi, že to neuděláme.

**Lily:** Věděls, že máte pod ledničkou koláček?

**Marchall:** Ne, ale to je jedno. Kde je to šampaňský? Chci si připít se svou snoubenkou.

However, *KillerShot* presented different translation:

**Marchall:** Slíbil jsem Tedovi, že to neuděláme.

**Lily:** Věděls, že máte pod ledničkou koláček?

**Marchall:** Ne, ale zabírám si ho. Kde je to šampaňský? Chci si připít se svou snoubenkou.

To compare these two translations, the inspiration of *KillerShot* by *Janewalk* is evident. The majority of the text is the same and, frankly, well translated. The *Pop-Tart*, a popular form of snack, the translators translate by a word *cookie* which is not entirely right since the *Pop-Tart* is rather a cracker or a biscuit<sup>[103]</sup>. However, for the purpose of translation to Czech audience the substitution is adequate since the audience does not need to know what really is under the fridge since the object is not shown afterwards.

The problem occurs with the expression *dibs* which is not typical and frequently used in the Czech environment. According to UD, *dibs* is an expression used to claim and express priority over an object<sup>[104]</sup>. Therefore it can be assumed that *Janewalk* had a little knowledge of this since this translation problem was avoided simply by putting in the translation something completely



different. Summarily, the translation by *KillerShot* is done better as the better awareness of the source culture is the better the translation.

The second scene to illustrate is the scene from the taxi in which the couple wants to head to the hospital because Marshall hit Lily with the cork of the Champagne bottle when opening it. This scene is also from the first episode of the series<sup>[81]</sup>.

Originally, the scene looks like this:

**Marshall:** Sorry, Lily. I am so sorry. Take us to the hospital.

**Taxi driver:** Wow, wow, wow. Did you hit her?

**Lily:** Hit me? Please! This guy can barely even spank me in bed for fun. He's all like "Oh, honey, did that hurt?" And, I'm like: "Come on! Let me have it, you pansy!" Wow, a complete stranger.

**Taxi driver:** No, no, no, no! It's okay.

*Janewalk* translated this scene as follows:

**Marshall:** Promiň, Lilly. Moc mě to mrzí. Vemte nás do nemocnice.

**Taxi driver:** Vy jste ji uhodil?

**Lily:** Uhodil? No prosím? Tenhle člověk mi ani nedokáže z legrace naplácat. On pořád "Zlato, nebolelo to?" Páni, to je divný.

**Taxi driver:** Ne, ne, ne, ne! To je v pořádku.

*KillerShot's* translation is different:

**Marshall:** Promiň, Lilly. Moc mě to mrzí. Vemte nás do nemocnice.

**Taxi driver:** Vy jste ji uhodil?

**Lily:** Uhodil? No prosím? Tenhle kluk mi ani nedokáže z legrace v posteli naplácat. On pořád "Zlato, nebolelo to?" a já: "No tak přidej srabe!" Páni, kompletně cizí člověk.

**Taxi driver:** Ne, ne, ne, ne! To je v pořádku.

To compare these two translations, *KillerShot's* inspiration in translation by *Janewalk* is confirmed. However, the translation of *Janewalk* is containing much less words than the original and therefore this translation cannot be a good one.

To analyze these two translations, *wow, wow, wow* is naturally omitted in the translation due to the fact that it is interpreted as an interjection to “slow down”. On the third line, the translators differ more in their translations, therefore to each of the translations is devoted one paragraph.

The translation of *Janewalk* suffers, evidently, with a lack of background knowledge. It can be argued that *Janewalk* did not hear or recognize some of the words, mainly the “*And, I'm like: 'Come on! Let me have it, you pansy!'*” and part since these words have been said very quickly or *Janewalk* simply did not know the meaning of the words (*pantsy*). The line by Lily is ended by a sentence “Wow, that's weird” which is completely different than the original sentence.

The *KillerShot's* translation, however, is more complete, comparing to the original text. The term *pansy* is also translated with a Czech word meaning *quitter* which is an appropriate choice.

Summarily, the translation by *KillerShot* seems to be a better choice. The reason, however, is mainly the fact it was created much later than the *Janewalk's* translation as we can see on the *titulky.com* website<sup>[102]</sup>.

