

‘DANGER ZONE!’

**Script requirements for the audience to understand the referential
verbal humor in *Archer***

Bachelor’s Thesis

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Tiivistelmä – Abstract <p><i>Archer</i> on amerikkalainen animoitu komediasarja, joka seuraa Sterling Archer nimistä salaista agenttia ja hänen työtovereidensa seikkailuja. Sarjan tarinat tapahtuvat usein ISIS-tiedustelupalvelun toimistoissa ja agenttien tehtävien kohteissa, jotka voivat olla missä päin maailmaa tahansa. Sarja on kohdistettu aikuiselle yleisölle ja täten käyttää aikuismaisia teemoja ja tyylejä komedian toteuttamisessa.</p> <p><i>Archer</i> käyttää huumorinsa luomiseen paljon viittauksellista huumoria, jonka ymmärtämiseen vaaditaan yleisöltä tietyn aiheen tuntemusta. Tämän tutkimuksen tarkoitus oli saada selville, minkälaista taustatietoa katsoja tarvitsee ymmärtääkseen <i>Archer</i>:ssa esiintyvää viittauksellista verbaalista huumoria. Tämä saatiin selville ensin etsimällä esimerkkejä kaikesta viittauksellisesta verbaalisesta huumorista mitä sarjan ensimmäisen kauden ensimmäisestä neljästä jaksosta löytyy. Tämän aikana esimerkit kategorisoitiin samaan aikaan luotuihin kategorioihin. Lopuksi jokaisesta kategoriasta valittiin yksi esimerkki joka analysoitiin GTVH:ta käyttäen.</p> <p>Tutkimustulokset osoittivat, että noin puolet sarjassa esiintyvistä viittauksellisesta verbaalisesta huumorista viittaa joko TV-sarjaan, elokuvaan tai johonkin tunnettuun henkilöön. Muita kategorioita esiintyi myös, mutta huomattavasti vähemmän. Tämän perusteella pystytään arvioimaan, että sarjasta eniten nauttii henkilö, joka katso paljon TV-sarjoja ja elokuvia sekä on perehtynyt monenlaisiin kuuluisiin ihmisiin.</p>	
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1 Introduction

Humor is very subjective. A joke that one person finds hilarious can completely go over someone else's head. This is because every person possesses a unique repertoire of information about a large variety of subjects. The knowledge sets that one possesses about different subjects informs their ability to understand verbal humor. These are called Scripts, collective networks of information about certain, for the lack of a more academic generalizing term, things.

Verbal humor is present in any everyday situation that requires verbal communication, such as a classroom, a conversation with a friend, a line at the grocery store and so forth. While these everyday situations could be interesting to take a closer look at, this study chooses to examine a more planned form of verbal humor, in this case a TV-show.

The purpose of this study is to find out what kind of Scripts a viewer is required to understand the verbal humor in the animated comedy TV-show *Archer*. Much of the humor in *Archer* is referential, meaning that it references something from the general, or a specific, culture. These references include but are not limited to movies, famous people and historical terms. To help with the aims of this study, General Theory of Verbal Humor will be used to analyze examples collected from the show.

This study starts with a background chapter, giving information about the history of animation, humor theories and previous studies on the subject. After that there will be the present study section, in which the research questions, data and methods will be explained. Then the analysis section will contain the analysis of the referential verbal humor in the show. Finally, conclusion will conclude the whole study and discuss some potential further studies.

2 Background chapter

This section will present a brief history of animation, from its roots as children's entertainment to animated shows for today's adult audiences. It will also give a general description of the show that this study will examine. After that traditional humor theories and modern humor theories will be discussed, including GTVH, which will be used to analyze *Archer*. Lastly a number of previous studies of TV-shows and studies that used GTVH will be presented.

2.1 Animation

Animation has been a popular form of entertainment ever since its conception. Animated cartoons have been especially popular among children (Creeber 2015: 177), which is why most of the animated shows produced have been written with young audiences in mind. As a result, the writing in animation has been simple and easy to understand, as not to confuse children who would not grasp the nuances of complicated storylines or complex dialogue.

