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Morphology as a Source of Comedy in American TV Shows

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Prohlašuji, že jsem tuto bakalářskou práci vypracovala samostatně a uvedla jsem všechny použité podklady a literaturu.

V Olomouci dne:

Podpis:

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1. Introduction

1.1 Thesis

This work will focus on the usage of backformation, conversion, decontextualization of idioms as a source of comedy in contemporary American TV shows. Examples analyzed in this paper have been collected over the course of more than a year and include such comedy shows as Brooklyn Nine-Nine (2013-present), Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt (2015-present), Bojack Horseman (2014-present) and many other unique examples found in popular American entertainment media. I will analyze these examples in order to find out what it is that enables the audience to interpret them as funny. This paper suggests that these interpretations are closely linked to and can be analyzed and explained by the Roots Theory and the Incongruity Theory of Humor. It will also describe the usage of these morphological tools by comedy writers in terms of character portrayal and development and how they may aid with portraying character traits and qualities.

1.2 Methodology

The data attached as an appendix has been collected over the course of more than a year and have been categorized into 3 categories: backformation-based, conversion-based and idiom-based. All of these examples are lifted verbatim from contemporary American TV shows, namely Brooklyn Nine-Nine (hereafter referred to as B99), Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt (UKS), Bojack Horseman (BH) and other TV shows which will be properly identified and sourced as they are used. I have chosen these TV shows based on their type of comedic style, which is often language based and therefore a valuable resource for this type of research. I have organized these examples in a table according to the type of morphological phenomenon.

1.2.1 *Cited TV Shows and brief synopses*

For the purposes of this thesis, I will briefly summarize the TV shows from which I have drawn the most. As stated in the introduction, it is my secondary thesis statement that writers often use morphology-based humor as means to extend a character and highlight some of their qualities or shortcomings, so it is worthwhile to familiarize with the premises of the shows.

1.2.1.1 *Brooklyn Nine-Nine*

Brooklyn Nine-Nine is an ensemble comedy series, currently in its 5th season. It could be described as a police workplace comedy, although police work tends to be highly simplified and devoid of any serious crimes. Instead, the series chooses to focus on the seven-character ensemble and their interpersonal relationships. It is a significantly socially aware series which often comments on current socio-political, as well as pop cultural events.

Brooklyn Nine-Nine was the main driving force behind the topic of my thesis, as the writers often use morphology-driven jokes.

1.2.1.2 *Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt*

Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt follows the titular Kimmy, who has been held captive in the underground bunker of a doomsday cult since she was 15 years old. We see her get rescued in the pilot episode and follow her as she re-enters society at 29 years old. Despite the grim premise, the show is notable for its main character's positivity and visual colorfulness. Kimmy, her friend Titus – a struggling actor, her eccentric landlady and her ultrarich out-of-touch employer are all very distinctive in their personalities and contribute to the diverse nature of the show. The script writers often employ morphological strategies to create humor, as well as to communicate certain characteristics of each character.

Both shows are represented in all three of the morphological phenomena, and therefore are considered the primary sources of examples. All other TV shows will be properly sourced and introduced as they are quoted.

2. Roots Theory

In this section, some theoretical background is established. Lexicalism is mentioned as a competing theory to Distributed Morphology – a framework in which the Roots Theory operates. The Roots Theory is then expanded upon.

2.1 Lexicalism and Distributed Morphology

Lexicalism is a linguistic theory which claims that there is a Lexicon, where some aspects of phonology and some structure-meaning relationships are acquired, while the rest happens during or after syntax. (Marantz, 1997).

There is no such lexicon in the framework of Distributed Morphology, in his 1997 paper *No Escape from Syntax*, Alec Marantz even goes as far as to say: “Lexicalism is dead, deceased, demised, no more, passed on...”. He proposes three lists that replace the singular lexicon of Lexicalists: List 1 contains roots and grammatical morphemes. The roots have no form, sound or meaning, nor do the grammatical morphemes. List 2 is called Vocabulary and provides phonetic forms for the roots after they have been inserted into syntax. List 3 is called Encyclopedia and stores meanings as well as “special meanings”, idiomatic, non-compositional meanings listed in respect to the root and its syntactic context (Marantz, 1997). This is referred to as “the Y model” and is shown in (1).

The Roots Theory could be considered a more radical version of this theory.

2.2 Harley on Roots

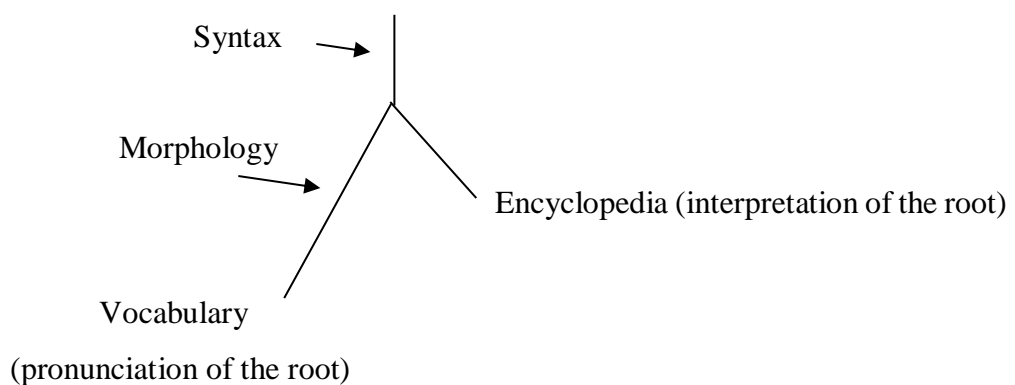
The Roots Theory was most significantly postulated by Heidi Harley. In her 2014 paper *On the Identity of Roots*, Harley put forward a theory that roots are blank featureless abstract pieces that only acquire form and meaning after being set in a syntactic context. Therefore, the concept of lexicon as we know it is rendered meaningless, pun intended.

Harley theorizes that Roots are not individuated phonetically, because there are suppletive forms – one root can take on different phonetic forms depending on its syntactic environment, e. g. bad, worse, person, people. They are also not individuated semantically, because one root can have several completely unrelated meanings listed in the Encyclopedia, for example *cat*, meaning *feline animal*, and *cat* meaning *secret*

in the environment *cat is out of the bag*. It must be true then that roots are completely abstract, “syntactic roots are individuated as pure units of structural computation, lacking (in the syntax) both semantic content and phonological features.” (Harley, 2014) Harley adopted the “index notation” method, where each root has a number address, which serves as a link between the “set of instructions” needed to produce phonetic and semantic interpretation.

