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About the Oita Text Forum

The Oita Text Forum was founded in August 2008 by five scholars teaching in Japan and China. The ultimate purpose of this forum is to contribute to the advancement of text studies by providing scholars an open forum for exchanging information and presenting their innovative ideas and theories on text and the processes of text creation.

The OTF Dream

We create texts every day, with the term 'text' being defined as 'any entity that has a meaning as a whole and can be broken down into parts'. We cannot live without creating texts. Yet, the entire process of text generation is yet to be elucidated. This elucidation must be done from at least the following two perspectives: sociological and cognitive. If it is possible to assume that text generation takes place in the mind, it can be noted that the former approach examines the relationship between the type of texts that are generated and their social situation, and that the latter examines what information is stored in memory and how the information stored is converted into a conventionalized structure.

The elucidation of the process of text generation requires these two approaches. But a footnote should be added. That is to say, just juxtaposing the two approaches would not lead us to the elucidation of the whole process of text generation. The two approaches must work together, be willing to listen to each other, and search for theories that are viable both cognitively and sociologically, since if something is true cognitively, it must also be true sociologically, and vice versa. The OTF endeavours to contribute to the development of the study of text and text generation by maintaining balance between those two approaches. It should be noted, however, that the OTF does not advocate for any particular theory. It is an academically open forum which encourages scholars to decide for themselves which theory to adopt.

The OTF is currently run by six executive members listed below:

- James Blackwell (Center for Language Education, Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University, JAPAN)
- Wendy L. Bowcher (School of Foreign Languages, Sun Yat-sen University, CHINA)
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Of these six members, Keizo Nanri is the current convenor. He receives abstracts submitted to the OTF workshop and forwards them to the other members to review. The executive committee thus also functions as a reviewing committee.

Besides this executive committee, the OTF has an advisor, Dr. Sugeno Michio, former President of the International Fuzzy Systems Association.

The OTF does not charge any fees.

The OTF has its own online journal, the *International Journal of the Oita Text Forum*, which adopts a blind refereeing system. The executive committee members and the scholars listed below form the editorial board of the Journal.

- Derek Irwin (Division of English Studies, The University of Nottingham, Ningbo, CHINA)
- Edward McDonald (School of International Studies, The University of New South Wales, AUSTRALIA)

- Michael O'Donnell (Universidad Autonoma de Madrid, SPAIN)
- Jonathan J. Webster (The Halliday Centre for Intelligent Application of Language Studies, The City University of Hong Kong, CHINA)

About the *International Journal of the Oita Text Forum*

We welcome submissions of articles on any topic related to text, discourse, or text generation.

While preference is given to manuscripts that have been presented at an OTF Workshop, all manuscripts submitted to the IJOTF are accepted on the condition that they have not been previously published, and are not under consideration or in press elsewhere. Contributions are forwarded for review at the discretion of the chief editors of the journal. Accepted manuscripts will be only published online.

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On the Mode of the Sitcom Discourse Interpretation: on the Corpus of the Sitcom *Friends*

Magdaléna Bilá, Alena Kačmárová, and Anna Džambová

Abstract

The topic falls into the field of discourse analysis, namely into the discourse of film dialog. We aim to present the outcomes of our preliminary research focused on semantically identical utterances in quasi-natural conversational speech in three language versions (original English and dubbed German and Slovak). The paper analyzes the communication style of medially transformed speech. The corpus of the study is an episode from *Friends*. We describe sitcom discourse in order to explore what position this discourse occupies on the “spokenness – writtenness” continuum. The utilized method is the stylistic description of the target sitcom discourse in terms of specifying speech-related characteristics (Crystal, 2001) and features typifying speech proposed by Mistrík (1997). Adopting Crystal’s (2001) approach, the target sitcom seems to be time-bound, spontaneous, typical of face-to-face interaction, loosely structured, socially interactive, relatively immediately revisable, and prosodically rich; however, some modification in the course of the making of the text presented to the viewer is necessary. Based on Mistrík’s features the target discourse approximates real dialog primarily characterized by vocality, conversationality, familiarity, and situationality, and marginally by expressiveness (due to its being substituted with non-verbal means). At the same time, however, this discourse type bears traces of text to be read – in other words, such text that is intended to create an illusion of spontaneous speech, more precisely to be acted out as if it was not written. The explored features are explained and exemplified utilizing portions from both the original and dubbed versions of the target corpus.

KEYWORDS: discourse analysis, film dialog, spokenness, writtenness, pause duration, tonic stress placement, sentence structure.