## 2.3 The Poll

This chapter is devoted to the poll which was placed on the internet site *vyplnto.cz*<sup>v</sup> for a two-weeks' time (between 18<sup>th</sup> January and 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2013). The 919 respondents participated in the poll of seven questions, five of them were closed-ended<sup>w</sup> and two of them were open-ended<sup>x</sup>.

However, not all of them answered all questions due to composition of the poll. Those who were not aware of the existence of the series (39 respondents) could answer only first three questions. Furthermore, two respondents also encountered technical difficulties or left the poll prematurely which has to be taken into account. Furthermore, 91 respondents claimed not watching the series in the fourth question, therefore only 787 respondents were able to answer all of the questions presented.

The reliability of the poll was also secured by the fact that the IP address<sup>y</sup> of the respondents was stored in the system to assure the respondents were genuine, valid and that they answered the questions only once.

The poll was conducted in Czech, as it targets the Czech television audience. Therefore, for the original Czech poll see Appendix 2, for the translated English version of the poll see Appendix 3.

The aim of this poll was whether:

- a) the people know the sitcom *How I Met Your Mother*
- b) they prefer the original or the translated version.

The poll is also placed on the enclosed CD's file *how-i-met-your-mother.pdf* which includes the first five hundred of respondents as well as all of the answers from the open-ended questions. The whole poll is also placed on the Internet<sup>[105]</sup>.

The questions and answers are described below in Chapter 2.3.1 and 2.3.2 respectively.

### 2.3.1 The closed-ended questions' evaluation

To begin with, first 5 questions of the complete seven-question poll were closed-ended. As mentioned above, 919 respondents answers first three questions, 880 respondents answered fourth question and the fifth question was answered by 787 people. The number of respondents

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v Czech internet site for the internet polls, also with archive with results and past polls ([www.vyplnto.cz](http://www.vyplnto.cz))

w with choices to be chosen from

x which allowed the respondent to his/her own

y Wiki: "Internet Protocol address (IP address) is a numerical label assigned to each device (e.g., computer, printer) participating in a computer network that uses the Internet Protocol for communication"

is lowering due to the composition of the poll which is explained in the introduction to the poll in Chapter 2.3.

The reason of the presence of **the first question** was to find out whether the people watch the TV (and therefore if they have the opportunity to watch the series). The figures (see *Figure 1* in Appendix 4) shows that the vast majority (720 respondents from 919; 78.3 per cent) of people have the chance to watch the TV at least once a week.

**The second question** was present to discover the preferences of the respondents watching the foreign movie or series. Surprisingly, the majority of the respondents (800 people; 87 per cent) claimed that they prefer the English sound while 663 people prefer Czech subtitles, 89 English subtitles and 48 prefer the English movie without any subtitles (see *Figure 2* in Appendix 4).

The arguments for using the subtitles differs: subtitles being less obtrusive<sup>[106]</sup>, the loss of movie's credibility in case of dubbing<sup>[107]</sup> and also the opportunity to learn the language, while this argument is proved as one named in the respondents' answers.

**The third question** was the first question devoted to the series HIMYM, therefore being crucial. The overwhelming majority of respondents answered that they know the series (880 respondents, almost 96 per cent). The rest of the respondents were thanked for the participation in the poll and this was the last question in the poll which they answered due to programming of the poll. For the exact figures see *Figure 3* in Appendix 4.

**The fourth question** was also used to eliminate the respondents unfamiliar with the series by asking whether they watch or have ever watched the series. Unsurprisingly, the overwhelming majority (789 respondents which is nearly 90 per cent, see *Figure 4* in Appendix 4) claimed they watch or have watched the series. The rest of the respondents were, similarly to the previous question, thanked and their participation in the poll was terminated.

Summarily, the people aware of the series tend to watch it or at least come across the opportunity to watch some part of the series. Only a fraction of the people knowing the series sitcom has not actually watched it.

**The fifth question** was constructed in a way which allowed the respondents to choose one or both possibilities and therefore it is possible to figure out how many respondents (from the number of 789) know about both versions of the series (the original and the dubbed). In this question it did not matter if the person watches the series with subtitles or not. For the entire calculation needed for the figures presented below see the Appendix 5.