Harley also adopted the Y model of Distributed Morphology:

- (1) List 1 – roots and grammatical morphemes



Let’s go step by step through this model. First, there is a root, signified, for example, by the numerical figure $\sqrt{936}$. In syntax this root is then assigned environment, for example, $\sqrt{936}$ is in the environment of noun. It is then sent to the Vocabulary branch and to the Encyclopedia branch. On the Vocabulary side, morphology makes necessary adjustments, the root then receives a phonetic form (or, in sign language, a sign form) – kik. On the Encyclopedic branch, which contains „instruction for the interpretations of roots in context“, the root gets a meaning that is found on the list of entries in the encyclopedia – the motion of hitting with leg. (Harley, 2014)

In terms of idioms, which this thesis will talk about further in section 4.3, the Encyclopedic branch is the most significant one.

2.2.1 *Encyclopedia*

Encyclopedia is where meanings are listed. After a root is inserted into syntax, the Encyclopedia identifies the listed meaning in that syntactic environment.

For example, the entry root $\sqrt{936}$ could have these following listings:

(2) $\sqrt{936}$

a) $\sqrt{936}$ (in the syntactic environment of V) = the action of hitting with leg
(on the vocabulary branch this root would be identified as kik)

b) $\sqrt{936}$ (in the syntactic environment of N) = the motion of hitting with leg
(kik)

c) $\sqrt{936}$ (in the syntactic environment of V and “back”) = relax (kik)

d) $\sqrt{936}$ (in the syntactic environment of V and “the bucket”) = lose life, die
(kik)

etc.

Some interpretations require a more specific context than the others and it could be argued that those that are the least specific, or unmarked, are toward the top of the list, making it easier for people to interpret them as such. The more specific the context, the lower the interpretation on the list.

Encyclopedic listings are crucial when it comes to comedy and humor based on the Theory of Incongruity, which is detailed in section 3.1.

For the purposes of this thesis, from here on out, roots will be indexed by their form a as opposed to their numerical code, as in (3):

(3) $\sqrt{kick (+N)}$ = the motion of hitting with leg

3. Theories of Humor

Philosophers who focus on comedy recognize three main theories. For the purpose of this thesis, the first two will be simplified, as they are not germane to this topic. That is to say they describe humor in terms other than linguistic, and while interesting and valid, this paper will pay most attention to The Incongruity Theory in section 3.1. The theories have been formulated and systemized most notably by D. H. Monro in his 1988 paper “Theories of Humor”.

The first and oldest theory is attributed to Plato and Aristotle, but it was Thomas Hobbes who formulated the standard version known as The Superiority Theory. He theorizes that “men laugh at the infirmities of others, by comparison wherewith their own abilities are set off and illustrated.” (Human Nature, chapter 9). This theory could be said to be the most primitive one, essentially explaining why we laugh at people falling over.

The second theory is The Relief Theory, which focuses more on the physiological aspects of humor and laughter, describing the process of tension and release, where laughter is the result of pent up energy. More symbolically, it was theorized by Sigmund Freud, as the relief which comes after the removal of restraint, in this case specifically moral restraints. Freud theorizes that humor arises after outwitting or tricking a censor (internal moral inhibitions) and indulging our immoral impulses. This accounts for the instances of comedy where the source is an immoral character or immoral behavior (Freud specifies sexual immorality in particular). (Freud, 1960)

And while Monro concludes these theories certainly each explain some instances of comedy, he doubts they successfully explain all types of humor. (Monro, 1988)

However, the last theory, as section 3.1 suggests, is more ambiguous and generalized. This paper proposes it is inextricably connected to the Roots Theory and may explain a larger field of humor than the two previous theories.

3.1 The Incongruity Theory

Incongruity means incompatibility, discrepancy. The Incongruity Theory, or more specifically The Incongruity Resolution Theory, refers to the difference in expectations and outcome. Simplified, the theory could be called Humor of the Unexpected. The “set-up” of the joke leads the audience to assume the ending, either based on social norms, personal experience or other factors, and a certain resolution is expected. The “punchline” then is in discordance with the previously gained information, forcing the audience to adjust their perception of the set-up, as illustrated in (11) by a comedian Emo Phillips, whose comedic style is almost exclusively based on this approach.

- (4) I discovered my wife in bed with another man, and I was crushed. So I said, ‘Get off me, you two!’ (Emo Phillips, 1999)

The first part leads the audience to believe the speaker was devastated upon discovering his wife’s extramarital affair, which would be perfectly normal and expected behavior for such a situation. The punchline then undermines these assumptions by revealing the speaker was instead physically crushed by the weight of the two people on top of him. This forces the audience to go back to the original statement and see it in a new light. Laughter ensues.

The Roots Theory can explain comedy on a similar basis – after a root has been inserted into syntax, it receives a set of instructions that inform the selection of a listing on both branches – vocabulary and encyclopedia. If there is any discrepancy between the listings of the speaker and the listener, confusion, surprise, laughter or a combination of these ensues.

4. Morphological phenomena as a source of comedy

This section of the thesis will feature examples of each of the three phenomena. Each example will be analyzed in three parts – first morphologically, syntactically, in terms of the Roots Theory and how it applies, what are the consequences. The analysis of the root-meaning relationship will be signified following the model in (5):

$$(5) \sqrt{\text{root (+environment)}} = \text{meaning/interpretation}$$

Then they will be analyzed in terms of The Incongruity Theory – what the source of incongruity is, in what way it is incongruous and how it results in humor – what leads the audience to identify the humorous interpretation.

Lastly, the character/speaker, their immediate state as well as the context of the situation the example was uttered in, will come under scrutiny to find out to what extent is the line character-driven - how much does the quote tell us about the character, or conversely, how much does the understanding of the character's personality help us understand the joke.

4.1 Backformation

Backformation is a word formation process where a speaker, upon encountering a word that contains what sounds like (or graphically looks like) a suffix or a prefix and even though the sound sequence does not carry that meaning (it might have diachronically, but no longer does in the minds of contemporary speakers) they base their treatment of the word on that assumption – getting rid of the affix to reach the apparent original meaning of the word. (Harley 2004)

Backformation is a productive word formation process which often produces everyday words - most noted examples include the verb *burgle*, backformed from *burglar* where the morpheme *-ar* was misconstrued as the regular productive ending *-er*, seen in *baker*, *singer*, *writer* (“Burgler”) or *surveil*, backformed from *surveillance*, where the ending *-ance* is treated the same as the suffix in *appearance*, despite it being a French loan word (“Surveillance”). The same applies to the verb *eavesdrop*, which developed from *eavesdropper* which came from *evisdroppyr*, meaning he who stands on an eavesdrop to listen in on a conversation. The morpheme *-yr* resembled *-er* to a later speaker, who therefore assumed that the inflectional bound morpheme is there to transform a verb into a noun. (“Eavesdrop”).

Most relevantly to this thesis, comedy writing based on backformation employs the Theory of Incongruity on a morphological level – in the following examples the point of the incongruity is a morpheme and the humor is derived from the environment of this morpheme. Because it is incongruous, backformation is a widely popular tool in comedy writing. There is a plethora of opportunities to backform in English and comedy writers like to take advantage of it.