Introduction

The research of the present paper is targeted at the language of sitcom discourse; its aim is to identify the position of this discourse type on a virtual scale of “spokenness – writtenness”. Traditional (almost outdated) approaches to grouping text styles undertake a bipolar approach; however, due to the incessant emergence of IT variations of text styles this issue necessitates scalar reading. Our understanding is that sitcom discourse appears closer to spokenness, yet bears imprints of writtenness. The sitcom is typically associated with the USA as its country of origin; for this reason, the first choice of language material to be researched is a sitcom of American production (in our case – *Friends*). In order to validate the data of the original English version, two other language versions (dubbed into German and into Slovak) of the same episode were considered supportive material for double-checking the truth value of the initial annotators’ decisions. The paper presents research into two parallel corpora – sound material and transcripts of an episode from *Friends* (The One When No One Proposes, episode 1, season IX, 2004/2005) in three language versions. The utilized method is the stylistic description of the sitcom discourse in terms of specifying speech-related characteristics (Crystal, 2001), and with regard to vocality, conversationality, familiarity, contextuality, and expressiveness (Mistrík, 1997). Experimental phonetic research was carried out in the phonetic laboratory of the Institute of Slovak, Media, and Library Studies at the Faculty of Arts, Prešov University; Multispeech software produced by Kay Pentax was used.

The speech-related characteristics of the target sitcom

The verbal performance of *Friends* characters bears strong resemblance to speech, more specifically conversation. The stylistics literature characterizes conversation as typically spontaneous, impromptu, and loosely structured. A more focused characteristic of speech is provided by Crystal (2001, p. 25, 28): “Speech is typically time-bound, spontaneous, face-to-face, socially interactive, loosely structured, immediately revisable, and prosodically rich.” Based on anecdotal evidence, these features can be adopted to the target discourse with some restrictions and/or distinctiveness. They are universally valid for sitcom discourse as such; hence their interpretation does not relate to a particular episode, contrarily, it provides general characteristics of *Friends*.

1. The *time-bound* character of the target discourse implies the actual presence of interactants, i.e. “... the speaker has a particular addressee (or several addressees) in mind” (Crystal, 2001, p. 26). It might be exemplified by the following exchange:

Joey: Hey, Ross is here! Hey, look, it’s my good friend Ross! Hey, Ross.

Ross: Hey, Joey. Hey, you.

Rachel: Hey, you.

Based on the situational reference, in her answer, Rachel addresses Joey and Ross, even though she does not explicitly mention their name.

The comparison of natural speech and sitcom discourse reveals that while in real conversation the interactants communicate in real time and an instant response is the rule, in sitcom discourse (from the viewpoint of a viewer), the communication does not take place in real time; however, when considering the storyline the communication time is real. This is to say that in sitcom discourse the interactants are truly present and take turns as necessary; during the make-up of the mere episode it may well happen that turn-taking slows down for some unpredictable reasons (e.g. ruining the turn, recurrent improvement of the scene, etc.). Even so, in the final version of the scene available to a viewer, turn-taking is smooth, i.e. interactants’ responses come relatively immediately.

2. The *spontaneous* character of natural speech means that it bears traces of no planning in advance and thinking while ‘talking’. In sitcom discourse, spontaneity is acquired in the process of shooting as if interactants were thinking and acting at the same time. Such

interaction seems to be the outcome of combining a good script and actors' performances. The illusion of spontaneous dialogic utterance is achieved through multiple intentional modifications of prefabricated characters' lines. Moreover, the final outcome is projected in such a form that it bears strong resemblance to natural speech with features like false starts [1], repetition [2], pause fillers, or discourse markers [3]; for example:

Ross: but with everything that's been going on and with Emma, I'm.... || I've been feeling.... [1] [2]

Rachel: Yeah, I know. I've been feeling.... [2]

Ross: Yeah?

Rachel: Yeah.

Ross: **Okay, well, that-- Wow, okay, well--** Then maybe at least we can talk about us again? [3]

Rachel: Yeah. Maybe.

Ross: **Well, good. Okay. I kind of think, you know, if we, || if--** You're wearing the ring. [3] [1]

3. *Face-to-face* interaction, typical of both real conversation and sitcom discourse, presupposes the actual presence of interactants and the usage of language and paralinguistic. The investigated communication does not lack eye contact, facial expressions, or gestures (otherwise also typical of real conversation); it is body language that adds to the distinctiveness of the communication situation in the sitcom due to the fact that it illustrates meaning more clearly than verbal expressions. Via the actors' performances words create a vivid picture and the interaction becomes truly interpersonal.
4. Conversation is by its nature *socially interactive*, and accordingly it provides opportunities for building and maintaining relationships whether in real conversation or in sitcom discourse. In the target discourse, social interaction is a priority since *Friends* represents a community in which its members try to resolve 'life matters', most often issues related to relationships, family, and work. Moreover, in the sitcom, interactivity is reflected in its mere production. Shooting happens in front of a live audience whose laughter may as well generate authentic atmosphere and an illusion of a live broadcast; in so doing, it approximates it to a conversational comedy performed on a stage (Slunčák, 2010).

