

FROM 'HI MAN' TO 'HEY BRO'
The Use of Lexicon in Television Series

Bachelor's Thesis
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English
May 2015

JYVÄSKYLÄN YLIOPISTO

Tiedekunta – Faculty Humanistinen tiedekunta	Laitos – Department Kielten laitos
Tekijä – Author Elisa Veteläinen	
Työn nimi – Title From 'Hi man' to 'Hey bro' - The Use of Lexicon in Television Series	
Oppiaine – Subject Englanti	Työn laji – Level Kandidaatintutkielma
Aika – Month and year Toukokuu 2015	Sivumäärä – Number of pages 18 + 1 liite
Tiivistelmä – Abstract <p>Kielet ovat alttiina muutokselle kaiken aikaa ja muutos voi tapahtua monella eri osa-alueella. Jatkuvaa muutosta on vaikeaa tarkkailla ja kielen muutokset huomataankin usein retrospektiivisessä tarkastelussa. Tietokonepohjaiset korpuksset ovat kuitenkin mahdollistaneet viimeaikaisen ja jatkuvan muutoksen tutkimisen suuren ja helposti saatavilla olevan aineiston avulla.</p> <p>Televisiokielen ja todellisen kielen käytön suhdetta on tutkittu varsin vähän. Aiemmista tutkimuksista vain yksi on konkreettisesti selvittänyt televisiokielessä käytettyjen sanojen suhdetta todelliseen kielenkäyttöön. Kyseisessä tutkimuksessa oli keskitytty vain yhteen sanaryhmään ja koska tässäkin tutkimuksessa keskitytään ainoastaan tiettyihin puhetilanteisiin, on ilmiössä vielä runsaasti jatkotutkimusaiheita.</p> <p>Tutkimukseen valikoitui kielen piirteistä sanaston käyttö amerikanenglannin kielivariaatiossa. Aineisto kerättiin kahdesta omaa aikaansa tiukasti seuraavasta yhdysvaltalaisesta televisiosarjasta. Aineistona käytettiin vanhemman sarjan, <i>Friends</i>, ensimmäistä tuotantokautta ja myöhemmän sarjan, <i>Ensisilmäyksellä</i>, viimeistä kautta. Näin saatiin tutkittavaksi 20 vuoden ajanjakso. Kahdesta televisiosarjasta saadut tulokset analysoitiin suhteessa suureen internetpohjaiseen korpukseen.</p> <p>Tutkimuskysymykset laadittiin selvittämään sanaston käyttöä tietyissä puhetilanteissa. Tulosten mukaan televisiokieli monella tapaa edustaa aikakautensa kieltä ja tulokset olivat usein linjassa, sekä datasta saadun tiedon että korpukseen vertailun suhteen.</p>	
Asiasanat – Keywords Language change, Lexicon, American English, Corpus study, Television language, <i>Friends</i> , <i>How I Met Your Mother</i>	
Säilytyspaikka – Depository JYX	
Muita tietoja – Additional information	

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1 INTRODUCTION

Language is unstable and ever changing, and often the changes are difficult to notice while the process is in motion. However, it is possible to observe and predict changes if one knows where to look. In order to find the possible changes, recent decades must be explored and even minor details have to be given attention to. Aitchinson (2001) has collected these ongoing changes in the English language and even some that are specific to the New York dialect of it. There are many ways to research changes in different items of language, but especially for the changes in grammar and lexicon, electronic corpora offer valuable information of recent and ongoing changes.

The idea of using television language as the representative of real life language is relatively new. In general, there are few studies that examine the role of television language. Moreover, the studies that exist more often focus on the effects of television language on real life language. Thus, with the comparison to a wide corpus, the current study offers an alternate view on the role of television language in the field of linguistic research.

I have selected lexicon as the item of language change as it is an item that most likely has gone through some change in a relatively short period of time. As a means of researching language change, I have selected two television series that were very current during their broadcasting and that are similar to each other. The television series are *Friends*, broadcasted between the years 1994 and 2004, and *How I Met Your Mother*, broadcasted between the years 2005 and 2014. Both series portray the lives of young adults in the city of New York and are closely linked to the society of their time. As these series were very popular, *Friends* even one of the most popular television sitcoms ever, it has been suggested (Tagliamonte and Roberts 2005: 297) that they can be treated as the representative of the contemporary use of the English language. Thus it is appropriate to base some value to them as an instrument in studying language change and assume that they have relevance with respect to authentic language use. A large and diverse corpus, *The Corpus of Contemporary American English*, was used as comparison with the results of the current study to broaden the view of the occurring changes. The current research was executed by finding elements of language from the data, i.e., the two television series and their online transcripts. The use of these elements was then analyzed and compared with each other and the corpus.