Because of this, some animated cartoons, such as *Tom and Jerry* (1940-1967), barely have any dialogue at all, instead relying on sound effects and the animation itself to entertain audiences. However, the popularity of *The Flintstones* (1960-1966) sparked a new sub-genre of animation; prime-time animation (Creeber 2015: 177).

2.2 Prime-time animation

In television, prime-time is considered to be the time slot from 8:00 pm to 11:00 pm, this being the time when most people are at home and looking for a way to relax, a popular choice being watching television. In terms of animated shows, this simply means that any animated show that was aired during this time slot, such as *The Flintstones*, was called prime-time animation.

The popularity of *The Flintstones* was followed by a multitude of shows attempting to emulate the successful formula of *The Flintstones*. These included *Jonny Quest* (1964-1965), *The Bugs Bunny Show* (1960-1975) and *The Jetsons* (1962-1963), all to be either quickly cancelled or moved to a different time slot (Harrison, Stabile 2003 :76). Despite this, prime-time animation did not fully catch on until much later when in 1989 *The Simpsons* made its debut (Creeber 2015: 179).

After the popularity of *The Simpsons*, shows such as *Beavis and Butthead* (1993-1997), *The Ren and Stimpy Show* (1991-1996) and *South Park* (1997-) paved the way for a more adult style of animated shows, including *Archer* (2009-).

2.3 Adult animation

The major difference between adult animation and its other contemporary genres of animation is the eponymous target audience, adults. Although there had been some cartoon aimed at adult audiences in the past, such as *Betty Boop*, they did not become more popular until the 1990s when prime-time animation was making a comeback (Creeber 2015: 184-185). Cartoons aimed at adult audiences

often appealed to the juvenile nature in adults (Creeber 2015: 185), but as time passed and adult animation became more mainstream so did the themes within. All this progress in animation in pop-culture paved the way for *Archer*.

2.4 General description of *Archer*

Archer is an adult animated sitcom focusing heavily on verbal humor to create comedy. The general plot follows the titular character Sterling Archer, a dysfunctional, narcissistic, alcoholic secret agent working for International Secret Intelligence Service (ISIS), a fictional private intelligence agency. He is also joined by other characters working within ISIS, each with their own humorous traits and personalities upon which majority of the humor of the show relies on. Each episode is on average 22 minutes long with each episode containing its own self-contained story.

The genre of *Archer* can be explained as a subversion of the spy fiction genre popularized by the *James Bond* film series. Instead of being a smooth operator who shoots off one-liners with ease while carrying out missions perfectly, Archer is a reckless and often self-destructive both during missions and his personal life. This behavior, especially when enhanced by the equally anti-social behavior of his coworkers, creates many of the humorous situations and dialogue of the show.

2.5 Traditional humor theories

Humor, especially verbal humor, has been researched extensively in the past. The oldest examples date back all the way to Plato and Aristotle. Plato claimed that humor was created from a mixture of pleasure and pain and should be avoided (Attardo 1994: 18). Aristotle's views on humor were more positive, even mentioning in his works how it can be used as a tool in argumentation (Attardo 1994: 20). Aristotle's definition of humor, Hostility Theory, explains how we can find humor in the misfortunes and shortcomings of others (Attardo 1994: 20). Hostility Theory can explain some styles of humor, such the physical and often hostile slapstick humor, but they are lacking in describing the humor in something harmless, such as a knock-knock joke.

Over 1500 years after Plato and Aristotle, Sigmund Freud proposed the Release Theory, claiming that humor is sort of a release valve, used to divulge the inner desires of otherwise civilized citizens (Attardo 1994: 50). This theory illuminated on many types of humor, such as dirty jokes, innuendo and of course Freudian slip. Even with these covered, it was incapable of explaining everything that

is funny, including puns, which are harmless plays on words with no obvious connection to the inner desires of man.

Another classic theory is the Incongruity Theory. This theory claims that humor is created from the incongruity of expectations and unforeseen perceptions (Raskin 2008: 103). This essentially means that people laugh at surprises, unexpected turns of events and subversions of expectations. This explains humor such as knock-knock jokes. Incongruity theory is the basis of SSTH, where humor is created when two opposing, or rather incongruous, Scripts are recognized.