The feature of social interactivity in the target sitcom can be exemplified by describing the basic set of characters. The core six characters are Rachel Green, Monica Geller, Phoebe Buffay, Joey Tribbiani, Chandler Bing, and Ross Geller (Monica's older brother). They form the basic community of the present sitcom, which as such can represent the concept of the community of practice. The concept is based on the process of social learning happening during long-term cooperation, team work and sharing ideas and approaches; regular interaction causes the group members to develop a new identity; they value team competencies, collectivism, and building relationships. The target party of six characters has balanced gender distribution; they are young single people in their early 30s who perceive one another as a family – such a model replaces a traditional nuclear family. In their value system, striving for self-realization, career-building, and establishing a professional status, all come before starting a family.

5. Spoken utterances can be characterized as *loosely structured*. In other words, they are often frequented by deictic expressions, repetition, rephrasing, filler phrases, hesitations, aposiopesis, generalized vocabulary, qualifying expressions, interjections, address terms, etc. In the target discourse, loose structure is manifested in the prevalence of short and simple sentences. The following mini-dialog serves as illustration:

Joey: I can come back.

Ross: Wait. Wait. Wait. Joey, did you propose to her?

Joey: No.

Rachel: Yes, you did.

Joey: Actually, technically, I didn't.
 Rachel: Well, then, why did you give me a ring?
 Ross: Wait. You gave her the ring?
 Joey: No, and I did not ask her to marry me.
 Rachel: Yes, you did.
 Joey: No, I didn't.
 Rachel: Yes, you did.
 Joey: No, I didn't.

More examples are provided in the following section.

6. The feature of being *immediately revisable* can be approached as follows. Rethinking the utterance is feasible, yet with consequences. In real conversation, the revision of what has been said is possible but this does not erase the error made; the speaker has to endure the consequences (Crystal, 2001). In the sitcom, error revision takes place on two levels: on the level of producing characters' lines and on that of self-correction as part of a storyline. On the former, some turns are recurrently corrected; even so, in the final version the originally considered alternatives are never present. The final product should bring the desired effect. It is the author's decision if the character's line will be faultless or if the character 'is mistaken' and immediately self-corrects. The aim of such intended correction is to provide a framework for a humorous situation and/or gag; for example in one of the final dialogs of the chosen episode, Rachel corrects herself and in doing so resolves the misunderstanding that was the central theme of the episode:
 Rachel: Yes, you did. Oh, my God, no, you didn't.
7. Speech, by its nature, is *prosodically rich*. Prosody includes intonation, tempo, rhythm, stress, etc. Even though this is not purely spontaneous speech, it is produced with a specific intent in mind. For this reason the utilization of the above prosodic features is stylized; probably the outcome is the result of multiple modification so that the best quality recording is achieved for both the producer and the viewer. This is discussed in the following section which provides insights into the spoken mode of the sitcom discourse.

The features of the spoken mode in the target episode

An Opening Note

We adhere to the view that the language means of the target discourse manifest oral forms of natural communication. In order to specify such resemblance, it is necessary to provide more in-depth description of the target verbal performance. Natural conversation has been the object of several studies, even comparative studies; e.g. Quaglio (2009) conducted a multifaceted analysis of two corpora – *Friends* and natural conversation. His pilot analysis yielded similar scores, that of 34.4 on D1¹ for *Friends* and 35.3 for face-to-face conversation (in his view, the difference being most probably ascribable to the limited range of settings, interaction types, and topics in *Friends*), which supports the claim that sitcom conversation resembles natural conversation in the linguistic features described in footnote 1 (Quaglio, 2009, p. 140). Our aim is to study an episode of *Friends* in order to compare, i.e. to examine the level of similarities existing between natural conversation and sitcom discourse. In Slovak linguistics practice, the following terms are used to describe natural oral communication (the terms are adopted from Mistrík, 1997, p. 502 – 507): *vocality*, *conversationality*, *familiarity*, *contextuality* and *expressiveness* (our translation of the terms from Slovak into English). We conducted an analysis to explore how these features operate in the sitcom environment; a brief commentary on each of them is supplemented with examples.

Vocality

On pause duration. The term *vocality* is used to express the vocal nature of the studied discourse (in contrast to e.g. the non-vocal nature of sign language). It is related to the prosodic

features which play a considerable role in semantic transfer. Each language makes use of a variety of means of transmitting information from a speaker to a perceiver, and suprasegmentals (resulting from temporal, force, and tone modulation) play a major role in interpreting its meaning. Our research focuses on two out of three suprasegmentals, namely pause duration and tonic stress. Pause in addition to its physiological function in communication also fulfills the role of grammar facts, i.e. it influences rhythmic patterning of speech and segmenting an utterance (Sabol and Zimmermann, 1984; Zellner, 1994; Stock, 1996; Viola and Madureira, 2008). Tonic stress is generally carried by the word that is the most important with regard to meaning (Cruttenden, 1997). In other words, tonic stress eliminates a potential or real possibility of interpreting an utterance in a manner different from a speaker's intention.