It can also serve a character-building purpose - it can be used to convey lack of intelligence, immaturity, as in (9), or creativity (13), it can be used as a relatability tool where the audience can identify with the characters who are imperfect and make mistakes (15).

To illustrate just how popular backformation is in comedy, here is a quote from P.G. Wodehouse's comic novel *The Code of the Wooster*, 1938: "He spoke with a certain what-is-it in his voice, and I could see that, if not actually disgruntled, he was far from being gruntled, so I tactfully changed the subject."

4.1.1 *Examples of backformation in comedy writing*

The following examples have been chosen based on several factors – creativity, originality and complexity.

The first example is from the TV show *Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt*.

- (6) Austin: This party is a rejection of Valentine's Day, 'cause it's so regressive.
Kimmy: I know. Regressive, meaning it gresses, again, like over and over.
Enough with the gressing already! (UKS, S03E06)

The Latin prefixes re- are homophonous: one denotes movement backwards (*return*, *revert*, *retreat*), the other denotes repetition (*repeat*, *remarry*, *restock*). Because *regressive* is not on her Encyclopedic list and she is not aware of its meaning, Kimmy's Encyclopedic analysis looked like this:

- a) $\sqrt{\text{gress}}$ (+re, +V, +ADJ) = adjective derived from the verb to repeatedly do unknown action,

Based on this, her Encyclopedia offers:

- b) $\sqrt{\text{gress}}$ (+V) = that unknown action

It can be claimed that -gress is a cranberry morpheme – morpheme which has only one or very few environments in which they gain meaning. It usually comes from a historical meaning which over the course of time became opaque to the contemporary English (Aronoff, 1976). Sometimes these are called caboodle items, because cranberry implies the morpheme is bound, which is not a requirement, see “kit and caboodle”, “chit chat”, “run the gamut” (Harley, 2014). The morpheme -gress only ever follows a Latin preposition – regress, progress, transgress, congress, digress. It never stands alone – except for the example in (13). This causes incongruity for the audience who’s list of entries in their encyclopedias does not include \surd gress. Example (13) forces them to de-cranberry said morpheme and accept it as a root with an independent meaning, which even in the quote is left vague for comedic purposes, to show that the character does not know what it means.

Kimmy’s experience, described earlier, leaves her with basic education and fearless attitude to life, which is perfectly summarized in (13) as she doesn’t know the meaning of *regressing*, but not only is she willing to hazard a guess and improvise with what she knows, she commits and even takes a rather passionate stance on it.

This de-cranberrization can be seen in example (7) as well. It comes from the TV show Brooklyn Nine-Nine, writers of which are known for their innovative morphology-based comedy.

(7) Jake: Don't worry. It's gonna be fine. We just have to turn this debacle into a straight-up bacle. (B99, S03E06)

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary states the following on the topic of the etymology of the word: it comes from Middle French *desbacler*, which consists of the prefix *des-* (meaning the opposite of) and *bacler* (to block). Originally, it used to mean breaking up of ice, which through time reincarnated into the meaning of violent flood, collapse and finally as it is known today, disaster or fiasco. (“Debacle”)

There are two possible analyses of *debacle*. One, it is a monomorphemic lexical word, which cannot undergo any further morphemic division. Or, as mentioned earlier, *bacle* is a cranberry morpheme, only ever gaining meaning in the context of *de-*.

In (7), Jake identifies and then overgeneralizes his knowledge of the English prefix *de-* – he knows that the opposite of *deformed* is *formed* and that *decode* means “*un*”*code*. He applies this rule to *debacle* and ends up with the completely new root *bacle*. His analysis may look like this:

- a) $\sqrt{\text{bacle}}$ (+de, +N) = great failure, disaster
- b) $\sqrt{\text{bacle}}$ (-de, +N) = victory, success

This is also noteworthy phonetically, because it can be considered a rule that these “false *de-* prefixes” do not carry stress, rather they immediately precede the stressed syllable – consider *delete*, *defibrillate*, *deliver*, *decide* or *deport*. This is opposed to the English prefix *de-* in words such as *deplane*, *decompose*, *dethrone*. Interestingly, in (7), Jake put the stress on the *de-* in *debacle*, presumably precisely because of the assumed meaning.

This kind of construction is unexpected and disrupts the audience’s perception of the root *debacle* that either had a place on their list of entries in their encyclopedias as one unit, or as a morpheme that can only be pronounced in the context of *de-*. By isolating the sequence *bacle*, Jake is forcing the audience to create a new entry and assign it a meaning.

Jake, the series’ main character, is often characterized as a man-child and he exhibits many childish traits and behaviors, including limited vocabulary. He is also highly creative and resourceful. In (7), the writers decided to put this on full display by compensating for Jake’s lack of knowledge by demonstrating his creative improvisation, which is delivered with his signature confidence.

The following example from *Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt* also employs the affix deletion strategy.

- (8) Kimmy: Well, college was a waste of time. What do I need to learn Mandarin for? I don’t want to go to Mandar. (UKS, S03E13)

Consulting the Merriam-Webster dictionary reveals a fascinating etymology of ‘Mandarin’: “Portuguese *mandarim*, from Malay *měntěri*, from Sanskrit *mantrin* counselor, from *mantra* – counsel.” (“Mandarin”) Consequently, it can be decidedly

declared that *-in* is not a suffix in this instance and *Mandarin* is one root with one entry in the Encyclopedia and one entry in the Vocabulary.

The possible explanation for Kimmy's analysis is that she perceived the *-in* ending to be the equivalent of *-ian/an*, which is a frequent suffix in names of languages and place name adjectives— *Italian, Mexican, Belgian, Moroccan, African*, etc. There is a sufficient phonetic similarity for Kimmy to make this assumption. This leads her to believe Mandarin is the language spoken in Mandar and thus creating a brand-new country.

a) $\sqrt{\text{Mandar (+ADJ}_{\text{PLACE NAME}}, +\text{in})}$ = the language of Mandar

b) $\sqrt{\text{Mandar (+N)}}$ = a country

The incongruity arises for those in the audience who have at least some geographical awareness. It is quite possible that this mistake is a common one for children to make and the audience can sympathize with Kimmy in her error.

Of course, Kimmy cannot be blamed for her ignorance as the reason behind it is her complete isolation in a bunker since she was 10 years old. The fact that it leaves Kimmy unaware of the last 10 years of the outside world's evolution and development is extremely productive in terms of humor and the show writers often capitalize on this fact with visual and physical comedy, as well, while treating the subject very thoughtfully and sensitively.

Another example comes from *The Office*, a mockumentary sitcom with a cult following. Some of the Brooklyn 99 producers gained earlier experience working on *The Office*, and the style of comedy and certainly the tendency to create humor through morphology is noticeably similar.

