

“I’m having candy for dinner!”:  
Characterization of Kimmy on *Unbreakable Kimmy  
Schmidt*

Bachelor’s thesis  
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<p>Ihmiset kohtaavat fiktiivisiä henkilöitä elokuvissa, televisiosarjoissa, kirjoissa, näytelmissä ja videopeleissä. Hahmojen tarkoitus on inspiroida, liikuttaa ja viihdyttää katsojia, ja usein hahmoihin voi olla helppo samaistua. Hahmot suunnitellaan ja luodaan huolellisesti, jotta ne olisivat mielenkiintoisia ja tunteita herättäviä. Tämän vuoksi hahmot, kuten ihmiset oikeassa elämässä, ovat ainutlaatuisia ja kompleksisia, ja siksi niiden tutkiminen on tärkeää.</p> <p>Tämä kandidaatintutkielma tutkii Netflixin <i>Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt</i> komediasarjan päähenkilöä Kimmyä ja hänen identiteettiään hahmoanalyysin ja pragmatiikan avulla. Analyysi keskittyy Kimmyyn visuaalisiin ja paralingvistisiin piirteisiin, hänen sanastoonsa sekä muiden hahmojen puheessa esiintyviin implikatuureihin – ilmaisujen sanattomiin merkityksiin ja taustaoletuksiin – joita Kimmy on usein vaikea ymmärtää. Tutkimuksen tarkoituksena on selvittää, millaisten piirteiden avulla Kimmy hahmo on luotu, ja mitä nämä piirteet kertovat hänen identiteetistään ja luonteestaan.</p> <p>Aineisto koostuu sarjan ensimmäisen tuotantokauden jaksoista, jotka katsottiin ensin läpi, jotta Kimmy hahmosta saataisiin kattava yleiskuva. Tämän jälkeen jaksoista identifioitiin kohtauksia, joissa Kimmy hahmolle tyypilliset piirteet olivat läsnä. Kimmy hahmon identiteettiä hyvin kuvaavia kohtauksia kerättiin aluksi noin 30, joista 10 valittiin ja litteroitiin analyysiä varten.</p> <p>Tutkimuksessa todettiin Kimmy hahmon koostuvan useista erilaisista piirteistä, kuten lapsenomaisesta pukeutumisesta ja vanhentuneista, hänen lapsuudelleen tyypillisistä slangisanoista, jotka yhdessä tekevät hahmosta ainutlaatuisen. Mikään Kimmy piirteistä ei toimisi kovin hyvin yksinään, mutta yhdessä ne luovat moniulotteisen ja kompleksisen kokonaisuuden. Tutkimus antaa täten pohjaa erilaisille jatkotutkimuksille, jotka ovat kiinnostuneita henkilöiden identiteeteistä ja niiden rakentumisesta.</p>	
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## 1 INTRODUCTION

We encounter fictional characters every day in books, television series, movies, plays and video games. Characters are vital for the narrative of a story; in fact, there would be no story if there were no characters to tell it. The purpose of characters is to inspire, move and entertain the viewers. A lot of thought and detail is put into creating interesting and relatable characters, especially in television series and movies. Characters are complex and unique like people in the real world, and therefore are worth analysing and studying.

Even though the importance of characters is acknowledged, little research is done on fictional characters and their identities (e.g. Kettunen 2015, Bednarek 2010). To help fill this research gap, I decided to study the character and identity of Kimmy from Netflix sitcom *Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt*. The show follows a 29-year-old Indiana woman Kimmy Schmidt, who was kidnapped as a teenager by a doomsday cult leader Reverend Richard Wayne Garry Wayne and kept in an underground bunker for 15 years with three other women, Cyndee, Gretchen and Donna Maria. The reverend convinced the girls that the world had ended, and they were the only ones alive. The series begins by the women being rescued from the bunker and Kimmy deciding to move to New York to restart her life. She soon meets Lillian, an unusual but kind-hearted landlord and becomes roommates with Lillian's tenant Titus Andromedon who dreams to act and sing on Broadway. On her first day in New York, Kimmy manages to get a job as a nanny for a rich socialite Jacqueline and becomes targeted by Jacqueline's teenage stepdaughter Xanthippe. Kimmy also goes back to school and has her first boyfriend. Even though Kimmy faces several mishaps as she adapts to the life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, she has a positive attitude towards life and people, and is determined to leave the past behind her.