The pause occupies a unique position within the suprasegmentals in that the segmentation by means of pauses divides the continuous speech signal into meaningful units ("Wortgruppen", cf Stock, 1996); in other words, grammatical pauses can be regarded as a major tool of text structuring. A study on the duration of intrasentential grammatical pauses was carried out (Bilá – Džambová – Kačmárová, 2011) on a sample of 50 utterances (altogether 272 pauses) from the target episode. The sound material was analyzed by means of phonetic methods based on a combination of computer analysis and perceptual tests including the interlingual comparison and contrast. With regard to pause measurement, the focus was on silent intrasentential pauses, and the computer analysis was verified by perceptual checks. The analysis utilized the classification introduced by Sabol and Zimmermann (1984, p. 227 – 228) who recognize the following pause types:

1. Zero pause or extremely short pause (≤ 50 ms)
2. Very short pause (50 ms – ≤ 100 ms)
3. Short pause (100 ms – ≤ 300 ms)
4. Normal/optimal (300 ms – ≤ 1350 ms)
5. Long pause (1 350 ms – $\leq 2 200$ ms)
6. Very long pause (2 200 ms – $\leq 2 800$ ms)
7. Extremely long pause (≥ 2800 ms).

Our choice of this classification is justified by the fact that Sabol and Zimmermann's typology seems to be more precise than other typologies developed until now. Our phonetic analysis revealed the highest frequency of extremely short pauses both in the corpus as a whole and in individual language versions, as indicated in the table and Figure below (Table 1, Figure 1).

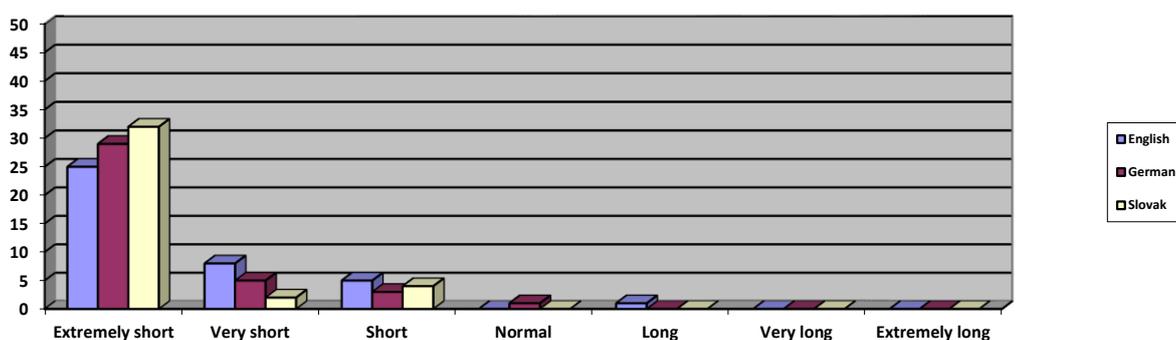
Table 1. The occurrence of pause types in the first 50 utterances in the whole corpus

<i>Pause type</i>	<i>%</i>
Extremely short pause	75.0
Very short pause	18.7
Short pause	3.7
Optimum pause	2.2
Long pause	0.4
Very long pause	0.0
Extremely long pause	0.0

Pause duration is related to the style of the text in which it occurs (Sabol and Zimmermann 1979, p. 54 – 55). In their longitudinal study, they explored three text styles (informal/colloquial – publicistic/journalistic – artistic) with the following outcomes: the pause occurrence was lowest in the informal/colloquial style, it increased in the publicistic/journalistic style, and was highest in the artistic style. With regard to pause duration, the typology looks different: the shortest pauses occurred in the publicistic/journalistic style and longer pauses in the informal/colloquial and artistic styles. The reason might be that impromptu speech needs more planning time and is

typified by hesitation pauses. Conversely, the publicistic style relies on a pre-planned, rehearsed performance; it is read aloud, not produced on the spot. Campione and Veronis (online) conducted a large-scale multilingual study of silent pause duration in read speech and spontaneous speech in five languages (English, French, German, Italian, and Spanish). The outcomes of their research show that pauses occur more often in read speech than in spontaneous speech, and that they are shorter in the former than in the latter.

Figure 1. The occurrence of pauses in the first 50 utterances in 3 language versions



Our study on film sitcom discourse revealed that the actors' speech (with regard to pauses) approximates read text in the above research studies. Our target corpus can be referred to as pre-scripted text modified several times until it suits the needs of the storyline and the intent of the scriptwriter and producer. Actors become familiar with the text and produce the memorized version of the lines. This influences the overall form of the verbal product offered to the viewer. The examined sample provides evidence of the absence of long, very long and extremely long pauses, which approximates this genre to the read text in the above studies. Our research also evidences the presence of optimum, short, very short, and extremely short pauses; the last having high incidence and appearing most frequently out of the present pause types. With regard to this outcome, our preliminary study shows a similarity to a publicistic/journalistic style (which implies texts to be read).