(9) Michael: He leaves work, he's on his way home and wham! His cappa is detated from his head! (*The Office*, S03E04)

This quote is difficult to analyze, as there are several morphological leaps taken by Michael and not all of them can be easily explained. What follows is a suggestion of an analysis.

Similar to (7) again, Michael saw the sequence *de-* and assumed it is a prefix that can be removed. The fact that *capitate* is not a conventional English root and the lack

of stress suggest that *decapitate* is not a sequence of a prefix and a root, rather it is a root that has entered English language as a unit, or again, it could be said that *capitate* is a cranberry morpheme and gains meaning only in the environment of *de-*.

Michael then identified the middle of the sequence as the original Latin root for head. However, because he does not know the root is *caput*, he used the pronunciation to inform his treatment of it, which, lifted directly from the pronunciation, can be transcribed as *cappa* – [di'kæpə,teitid]. Michael separates this sequence as a new root:

a) $\sqrt{\text{cappa}}$ (+de, +V) = remove head

b) $\sqrt{\text{cappa}}$ (-de, +N) = head

He also identified the sequence *tate* as a root

c) $\sqrt{\text{tate}}$ (+V) = the action, movement

And he attached the *de-* prefix to this new root

d) $\sqrt{\text{tate}}$ (+de, +V) = the action of removal (*detate*)

That is not where Michael stops, however. The follow-up *from his head* then undermines the tentative understanding of the sentence that the audience might have developed, a finishing touch to undermine all expectations, perhaps to let the audience conclude that Michael himself does not know what he said.

As the previous paragraph suggests, it is the subverted expectations that cause the incongruity. Despite it being a very short line, it manages to fit in several elements that are incongruous with what the audience expects and predicts – from *cappa* being the root as opposed to *caput*, *detated* being the verb to the concluding *from his head*, where *from his torso* could be predicted.

However, it is my belief that comedy writers are very deliberate in their scripts and lines such as (16) are driven by the characters themselves. So let's now focus on Michael Scott, the character - he is a maladjusted, emotionally stunted man who desperately wants his employees to love and admire him, despite constantly doing all the wrong things. He is not overly intelligent or socially aware, shortcomings he often overcompensates for in an off putting, insensitive or selfish manner. This is encompassed on a smaller scale in the (16) quote - his need to make the story interesting and to seem educated and well versed in Latin, which he believes will earn him the admiration of his employees, drives him to treat the word 'decapitation' in a highly unconventional way.

In summary, backformation seems to be exceedingly productive for comedic purposes, as the opportunity to backform is considerable in English, especially with Latin affixes. All examples were able to undergo the Roots analysis and were explainable by the Incongruity Theory. Backformation is used by comedy writers as a strategy to accentuate the character/speaker's characteristics, mainly creativity or some lack of knowledge or the combination of the two.

4.2 Conversion

Conversion is a word formation process where the category of the word changes without any affixation. It is often referred to as zero affixation. This thesis includes both true conversion and partial conversion – where a vowel, a consonant or stress placement undergo slight changes. (Veselovská, 2014)

Conversion is not unusual in spoken English, as it often simplifies and shortens speech and is not uneasy to understand. To offer a personal example: in a conversation with a friend the verb to *hiate* was used, a verb developed from the Latin noun *hiatus* – a pause in a continuous action. E.g. Brooklyn Nine-Nine is *hiating* right now.

4.2.1 Examples of conversion in comedy writing

The examples below have been chosen based on their complexity and creativity showcasing the variety of conversion jokes. First example again comes from Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt.

(10) Andrea: Hey, who breakthroughed you on the mom stuff? (UKS, S02E12)

The root *breakthrough* in (10) is in the environment of noun in its usual syntactic context, therefore the usage of *breakthrough* in the context of verb is unexpected and made even more prominent by the past tense.

a) $\sqrt{\text{breakthrough}}$ (+N) = sudden development or success

b) $\sqrt{\text{breakthrough}}$ (+V) = provide or cause sudden development

As mentioned it is the use of a root which in the audience's Encyclopedias does not offer any other interpretation than that of a noun in a verbal context that causes incongruity.

This sentence was uttered by a character while inebriated. The intention may have been to underline their fragile grasp of language, or their inventiveness in communicating with diminished cognitive abilities. This is a common theme in comedy writing – language serving as an indicator of the level of drunkenness. While inebriation undoubtedly takes the biggest and most obvious toll on pronunciation (slurring, under-enunciation) it would be interesting to develop an analytic study on how it affects grammar and syntax.

What is certain is that comedy writers like to use these opportunities to be adventurous with language and create humor this way.

The next two examples were uttered on Brooklyn Nine-Nine. The first is a conversion from a phrase of a determiner and an adjective to a verb, while the other is a highly unusual sentence to verb conversion.

(11) Rosa: Just when I thought he couldn't be any more the worst, he out the worsts himself. (B99, S03E04)

In (11), Rosa uses the suppletive form of the adjective *bad*, *the worst*. She then goes on to use the entire sequence *the worst* in a verbal context – she uses the prefix *out-* and conjugates the verb to a third person singular form. Because the newly created verb *to out the worst* is transitive, following the model of *to outdo*, *to outshine*, *to outnumber*, it requires a reflexive pronoun *himself*. The process of transforming an irregular adjective into a transitive reflexive verb is solely facilitated by the environment of the root:

- a) $\sqrt{\text{worst}}$ (+the, +ADJ) = most awful, most terrible
- b) $\sqrt{\text{worst}}$ (+out, +the, +V) = to do something that makes one even more terrible than most terrible.

The incongruity in (19) is more so prominent here than in other examples, thanks to the two roots being so close to each other chronologically. Just as the audience hears it in its usual, unmarked context, it is used in a completely new, unlisted context.

The character, Rosa is not known for wordplay, contrarily, she is a straightforward woman of a few words. It could be said that (19) is slightly out of

character for her. It is not unusual, in fact it is highly usual, that a joke is merely a means to make the audience laugh and does not have to be specifically character-driven.

(12) Holt: This isn't about you.

Amy: Don't this-isn't-about-you me, I'm this-isn't-about-youing you!

(B99, S02E02)

Similar to (19), a sequence of several constituents is converted into a single constituent of a different category. In this case, it is an entire SVPP sentence that is converted to serve the role of a verb, which is a highly unconventional and an extreme example of a quotational compound, as other quotational compounds tend to be nouns (forget-me-not) or noun premodifiers (touch-and-go situation, get-rich-quick scheme, out-of-this-world place) (Veselovká, 2010).

So while the sentence *This isn't about you* is a fully formed meaningful sentence, $\sqrt{\text{this-isn't-about-you}} (+V) = \text{dismiss, brush off}$.