The aim of this study is to find out what kinds of characterization features are used to create Kimmy's character identity. The study applies Culpeper's (2001) theories on characterization and focuses on the visual and paralinguistic features as well as the lexis of Kimmy's character. Kimmy also tends to struggle understanding implicature, utterances that have implicated meanings (Birner 2012: 43), and therefore her reactions to certain utterances are also analyzed by following H.P. Grice's Cooperative Principle.

In Chapter 2, I introduce background information about characterization and The Cooperative Principle and implicature as well as previous research done on fictional character identity. Next, the data and the methods of analysis are discussed and justified in Chapter 3. The analysis of the data is done in Chapter 4. The analysis is divided in three sections: visual and paralinguistic features, lexis, and implicature. The findings are further discussed in Chapter 5 which concludes the study.

## **2 BACKGROUND**

In this chapter, I will discuss key terms and theories that are relevant for this study and introduce previous research done on characterization. The present study mainly applies Culpeper's (2001) approaches and terminology and H.P. Grice's Cooperative Principle and implicature.

### **2.1 Characterization**

Characterization is a literary device used to gradually explain the details about a character in a story and can be either explicit (direct) or implicit (indirect) (Literary Devices 2018). Explicit characterization tells about a character directly, whereas implicit characterization reveals information about the character through implicit cues, such as behavior, appearance and way of talking. This study will focus on some of the implicit cues presented in Culpeper's (2001) study, such as visual and paralinguistic features and lexis. Culpeper's study is one of the main ones done on characterization and explores how the language of play texts creates a particular impression of a character in the reader's mind. Culpeper's approach is multi-disciplinary, drawing theories from linguistics, cognitive psychology, social psychology, and stylistics.

#### **2.1.1 Visual and paralinguistic features**

When characterizing fictional characters, it is important to analyze their visual and paralinguistic features as well. Visual features, such as clothing, stature or facial expressions, are an essential part of characterization. One's appearance gives information about one's sex, approximate age and ethnicity, but visual features can also tell about one's personality and emotions. According to Culpeper (2001: 222), there are two different types of visual features: kinesic features, which are

dynamic, and appearance features, which are static. Kinesic features relate to body motion, such as facial expressions and posture. A considerable amount of research has been done on facial expressions and their correlation with particular emotions, such as happiness, sadness, fear, and anger (Culpeper 2001: 223). However, Culpeper (ibid.) points out that emotions can be habitual, meaning that some people or characters are characteristically happy, sad, angry, and so forth. Body movements and postures also may suggest or reinforce characterization (Culpeper 2001: 224).

Appearance features are relatively static features, such as stature, facial features or clothing. Stature can mean both physical height and social standing, thus one's height may affect how one's social power is perceived; tall people, for instance, are often perceived more powerful than short people (Culpeper 2001: 224). Clothing can also convey characterizing information about a person. Clothing is less static than most other appearance features and something that can be changed (Culpeper 2001: 225). However, most people, especially fictional characters, have a rather specific style, and dress similarly every day. Moreover, sudden drastic changes in a character's choice of clothing can reveal important information about their identity (e.g. a desire to belong to a particular group). Therefore, clothing should be considered when analyzing fictional characters.