On the tonic stress and pause interrelation. A further aspect worth contemplation is the interrelation between pause and tonic stress placement. We focused on the occurrence of pauses in pre- and post-emphatic positions. The analysis of the target episode revealed five different combinations based on what pause type occurred in the pre-emphatic position:

- Group 1: inter-sentential pause
- Group 2 (intra-sentential pause): extremely short pause
- Group 3 (intra-sentential pause): very short pause
- Group 4 (intra-sentential pause): short pause
- Group 5 (intra-sentential pause): normal/optimal pause

Within each group we identified the combination of these pauses with other pause types in post-emphatic positions. Our investigation focuses on intra-sentential pauses; since the first group is a combination of tonic stress and inter-sentential pauses and others, we decided to exclude it from our study. The following table (Tab 2) presents the occurrence of pause types in pre- and post-emphatic positions in three language versions.

The interrelation between pause and tonic stress is very close (cf Sabol 2006). The reason is that a speaker calls a listener's attention to a very important piece of information not only by an intonation contour and volume of speech but also by means of a longer pause in a pre-emphatic position. Sabol's experimental measurements (2006) point to the fact that, communication-wise, a pause in a pre-emphatic position is more important than a pause in a post-emphatic position. A

pause preceding an emphasized word prepares an addressee to identify the salient part of an utterance. A pause following an emphasized word completes the information unit; hence an addressee may not recognize such a pause. Sabol's research (2006) indicates that a pause in a pre-emphatic position is longer than that in a post-emphatic position. He concludes that the co-operation of the two suprasegmentals is evident and purposeful in communication. Our study on interconnectedness of pre- and post-emphatic intra-sentential pauses and tonic stress showed that it was extremely short pauses rather than other types of pauses that, generally, prevailed in the pre-emphatic position. Another outcome is that in the prevailing number of utterances, pauses in the pre-emphatic position were shorter than those in the post-emphatic position.

Table 2. The occurrence of pause types in pre- and post-emphatic positions in three language versions

1	2	3	4	5
(---) ... (ES)	(ES) ... (ES)	(VS) ... (ES)	(S) ... (ES)	(N/O) ... (ES)
(---) ... (VS)	(ES) ... (VS)	(VS) ... (VS)	(S) ... (---)	
(---) ... (---)	(ES) ... (S)	(VS) ... (N/O)		
	(ES) ... (N/O)	(VS) ... (---)		
	(ES) ... (---)			
----	English: 69	English: 15	English: 6	English: 0
	German: 51	German: 8	German: 0	German: 0
	Slovak: 64	Slovak: 14	Slovak: 0	Slovak: 4

Conversationality

Conversationality implies a dialogic mode of conversation which is inherently associated with contact-establishing means, such as address (hypocorisms being very common), evaluation comments, politeness strategies, discourse markers, as well as those providing feedback (Mistrík, 1997). The studied discourse provided for all of these features. Examples (hereinafter appearing in the order of English, German, and Slovak language versions) are as follows:

address

Joey: And Ross, I need to talk to you.
Und Ross, dir will ich auch was sagen.
A Ross, predovšetkým s tebou.

evaluation comments

Chandler: Okay, wow.
Na gut, wow.
Dobre, wow.

politeness strategies

Joey: I'm sorry. I meant, "No."
Tut mir leid, ich meinte nein.
Prepáč, myslel som nie.

discourse markers

Rachel: So... I guess we should make it official, huh?
Tja, dann. Sollten wir es jetzt offiziell machen. Findest du nicht auch?
Takže... Myslím, že by sme to mali urobiť oficiálne.

feedback provided

Phoebe: Have you thought any more about you and Rachel?
 Ross: Yeah, actually I was gonna talk to her when you guys came in the room.
 Hast du, hast du denn jetzt über Rachel und dich nachgedacht?
Ja, ich wollte gerade mit ihr reden, aber dann seid ihr auf einmal alle gekommen.
 Počúvaj, rozmýšľal si o sebe a o Rachel?
Áno, vlastne som s ňou chcel o tom hovoriť, keď ste tam vrazili.