2.6 SSTH and GTVH

Semantic Script Theory of Humor (SSTH) is a theory of humor that is based on Scripts (Raskin 2008: 107). Although a script usually refers to the written scripts that TV-shows and movies are based on, in this context, a Script is an organized, collective framework of facts about a certain subject (Attardo 2001: 2). According to SSTH, humor is created when one of two things happen: two Scripts are opposed to each other or the joke can be simultaneously interpreted using two Scripts (Raskin 2008: 108). This theory can be used effectively to explain many types of humor, especially ones that have been written for a show such as *Archer*.

SSTH was later in 1991 expanded into General Theory of Verbal Humor (GTVH) by Victor Raskin and Salvatore Attardo (Raskin 2008: 108). It differs from SSTH by introducing six knowledge resources instead of just the one, Script Opposition, of SSTH. These six Knowledge Resources (KR) are Script Opposition (SO), Logical Mechanism (LM), Situation (SI), Target (TA), Narrative Strategy (NS) and Language (LA) (Raskin 2008: 108). The order these were just presented in is also the hierarchy on which these Knowledge Resources are dependent on (Raskin 2008: 109). As GTVH was chosen to be the analysis tool for this study, these Knowledge Resources will be explained further in the Methods section of this study.

2.7 Previous studies on TV-shows

Previous studies focusing on TV-shows, especially comedies, have been made before. For example, Iina Halttunen (2016) from University of Jyväskylä wrote "*Life is short, talk fast!*": verbal humour in *Gilmore Girls* As her Bachelor's thesis. The aim of the thesis was to analyze the role of humor in the dialogue of the show *Gilmore Girls* to find out how humor is created within the show. The

findings included how the most prominent themes of humor were popular culture references, irony and listing.

Laura Kalliomäki (2005) wrote a study titled *"Ink and incapability": verbal humour in the TV-sitcom Blackadder: a pragmatic and rhetorical analysis*. This studied the verbal humor in the TV-show *Blackadder*. The aim of the study was to find out what pragmatic and rhetoric ways are used in *Blackadder* to create humor, especially by seeing if Grice's Maxims have been violated.

Another study focusing on humor in a TV-show is *"I'm Indiana Jones!": intertextuality and humor in How I Met Your Mother* (Kinnunen, 2012). This study asks what types of intertextual references are used and how do they function in creating humor in the show.

2.8 Previous studies using GTVH

As GTVH is an effective tool to analyze verbal humor, it should not come as a surprise that it has previously been used to analyze TV-shows and other forms of humorous media. These studies give valuable insight into how this theory can be used in practice.

Anastasia Nelladia Cendra (2016) wrote *A linguistic analysis of verbal humor in BBC radio drama Cabin Pressure: Abu Dhabi*. This study focused on the first episode of the titular radio drama, asking the questions 'which types of verbal humor are found in the BBC radio drama series *Cabin Pressure: Abu Dhabi*?' and 'how is the verbal humor found in BBC radio drama series *Cabin Pressure: Abu Dhabi* analyzed linguistically using GTVH?'. The study found GTVH to be an excellent resource for analyzing humor in the radio show and it was noted that it could be used for analyzing other types of humorous texts, such as TV-shows, just as effectively.

GTVH has been used for analyzing a TV-shows before. One such example is *Linguistic analysis of humor and script interpretation in the Sitcom "The Big Bang Theory"* by Carmen Romano (2014). This study uses GTVH answer the research questions 'what are the characteristics of the verbal humor in three humorous texts in the chosen episodes of "The Big Bang Theory"?' and 'can the opposing script be given by the audience and not by the show itself? If so, how?'. Both of these studies provide enough evidence that GTVH can be used effectively to analyze humorous texts, which is one of the reasons why this theory was chosen to be used for this study.

3 Present study section

This section will present the aim and research questions of this study, the data that will be used and the methods that will be used to analyze the data. At the end the pilot study and possible ethical considerations will be discussed.