Paralinguistic features refer to non-verbal qualities of speech, such as pitch, amplitude, rate, and voice quality (Cambridge Dictionary 2018). Paralinguistic features embody a great deal of meaning and can reveal important information about someone's personality. According to Culpeper (2001: 215-221), certain voices are strongly associated with certain personality types. For example, non-fluency features, such as hesitation or needless repetitions, may indicate nervousness or lack of confidence, whereas high variability in pitch may suggest the person is dynamic, extroverted and outgoing (Culpeper 2001: 217-218). There are also several voice-qualities that can mark, for example, one's age, such as the breaking voice of male puberty (Culpeper 2001: 219).

### **2.1.2 Lexis**

Word choices offer a significant amount of information about one's personality, and we tend to form impressions of other people based on their lexis. According to Culpeper (2001: 183) formal

lexis, for example, can make one seem rather pompous, whereas informal lexis can give the impression a person is more “down to earth”. One’s lexis depends greatly on their age, education, occupation and region. Slang, for instance, is commonly used by younger speakers as a marker of a group identity. However, since slang terms are used during a limited stage of life, they become dated rather quickly and change constantly (Yule 2014: 262).

Recurring words and phrases, such as one’s habitual swearing, can also be significant when analyzing one’s identity. Surge features are “outbursts of emotion”, such as exclamation or swearing, that give information about the person’s emotions, moods, and attitudes (Culpeper 2001: 190). Swearing often signals anger or surprise but can also be used to build in-group cohesion and express certain attitudes. Swear words may also contribute to certain characteristics of a character (Culpeper 2001: 191).

## **2.2 Pragmatics: The Cooperative Principle and implicature**

H.P. Grice’s Cooperative Principle (CP) suggests that speakers attempt to be cooperative in a conversation (Birner 2012: 41). The CP consists of four maxims (Quality, Quantity, Relation and Manner) which the speakers follow and expect others to follow. Birner (2012: 42) paraphrases the maxims as following: say enough, but don’t say too much; say only what you have reason to believe is true; say only what is relevant; be brief, clear, and unambiguous. However, the speaker can observe, violate, flout or opt out of the maxims (ibid.), which all give different meanings to the utterances.

Implicature occurs when utterances contain implicated meanings and suggestions (Birner 2010: 43). To understand implicated meanings, the receiver of the utterance must infer what is meant. Metaphors, irony, and lying are all examples of implicature. According to Birner (2010: 62, 63) implicature can be conversational or conventional. Conversational implicatures are derived via the CP and have two distinguishing characteristics. First, the contribution of the implicature to the meaning of the utterance is not truth-conditional. This means the truth of the statement would not be affected even if the implicature did not remain valid. Second, conversational implicature is context-dependent: if the context changes, the implicature may change as well. Conventional

implicatures are also non-truth-conditional but are not tied to context or the maxims (Birner 2010: 66). This study mainly focuses conversational implicature and the different uses of the maxims.

### **2.3 Previous research**

There is little research on fictional or televisual characters and their identities. Most of the recent research on characterization has focused on prose rather than drama or television, even though characters of plays and television series are particularly salient, and there is usually no narrator to guide our perception of the characters (Culpeper 2001: 2). According to Eder et al. (2010: 3), one reason for the lack of research may be that fictional characters are so familiar a phenomenon that studying them has not been necessary. Characters also prove to be highly complex; therefore, studying them can be challenging. However, characters are fundamental to televisual narrative, and the story and the dialogue of a television program is created around the characters.

Research on televisual dialogues has also focused mostly on news broadcasts, political interviews and reality TV. Bednarek (2010: 2) argues that television dialogue should be taken seriously and incorporated as a whole in the linguistic enterprise, including the diverse genres of fictional television. In her study, Bednarek (2010) analyzes how the language of fictional television differs from real life language and how the language is used to create drama and character identity. The study focuses on the dialogue and the identities of the characters in a popular television series *Gilmore Girls* and is carried out by combining qualitative and quantitative linguistic analysis and drawing on theories from different backgrounds, such as pragmatics and multimodal research. Bednarek's (2010: 114, 231) analysis on the key terms used by the characters show that their vocabularies are very different. Thus, the characters can be distinguished from each other through language use (e.g. unique word choices), which suggests that characters in television are often constructed unique and linguistically differentiated from other characters, akin to people in real life.