Summarily, from 789 people answering the question, 452 of them claimed they watch only the original of the series, 236 respondents stated that they watch both original and dubbed versions and only 99 respondents claimed they watch only the dubbed version. This can be interpreted also in way that 688 out of 789 respondents watch the original version and 335 watch the dubbed version (see *Figure 5* in Appendix 4).

To conclude, the results of the second question, where the vast majority claims the preference of the original sound of the films and series in general, are confirmed by the vast majority claiming to watch the original of the sitcom. Furthermore, this is confirmed in the following chapter focusing on the evaluation of the open-ended questions.

### **2.3.2 The open-ended questions' evaluation**

Both open questions are described and analyzed in present chapter, similarly to the evaluation of the previous, closed-ended questions. For the original, Czech poll, see Appendix 2, the English translation is presented in Appendix 3. For the unprocessed raw data, see the .pdf file mentioned above on the attached CD.

All of the 787 respondents left answered **the sixth question** and presented their opinion. The majority of people claiming to know both versions prefer the original. This statement confirms the research of previous questions number 2 and 5 of the poll. The reasons of their preference of the original they named differ. Nevertheless, some of them are presented below (chosen and translated by the author of the present thesis):

- *The dubbing is not done badly but I still prefer the original.*
- *I like more the English original. The voices are identical. The series is funnier in English.*
- *English version, because I am used to the voices of the actors. Some jokes and phrases are too difficult to translate them.*
- *I like the English version with Czech subtitles. The translator tries to emerge from the things the characters say while in dubbed version the translators divert from the original jokes and phrases and the meaning is therefore different.*
- *The original version. The Czech version has wrongly chosen voice actors (one feels that the voice actors can be counted on the fingers of one hand), generally, the dubbing got worse.*
- *I prefer the English version because I am learning English language and the watching of the original series helps me.*

To compare, the minority of people claiming to know both versions prefer the dubbing:

- *I like Czech dubbing although I had a chance to see the original. The reason is, in this case, that I saw the dubbed version first and I have never got used to the original version.*
- *The dubbed version. The jokes sound better.*
- *I like the Czech version because I am relaxing while watching the series and I like to switch myself off and let it flow.*
- *The Czech version. I am a comfortable person.*
- *I consider the Czech dubbing as one of the best ones.*

To sum up, the mostly noted reason to watch the English version was the impossibility of the accurate translation and the mostly noted reason to watch the dubbed version was the comfort or a habit.

However, there were also people not knowing either Czech or (in fewer cases) the English version. In this case, the respondents admitted the unfamiliarity with both versions claiming that they do not know both versions, that they have watched only the Czech series or they just typed a dash instead of the proper answer.

Other voices claimed e.g. that both versions are equally well done, one person stated that she has watched five seasons of the series dubbed because it is more comfortable and she does not need to focus that much. However, she has watched the sixth and seventh season the subtitled original version.

**The seventh question** was even more complicated to analyze because some respondents answer this question with just the name of the character, some wrote “why” they like the character, some wrote the favorite moment... And some wrote all of the above. Only 569 respondents answered this final question of the poll. The probable reason is that the respondents did not like to present their opinions for the second time in a row.

However, the thesis tries to present the opinions of the respondents and their view on the characters and the series itself regardless the language of the series and the translation.

The assumption was that the majority of respondents will state *Barney* as their favorite character since Neil Patrick Harris himself received two People's Choice Award<sup>z</sup> (in 2011 and 2012) and is e.g. a four time nominee for the Emmy Award<sup>aa</sup>.

This assumption appeared to be true as Barney (although frequently misspelled) was presented as the favorite character in 339 answers of the last question. The second favorite was the main protagonist, Ted (with 68 mentions) and the third was Marshall, Ted's best friend (with 53 mentions of the respondents).