2 LANGUAGE CHANGE AND TELEVISION LANGUAGE

It is natural for language to change. Usually changes in language can be viewed in retrospect and, when doing so, it is somewhat clear to see what happened and during which timeline. However, the reasons behind these changes are slightly more obscure. Therefore, it is interesting, if more challenging, to examine recent or ongoing changes. Study of language change has long been interested in the changes that have happened in the past. In fact, it has been a common misconception that recent and ongoing changes are unobservable. While it may be true that these changes are more difficult to find, it is possible if one knows where to look. (Aitchison 2001: 3, 19.) In addition, the recent development of computer technology allows linguists to use current data to observe these changes.

2.1 Language change: the ways and the whys

Languages change in many ways and the changes depend somewhat on the element undergoing the change. In the current study the focus is on lexicon and even more so on the way that existing vocabulary is used. Aitchison (2001: 39, 99) claims that the changes in the use of lexicon are more often variations and fuzziness than actual, drastic changes. These variations do not always lead to permanent changes and they can be viewed as fluctuations. However, the frequency of certain words may indicate more permanent change. According to Tagliamonte and Roberts (2005: 282), even when words with similar meanings coexist for some time, the ones with the higher frequency tend to live on, while the others slowly fade away or alter in meaning, in other words, go through a semantic change.

The reasons behind language change are either internal or external. Externally motivated change usually requires an influence of another language and while the English language has been known to borrow elements from other languages, externally motivated change will not be included in the current study. Internally motivated change includes native speaker creativity and drift. Drift in this context means the linguistic change that happens when the original language users drift apart and create their own consensus of usage of the language. (Jones and Singh 2005: 4, 9.) An example of this kind of drift is the development of different variations of the English language and, in a smaller setting, the different dialects of English. Still, according to Jones and Singh (2005: 18), the reason

that is possibly more important behind ongoing changes is native speaker creativity. It is especially present in the lexical changes as native speakers use their creativity in forming new words to describe things formerly unknown. Thus it is safe to presume that native speaker creativity is present in semantic change and the changes of the use of lexicon.

There are some reasons why native speakers support the coexistence of words of similar meanings and McMahon (1994: 246) gives two examples of these reasons. Firstly, the individual words may have different connotations and, secondly, different social prestige. Different connotations might affect the frequency of the use of a word. Similarly, the word's social prestige plays a role. Previously social prestige has been somewhat dependent of the social class of the language users. The English language has long had upper-class usage norms and working-class usage norms alike. Language users have been prone to adjust their language to match the upper-class usage norms. However, Tagliamonte and Roberts (2005: 281) claim that in the present day culture, media and pop culture are stronger influences. The language users no longer idolize the upper class but rather the novelties and the fashionable.

2.2 Recent linguistic change through corpora

Change of lexicon is often considered the change of the form of lexical items. However, it can be viewed as the change that happens in the use of a lexicon, more specifically the use of existing vocabulary. These changes happen during a shorter period of time than those of forms of lexical items. Researching these changes is now possible due to the excessive amount of data that can be accessed through online based corpora.

As Meyer (2008: 1, 10) explains, there are two types of corpora, pre-electronic and electronic corpora. The common feature of all existing corpora is that they are collections of any types of texts, spoken or written, that can be used as material for linguistic analysis. Pre-electronic corpora mainly consist of biblical concordances, grammars, dictionaries and The Survey of English Usage Corpus, the first actual corpus, which was collected in the 1950s and 1960s. The computer era enabled the invention of electronic corpora, which has made it possible to store and utilize millions of words, and the electronic corpora have become more widely used among linguists during the recent decades.