3.1 Aim and research questions

The aim of this qualitative study is to find out how and why *Archer* is funny from a linguistic perspective. This is achieved by explaining the humor behind them using General Theory of Verbal Humor (GTVH), most notably by examining Script Opposition, the first Knowledge Resource in the hierarchy of GTVH. The research questions are:

1. What Scripts are necessary for the viewer to understand the verbal humor in *Archer*?
2. Is GTVH useful for revealing information about the referential humor in *Archer*?

3.2 Data

The data of this study will consist of the first four episodes from the first season of *Archer*. The episodes are approximately 22 minutes long each, and the episodes were chosen for the study after the completion of the pilot study of the first episode and initial viewing of the entire season, which consists of 10 episodes. The final episodes chosen were limited to the first four to limit the data pool and specifically the four consequential episodes were chosen to ensure that any references to earlier episodes would not be missed. Furthermore, the number of examples chosen will be highly dependent on how many different categories of referential verbal humor will be found. The expected number of examined examples is approximately between five and ten, with a full list of all examples found added to the end of this study. The examples represented and analyzed will be chosen on the basis of which of them best represent the external background knowledge required from the viewer to understand the verbal humor. The number of examples will be admittedly small but should give an adequate range of examples to work with. If the study were larger, these examples could potentially number in the hundreds. When presenting the examples, the episode in which the example can be found in and the exact time will be presented as well. Transcribing the chosen episodes in their entirety will not be necessary as only parts of the scripts will be used in the

study as examples. These parts will of course be transcribed and presented as examples in this study. The transcribed parts will be included in the Language portion of the GTVH analysis. No picture or audio from the show will be presented in this study.

3.3 Methods

General Theory of Verbal Humor (GTVH) will be used for analyzing the humor used in *Archer*. This method was chosen because its first Knowledge Resource, Script Opposition, effectively describes what knowledge the audience of the show needs to know in order to understand the verbal humor used, in this case Scripts. A Script refers to the organized, collective framework of facts about a certain subject. This subject can be practically anything, including but not limited to objects, people, events, locations, time periods, organizations and concepts. With GTVH, verbal humor can be explained by identifying two opposing Scripts that the viewer recognizes, resulting in a joke. Essentially, the two Scripts that make up a joke will be identified and the knowledge necessary from the Scripts will be explained in this study. This will give a general overview of the kind of knowledge the target audience of the show is required to know in order to enjoy the humor of the show.

The other five Knowledge Resources, while not the primary way of answering the research question of this study, will be used in the analysis as well, even though some of them, such as Target and Situation, can be explained with a single sentence or might not exist for a joke at all. Nevertheless, as they make up the rest of GTVH it is important to use them and elaborate on them as well.

Logical Mechanism is the mechanism which connects the two scripts together. An exhaustive list of these has been made by Attardo (2001: 27) and is as follows:

role-reversals	role exchanges	potency mappings
vacuous reversal	juxtaposition	Chiasmus
garden-path	figure-ground reversal	faulty reasoning
almost situations	analogy	self-undermining
inferring consequences	reas. from false prem.	missing link
coincidence	parallelism	implicit parall.

proportion	ignoring the obvious	false analogy
exaggeration	field restriction	Cratylism
meta-humor	vicious circle	referential ambiguity

These will be given to each example identified during the analysis using GTVH.

Situation refers to the place and time the humor takes place in. This can mean the environment, event, time of day or any other situational aspect that can affect the humor. Sometimes humor isn't connected to the situation at all, but the situation nevertheless exists.

Target is, as the name would imply, the target of the humor. Often this can be easily identified as the person an insult is directed at, but also often there is no target at all.

Narrative Strategy refers to the narrative genre of humor that is used. This can be a narrative, monologue, question and answer etc. Attardo (2001: 23) admits that little work has gone towards this knowledge resource, which is likely why there is no exhaustive list of Narrative Strategies to be found.

Language is the actual written or spoken part of the text. While there could potentially be something more to study about this knowledge resource, for the purposes of this study the examples taken and transcribed from the show will be sufficient to fill this part of GTVH.