Below is the collection of opinions on characters (chosen and translated by the author of the thesis):

- *I like Barney and his jokes or his modified carols :)*
- *I like Robin and her Canadian personality.*
- *I like Barney and his quotation: "When I get sad, I stop being sad and start being awesome instead. True Story." ;)*
- *Ted Mosby. I have always seen some resemblances with myself during the first four seasons.*
- *I don't know if I have a favorite character. All of the characters are built to have both light and dark side of their personalities.*

To sum up, the majority adoring Barney like him for his style of humor, his catchphrases and his flamboyant lifestyle. The respondents preferring Marshall like him for his songs and his desk game craze. The people preferring Ted over the rest of the group stated that they like him because they have same opinions like him (opinions on relationship etc.) which confirms the premise of feature of a sitcom mentioned in Chapter 1.4.

Furthermore, the respondents who claimed they like Robin the most stated that they like her personality as Canadian and her remarks to the Canadian culture as well as her personal history. To finish with, the people naming Lily as their favorite character mention that they like the long-lasting relationship between Lily and Marshall.

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z Wiki: "an American awards show recognizing the people and the work of popular culture." The awards were based upon public polls; in 2005 was the online voting established.

aa Wiki: "is a television production award, and is considered the television equivalent to the Academy Awards (for film), the Tony Award (for theatre), and the Grammy Awards (for music)."

Additionally, the respondents named also some scenes from the series they enjoyed the most. To name a few: the Barney's proposal<sup>[108]</sup>, the Ted's rain dance<sup>[92]</sup> or the slap-bet<sup>[94][109]</sup>. The audience also remarks that the quality of the series is deteriorating.



# Conclusion

To conclude the thesis, the summary of the described terms and results of the practical part is listed below:

The chapters of the theoretical part were devoted to the terms and principles crucial to the series *How I Met Your Mother* and to the translation of the series. The analyzed terms were: *humor*, *translation*, the differences between NAmE and Czech language, *catchphrase* and *running joke*. These descriptions were necessary due to a fact that the series *How I Met Your Mother* is mainly a humorous series translated to the Czech language and its humor is based on the occurrence of the catchphrases and running jokes.

The last chapter of the theoretical part of the thesis was aimed on the series *How I Met Your Mother* itself to introduce the series, its creators and characters to the readers. Additionally, the running jokes of the series were presented.

The practical part of the thesis was divided into two parts:

The first two chapters of the practical part were devoted to the translation of the series - firstly in general, secondly illustrated on examples of two different translations. It was showed that the translation by *KillerShot* is a better one although the reason for the quality of the translation was mainly the time between the original broadcasting and the date of publishing of the translation.

The second part was focused on the internet poll which was present in the thesis to discover whether the Czech audience is aware of the existence of the series. Surprisingly, the vastly majority of the respondent claimed that they do not only know the series but also watch it and more than a half of the respondents watch or have watched it regularly. The results also showed that the majority tends to watch English movies or series with subtitles, the minority prefers dubbing. Additionally, the character of *Barney Stinson* was, unsurprisingly, picked as the favorite character from the series, similarly to the US audience. Czech audience also remark that the quality of the series is deteriorating.

The aims of the thesis presented in the Introduction were:

1. Is there a way to make a good translation without losing the sense of original?
2. Do Czech audiences prefer the original or translated version?
3. Why does the Czech audience like the characters?

To answer the first question, the approach to achieve a “good” translation is presented at the end of the Chapter 1.3.1 where the “best way” to translate is described as the use of literal translation,

however, in cases of translation when there is a possibility of misunderstanding, the translator is allowed to use different words to preserve the meaning.

The results regarding the second aim of the thesis are presented in the Chapter 2.3.1 among the closed-questions' evaluation. The results show that the overwhelming majority of 880 respondents claim to know the series.

The answers to the last aim of the thesis is not easy and explicit to present and to interpret. However, some of the statements given by the respondents are presented in the Chapter 2.3.2. The more complete list is presented in the .pdf file on the attached CD.

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*01x01 – KillerShot.txt*

*how-i-met-your-mother-vyzkum.pdf*

*jingspiral\_email.xps*

## **Appendix 1: The email from Michal Grepl**

**Jan Gregar <honza.greng@gmail.com>**

**jingspiral <jingspiral@gmail.com>** 4. dubna 2013 15:45

Komu: Jan Gregar<honza.greng@gmail.com>

### **Použití titulků v bakalářské práci**

Dobrý den,

souhlasím s tím, aby byly ve Vaší bakalářské práci použity titulky vytvořené pro web himym.cz.