Familiarity

Familiarity is linked with the private setting that tolerates lexical and grammatical slips. The focal discourse presents a group of six central characters involved in a variety of interpersonal (almost intimate) issues. Episode topics are numerous in *Friends* and it may well be this profusion of topics that makes the sitcom so appealing to viewers. Typically, a *Friends* episode has three main topics and approximately three support topics. This can be illustrated by the analysis of the target episode *The One When No One Proposes*. The three main topics are: (non)proposal to Rachel, Rachel's newly-born baby girl, Emma, and Monica and Chandler trying to get pregnant. Together with this, a number of side topics are developed (e.g. Aunt Liddie, returning the Game-boy, Rachel's engagement ring). If three main topics are taken as a mean number, then with 238 episodes of this sitcom it makes altogether 714 main topics. The vocabulary ranges from informal to colloquial; a certain amount of slang is present, too. In terms of grammar, standard and/or conventionalized constructions are in the majority. This discourse is primarily intended for a general viewer; hence, grammatical slips tend to be avoided. This is so in the original and dubbed language versions. The following extracts exemplify characters' being on familiar terms. This is visible through direct address, informal and colloquial lexis and grammatical structures, semantically empty phrases, discourse markers, contracted forms, etc.

The transcript of the original English version

Joey: Hey, Ross is here! Hey, look, it's my good friend Ross! Hey, Ross.
 Ross: Hey, Joey. Hey, you.
 Rachel: Hey, you.
 Joey: And he brought flowers! Thanks, Ross. I'm really more of a candy kind of guy.
 Ross: You're weird today.
 Ross: Listen, I wanted to talk to you about something.
 Rachel: Yeah, actually, I kind of need to talk to you too.
 Ross: Joey, could you give us a minute?
 Joey: No.
 Ross: What?
 Joey: I'm sorry. I meant, "No."

The transcript of the dubbed German version

Joey: Hey, was ist da? Hey. Das ist mein guter Freund Ross. Hey Ross.
 Ross: Hey Joey. Hey Rach.
 Rachel: Hey Ross.
 Joey: Du hast ja sogar Blumen mitgebracht? Hey danke Ross. Aber ich bin mehr für Süßigkeiten, Liebling.
 Ross: Du bist eigenartig. Rach, ich, ich möchte etwas mit dir besprechen.
 Rachel: Ja, ich wollte auch noch mit dir reden, es ist sehr wichtig.
 Ross: Würdest du uns alleine lassen, bitte?
 Joey: Nein.
 Ross: Was?
 Joey: Tut mir leid, ich meinte nein.

The transcript of the dubbed Slovak version

Joey: Hej, Ross je tu! Vidíš, môj dobrý priateľ Ross! Ahoj Ross.

Ross: Ahoj Joey. Ahoj, Rachel.

Rachel: Ahoj.

Joey: To je dobre. Pozri, priniesol kvety! Vďaka Ross, ale ja som skôr na sladkosti.

Ross: Dnes si čudný. Počuj, ja chcem sa s tebou o niečom porozprávať.

Rachel: Áno, vlastne aj ja s tebou potrebujem hovoriť.

Ross: Joey, dáš nám minútku?

Joey: Nie.

Ross: Čože?

Joey: Prepáč, myslel som nie.

Contextuality

The role of context. Contextuality entails the participants' awareness of the situation and the issue talked over, and is clearly exhibited through their relevant contributions. Contextuality implies situational context and extra-linguistic and paralinguistic means. In real conversation situational context is very helpful in interpreting a communication intention. In the focal discourse, not only is it a means of interpreting the message but is also many a time a source of amusement. It assists in carrying out semantic transfer and it often outweighs verbal conduct. Sharing a situational context and/or background information makes it possible to provide a relevant contribution; for example:

Dad: She went to pick up Aunt Liddy.

Monica: Aunt Liddy's coming? That means we get \$5 each!

Tante Liddy muss abgeholt werden.

Tante Liddy kommt? Dann bekommen wir alle fünf Dollar, Leute.

Tá šla vyzdvihnúť tetu Liddy.

Teta Liddy príde? Dostaneme každý päť dolárov!

Moreover, the involvement of the speaker and the shared knowledge allow for successful interpreting in the case of elliptical structures or deixis; for example:

ellipsis Monica: About what?

Was Phoebe?

Ale o čom?

deixis Joey: No, no. That was Jack.

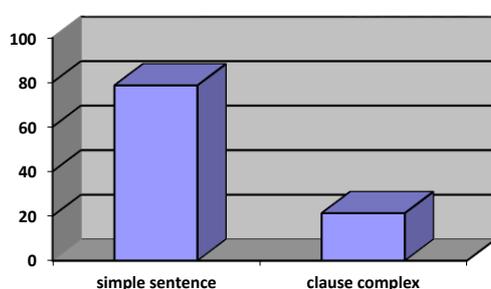
Nein, das war wirklich Jack.

Nie, nie. To bol Jack.