Another study on fictional character identities was carried out by Kettunen (2015), who analyzed the identities of the protagonists of a videogame called *Grand Theft Auto V*. Kettunen's (2015) aim was to find out what elements contribute to the characters' identity construction and whether their identities develop during the game. His study applied Culpeper's (2001) theories and focused on



the protagonists' visual features, languages, group membership, social roles and personality categories. Even though Kettunen's study focused on a different media, the characters of video games and television are similar and can be analyzed using the same methods due to the realistic graphics and overall quality of video games nowadays. The characters of *GTA V* were also played by voice actors, which made it possible for Kettunen to analyze the language of the characters similarly to television characters.

In his study, Kettunen (2015) came to the conclusion that the characters' identities were constructed by several different factors, such as visual features, language and group membership, and evolved as the story progressed. He also found out that the characters are much more than just these features simply put together – the characters were created carefully with specific details that made the characters feel realistic and different from each other.

### **3 THE PRESENT STUDY**

#### **3.1 Research questions**

This qualitative study intends to analyze the characterization of Kimmy from *Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt* through the visual and paralinguistic features and the lexis Kimmy uses. Kimmy's reactions to utterances with implicated meanings are also analyzed. Since Kimmy is a humorous character, I will also discuss how these features of her character help create a humorous effect. My aim is to answer the following research questions:

1. What kinds of visual and paralinguistic features are used to create Kimmy's character?
2. What kind of information does Kimmy's lexis and her reactions to implicature give about her identity?

#### **3.2 Data**

*Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt* is an American sitcom distributed by Netflix. The series premiered in 2015 and is releasing its fourth season in May 2018. The seasons consist of 13 episodes, each episode being approximately 25-30 minutes long.

I chose to analyze the character of Kimmy because she is quite an unusual and interesting character: the way she dresses, speaks, and behaves is not quite normal for a 29-year-old. She is an adult with a mind of a child still living in the 90's. Therefore, her worldview is quite different from everybody else's and there are many things in the modern world she does not understand. I decided to look more deeply into her character and how it is created. Language is an essential part of Kimmy's character and what differentiates her from other characters the most. Kimmy does look unusual for her age, but the things she says causes confusion in other characters the most. The data consists mainly of the episodes of the first season. The first season was chosen because Kimmy's character is still new. One season also gives enough data for the scope of this study.

### **3.3 Methods**

I collected the data by first watching the episodes through to get a good overview of Kimmy's character. After this, I identified the scenes that contained important and representative features of Kimmy's character. In total there were approximately 30 scenes, which were narrowed down to 10 for further analysis (see Chapter 4). I transcribed the selected scenes with the help of Jefferson's (2004) transcript symbols (see Appendix) and paid more attention to details, such as Kimmy's voice (e.g. pitch, volume, quality), her vocabulary, and her reactions to implicature. I also paid attention to Kimmy's appearance, such as her clothes and facial expressions.

The main methods when analyzing the data were character analysis and pragmatics. The character analysis consists of describing and analyzing Kimmy's visual and paralinguistic features, i.e. clothing, facial expression and way of talking, and lexis. The study focuses both on the lexis Kimmy uses and modern lexis that is unfamiliar to her. Pragmatic approach was used to analyze implicature produced by other characters and Kimmy's reactions to it. I identified the ways the characters used the CP maxims to create implicature, such as violating a maxim, in which case the speaker assumes the hearer will not realize the maxim is being violated, or flouting a maxim, which means the violation is so obvious the hearer is expected to understand it (Birner 2010: 43). I then analyzed and discussed possible reasons why Kimmy struggles to understand the implicated meanings.

## **4 ANALYSIS**

In this chapter, I will analyze the chosen examples from different points of view. First, I analyze Kimmy's appearance, such as clothing and facial expressions, and her paralinguistic features. Second, I analyze Kimmy's lexis and her lack of modern lexis. Lastly, I analyze Kimmy's reactions to different types of implicature.