The examples of verbal humor identified in *Archer* will be divided into distinct categories. The number of these categories and the categories themselves will be determined as they are identified during data gathering. The different categories will be classified by the type of reference included in the verbal humor. A single example of each of the identified categories will be chosen and analyzed further in the Analysis section of this study.

Another method that could have been applied is Semantic Script Theory of Humor (SSTH) but using it would have given access to only one Knowledge resource, Script Opposition, whereas GTVH gives access to six. If the other five Knowledge Resources were to be ignored, it would result in an incomplete picture of why the humor works specifically in any given situation. That is not to say that SSTH would have been completely useless, as it would have explained the strongest, and possibly the most important, Knowledge Resource of GTVH.

3.4 Pilot study

As the study does not require any surveys, interviews or other methods that require participants, a pilot study won't be necessary to ensure that the interview questions would be suitable or that a survey would work. However, for the purpose of assessing the amount of time required to analyze a single episode, a smaller sample study of one episode of *Archer* from the first season will be done to ensure that the methods described before will work for the purposes of the study.

3.5 Ethical considerations

As there are no active participants in this study, fewer ethical questions arise. One ethical consideration that comes to mind are copyright laws. While this study does involve a TV-show owned by 21st Century Fox, the final study will not contain any images or sound from the show itself, only written dialogue from the transcripts.

4 Analysis

This section will be divided into sections according to the different categories of references that were found within the first four episodes of *Archer*. These categories will be explained, followed an example of the category and concluded with an analysis using GTVH. These categories are Movie/TV-show, Music, History, Literary Device, Famous Person and General Knowledge. A full list of all examples identified will be at the very end of the study.

4.1 Movie/TV-show Episode 3 13:35

Movie/ TV-show is one of the most used reference categories used in the show, right after Famous Person. The movies and TV-shows referenced range from all genres and time periods, with most of them being well known by the general public and commercially successful enough that the viewer doesn't have to be a film expert to understand most of the references. Of course, some of the references are a bit more niche than others, such as a reference to *Brian's Song*, a TV-movie from 1971, and others are common enough to be considered common knowledge, such as a reference to *Top Gun*, a hugely successful summer blockbuster from 1986. This reference was chosen as an example to be analyzed.

SO	Dangerous situation / Famous movie
LM	False Analogy
SI	Lana is undercover as a flight attendant without permission, Archer confronts her.
TA	Lana
NS	Conversation
LA	<p>Archer: You know what's dangerous? Your obsession with me. Seriously, Lana, call Kenny Loggins because you're in the danger zone.</p> <p>Lana: (sighs)</p> <p>Archer: From <i>Top Gun</i>?</p>

This joke not only references the movie *Top Gun*, but also Kenny Loggins, who provided the theme song of the movie, *Danger Zone*. The humor comes from the false analogy between the current situation of Lana endangering the mission with her accused obsession with Archer and the reference to a famous song about danger. It should be noted that this is one of the references in the show that are directly mentioned with the line '*From Top Gun?*'. The reference to Danger zone is also one of the many running gags of the show, with this scene being the first time it is used.

4.2 Music

Episode 4

14:45

Musical references in *Archer* are very much like Movie/TV-show references, drawing humor from referencing songs. These songs can be well-known, such as '*Puttin' on the Ritz*' and less-known, such as '*What's the Frequency, Kenneth?*'. While most of the references related to music refer to musicians, there are some that refer to just songs with no mention of their performers.

SO	Question / Famous song
LM	Faulty Reasoning
SI	Jackov is trying to contact his assassins though a pocket mirror communicator, Archer is the one who answers.
TA	Jackov
NS	Conversation
LA	<p>Jackov: Hello? Can you hear me? Come in!</p> <p>Archer: Wait, what the hell?</p> <p>Jackov: What is the frequency?</p>

	Archer: Kenneth?
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This joke is a reference to ‘*What’s the Frequency, Kenneth?*’, a song by R.E.M. To understand the joke, the viewer doesn’t necessarily have to know the song itself, just the title. Interestingly, this song is itself a reference to an incident where two men attacked Dan Rather, a journalist, while repeating the phrase ‘Kenneth, what is the frequency?’. If the viewer happens to know of this event as well, the joke can be understood in another way as well, but still in a way that makes sense.