On syntactic structure. In a way, contextuality replaces complex sentence structures (which would be ineffective and boring). The sentence structure greatly influences the overall impression of how demanding the target discourse is in terms of comprehension. For this reason, an analysis of the sentence structure of the chosen episode was conducted. The utterances of the chosen episode were classified based on three criteria: 1) the number of finite verb forms, 2) grammatical structure, and 3) the presence or absence of secondary sentence elements (object, adverbial). Hence, the syntactic analysis was conducted within three dichotomous pairs: 1) simple sentences (containing one finite verb) vs. clause complexes (sentences containing more than one finite verb), 2) one-member sentences (minor sentences) vs. two-member sentences, and 3) non-extended sentences vs. extended sentences. The sentences were analyzed as syntactic constructs. For the purpose of a syntactic analysis, only the English version was studied since for the most part the dubbed versions copy the syntactic structure of the original version.

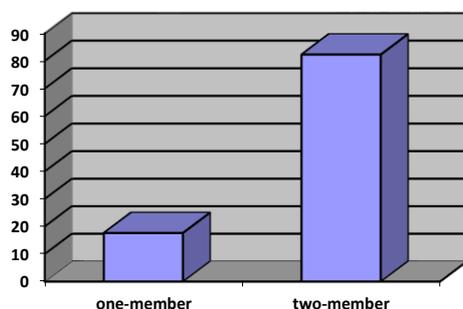
In the course of conducting research, we adhered to the following terms: an utterance, a sentence and a turn. An utterance embodied the modification of a sentence (syntactic construct) and the situationally and contextually determined attainment of a speaker's communicative intention delimited by speakers' swap (Crystal and Davy, 1973, Yule, 1996). A sentence signified a detached, independent (predicative or non-predicative) structure, relatively non-compositional in meaning, intonationally delimited, and with grammar-consistent word ordering (Oravec and Bajžíková, 1986). A turn represented a non-propositional unit of a dialogic structure (Bosák and Camutaliová, 1967). In the original English version of the chosen episode, 507 sentences as syntactic constructs were identified and classified within the three dichotomous pairs. In the first dichotomous pair, the discrimination between simple sentences and clause complexes (of any kind, whether compound, complex, or compound-complex) was considered. In our corpus, simple sentences significantly outnumbered clause complexes. Out of 507 sentences, 399 were simple sentences (78.70%), and 108 were clause complexes (21.30%), see Figure 2.

Figure 2. The occurrence of simple sentences and clause complexes expressed in percentage terms



The second step was the classification of sentences according to their grammar structure, which is to say discrimination between one-member and two-member sentences. In this dichotomous pair, the total number of sentences is higher than in the first one since clause complexes were divided into clauses and each clause was treated separately. Hence, the total number of the clauses to be considered was 651. Out of this number, 115 were one-member (17.67%), and 536 were two-member sentences/clauses (82.33%), see Figure 3.

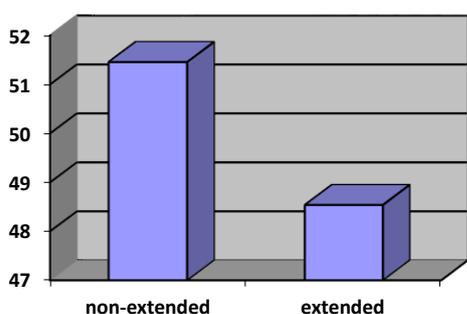
Figure 3. The occurrence of one-member and two-member sentences expressed in percentage terms



The third step was classification of the sentences based on what sentence elements were present. The total number of sentences was identical with that in the second dichotomous pair, i.e. 651. The clauses were classified as non-extended if only the subject and predicate were

present; the clauses were classified as extended if secondary sentence elements were present, too. Out of 651 sentences, 335 clauses were non-extended (51.46 %), while 316 clauses were extended (48.54 %), see Graph 4.

Graph 4. The occurrence of non-extended and extended sentences expressed in percentage terms



The syntactic analysis of the utterances in the chosen episode indicated the prevalence of simple sentences (SS) over clause complexes (CC), the prevalence of two-member sentences (2MS) over one-member sentences (1MS) and a slightly higher number of non-extended sentences (NES) over extended sentences (ES). The analysis indicated a high ratio of simple sentences vs. a very low ratio of clause complexes. In the dichotomous pair of one-member vs. two-member sentences, two-member sentences prevailed; however, due to the size of the corpus the occurrence of one-member sentences can be considered relatively high. The juxtaposition of non-extended and extended sentences reveals a high ratio of non-extended sentences, almost comparable with that of extended sentences. It can be assumed that such sentence structure mirrors spokenness, which is to say it manifests speaking as a process:

As explained by Halliday (1985: 81), “written language represents phenomena as products” and “spoken language represents phenomena as processes”. Whereas writing is done, finished, like an object, speech is being done, it is happening. In a film, the script has been written and is therefore an object. It has already happened. However, it is shown to the viewers as speech, as something that is happening – as a process (Romero-Fresco, 2009, p. 49) [his inverted commas].