S pozdravem,

Michal "jingspiral" Grepl

administrátor a majitel webu <http://himym.cz>

## **Appendix 2: The Czech (original) poll**

### **1) Jak často sledujete televizi?**

- a) Denně
- b) 3x-5x týdně
- c) 1x-2x týdně
- d) Méně často

### **2) Čemu dáváte přednost u anglických filmů/seriálů?**

- a) Původní znění (anglický film - anglický zvuk)
- b) Původní znění + titulky v jazyce původního znění (anglický film - anglický zvuk - anglické titulky)
- c) Původní znění + české titulky (anglický film - anglický zvuk - české titulky)
- d) Dabovaný film/seriál

### **3) Znáte seriál „How I Met Your Mother“ (Jak jsem poznal vaši matku)?**

- a) Ano
- b) Ne

### **4) Sledujete seriál „How I Met Your Mother“?**

- a) Ano, sleduji pravidelně.
- b) Ano, sleduji nepravidelně.
- c) Sledoval jsem, nyní již nesleduji.
- d) Nesleduji.

### **5) Sledujete/sledoval/a jste...**

- a) Anglickou verzi (ať s titulky či bez)
- b) Českou verzi (dabing Prima Cool)

### **6) Pokud znáte obě verze, jak český dabing a anglický originál, která verze se Vám líbí víc? Proč?**

### **7) Doplňující, nepovinná otázka. Jaká postava je Vaše nejoblíbenější, nebo například máte nějaký oblíbený moment seriálu?**

### **Appendix 3: The English (translated) poll**

#### **1) How often do you watch the TV?**

- a) Everyday
- b) 3x – 5x per week
- c) 1x – 2x per week
- d) Less frequently

#### **2) What do you prefer when watching the English films or serials?**

- a) Original sound (English film – English dialogues)
- b) Original sound with subtitles in original sound's language (English film – English dialogues – English subtitles)
- c) Original sound with Czech subtitles (English film – English sound – Czech subtitles)
- d) Dubbed film/series

#### **3) Do you know the series “How I Met Your Mother” (Jak jsem poznal vaši matku)?**

- a) Yes
- b) No

#### **4) Do you watch the series “How I Met Your Mother”?**

- a) Yes, I watch the series regularly.
- b) Yes, I watch the series not regularly.
- c) I used to watch the series, I do not watch them now.
- d) I do not watch the series.

#### **5) Do you watch/have you watched...**

- a) English version of the series (does not matter whether with subtitles or not)
- b) Czech version of the series (dubbed by “Prima Cool” channel)

#### **6) If you know both versions, both Czech dubbing and English original, which version do you prefer and why?**

#### **7) The voluntary question. Which character from the series is your favorite or do you have, for example, a favorite moment from the series?**