This exchange is substantially incongruous as the audience is faced with assigning an encyclopedic entry to a sentence which includes several roots that already have their own entries, as well as the attachment of -ing ending to a pronoun, which is decidedly unconventional.

Interestingly, Amy tends to be quite reserved, and most of all in front of Captain Holt who she idolizes. In (12), her frustration with the situation results in her snapping at Holt, which is out of character. The sentence to verb conversion seems to be the result of this frustration as she is rushing to retort without properly thinking about what she is saying.

The next example introduces a new factor – pop cultural references and how they might influence morphological processes.

(13) Titus: I'm not over-reacting! I'm doing what any reasonable person would do in this situation, I'm lemonading. (UKS, S03E02)

In (20), a zero conversion from the noun *lemonade* into the verb *to lemonade* by using it in the environment of V. A simple enough case of conversion on the surface.

This example is included because in (20), an additional layer of non-linguistic factor is utilized – audience’s general knowledge of popular culture. For this joke to be fully appreciated, the audience must be familiarized with a then-recently released Beyoncé music album *Lemonade*, a concept album of 12 songs about Beyoncé’s partner Jay-Z allegedly cheating on her. Someone who is not familiar with this piece of information could have interpreted *lemonading* as an unusual way of saying making lemonade, or perhaps a twist on the saying “When life gives you lemons, make lemonade”, which is what it could have potentially meant if it was a simple case of N to V conversion.

However, an audience member up to date on music charts understood that *lemonading* means to go and publicly shame one’s partner for being unfaithful.

For this reason, the proposed roots analysis is as follows:

- a) $\sqrt{\text{lemonade}}$ in the environment of N = lemon drink,
- b) $\sqrt{\text{lemonade}}$ in the environment of V = publicly shaming one’s partner for unfaithfulness.

The necessity of audience’s awareness of outside factors is almost always the case with comedy that is contemporary and/or topical, especially with satirical comedy.

The incongruity arises from a noun being used in a verbal context, as well as the unexpected meaning of the verb, which has an entirely different meaning than the one of the original noun.

Roots Theory, in the case of conversion, works with environments of categories to explain each example, as does the Theory of Incongruity. Conversion seems to cover several different usages - from conveying lowered ability to speak or heightened emotions to accommodating pop cultural references.

4.3 Idioms and idiomatic decontextualization

A 1994 paper by Geoffrey Nunberg, Ivan A. Sag and Tomas Wasow aptly titled *Idioms* defined the aspects of idioms, most important of which are: conventionality,

sometimes referred to as non-compositionality or opacity – the meaning has been conventionalized and cannot be gleaned from the knowledge of the meaning of the constituents; inflexibility – there is a degree of syntactic fridity in place, if disturbed, idiomaticity is lost, in other words, the syntactic environment is so specific that a small change strips the idiom of its idiomatic interpretation.

In section 2.2.1, which described Encyclopedias, syntactic environment was discussed. For idiomatic expressions, the environment is specific to the point of a single other lexical word or a sequence of words. In the case of “kick the bucket”, every element is important. The idiom is rendered uninterpretable as such if a single element changes (*kick a bucket, *kick the pail, *strike a bucket). If a listener does not have this specific interpretation listed in their encyclopedia, the phrase will mean something completely different to them than intended. Let’s look at other examples.

(14) The cat is out of the bag.

(22) is a prototypical idiom. It is a short sentence structure where every lexical morpheme takes an opaque meaning.

- a) $\sqrt{\text{cat}}$ (+N) = a feline animal – the unmarked meaning, the one on top of the list of entries
- b) $\sqrt{\text{cat}}$ (+is out of the bag) = a secret – a specific environment consisting of 5 different elements
- c) $\sqrt{\text{bag}}$ (+N) = flexible container
- d) $\sqrt{\text{bag}}$ (+ the cat is out of) = usually a person’s mouth

There is some non-syntactic flexibility, of course, for example the *of* or the first *the* can be omitted in colloquial speech – cat is out the bag. This varies from idiom to idiom.

However, idioms do not always take the form of neat sentence-like structures. Verb-preposition phrases can be idiomatic – kick back, stand up (for something), eat out, order in; or noun compounds – greenhouse, hashtag, headphones (Veselovská, 2010).

Idioms are valuable in terms of the Roots Theory as they are a prime example of how a root has no one meaning before it is injected into its syntactic environment. Andrew Nevins compares this very fittingly to the Schrödinger’s cat – we don’t know

if a root means ‘dead’ or ‘alive’ until we open the box. ($\sqrt{\text{box}}$ in this syntactic context = syntactic context)

4.3.1 *Examples of idioms in comedy writing*

In comedy, idioms are a treasure trove of incongruity. This incongruity arises when a root with an idiomatic meaning is put into an environment that is default for a different, non-idiomatic meaning, or vice versa – idiomatic decontextualization. This forces the audience to confront their interpretations and their encyclopedic lists of entries and if the intended interpretation is very low on the list or is missing completely, humor is achieved.

The examples below illustrate the wide range of possible creative and diverse ways to utilize this idiomatic decontextualizing in comedy. As stated before, writers of Brooklyn Nine-Nine like using morphological humor and the same can be claimed about idiomatic expressions.

(15) Jake: And I am choosing Charles because he’s less likely to steal my thunder.

Charles: I would never steal his thunder. I-I’d be afraid to borrow it. (B99, S01E05)

In (23), an idiom is introduced: *to steal someone’s thunder*. It could be argued that the meaning of *steal* in this case is not idiomatic, rather it is transparent. However, the consequences of Charles’ treatment of it suggests otherwise.

a) $\sqrt{\text{steal one’s thunder}}$ = take away one’s attention, accolades of others

Charles de-idiomatizes *steal* by treating it as a root that is only in the context of V as opposed in the context of V and the context of *thunder* which enables the idiomatic meaning. He does in order to replace it with a root denoting the less illegal *borrow*:

b) $\sqrt{\text{thunder/it (+borrow one’s)}}$ = ?attention, accolades

It seems that *steal* and *borrow* are related enough semantically for the audience to interpret *thunder* in the idiomatic context. However, it has been disrupted enough for the incongruity to occur in the audience’s Encyclopedias, when they are forced to analyze *thunder* as its idiomatic meaning in a non-idiomatic environment.

Charles Boyle is an exemplary sidekick to Jake’s leading man and his best friend. He is portrayed as a nervous, inept, comically subdued but incredibly loyal man

and (23) is perfectly in keeping with this trait, as the thought of stealing anything from Jake seemed unacceptable to him, and he looked for a more moderate substitute. Charles' naiveté about idiomatic expressions, especially those conveying less than appropriate subtext, is utilized many times across the seasons.

Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt writers also like to use idiomatic decontextualizing to create humor.