Based on long-term contemplation of natural conversation by many linguists worldwide, the generalization of syntactic features of speech and speech-like phenomena can be found in different linguistic sources (e.g. Biber et al 1999, Halliday 1989, Crystal and Davy 1969, Ferenčík 2003, Urbanová and Oakland 2002). Taken these as points of reference, the target discourse (film dialog) can be understood as a product creating an illusion of being a process, thus giving the general viewer an impression of spontaneous speech.

Expressiveness

Expressiveness mirrors the speaker’s stance to the communicated idea. Common means of its expression are considered to be diminutives, augmentatives, interjections, and emphatic expressions (Mistrík, 1997, p. 80 – 86). In the original version are several occurrences of diminutive forms. As a rule, the English language does not encourage the usage of diminutive forms due to the non-existence of diminutival suffixes. In the target episode, we identified several diminutival forms, hypocoristic forms, and address forms fulfilling the function of maintaining rapport: e.g. Dad, Princess, Honey, Daddy, Sweetie, Dude, Mom, Rach (truncated from Rachel). In the German version, the only rapport-maintaining expression was *Liebling*; in general, the German language

version shows a very strong resemblance to the English language, which is owing to the nature of the language. The above mentioned expressive English forms had a diminutive alternative in Slovak. Since the Slovak language has synthetic means for forming diminutive forms, in the Slovak version of the episode we noticed diminutive forms of common nouns that neither in the original English version nor in the dubbed German version have a diminutive characteristic: e.g. she-DIM (malá), a minute-DIM (minútka), just before-DIM (pred chvíľkou), family-DIM (rodinka), the TV-DIM (telka), a minute-DIM (chvíľka), put it in your mouth-DIM (cuckaj). Augmentatives did not appear at all. The occurrence of interjections was very low, e.g. oh, wow (English version); oh, tja, hey, wow (German version); hej, no, jaj, wow (Slovak version). The interjections occurring in the dubbed versions tried to imitate the original English versions so that sound synchronization could be achieved; moreover, such interjections are starting to occur in the lexicon of German and Slovak more often, assumingly, due to the general influence of the English language. The emphatic expressions occurring in the language versions of the target episode form subgroups of degree adverbs, strong lexemes, and exclamatives, e.g.

English original: I totally understand. ... two people screwing in there. Oh, my God.;

German dubbing: Kapiert. Misst. Oh, mein Gott.;

Slovak dubbing: ... úplne ti rozumiem. Ale urob to hneď, kým sa to nedozvie a nenakope ťa do zadku. Pane Bože.

In the focal discourse, expressive language means appear in a moderate number. They are substituted by exaggerated use of non-verbal means (facial expressions, gestures) and paradoxical situations.

Conclusion

Language, being a component of a communication act, plays a specific role – individual utterances represent presuppositions and implicatures dependent on the nature of a speech event. Speech events of the target discourse embody the intention of the scriptwriter, director, producer, and actor. It is a type of discourse that is planned to create an illusion of spontaneous speech. It is planned to be acted out as if it was not written. We conducted an analysis to explore the level of sameness between natural conversation and sitcom discourse on two levels: a) description of speech (as opposed to writing), b) the features of the spoken mode in the target sitcom. The former included description pertaining to Crystal (2001, p. 25, 28) who describes speech as time-bound, spontaneous, face-to-face, socially interactive, loosely structured, immediately revisable, and prosodically rich. Each feature was found to be present in the target discourse in its own way – all together generating characteristics of pre-scripted text to be read out and performed. The latter attested to the presence of five features typifying natural dialog: vocality, conversationality, familiarity, contextuality and expressiveness (cf Mistrík, 1997). The exploration of the target language material supported the initial assumption in that the five features capture the essence of a private, spontaneous conversation and prove to be, with some adaptation, comparatively relevant in the target discourse. The rhetorical mode of the focal discourse echoes the verbal performance that is traceable to spontaneous dialog. With reference to vocality, our research on pause duration and pause-tonic-stress interrelation indicates potential similarity to a publicistic/journalistic style, which is to say the approximation of sitcom discourse to the text to be read. The analyses of the sentence structure and stylistic stratification of vocabulary point to the closeness of the sitcom discourse to informal speech. In other words, it is a “product-process hybrid form” that is planned to be written and further to be spoken as if neither written nor planned (cf. Romero-Fresco, 2009).

Endnote

¹Dimension 1 represents a continuum extending from extremely involved (interactive) to extremely informational registers. The former, like face-to-face conversation, are typified by high incidence of features comprising private/mental verbs, *that*-deletion, contractions, present-tense verbs, and first- and second-person personal pronouns. Conversely, highly informational registers tend to manifest high frequencies of nouns, nominalizations, prepositions, attributive adjectives, and agent-less passive constructions (Quaglio, 2009: 140)

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