In the short history of corpus linguistics, the use of corpora has mainly revolved around historical changes of language use. The research of recent or ongoing changes is a much younger phenomenon. The amount of data that online corpora provide makes it a possible and compelling research subject but there are some problems to consider. The time period, when examining recent and ongoing changes, is naturally substantially shorter than that in the research of historical changes. In addition, it is hard to determine whether the changes are actual changes or just natural fluctuations of language use. Another important factor is that the amount of data in the Internet is huge and it is impossible to know the origin and the quality of the data. That being said, it is indisputable that the corpora offer some evidence of actual language use and is thus applicable in researching these recent changes or fluctuations, especially in the use of grammar and lexicon. (Mair 2009: 1110-1111.)

The Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA 2014) is the largest corpus of English available online and the only large corpus of the American English language. It consists of some 450 million words and 190 000 texts under categories of spoken, fiction, magazine, newspaper and academic languages. It was released in 2008 and covers the time period from 1990 to 2012. The corpus allows users to compare the use of language in different time periods and, depending on the category, for example different television channels or magazines. (COCA 2014; Törkkö 2011.) Despite the fact that it has many other uses, the fact that it can be used to monitor language change through time, makes it a monitor corpus. According to Teubert and Čermáková (2007: 71-72), generally these types of corpora are regularly updated and the composition of the corpus should stay as stable as possible. Corpus linguistics is most interested in researching the change in the frequency of words and the occurrence of new words.

2.3 Television language as a representative of real-life language

Television has been the interest of discourse studies for decades and it seems to be an endless source of content to be analyzed. As Nyysönen (2012: 689-690) points out, the linguistic aspect of television studies is usually narrowed to the meaning making and communication aspect. However, Tagliamonte and Roberts (2005: 296) found that television language can be viewed as the representative of real-life language as it reflects the current, authentic language use. The researchers compared their data from the television series *Friends* with contemporary studies of the use of the English language as well as the British National Corpus. They examined the use of intensifiers in

Friends and found that it correlated with authentic language use with respect to the frequency, form and patterning of intensifiers. In addition, they found that the popularity ratings of different seasons formed a similar pattern with the frequency of the most popular intensifiers. Thus, it has to be considered that it is not entirely clear if the television series actually represents actual language use or if television language affects the real-life language use.

The television series Tagliamonte and Roberts (2005) used as their data, Friends, ran for ten seasons from 1994 to 2004, and it was one of the most popular TV sitcoms ever on television with average viewer rates of over 23 million viewers per episode and the high of 52.5 million. As a pop culture phenomenon it is, as Tagliamonte and Roberts (2005:281) pointed out, “an ideal candidate” for examining contemporary language use. A similar television series is How I Met Your Mother, which possibly owes some of its success to Friends, as it follows the previous series at least in its style and setting. How I Met Your Mother aired between the years 2005 and 2014 and thus filled at least some of the void that Friends left when ending in 2004. Even though the latter show was not as popular, it still reached the average of some 9 million viewers and the high of 12.9 million viewers. The two television series share most of the basic elements such as the setting, main character type and the nature of the show. They are both sitcoms that are situated in New York, portraying the lives of a group of friends in their thirties. Both series are very contemporary and follow their historical times closely. Introduction of the data is offered in the following chapter, preceded by the research goal and the research questions.

3 GOAL AND METHODS

3.1 Goal and research questions

The goal of the present study is to find out how the use of the American English lexicon has changed during the last two decades (1994-2014), as they occur in two popular American TV sitcoms, Friends and How I Met Your Mother. The main focus is on four speech situations, which are greeting, addressing an interlocutor, commenting on a positive occurrence and the use of intensifiers. These were selected due to their repetitive and frequent nature in real-life language use. As such, it can be assumed that they appear in the two television series and thus offer meaningful data. In addition to researching the possible changes in the use of lexicon, the current study aims to

find out to what extent the language in the two television series reflects real-life language use. This issue is addressed in the final research question.

The research questions are:

1. How has the use of the English lexicon changed in the speech situation of greeting?
2. How has the use of the English lexicon changed in the use of address terms?
3. How has the use of the English lexicon changed in the use of intensifiers?
4. How has the use of the English lexicon changed in the speech situation of commenting on a positive occurrence?
5. What is the relationship of the changes in the two television series and findings in the COCA?