(16) Titus: You better make like me eating beans drunk and spill the beans. (UKS, S03E07)

A variation on the famous saying *Make like a tree and leave* is presented in (24). This is a very well-known template for joke-making and there are many reincarnations – Make like a baby and head out, Make like a bad check and bounce, Make like a banana and split. It is so well known in fact, that there is a version *Make like a tree and get out of here*, often accompanied by an expletive, which is a twist capitalizing on the fact that people know this saying and expect the word *leave* – this subversion of expectations causes incongruity.

In (24), a slightly more complicated version of this can be observed. The idiomatic expression is *spill the beans*:

- a) $\sqrt{\text{spill}}$ (+ the beans) = tell, say
- b) $\sqrt{\text{beans}}$ (+ spill the) = secret, classified information, something a person does not want to reveal

By prefacing it with a description of conditions wherein the non-idiomatic meaning of *spill the beans* would be appropriate, that is if one is under the influence of alcohol and consuming saucy beans, the idiomatic meaning is stripped away and the audience is left with:

- c) $\sqrt{\text{spill}}$ (+V) = dribble, pour by mistake
- d) $\sqrt{\text{beans}}$ (+N, +pl) = kidney shaped seeds of the pea family plant

However, because this is a known joke template and because of the situational context it is said in, it is clear that the idiomatic meaning is the one in effect.

It can be said that *spill the beans* in (24) means both *dribble kidney shaped peas* and *tell a secret* at the same time in the minds of the audience – all entries in their encyclopedias for all elements must work together to make sense of the sentence.

What is perhaps the funniest factor of this quote is the specificity: while the previous examples of this joke only ever take advantage of the duplicity of meanings of one or two elements, example in (24) uses a well-known idiom, which needs rather specific conditions under which it can be interpreted transparently.

There does not seem to be a specific character-driven reason behind the line as it could be uttered by any of the characters and it would not influence the impact of it in any way.

Next example comes from the Netflix show *Bojack Horseman* – a fully animated dark comedy/drama about existential problems of an aging actor and a group of people around him. Interestingly, it takes place in a world where all people are indiscriminately anthropomorphic animals or humans who live alongside each other with no reference to it, other than for comedic effect (e.g. the crossing guard is a zebra)

(17) Mister Peanutbutter: If we do get the signatures we need, the campaign will begin in... where did you say again Katrina?

Katrina: Earnest. When we do get the signatures, the campaign will begin in earnest.

Mister Peanutbutter: Right! Earnest, California! (*Bojack Horseman*, S04E01)

The case of (25) is interesting because the idiomatic expression consists of a preposition and the root $\sqrt{\text{earnest}}$:

a) $\sqrt{\text{earnest}}$ (+in, +N) = resolute, intent state of mind

Mister Peanutbutter is unaware of this special meaning in the context of *in* and simply interprets it as a preposition of place and his analysis, influenced by the whole sentence, is the following:

b) *in* = preposition of place

c) $\sqrt{\text{earnest}}$ (+N) = name of a city in the state of California

The audience's encyclopedias do list the entry for $\sqrt{\text{earnest}}$ in the environment of *in* and the diving of it forces the audience to interpret *in* as a preposition of place

even though the context is not that of preposition of place, and similarly $\sqrt{\text{learnest}}$, except the intended interpretation of it is not listed at all. This is highly incongruous and along with the entire exchange leads to a humorous effect.

Mister Peanutbutter is an anthropomorphic yellow Labrador whose personality is similar to that of a prototypical Labrador. He is a happy-go-lucky, people pleasing social butterfly with a slightly diminished intelligence, which is often reflected in his speech.

The following two examples are once again from Brooklyn Nine-Nine and feature two interesting instances of idiomatic decontextualizing.

(18) Jake: We got this whole tit for tat thing going and it's my time to tit. It's my tit turn. (...)

Holt: Thank you. For titting my tat.

Jake: Well thank you. For tating my tit. (B99, S05E12)

Example (26) presents a variation on de-cranberrization. In the idiomatic expression *tit for tat*, both *tit* and *tat* could be considered cranberry morphemes with homonymy excluded, as homonyms get two different entries in the encyclopedia (Acquaviva, 2014). The root analysis then may look like this:

a) $\sqrt{\text{tit}}$ (+for tat, +N) = a favor

b) $\sqrt{\text{tat}}$ (+for tit, +N) = a favor

c) $\sqrt{\text{tit}}$ (+N) = \emptyset (cranberry morpheme)

d) $\sqrt{\text{tat}}$ (+N) = \emptyset (cranberry morpheme)

In (26) Jake analyzed *tit* as a verb

e) $\sqrt{\text{tit}}$ (+V) = to do someone a favor

As the form *titting one's tat/tating one's tit* is later used, the analysis seems to be as follows:

f) $\sqrt{\text{titting}}$ (one's tat, +V) = fulfilling one's need, solving one's issue

This analysis seems so be consistent even if the roots are reversed. It can be said the interpretation is highly flexible.

Comedy, in this case, is also achieved by the fact that the root *tit* is a homophone with a root denoting *breast*. This interpretation is caused by the root *tit*

being taken out of its cranberry context which leads to the other, homophonous entry being assumed as the root. This is, of course, funny.

The exchange is incongruous in its complete uprooting of the idiomatic expression as well as the newly created interpretations for standing entries in the audience's encyclopedias.

As mentioned in (14), Jake the character can be quite creative with language as an overcompensation for his limited vocabulary. Although, it can be presumed the writers' intentions were to show that Jake does not know the meaning of the *tit for tat* idiom, and given his childish nature, it is only fitting that he finds it amusing.

(19) Gina: He's in a meeting and you cannot be seen stopping by for chits and or chats. (B99, S03E04)

Example (27) takes advantage of the two homonymous encyclopedic entries of two roots both of which are phonetically represented as *chit*. The root in *chit chat* undergoes this analysis:

a) $\sqrt{\text{chit}}$ (+chat) = small, trivial, unimportant – originated from reduplication of *chat*,

while its homonymous counterpart undergoes a different analysis:

b) $\sqrt{\text{chit}}$ (+N) = an owed favor

It is noteworthy that although being recognized as an independent root which in context of N takes on the meaning a "slip of paper with writing on it, especially a sum owed" ("Chit.") by most major dictionaries, *chit* is mostly used in the idiomatic expression to *call in one's chit*. It could be said *chit* is on its way to becoming a cranberry morpheme (or, in this case, a caboodle item) as it is no longer in active use by younger generations¹.

¹ Based on an informal internet survey (<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Z5TMHTV>) made by the author on the 2nd of April, 2018. In the survey, of the 20 respondents (all with at least a high school education and all under 30 years of age) only one person recalled what *chit* means on its own and all respondents stated *chit chat* when asked for an expression, collocation or other association, with one person also recalling *call in one's chit*. However, a sample of 20 people cannot be considered sufficient and the conclusion of the survey - *chit* is becoming a caboodle item - only serves as a suggestion.