4.3 History

Episode 3

1:02

There are some references in *Archer* that require some amount of historical knowledge from the viewer. While most of the historical references are of well-known events, some references use less-known historical knowledge, such as antiquated terms. It should be noted that many people in the Famous Person category are historically significant, and as such some knowledge of history helps to understand many of those references.

SO	Modern term / Historical term
LM	False Analogy
SI	Conversation about diversity quotas within the agency.
TA	Lana
NS	Conversation
LA	<p>Archer: What? You’re black...ish.</p> <p>Lana: Ish!?!</p> <p>Archer: Well, what’s the word for it, Lana? You freaked out when I said quadroon.</p> <p>Lana: Imagine that!</p>

This joke requires the viewer to know what the term quadroon means. It was a term used to describe people who were $\frac{1}{4}$ black and $\frac{3}{4}$ white in the context of slave societies. While the term might have been acceptable back then, using it in a modern context would be considered racist, and the humor of the joke comes from Archer’s inability to realize that.

4.4 Literary Device

Episode 2

13:56

One instance of using a Literary Device as a reference was found during one the first four episodes. Because of this, giving an entire category is a bit suspect, but more examples could be found in further episodes. Nevertheless, this one example is one of the most complex jokes that were found.

SO	Breaking the fourth wall / Staying within the story
LM	Meta-humor
SI	Cyril accidentally kills a prostitute with a poisonous pen.
TA	Cyril
NS	Conversation
LA	<p>Archer: No, Cyril! When they're dead, they're just hookers. God, I said the cap slips off the poison pen for no reason, didn't I?</p> <p>Cyril: I know, but I just assumed that if anything bad happened-</p> <p>Archer: No, do not say the Chekhov gun, Cyril! That, sir, is a facile argument.</p> <p>Woodhouse: And also woefully esoteric.</p>

Earlier in the episode Archer warns Cyril, one of Archer's coworkers, that the cap of the poison pen can slip off accidentally, foreshadowing further events. Cyril is trying to defend himself by saying that the accidental poisoning was inevitable when Archer interrupts him by breaking the fourth wall and using the term Chekhov's gun. Chekhov's gun is a literary device that states that every element in a story must be used, otherwise they should be removed. This is a reference that most viewers won't understand, further compounded by Woodhouse, Archer's butler, exclaiming how the reference is 'woefully esoteric'. There is another layer to this joke as well. Earlier in the episode Archer hands Cyril a Chekhov-model handgun. This acts as a red herring, an intentionally misleading plot device, for anyone who might think that the Chekhov-model gun will act as a Chekhov's Gun. This creates the additional layer of humor in the form of misdirection.

4.5 Famous Person

Episode 2

16:36

Quite often the referential humor uses famous people as a source of humor. Most of these people are well-known in popular culture, but some of them are less known to the point where niche information is required from the viewer to understand the reference. What makes Famous Person

different as a category is the fact that the viewer often must know some specific detail about the person for the joke to land.

SO	Famous people who are linked to irony / Ironic situation
LM	False Analogy
SI	Archer and Cyril are talking about the ironic situation they are in.
TA	Cyril
NS	Conversation
LA	<p>Archer: Ironic, isn't it?</p> <p>Cyril: I'm not sure that's technically irony.</p> <p>Archer: What!?! This is like O. Henry and Alanis Morissette had a baby and named it this exact situation.</p>

Here Archer is referring to two famous people at once to exclaim how deeply ironic his and Cyril's current situation is. O. Henry is an American writer known for his heavy use of irony in his writing and Alanis Morissette is a Canadian singer whose most well-known song is titled '*Ironic*'. The joke is doubly effective if the viewer is aware of both person's connection to irony instead of just one. It is also possible to realize the humor if indeed only one of these references is understood, as the viewer can associate both references to be of someone with a connection to irony. While this example uses two famous people in it, most of the jokes in the Famous Person category only use one.

4.6 General Knowledge

Episode 1

16:18

The General Knowledge category might be considered lacking, since every individual person has a different amount of knowledge about any given subject, especially depending on what culture they are from. Nevertheless, the General Knowledge category encompasses any reference that can be considered common knowledge, such as what a certain animal looks like, how is a specific board game played or who Santa Claus is.