3.2 Data and Methods

3.2.1. Data

The data of the current study is comprised of the two above mentioned television series, more specifically, the first season of Friends (1994) and the last season of How I Met Your Mother (2014). This gives the research a 20-year time frame. The data is formed by the TV-series and transcripts of the episodes that are collected from the Internet are used as backing material. The reliability of these transcripts is ensured by comparing them with the corresponding episodes.

The corpus used to form comparisons in the current study is The Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), which is an online corpus. The COCA consists of some 450 million words from texts of different genres.

3.2.2. Data analysis

The two television series were researched to find the linguistic variables of the speech situations of greeting, addressing an interlocutor, commenting on a positive occurrence and the use of intensifiers. These linguistic variables were compared to each other and with the COCA. The linguistic variables were found from the television series and the transcripts were used to find out

the frequency of the use of these variables. The word choices and the frequency of their use were compared in the two television series to examine whether there were changes in the use of the English lexicon. These linguistic variables were then entered in the COCA and the frequency of their use in different time periods was observed. Special attention was paid to the forum the words were used in, that is to say, if the word was especially used in fiction or spoken language.

Frequently appearing terms in the analysis are *address term* and *intensifier*, thus, explaining the meaning of these words is significant in relation with the study. Address terms are used to address a person instead of referring to that person. A person one addresses is always in contact with the speaker, whereas a person who is referred to can be completely absent from the situation. (Kiesling 2011: 166.) Tagliamonte and Roberts (2005: 280) define intensifiers as words that “boost or maximize meaning”.

4 USE OF LEXICON: THE CHANGES AND THE COMPARISON TO COCA

In gathering and analyzing the data, many changes and many similarities were found between the uses of lexicon in the two television series. Full analysis and comparison to the corpus were performed on those words that had a significant role or frequency. Thus not all individual words were included in the profound analysis. The list of all the findings in their categories, with the frequency of their appearance, can be found in the appendix.

4.1 Greeting

The most common words used in greeting situations were the same in both TV-series: *hi*, *hey* and *hello*. The word appearing the most in Friends was *hi* (n=153) and *hey* (n=139) was a close second. The results were reverse in How I Met Your Mother (HIMYM), with *hey* leading with 76 appearances and *hi* (n=62) being the second most used word. *Hello* was used throughout less frequently, in Friends 48 times and in HIMYM 14 times. In addition, its use differed from the other words in that about half of the times it was used in starting a phone conversation. According to the COCA, the use of *hi* has been pretty consistent for the last 20 years whereas the use of *hey*

increased in the mid-nineties. The numbers between these two words were similar in the early nineties but since the increase in the use of the word *hey*, it has been the more used greeting. Curiously one major difference in the use of these words is that *hey* seems to be used more in fiction than the word *hi*. A concrete difference between the two television series can be seen in examples 1 (Friends, episode 7) and 2 (HIMYM, episode 4).

1. Rachel: ...*Paolo, I want you to meet my friends. This is Monica.*
Monica: *Hi!*
Rachel: *And Joey...*
Monica: *Hi!*
Rachel: *And Ross.*
Monica: *Hi!*

2. Lily: *Hey!*
Marshall: *Am I on? Hey, guys!*
Ted: *Hey!*
Robin: *Hey Marshall!*
Barney: *Hey, it's like you're really here.*

The use of the word *hello*, according to the COCA, has decreased slowly but steadily during the last 20 years. The findings of the current research support that, but the results are not entirely reliable in the sense that all greetings were used noticeably less in the latter TV-series. Other words or utterances were used for greeting as well. In Friends *what's up* was used once and *tah-daah* once. The latter is difficult to interpret as a greeting but in the TV-series, it was followed by: *Are we greeting each other this way now, cause I like that!* In HIMYM there was more variation and the greetings found were: *go for Barney* (n=2), *heya*, *hello there*, *what's poppin'* and *ahoy*. The COCA does not allow multiword searches and for the single word greetings it does not give any conclusive results.

4.2 Address terms

In both TV-series the most often used address terms were *you* and the interlocutor's name or nickname. Other frequently used words were *Mr.*, *Mrs.* or *Miss* and the last name, words referring to an occupation, such as *doctor* and *reverend*, often combined with the last name, and words referring to the family relations, such as *dad*, *mom*, *kids* and *grandma*. These were not included in

the analysis, because of their general and irrelevant nature; instead the words used outside of this group were examined.