## Appendix 4: The graphs of the poll



Figure 2.1: Graph of the respondents' answers for the first question of the poll

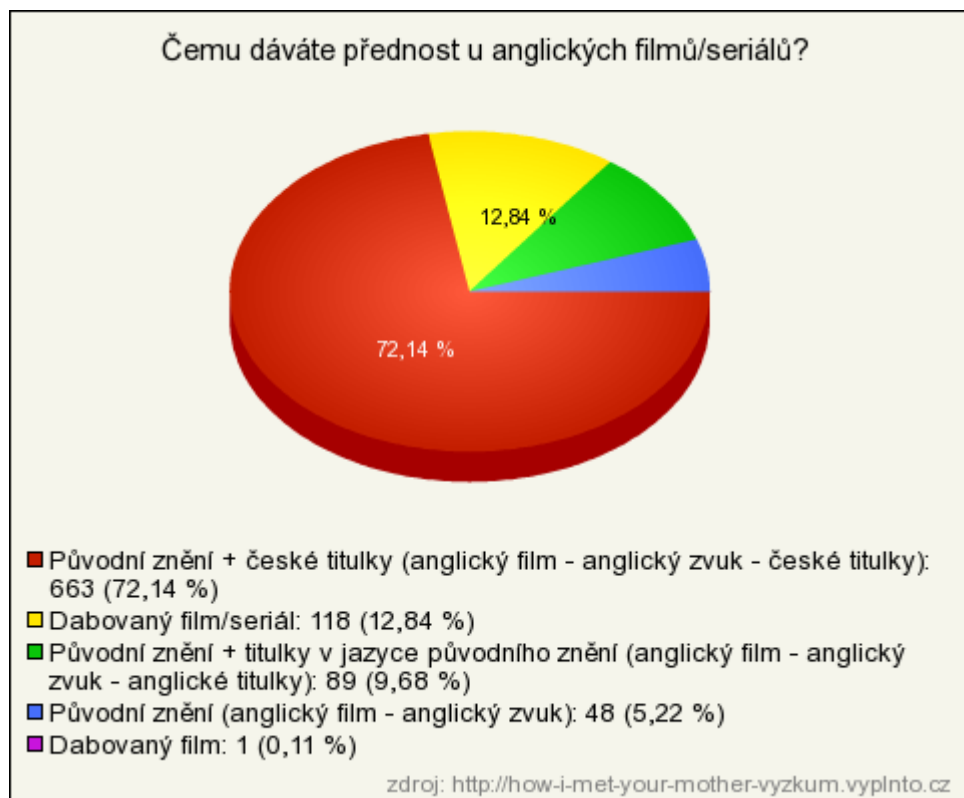
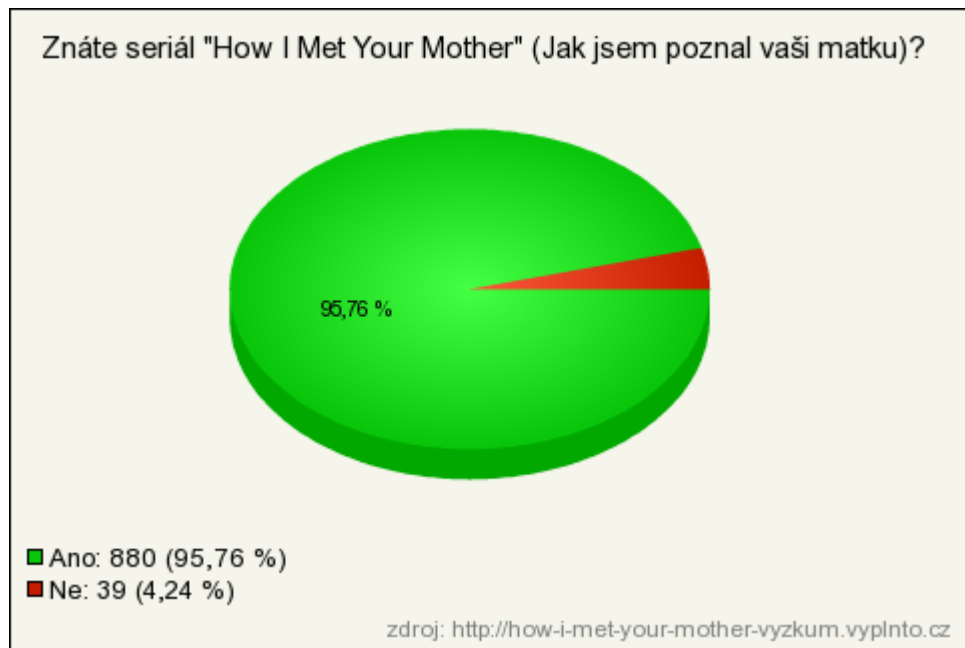
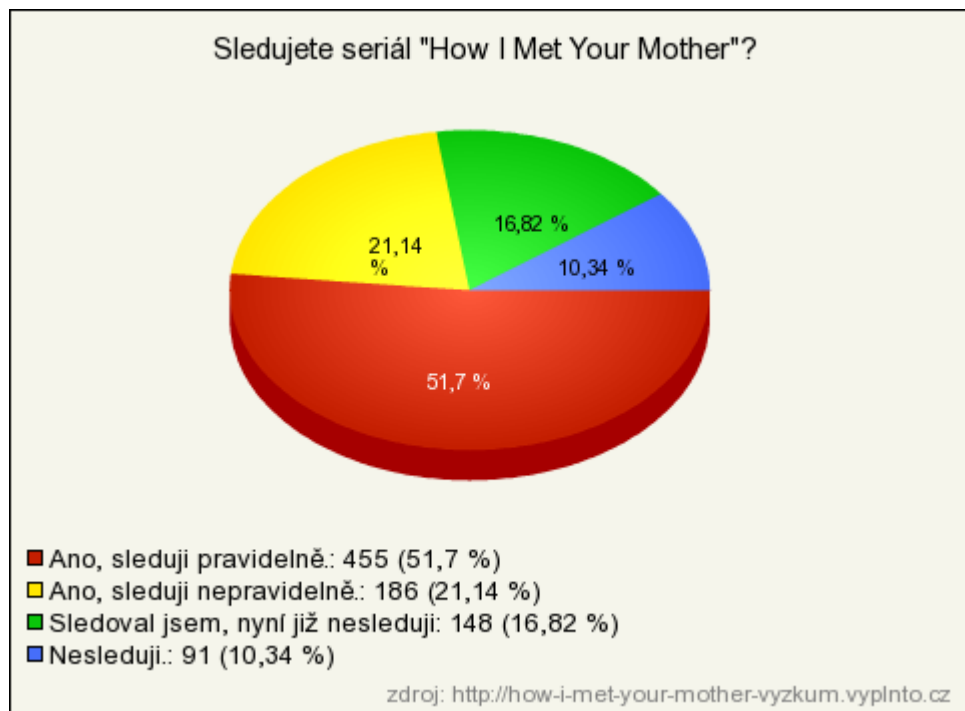