### **4.1 Visual and paralinguistic features**

Kimmy has interesting visual features which makes her stand out from other characters and strengthen the impression that she still has the mindset of a 15-year-old. Clothing can give information about one's age; however, Kimmy's clothing choices reflect more her mental age rather than her physical age. Kimmy usually wears bright colors, such as pink and yellow, patterns, skirts, sweaters and sneakers. On the first episode, for example, Kimmy is wearing a bright yellow cardigan with butterflies on it, floral shirt, bright pink trousers, and Skechers Twinkle Toes light-up shoes that were the first thing she bought in New York. According to the Footwear News interview (2015) with Skechers President Michael Greenberg, Twinkle Toes shoes are made for children, and thus the shoes make Kimmy stand out and grab the viewer's attention. The light-up shoes can be seen in several occasions throughout the series since the moment Kimmy buys them. The shoes, therefore, are clearly quite important to Kimmy and worth paying attention to when analyzing her character. According to Culpeper (2001: 225), characters may adopt specific items that have strong associations, e.g. an old person with a cane. The shoes may indicate Kimmy still sees herself as a child, and therefore feels more comfortable wearing children's shoes and more youthful clothes in general. The shoes were also widely popular during the 80's and the 90's when Kimmy was a child, and thus reflect the fashion of her childhood.

Despite her past, Kimmy seems to have a positive outlook on life, which can be seen in her appearance. Kimmy has a very expressive face, and she smiles constantly. In fact, Kimmy's landlord Lillian says on episode six that Kimmy "smiles too much, like a collie". Kimmy also tells Jacqueline on episode four about her technique to "smile until you feel better" which she calls "Kimmying". Smiling, therefore, could be seen as Kimmy's way of making herself feel better after what happened to her and a reason to why she smiles so much. Smiling can also be a sign of excitement, since Kimmy tends to become excited over various things, especially at the very

beginning of the series. Moreover, as Culpeper (2001: 223) has stated, some characters may be characteristically happy, sad, and so on. Being happy and smiling may, therefore, be habitual for Kimmy.

In addition to visual features, also the way one speaks can give information about their age and sex, for example (Culpeper 2001: 215). The pitch of Kimmy's voice is rather high most of the time. Pitch usually varies according to a person's physique and height and is, therefore, a good indicator of the speaker's sex. Moreover, high variability of pitch suggests the person is outgoing, extroverted and benevolent, which fits Kimmy's personality (Culpeper 2001: 217-218). The quality of Kimmy's voice could be described as tense. According to Addington (1968, in Culpeper 2001: 220), female speakers with tense voice tend to be perceived as youthful, emotional, feminine, high-strung and less intelligent. As mentioned before, Kimmy seems to perceive herself younger than she is and tends to be quite excitable. Moreover, due to captivity and lack of education, Kimmy may not be as intellectually mature as other people of her age.

## 4.2 Lexis

The impact of the isolation from the outside world can be heard in Kimmy's lexis. Words are developed and changed constantly by people in a social environment. Since Kimmy lived 15 years in isolation from the world and people, she did not have the chance to learn new words, and therefore uses vocabulary she is familiar with. Kimmy has only a middle school education, which, at times, affects her grammar, for example saying "tooken" instead of "taken".

Kimmy's lexis reveals how she perceives the modern world and her role in it. She uses, for example, words *now* and *nowadays* in questions to refer to the world, which other people find odd, as can be seen in the Example 1 and 2:

Example 1 S01E01 11:50

Kimmy arrives to Titus' apartment and sees his robot costume on a chair.

1 K: Is that a real robot? Do people have robots now?

2 T: What?

3 K: Huh?

Example 2 S01E03 21:10

1 J: Xanthippe Lannister Voorhees, how about you mind your own damn business. Women have secrets, okay? Who knows what Kimmy had to do to get here. Maybe she was a hooker.