Both TV-series shared the most common word for addressing the interlocutors and the word was (*you*) *guys*. This appeared in *Friends* a total of 103 times and 82 times in *HIMYM*. With other words used as address terms, there was more variation. In *Friends* the other popular words were *honey* (n=19), *buddy* (n=9), *sweetie* (n=9), *man* (n=9), *sweetheart* (n=4) and *kids* (n=4). In *HIMYM* some of the same words were used, such as *buddy* (n=21), *sweetie* (n=7) and *honey* (n=6), but, in addition to *buddy*, the most popular words were *baby* (n=36), *bro* (n=23), *dude* (n=15) and *you son of a bitch* (or in one instance *you son of a me*) (n=8).

According to the COCA, the use of the word *guys* has grown steadily during the last 20 years, and, in spoken language, it most often collocates with the word *you*. The origin of the word *guy* can be traced all the way back to the 17th century, and the rebel Guy Fawkes, and its meaning was quite negative until the late 19th century, when it became to mean simply a fellow. It seems that at some point in time the word has lost its gender specificity and is now applicable to both genders. In both television series more than two group members were generally addressed as *guys*, whether the members were women or men. In the example 3 one of the group members addresses the rest of the group (*Friends*, episode 4).

3. Rachel: *What are you guys doing here?*

The etymology of the word *buddy* is unclear; it could be derived from the word *brother* or it might be a variation of the British English word *butty* that was used in the 19th century for a work related friend in the British mining culture. (Online Etymology Dictionary 2014.) According to the COCA, the use of the word *buddy* peaked at the beginning of the 21st century; however, its use has since then declined to less than that in the early nineties. This is not in concordance with the results of the current study which clearly shows an increase in the use of the word. Another contradictory finding is the lessened use of the word *honey*, as the COCA shows no decline in the use of this word. That being said, it needs to be taken into consideration that words such as *honey*, *baby*, *kids* and *man* have other main functions than that of an address term.

The word *sweetie* has been used as an endearment since the late 18th century (Online Etymology Dictionary 2014) and, despite being an old word, according to the COCA, its use is increasing steadily. This does not show in the current study; however, the difference is only -2 from *Friends* to *HIMYM*. The use of an even older word of endearment, *sweetheart*, also shows a slight increase in

the COCA even though it was practically missing from the data of the more recent TV-series. *Sweetie* was used as a friendly endearment as well as an address term for a love interest. Example 4 shows a situation where a character is worried about her brother (Friends, episode 1).

4. Monica: *Are you okay, sweetie?*

The address term *bro* is a variation of the word brother and most often holds the meaning of a male friend (Online Etymology Dictionary 2014). According to the COCA its use has more than doubled during the period under examination. More importantly, that is evident in the current study, where the word *bro* does not appear at all in the first season of Friends but is one of the main address terms used in HIMYM. Another often used term in the latter series is *dude*, which was identically nonexistent in Friends. The origin of the word is in the American English variation and after its early use with the meaning of clothes, it became to mean a fashionably dressed man and later a man in general. The gender specificity is not as strict anymore, but still it is mainly used to refer to or address a male. (Kiesling 2011: 166.) The results in the COCA search indicate a major peak in the use of *dude* in the time period of 1995-1999, before and after which the use was significantly less frequent. The findings of the current study do not reflect this, but the COCA shows a slower increase in the use of the word toward the present time, which is in line with the results. Example 5 shows two men addressing each other, using these frequent terms (HIMYM, episode 21).

5. Ted: *Dude, knock it off.*

Gary: *Knock what off, bro?*

The terms *you son of a bitch* and *bitch* in general were nonexistent in Friends but frequently used in HIMYM. According to the COCA, the word *bitch* has been used consistently throughout the period under examination. Both terms have long histories of derogatory meanings and they probably have been used quite consistently through time. What has, however, changed might be the perception of the general public of the offensiveness of these words. The Federal Communications Commission (2014) regulates and supervises the content of the media shown in the United States and it has clear rules about the language that can be used in television during prime time. However, the rules leave plenty of freedom for the viewers to decide the level of obscenity. Thus, it seems that the perceived offensiveness of these terms has decreased allowing them to be used in a prime time television series. Moreover, the use of the word *bitch* is not reserved to derogatory situations, but rather it is used to address friends in certain situations, as the example 6 shows (HIMYM, episode 22).