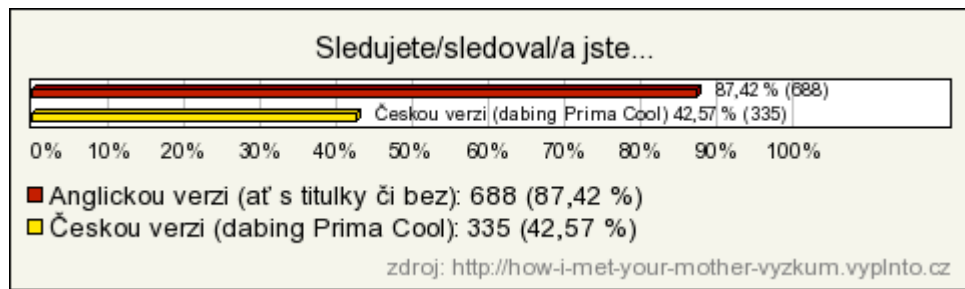
Figure 2.2: Graph of the respondents' answers for the second question of the poll



*Figure 2.3: Graph of the respondents' answers for the third question of the poll*



*Figure 2.4: Graph of the respondents' answers for the fourth question of the poll*



*Figure 2.5: Graph of the respondents' answers for the fifth question of the poll*

## Appendix 5: The calculations of the intersection

The following calculations were done co-operating with Mgr. Pavla Jílková of Gymnasium Šumperk.

- Firstly, the correct number of respondents has to be found. The sum of 688 and 335 is not the estimated number of 789 from the fourth closed-ended question's evaluation. Therefore, the dimension of one per cent of the total has to be found. To do so, the number of the respondents claiming watching the original version has to be divided by the following relative percentage, hence  $688 / 87.42$  which is 7.87 (actually, it is 7.87005..., the result is rounded of). Next, this number has to be multiplied by one hundred to get the dimension of the total. This works out as 787 respondents.

To check this, there is another possibility to find out the number of the respondents and it is dividing 335 with 42.57 which also gives us the result of 7.87 (actually, it is 7.86939..., the result is rounded of).