- 4 K: Okay, is this how prostitutes dress nowadays?  
 5 X: Admit that that was a weird thing to say!

The words *now* and *nowadays* in the questions indicate that Kimmy is unfamiliar with the modern world. She asks questions people expect someone of her age to know the answers to. In these scenes, the characters are not aware of Kimmy's past, and therefore they become confused or suspicious. Using *now* and *nowadays* in this context may also indicate that Kimmy feels like she is not part of the world like everyone else because of her lack of knowledge.

#### 4.2.1 Outdated and modern words

A great part of Kimmy's vocabulary consists of outdated words. Kimmy can be heard saying words such as *dagnabbit*, *word up* and *wack*. Kimmy also keeps a notebook labeled "Things people don't say anymore" to write down outdated words. Technology also is growing and changing, and many device names have changed since the nineties, which Kimmy, of course, is unaware about. She, for example, refers to an iPhone as Macintosh or Gameboy, and says *electronic mail* instead of *email*. Kimmy also mentions devices and programs that are not used anymore, such as PalmPilot, WordPerfect and Mavis Beacon Teaches Typing.

Kimmy also seems to encounter quite many misunderstandings and confusing situations because of words she does not know. Some words may also have new meanings she is not aware of, as can be seen in Example 3.

Example 3 S01E01 14:12  
 Kimmy meets two girls at a nightclub  
 1 G: Hey do you wanna party with us? Are you into molly?  
 2 K: Am I? She's my favorite American Girl doll!  
 ((smiles and dances away))  
 ((the girls look at each other confused))

In this example, the girls ask if Kimmy is into *molly*, which is a slang term for 'molecular' and refers to the drug ecstasy. Kimmy, however, innocently believes the girls are talking about an American Girl doll called Molly. This example does not only show Kimmy's lack of modern vocabulary but her innocent and child-like way of thinking: the girls are in the club and talk about partying, yet Kimmy does not think that *molly* could mean something else but a doll.

Examples 4 and 5 show two words, *googling* and *selfie*, which seem to be unknown to Kimmy.

Example 4 S01E03 21:10  
 1 X: Kimmy Smith from Middletown, Ohio, I've been googling you.

2 K: You have? I didn't feel it.

Example 5 S01E04 03:50

Jacqueline needs a recent picture of Kimmy for her caregiver ID.

1 K: Oh boy, okay. I, don't really have a recent picture of myself.

2 Is there a Sears near here?

3 J: Ew. No. Just take a selfie and email it to me.

4 K: A selfie. Yes. (.) What is that?

Her reaction to the word *googling* is rather interesting: she understands googling as a physical action and is surprised she did not feel Xan doing it. Kimmy therefore seems to have some kind of meaning for *googling* in her mind but is not familiar with Google or the action of googling. The word *selfie*, however, seems to be a new word that Kimmy has never heard before. She takes a little pause before asking what it is, perhaps trying to figure it out herself first but does not seem to have any idea what the word means. Kimmy automatically thinks she would have to have her picture taken at an American department store chain Sears as people would back in a day. By episode four Kimmy has already used modern cellphones but may have forgotten they have cameras in them.

#### 4.2.2 Surge features

Kimmy's personality, feelings and attitudes come through by different surge features, such as exclamations and mild swearing, i.e. replacing offensive words with more appropriate ones, such as *fudge* or *heck*. In various occasions Kimmy can be heard to exclaim "Urethra!" or "Aretha!" instead of "Eureka!" when she has an idea, which strengthens the impression that she is uneducated. Kimmy also uses mild swear words in nearly every episode to express different feelings through them. She may, for example, express both positive surprise or annoyance with the phrase "what (in) the ham sandwich", depending on the situation. The mild swear words are a great part of Kimmy's childlike identity: she may feel like she is not allowed to swear and finds it inappropriate for "her age". Kimmy does not seem to try to avoid actual swear words consciously by using the mild versions; rather, the words are a natural choice for her and are produced automatically.