6. Marshall: *You're seriously questioning our wedding vows? Us? Uh, we're adorable.*

Lily: *We're Marshmallow and Lilypad, bitch.*

Plenty of other address terms (see the appendix) were used in both TV-series, but the lower frequency of their use does not allow any meaningful analysis. The words can be categorized according to the reasons behind their use. There were address terms based on the physical attributes of the interlocutor, such as *gorgeous*, *handsome*, *beautiful*, *pumpkin head* and *growth spurt*, whereas some were based on personality attributes, such as *madcap gal*, *girl scout*, *wussies*, *prom queen* and *silly*. Other terms were based on the interlocutor's actions, for example *noisy boys*, *mother kisser*, *kicky*, *loser*, *weird girl* and *jerk* and some were related to occupational background, for example *scientist guy*, *captain*, *Judge Fudge*, *your honor* and *Mr. Architect*. Many terms were just purely situational: *camper*, *butt guy*, *Yoko*, *funny valentine*, *good woman*, *superman*, *my dear boy*, *princess*, *detective* and *robot*. Out of these different categories, terms based on physical attributes and occupational background were more frequent in HIMYM and terms based on the interlocutor's actions and personality were more frequent in Friends.

4.3 The use of intensifiers

The results of the use of intensifiers were quite consistent in both television series. In general, intensifiers were used more and in greater variety in Friends. The most used words in both series were *so* (n=146/135), *really* (n=53/33) and *very* (n=44/28). In addition to these, *pretty* (n=13/8) and *totally* (12/7) were used semi frequently in both, but one frequently used intensifier, *super* (n=10), was only present in HIMYM. Interestingly, the word *real*, with a singular occurrence in Friends, was used more frequently in HIMYM (n=6). Other words had either singular or few occurrences in one or both of the shows (see the appendix).

Comparison to the COCA is rather difficult with this group of words, as they are quite often used with other meanings than that of an intensifier. The COCA shows a slow increase in the use of the word *so* during the last 20 years, but this word especially is rather impossible to analyze using the corpus as it, in addition to being an intensifier, carries similar meanings with the words *then*, *also*, *thus*, *surely*, *therefore* and *indeed*. According to the present study, it seems that the use of it as an intensifier might have declined a little but as the results show a decrease in the use of other intensifiers as well, it is hard to know for sure. Similar results were found about the word *really*, which is more distinctly an intensifier despite its other uses. According to the COCA, its use has been increasing slowly but steadily. However, the results of the current study show a much more significant decline than in the case of *so*. The results on the word *pretty* are somewhat similar.

According to the COCA collocate search, it functions as an intensifier remarkably more than as an adjective. The COCA shows a moderate increase in the use of *pretty*, contradicting the results of the current study.

In the case of the word *very*, which is most markedly an intensifier, the results of the current study and the COCA are aligned. Though not notably, the use of the word has decreased according to the corpus and similar results can be seen in the present study. This is also the case with the intensifier *totally*, although despite the slow decline, its use has experienced a slight increase in the last period recorded. The results of the use of the word *super* are clearly parallel with the corpus and the current study, as, according to the COCA, the use of the word has increased more than a third during the inspected time period. The word's etymology is very old, as it is straight from the Latin word *super*, which carries the meanings of *above*, *over* and *beyond* (Online Etymology Dictionary 2014). Thus its function as an intensifier has long been known, but for some reason it is only now becoming more and more used as such. In the example 7 *super* is used as an intensifier with a similar intensifying value as the word *extremely* (HIMYM, episode 22).

7. Robin: *Last year, when you helped Victoria escape this church, how hard was it to climb down that drainpipe?*
Ted: *Extremely hard.*
Robin: *Okay, so that means super easy. Thanks.*

The word *real* is rather impossible to search in the COCA as it most often carries a different meaning. One can only guess the reasons behind its increased use during the last 20 years. As Rubinstein (2000: 4) claims, people generally aim at as economic use of language as possible; thus, it is possible that it is simply an economic use of the intensifier *really*. In most cases the word *real* could be replaced with the word *really*, as in the example 8 (HIMYM, episode 18).