SO	Hungry, Hungry Hippos / Eating off the floor
LM	False Analogy
SI	Archer is asking Pam for a favor.

TA	Pam
NS	Monologue
LA	<p>Archer: But I need your help, Pam, because I'm, um, conducting a mole hunt.</p> <p>Pam: (gasps)</p> <p>Archer: Gasp you should, because if you let me in the mainframe, I'll drop these donuts. Then you can pretend they're marbles and you're a hungry, hungry...</p> <p>[Pam closes the door in Archer's face]</p> <p>Archer: ...hungry hippo.</p>

What isn't apparent from the transcript of the joke is that Pam is an overweight office worker and Archer is holding a box of donuts in his hand. Hungry, hungry hippos is a popular boardgame where the objective is to use a plastic hippo to 'eat' marbles from the gameboard as fast as possible. While the insulting analogy between pam and a hippo can be understood without knowing about the boardgame, the visual that comes to mind of Pam pretending to be a hippo from the game is what the joke is referring to.

5 Conclusion

The aim of this study was to answer two questions: What Scripts are necessary for the viewer to understand the verbal humor in *Archer* and is GTVH useful for revealing information about the referential humor in *Archer*? This chapter will summarize the results and discuss the effectiveness of using GTVH for this purpose as well as potential for further studies.

5.1 Results of the analysis

The six categories of references were created in conjunction with gathering examples from the data. Some of these categories, such as Literary Device, have fewer instances in the show while others, such as Movie/TV-show, have much more. The number of examples in any category is of course dependent on the number of episodes that were examined. More examples and even new categories could be identified if more episodes and other seasons were to be studied. There is no doubt that these six specific categories would serve as an inadequate template for other TV-shows, as the Scripts required for their references could be completely different, such as referring to medical

procedures or geographical facts. Because of that, every show needs their own categories into which their references can be divided.

As was mentioned during the analysis of their examples, Famous People and Movie/TV-Show are the most used categories of references used in the show. These categories could have been divided into smaller categories focusing on the reason a person is famous and different genres of movies and TV-shows, giving more detailed information on the Scripts required from the viewers. This could be done in a larger study, but for the purposes of this study these two categories were enough.

General Knowledge is the most controversial category of them all. This is because it can be very difficult to determine what exactly constitutes as general information. This is especially true in this show's case, since it was written by Americans with a western audience in mind, meaning that the General Knowledge category could be completely alien to viewers from other cultures. In a larger study this category could be divided into smaller categories.

Most of the categories had very few examples found, which is undoubtedly due to the relatively small sample size of mere four episodes. Despite this, there is a clear focus on the Famous Person and Movie/TV-Show categories, with these two categories making up half of the referential humor identified within the first four episodes. This makes them the most important Scripts for the viewer to understand.

In conclusion, the type of viewer that gets the most out of the referential verbal humor in *Archer* is a westerner who watches a lot of movies and TV-shows and is familiar with many famous people. Knowledge of the other categories is useful as well, but less so. Someone who isn't familiar with these categories can still enjoy the who but will be often confused with most of the references.

5.2 Effectiveness of GTVH in this study

General Theory of Verbal Humor can be used, as the name hints, for any kind of verbal humor. Because of this, the tools within the theory are flexible, which makes them useful for all kinds of analyses, including analyzing TV-shows. The downside of this flexibility is the relative inaccuracy of the tools, making some of the Knowledge Resources less useful for this particular analysis.

As is the case with most verbal humor, Script Opposition is quite important when it comes to understanding referential verbal humor. It is present in all examples discussed, and within it exists the most important part of referential humor, the reference itself. Because of this, Script Opposition

is the most important Knowledge Resource of them all for understanding referential humor.

Interestingly, this means that Standard Script Theory of Humor, which includes Script Opposition as the only Knowledge Resource, could also be used to pinpoint the Scripts necessary for the viewer to understand the referential humor in any TV-show.