Example (27) uses this duplicity by creating a syntactic environment in which *chit* remains in close enough proximity to still be interpretable in the $\sqrt{\text{chit}}$ (+chat) meaning, while also receiving plural form to denote the other encyclopedic entry.

The character of Gina is portrayed as highly intelligent, narcissistic, aloof and mysterious. She tends to use language in a very grandiose manner and is even known to incorporate emoticons into everyday speech. It is obvious the writers take Gina's lines as an opportunity to be adventurous with morphological and syntactic humor.

The last example is from *Bojack Horseman* and deals with language affected by the internet age.

(20) Stefani Stilton: It wasn't even on fleek, fleek was on it. (*Bojack Horseman*, S03E12)

The phrase *on fleek* is an idiomatic phrase meaning well-groomed, stylish, attractive. It is a quite young and unconventional expression, having gathered wide popularity in 2014 by means of the short-video hosting service Vine, specifically a video by Kyla Newman, which became popular in a short period of time in which the phrase entered the encyclopedias of the internet user generations and subsequently of the general public. ("Fleek.") As is usual with viral internet crazes, the phrase has since become obsolete and acquired instead an ironic interpretation.

The roots analysis of the phrase would be:

a) $\sqrt{\text{fleek}}$ (+on, +ADJ) = extremely attractive, well groomed

However, in (20), the root was used out of the context of *on*, causing the analysis to change

b) $\sqrt{\text{fleek}}$ (+N) = an independent root

By isolating the element *fleek* from its usual context, the audience is confronted with its lack of an independent entry with the context of N in their encyclopedias and is left to interpret it to a comedic effect.

This line was spoken by a successful online magazine owner who spends most of her time online, very tech savvy and up-to-date on the newest slang and internet terminology. The writers possibly aimed to parody the internet culture of short-lived

slang by having the character try to replace it or one-up it, while effectively stripping it of its idiomatic meaning and highlighting its arbitrary nature.

While internet slang, or internet speech, could be considered inconsequential or nonsensical, it seems to be extremely creative and reflective on the capacity for language and word creation. For these reasons it has the potential to be exceedingly interesting from a linguistic point of view and there is a lot of research to be conducted.

Idiomatic expressions are perhaps the most accessible illustration of the Roots Theory analysis as several of the examples were able to undergo a word-for-word analysis. Similarly, it was apparent where the point of incongruity was located in the expression and where the comedic interpretation arose. For these reasons, it can be claimed that idiomatic jokes are the most overtly funny, see Discussion.

Idiomatic decontextualizing seems to be most consistently used as a strategy for portrayal of character traits, both negative and positive, out of all three of the phenomena discussed.

In this chapter I introduced three morphological strategies for creating comedic effect in American TV shows. An assortment of examples was presented for each of them, and analyzed according to The Roots Theory, The Theory of Incongruity and a cautious link between the character and the quote was offered.

For more examples, see Appendix 1.

5. Discussion

In chapters one and two, the framework for this thesis was established. I have introduced and defined the Roots Theory and the Theory of Incongruity, as well as relevant terminology – Encyclopedia, cranberry morphemes, caboodle items.

In the analysis portion of the thesis, the three morphological phenomena were demonstrated using examples from popular American TV shows.

5.1 Backformation results

Examples such as *gress/regress*, *bacle/debacle* and *Mandar/Mandarin* suggest that Roots Theory is highly useful and productive in comedy – especially with Latin affixes and/or cranberry morphemes.

Incongruity arises when the desired encyclopedic entry for the roots is missing on the lists in the minds of the audience, creating the sudden comedic effect of confusion and subsequent understanding and creating or adjusting that entry for the purposes of the joke.

Backformation seems to mainly communicate lack of knowledge in comedy writing, given the number of examples with Latin affixes. Creativity and ability to improvise can also be seen as the writer's intended quality to illustrate.

5.2 Conversion results

In conversion comedy writing, the roots which are usually in a certain environment (e.g. environment of a noun, a verb, an adjective) where they acquire meaning corresponding to the environment, appear in an unusual, marked environment.

The appearance of a root in an unfamiliar context is incongruous and the audience is again forced to adjust their encyclopedic entries, level of incongruity also depends on to what degree the interpretation is transformed. For example, *breakthroughed* does not shift significantly in meaning, while *lemonading* acquires a completely new interpretation. This then influences the degree of the incongruity and therefore of the comedic effect.

The writers' usage of conversion appears to be varied, with none distinctively more frequent than the others.

5.3 Idiomatic decontextualization

The Roots Theory states about idiomatic expressions that the roots get special meanings in the idiomatic context. This context tends to be very specific, often including more than two or three elements. If the context is disrupted or changed, the idiomatic meaning is dissolved.

Comedic effect is achieved when either the idiomatic context is disrupted but the intended meaning is preserved (*borrow one's thunder, fleek is on it*) or if the idiomatic context is intact but the interpretation is not that of the idiom (*tit for tat, in earnest*) This causes incongruity for the audience as their encyclopedias list the specific interpretation and assigning a different interpretation to the root in the idiomatic context is unexpected.

Idiomatic decontextualization jokes seem to be comedically effective for portraying distinctive character traits and creating nuanced jokes, perhaps because of the large amount of context-interpretation variations and therefore of opportunities to create incongruity and comedy. Idiomatic jokes also tend to be more distinctive and self-contained jokes. This is possibly because idiom-based jokes deal with roots rather than affixes, cranberry morphemes and environments of verbs or nouns, which the audience might not be aware of consciously. In other words, the audience might not be able to instantly explain why they laughed at *his cappa was detated*, they are, however, more likely to accurately explain why *in Earnest, California!* is funny.

6. Conclusion

The aim of the thesis was to examine instances of comedy in contemporary American TV shows based on morphological phenomena, namely backformation, conversion and idiomatic expressions. A sum of fifteen examples across the three phenomena was analyzed first in the Roots Theory framework and subsequently in terms of the Incongruity Theory of humor.

The main proposition was that morphological jokes are possible due to the Roots Theory, which states that no root has a meaning before it is inserted into syntax. Based on the results, it is clear the Roots Theory is the explanation behind a variety of morphological jokes. A conclusion is drawn that it is particularly in the Encyclopedia where the incongruity occurs. This is directly connected to the Theory of Incongruity, which states that when the expectation differs from the outcome, it is startling and humorous. This is why when the list of entries in the Encyclopedia of the character/the writer of the joke does not match the audience's list of entries for a particular root, the expectation as to the interpretations are subverted and comedy is achieved.

Secondly, a partial goal was to examine to what extent morphological jokes are character driven. It was demonstrated that morphological jokes are often used by writers to expand upon or driven by the character, especially to communicate creativity or lack of education.