8. Marshall: *You know what, Ted, you've been going at it real hard. Why don't you take a breather.*

Generally, this group of words showed most contradictions between the findings in the television series and the COCA. This might partly be due to the ambiguity of most of the words and the effect that has on extracting results from the corpus. The most significant findings were the ones concerning the appearance of the word *super* and the increased use of the word *real*.

4.4 Reacting to a positive occurrence

In general, positive occurrences were more frequent in *Friends* than in *HIMYM* and that might be a plot related issue. On that notion, the frequency and variation in the reactions was lower in *HIMYM*. In the case of *Friends*, one reaction clearly stood out and that was *Oh my God* (n=16). The corresponding number in *HIMYM* was clearly fewer (n=4) but still among the leading reactions in frequency. Another relatively frequent reaction was *Wow*, with five occurrences in both series. In *Friends*, similarly *That's great* (n=5) was in use and in *HIMYM* the third option was *Awesome* (n=3). As mentioned above, multiword searches are not possible in the COCA, so most of the reactions cannot be searched. In addition, the utterance *wow* is too vague to be analyzed further. However, the word *awesome*, which according to the results of the current study does not appear once in the earlier television show, has nearly tripled in use according to the COCA. Similarly, the use of the word *awesome* has increased comparing the two television series. Example 9 shows a situation where a character tells another that their mutual friend has resolved a problem concerning a wedding (*HIMYM*, episode 10).

9. Ted: *Billy saved the day by getting a new one from an autograph dealer nearby.*

...

Barney: *Awesome. Thanks, Billy!*

A special feature of the television series *Friends* is that one of its characters is prone to sarcasm in many situations. This shows in the results of the reactions to positive occurrences and many of the comments are rather sarcastic, for example *Oh Satan's minions at work again* and *Ooh, this is a Dear Diary moment*. These sarcastic sentences together with the utterances and the multiword reactions are not examinable through the COCA. More importantly, they would not give any conclusive results with any real significance for the current study.

5 CONCLUSION

Changes in the lexicon are often difficult to determine, especially when examining recent or ongoing changes. In addition, the line between change and natural fluctuation is not easy to define. (Aitchison 2001: 39, 99.) However, an extensive and multifaceted corpus helps to analyze the trends in the changes of lexicon. The findings of the current study were in line with the findings in the COCA in the case of greetings. The word *hey* has, according to both, become the most used greeting. The difficulty in the analysis is that the absolute numbers of greetings are significantly fewer in the TV-series HIMYM than in Friends. The change is so drastic that it needs to be taken into consideration that the reason behind this might be in the plot writing decisions rather than in language change. Therefore, the relation between the different words and the relative numbers within one television series count instead of the absolute numbers.

The results in the case of address terms were somewhat similar between the COCA and the results of the current study. Most of the popular address terms were present in both series, although a few new terms and a few terms that were less frequent earlier had become very popular. The native speaker creativity can be seen in the great variety of words used as address terms in both series. The frequency differences in terms related to physical and personal features and occupational backgrounds is an interesting detail that can be addressed as a side notion. It leads to thinking that the significance and appreciation of profession and physical features as opposed to personality features has increased during the last twenty years.

The findings about the use of intensifiers of the current study are very similar to the ones Tagliamonte and Roberts (2005) found in their study of the use of intensifiers in Friends. Both are in consensus that *so*, *really* and *very* are the most frequently used intensifiers in contemporary American English. However, the use of intensifiers in total seems to have declined during the last twenty years as all intensifiers were used less in HIMYM than in Friends, with the exception of the intensifier *super*, which was only found in HIMYM. This group of words showed most contradiction between the results of the current study and the COCA, which is interesting as Tagliamonte and Roberts (2005) focused precisely on intensifiers in their study and found a very clear connection between television language and “real-world” language.

The reactions to positive occurrences proved to be a difficult and ambiguous area of research. The problems lie in the ways people react to these occurrences, which, according to this study, are most often utterances or multiword items. In addition, it seems that the reaction is highly situational and

thus any conclusive results are difficult to find. The result with most significance is the appearance of the word *awesome* that was not used in the earlier series, *Friends*, at all. The results were in line with the COCA and this is one of the facts that indicate the comparability of television language and real life language use.