Logical Mechanisms were not very useful for the purposes of this study. Categorizing the way the two scripts are connected to each other is not useful when trying to identify Scripts. In another kind of study Logical Mechanisms could be useful, possibly in one that aims to find out what is the most used Logical Mechanism in referential humor.

In many examples the Situation was quite important. This is because many of the references only work within the context of the scene and without it the reference, even if the viewer understood it, just wouldn't be funny. While Situation is not needed to identify Scripts, it is still important in understanding why the reference is funny in the first place.

Target is similar with Situation, as in that it exists most of the time and is crucial for the humor to work in these cases. Because of the style of humor that *Archer* is, the Target is usually someone who is being insulted, and in the case of referential humor, they are being insulted using some kind of reference. Also similar with Situation, Target is not all that important for the understanding of Scripts, but still important for understanding the humor.

All of the Narrative Strategies in *Archer* were either conversations or monologues. This is of course because this study focused on verbal humor, and this quite often means that someone is talking. Narrative Strategies are useless for identifying Scripts.

Language is arguably the second most important Knowledge Resource for understanding Scripts, right after Script Opposition itself. The reason for this is because this is the actual part that can be analyzed and from which the Scripts can be identified from.

Overall GTVH was found to be adequate for the purposes of this study, providing the information that was required while giving some additional information as well. Some Knowledge Resources were less useful than others, giving reason to possibly create a whole new linguistic tool based on GTVH. This new tool could incorporate the most useful Knowledge Resources of GTVH while adding others that would be useful for this specific type of analysis.

5.3 Potential for further study

The first obvious potential for further study is this very study. As this was a mere Bachelor's thesis, the length of it is relatively short. A larger study could include more episodes, more seasons, more examples, more categories and generally more of everything. This would give a better representation of what Scripts are required for *Archer*.

While this study focused on *Archer*, other studies of similar manner could be done on any comedy TV-show or even a movie. The same tools and methods could be used for these studies, but the categories would have to be different, with some of them possibly overlapping.

As was mentioned earlier, all the categories into which the examples found were allocated were created while the examples were being collected from the data. There is potential for more research into these categories, especially since the six categories created can by no means be all that can be found in the first season of *Archer* alone, let alone in any other TV-shows.

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Episode 1			
Example Number	Approximate Time	Reference(s)	Category
1	1:29	Jenga	General
2	3:33	Puttin' On The Ritz	Music
3	4:33	Indira Gandhi	Famous Person
4	6:37	Manatee	General
5	7:05	Brian's Song	Movie/TV-show
6	8:56	Johnny Bench	Famous Person
7	10:38	Hungry, Hungry Hippos	General
8	14:10	Ugly Duckling	General
9	16:18	Password Security	General
10	18:41	Cosplay	General
11	20:19	Johnny Bench	Famous Person

Episode 2			
Example Number	Approximate Time	Reference(s)	Category
12	1:57	Santa Claus	General
13	4:17	Oprah	Movie/TV-show
14	5:31	Karen Carpenter	Famous Person
15	8:06	Dane Cook	Famous Person
16	13:56	Chekhov's Gun	Literary Device
17	15:03	Password Security	General
18	16:36	O. Henry / Analis Morrisette	Famous Person
19	18:16	Rain Man	Movie/TV-show
20	19:28	Milton Berle	Famous Person

Episode 3			
Example Number	Approximate Time	Reference(s)	Category
21	1:02	Quadroon	History
22	4:53	Sammy Davis Jr.	Famous Person
23	7:00	Project Runway	Movie/TV-show
24	8:25	Tron	Movie/TV-show
25	10:16	Flintstones	Movie/TV-show
26	13:35	Top Gun / Danger Zone	Movie/TV-show
27	15:55	Charles Whitman	Famous Person

Episode 4			
Example Number	Approximate Time	Reference(s)	Category
28	1:08	PEZ-dispenser	General
29	5:52	Johnny Bench	Famous Person
30	6:31	Snuffleupagus	Movie/TV-show
31	7:33	Mister Roboto	Music
32	12:11	Star Wars	Movie/TV-show
33	14:45	What's The Frequency, Kenneth?	Music
34	19:07	Outward Bound	General