- Secondly, since the estimate was that 789 people came up to this question and the counting proved that only 787 did so, it is now assumed that 2 people had technical difficulties filling up the poll or left the poll prematurely.
- Thirdly, the intersection<sup>bb</sup> has to be found (therefore the number of people watching both versions can be found):
  - Firstly, the total number of choices of answers ticked by the respondents has to be found. The total is the sum of numbers 688 and 335 which is 1023.
  - Secondly, the total number of respondents has to be subtracted from the total number of the choices of answers ticked by the respondents, therefore  $1023 - 787$ , which is 236. This is the number important for the evaluation of this question since this is the intersection. There were 236 respondents who claimed that they watch both original and dubbed version.
  - Lastly, the number of people who claimed that they watch only the original or the dubbed version is to be found. The correct numbers are  $688 - 236$ , which is 452 and 99 respectively.

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bb Wiki: “the intersection ... of two sets a and B is the set that contains all elements of a that also belong to B”. For this particular example, the set a are the people watching the English version, the set B are the people watching the dubbed version.

## **List of abbreviations used in text:**

BrE – British English

CBS – Columbia Broadcast System (US TV Channel)

HIMYM – How I Met Your Mother

iM&W – Merriam and Webster online dictionary ([www.merriam-webster.com](http://www.merriam-webster.com))

NAme – Northern American English

NJ – New Jersey

NYC – the New York City

NYT – New York Times

pdf – portable document format

sth - something

TFD – The Free Dictionary ([www.thefreedictionary](http://www.thefreedictionary))

TV - television

UD – Urban Dictionary ([www.urbandictionary.com](http://www.urbandictionary.com))

UK – the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

US – the United States

Wiki – Wikipedia ([www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org))

WWII – the second World War

## Anotace

<b>Jméno a příjmení:</b>	Jan Gregar
<b>Katedra:</b>	Katedra anglického jazyka
<b>Vedoucí práce:</b>	Mgr. Josef Nevařil, Ph.D.
<b>Rok obhajoby:</b>	2013

<b>Název práce:</b>	Humor amerického sitcomu <i>How I Met Your Mother</i> , jeho překlad a přijetí českým publikem.
<b>Název v angličtině:</b>	Humor of the American sitcom <i>How I Met Your Mother</i> , its translation and acceptance by the Czech audience.
<b>Anotace práce:</b>	Práce je zaměřená na problematiku překladu humoru jak v teoretické tak v praktické části. První dvě kapitoly definují pojem <i>humor</i> a rozdíly mezi americkým a českým humorem. Další kapitoly jsou věnovány pojmům <i>překlad</i> , <i>sitcom</i> a <i>catchphrase</i> . V závěrečné kapitole teoretické části je popsán seriál <i>How I Met Your Mother</i> , jehož překlad je dále zkoumán v praktické části.
<b>Klíčová slova:</b>	Humor, překlad, sitcom, catchphrase, How I Met Your Mother
<b>Anotace v angličtině:</b>	The thesis is aimed on the issue of humor translation both in theoretical and practical part. The first two chapters define the term <i>humor</i> and the differences between the American and Czech humor. The following chapters are devoted to terms <i>translation</i> , <i>sitcom</i> and <i>catchphrase</i> . In the last chapter of the theoretical part is described the sitcom <i>How I Met Your Mother</i> while its translation is the subject of the practical part of the thesis.
<b>Klíčová slova v angličtině:</b>	Humor, translation, sitcom, catchphrase, How I Met Your Mother
<b>Přílohy vázané v práci:</b>	The email from Michal Grepl Czech (original) poll English (translated) poll The graphs of the poll The calculation of the intersection CD
<b>Rozsah práce:</b>	29 stran
<b>Jazyk práce:</b>	Anglický jazyk

## Resumé

Závěrečná práce je zaměřena na problematiku českého a amerického humoru a jeho překladu. V teoretické části je nejprve objasněn humor jako termín, jak po stránce etymologické, tak po stránce významové. Dále je objasněn rozdíl mezi humorem českým a americkým, je vysvětlen pojem *překlad* a je ilustrována problematika překladu humoru. V páté kapitole je vysvětlen pojem *catchphrase*, stěžejní část práce je však věnována sitcomům, především pak americkému sitcomu *How I Met Your Mother*, jelikož se praktická část věnuje jeho překladům a anketě, která zkoumá české povědomí o tomto seriálu a preference jeho diváků.