As mentioned above, the current study indicates that television language can be used as a representative of real life language. As this is a field relatively little researched, it opens up a variety of possibilities to examine the relationship between television language and real life language use or find out about contemporary language using television language as research data. In addition, despite there being few studies about the effect of television language on real life language use, it could be examined more, for example from the point of view of language learning. Other future research ideas are related to the background factors of the two television series. They were shown by different production companies, and thus their influence on language use could be examined. In addition, other factors that influence language use, such as writers, actors and writing mechanics, could be taken into consideration. This would further clarify the relationship between television language and real life language. All in all, the research of language use in television broadens the current view of television as a research subject from content centered research to linguistically oriented research.

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APPENDIX

Situation	Friends	(n=)	How I Met Your Mother	(n=)
Greeting				
	Hi	153	Hi	62
	Hey	139	Hey	76
	Hello	48	Hello	14
	Tah-Daaah	1	Go for Barney	2
	What's up	1	Heya	1
			Hello there	1
			Ahoy	1
			What's poppin'	1
Address terms				
	You guys	88	You guys	55
	Guys	15	Guys	27
	Honey	19	Baby	36
	Buddy	9	Bro	23
	Man	9	Buddy	21
	Sweetie	9	Dude	15
	Dear	5	Captain	8
	Sir	5	You son of a bitch(/me)	8
	Sweetheart	4	Sweetie	7
	Kids (non-familial)	4	Honey	6
	Miss	3	Lady	5
	Pal	3	Bitch	5
	Ladies	3	Gentlemen	4
	Boys	2	Sir	4
	Weird girl	2	Darling	4
	Big guy	2	Judge Fudge	3
	Baby	2	Ladies and gentlemen	3

	Gorgeous	2	Mi amigos	3
	Babe	2	My friend(s)	3
	Lady	2	Babe	3
	Girls/gals	3	Ma'am	3
	Big spender	1	Pumpkin head	3
	Tiger	1	Brother	2
	People	1	Man	2
	Prom queen	1	Dear	2
	Loser	1	Baby doll	2
	Monkey boy	1	You kids	1
	Good woman	1	Dummy	1
	Cheech	1	Daddy (non-familial)	1
	Mr. suity man	1	Granma (non-familial)	1
	Funny valentine	1	Handsome	1
	Fella	1	My dear boy	1
	Kicky	1	Sweetheart	1
	Mister	1	Mister	1
	Sparky	1	Superman	1
	Wussies	1	Loser	1
	Kiddo	1	Jabba	1
	Mother-kisser	1	Hosers	1
	Girl scout	1	Princess	1
	Scientist guy	1	Young one	1
	Yoko	1	Travel breath	1
	Noisy boys	1	Fathead	1
	Ladies and gentleman	1	Jerk	1
	Butt guy	1	Homies	1
	Madcap gal	1	Silly	1
	Missy	1	Ladies	1
	Camper	1	Detective	1
	Bunny	1	Diaper man	1
	Hon	1	Partner	1
			M'lady	1

			Mr. Architect	1
			Your honor	1
			Chumps	1
			Robot	1
			Sister (non-familial)	1
			You bitches	1
			Bud	1
			Beautiful	1
			Old man	1
			People	1
			Growth spurt	1
			Boys	1
Intensifiers				
	So	146	So	135
	Really	53	Really	33
	Very	44	Very	28
	Pretty	13	Pretty	8
	Totally	12	Totally	7
	Unbelievably	2	Super	10
	Real	1	Real	6
	Kinda	1	Extremely	2
	Horribly	1	Terribly	2
	Supremely	1	Extra	2
	Way	1	Bonkers	1
	Completely	1	Incredibly	1
	Incredibly	1		
	Perfectly	1		
	Damn	1		
	Fundamentally	1		
	Ridiculously	1		
Reacting to positive occurrence				

	Oh my god	16	Oh my god	4
	Wow	5	Wow	5
	That's (so) great	5	Awesome	3
	Hey!	2	Great	1
	You're kidding	2	Aww	1
	Man oh man	1	Whoah	1
	That's wonderful	1	Hooray	1
	Woohoo	1	That's amazing	1
	It's terrific	1		
	Whoah	1		
	Fantastic	1		
	Congratulations	1		
	That is amazing	1		
	Ooh, this is a Dear Diary moment (sarcastic)	1		
	Oh, Satan's minions at work again (sarcastic)	1		
	That guy, he burns me up (sarcastic)	1		