7. Resumé

Cílem této práce bylo rozebrat příklady vtipů v současných amerických seriálech, které jsou založeny na morfologických fenoménech, specificky backformace, konverze a idiomatické výrazy. Celkem 16 příkladů bylo analyzováno pomocí Teorie Kořenů a posléze z hlediska Teorie Inkongruence.

Hlavní teze práce tvrdila, že morfologické vtipy jsou možné díky Teorii Kořenů, která uvádí, že žádný kořen nemá význam dokud není zasazený do syntaxe. Na základě výsledků je zřejmé, že Teorie Kořenů stojí za mnoha druhy morfologických vtipů. Lze dospět k závěru, že tento nesoulad vzniká zejména v Encyklopedii, což je přímo spojeno s Teorií Inkongruence, která uvádí, že když se očekávání liší od výsledku, je to překvapivé a humorné. Toto je důvodem proč, když se seznam položek v Encyklopedii postavy/spisovatele vtipu neshoduje s Encyklopedií diváků, očekávání o interpretaci kořenů jsou nenaplněna a je dosaženo humoru.

Dílčím cílem bylo zjistit do jaké míry jsou morfologické vtipy založeny na dané postavě. Lze tvrdit, že scénáristé často využívají morfologické vtipy k rozvinutí postav nebo že jsou motivovány osobností postavy, zejména aby zprostředkovali kreativitu či nedostatek vzdělání.

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Annotation

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Title of the Bachelor Thesis: Morphology as a Source of Comedy in American TV Shows

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This thesis analyzes the usage of morphological phenomena, namely backformation, conversion and idiomatic expressions, in contemporary American TV shows. Examples are analyzed using the Roots Theory framework and subsequently in terms of the Theory of Incongruity to examine what causes the audience to interpret the morphological jokes as funny.

Anotace

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Tato práce se zabývá použitím morfologických fenoménů, zejména backformace, konverze a idiomatických výrazů, v současných amerických seriálech. Příklady jsou analyzovány v rámci Teorie Kořenů a posléze z hlediska Teorie Inkongruence za účelem zjištění co způsobuje humornou interpretaci morfologických vtipů diváky.

Appendix

	Brooklyn Nine-Nine	Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt
Backformation	Jake: Don't worry. It's gonna be fine. We just have to turn this <i>debacle</i> into a straight-up " <i>bacle</i> ." (S03E06)	Kimmy: Well, college was a waste of time. What do I need to learn Mandarin for? I don't want to go to Mandar. (S03E13)
		Jacqueline: She had to testify in that trial thingy in Indiana. Lillian: In Diana? I barely know Diana. (S01E13)
		Austin: This party is a rejection of Valentine's Day, 'cause it's so regressive. Kimmy: I know. Regressive, meaning it gresses, again, like over and over. Enough with the gressing already! (S03E06)
Conversion	Rosa: Just when I thought he couldn't be any more the worst, he out the worsts himself. (S03E04)	Andrea: Hey, who breakthroughed you on the mom stuff? (S02E12)
	Gina: Told you. He just needed to be alpha'd. Boyle: Is that what happened, or did I just beta you into protecting me? (S03E19)	Titus: I'm not over-reacting! I'm doing what any reasonable person would do in this situation, I'm lemonading. (S03E02)
	Holt: This isn't about you. Amy: Don't this-isn't-about-you me, I'm this-isn't-about-youing you! (S02E02)	
Idiomatic Decontextualizing	Amy: Absolutely, sir. I won't just head it up, I will head and shoulders it up. I will dive in, swim around it, and just... be all together good with it.(S01E03)	Kimmy: But you're all full of something. It! (S03E08)
	Terry: Boyle gets cold a lot because of what he calls his medically diagnosed thin skin. (S01E15)	Lilian: But then, you put your money where your mouth is. And now, I'd like to put my mouth where your mouth is. (S03E07)
	Jake: And I am choosing Charles because he's less likely to steal my thunder. Charles: I would never steal his thunder. I-I'd be afraid to borrow it. (S01E05)	Titus: You better make like me eating beans drunk and spill the beans. (S03E07)
	Jake: Plus we got this whole tit for tat thing going and it's my time to tit. It's my tit turn. Holt: Thank you. For titting my tat. Jake: Well thank you. For tating my tit. (S05E12)	Jacquelin: I'm sorry but if you're going to remember what it's like to be an underdog, I'm going to have to pile some dogs on you. (S03E12)
	Gina: He's in a meeting and you cannot be seen stopping by for chits and or chats. (S03E04)	Kimmy: Anger is bad and ugly, it's the opposite of who I wanna be. So I don't get pissed off! I get pissed ON. (S01E10)
Gina: This is a miscarriage of justice. (S01E14)		

	Bojack Horseman	Happy Endings	Other Shows
Backformation			Micheal: He leaves work, he's on his way home and wham! His cappa is detated from his head! (The Office S03E04)
Conversion		Max: I mean we've already played diner, maid, carwash, dog kidnapper and bringer backer for a fifty dollar rewarder, I don't know what else to do with you guys. (S02E08)	Mona Lisa: You told me to look for VIPs and my daddy is the VI-est P I know. (Parks and Recreation S06E22)
		Jane: I told you guys to come an hour earlier so you wouldn't be late. Alex: You witch! You tricked us! You can't just walk around daylight savingsing people! (S02E14)	
		Max: That is not fresh squeezed juice, that is from concentrate. Concentrate, Jane! Alex: I'm trying, but I don't know what you're talking about! (S03E02)	
Idiomatic Decontextualizing	Random: It wasn't even on fleek, fleek was on it. (S03E12)	Alex: Kathryn Higel's panel was incredible. Here's the chain, off it. (S02E10)	Mindy: She cleaned hotel rooms just to make ends meet. What is "ends meet (end's meat)" anyway? People are always talking about it. Is that, like, the last, fatty part of the rump roast? It sounds delicious. I'd love to try it. (The Mindy Project, S03E02)
	Todd: I was hoisted by my own petard. The one petard I thought would never hoist me! (S03E10)	Max: I screwed the pooch. I wined it, I dined it, I told it it was cute and that I valued its opinions even though I don't and then I screwed it. (S03E16)	
	Mister Peanutbutter: If we do get the signatures we need, the campaign will begin in.... where did you say again Katrina? Katrina: Earnest. When we do get the signatures, the campaign will begin in earnest. Mister Peanutbutter: Right! Earnest, California! (04E01)	Brad: So you really think I could pull off that slim fit James Perse crew neck T-shirt? Guy: As long as I can be there when you pull it off! (S02E01)	
		Brad: This year, I am so angry I don't even want that slender dragon to get the satisfaction of seeing me rage-spend. So let's just rage-chill instead. Rage-get caught up on Downton Abbey. (S02E15)	