In Example 6, Kimmy encounters her step-father and step-sister, who she is in quite bad terms with, and expresses her annoyance and anger through swearing.

Example 6 S01E09 02:15

Kimmy sees her step-father and step-sister waiting outside her apartment.

1 K: ((through her teeth)) Gosh darn mommy-fudger. What the ham sandwich are you doing here?

Kimmy's anger can be noticed from the way she speaks and her facial expression. Her expression changes from happy to serious when she sees her step-father and step-sister, and she speaks tensely through her teeth. The word that stands out the most in this example is 'mommy-fudger', which is most likely directed to Kimmy's step-father. Kimmy uses the word 'mommy' instead of 'mother', making the swear word even milder. However, the word 'mommy-fudger' gets a rather odd connotation. The word is used with the same intent as 'motherfucker', but since 'mommy' is used by children for their mothers, it gives the impression as if Kimmy was referring to her own mother, whereas 'mother' would have sounded more neutral and generic.

As in example 6, Kimmy uses several mild swear words in one turn in Example 7. However, in this example the swear words express disbelief and determination.

Example 7 S01E07 05:55

Kimmy and Jacqueline are eavesdropping Jacqueline's husband's phone call and hear him talking to a woman, who they believe him to have an affair with. Jacqueline puts the phone down and remains silent.

1 K: What are you doing? You have proof now. Get up there and give him  
2 heck for fudge's sake, gosh dang it.

Kimmy's tone of voice is surprised but soft, not angry or frustrated. She clearly tries to persuade Jacqueline to take action and confront her husband. Jacqueline decides to throw a party where she could catch her husband and his mistress together. The mild swear words (i.e. 'heck for fudges sake' and 'gosh dangit') add determination and encouragement to Kimmy's utterance: If Kimmy only said, "go confront him", it would not be as effective. The mild versions also suit the situations: If the words had been proper swear words, Kimmy's utterance would have been more aggressive.

### 4.3 Implicature

Kimmy often struggles to understand implicature that occurs in other characters' utterances and tends to take things literally. In Example 8, Kimmy is being catcalled by a man. Catcalling in this context means a sexually suggestive comment that is made to a passing person in a public environment, often a street.

Example 8 S01E05 00:00-00:45

Kimmy is walking past a construction site and gets catcalled by a construction worker

1 M: Hey Red, you're making me wish I was those jeans.

2 K: Well I wish I was your yellow hat! ((smiles and chuckles))

3 M: What?  
 4 K: It's my favorite color. ((smiling))  
 5 M: ((looks confused))  
 6 K: Did I say something wrong? ((looks concerned))  
 7 M: Okay u:h, I'm sorry about the jeans thing. You made your point.  
 8 K: And my point is wh-((shakes head, not understanding))  
 9 M: That I say these things to women even though I got a mother that  
 10 I love and three beautiful sisters, okay?  
 11K: ((smiles and nods))

In this example, Kimmy seems to be unfamiliar with the concept of catcalling and takes the man's statement in the first line literally. In this situation the construction worker is flouting a maxim: he violates the maxim of Quality, but the violation is so obvious he expects Kimmy to realize it (Birner 2013: 43). The man does not literally mean he wants to be Kimmy's jeans but rather implicates he would like to take the place of the jeans, thus making it a sexual suggestion. Kimmy, however, genuinely thinks the man is being literal and replies with a similar utterance, which makes the man confused. The man does not seem to realize Kimmy is being serious; he may think Kimmy is being sarcastic, perhaps trying to show the man how catcalling is inappropriate, and therefore he becomes apologetic in the seventh line. Kimmy's sincerity can, however, be noticed in her smiling, concernedly asking if she said something wrong when the man is looking confused and being confused herself when the man says she made her point. The viewer is also quite familiar with Kimmy's behavior by this time and knows she is being sincere, whereas the man has never met her before, and therefore cannot know her personality and behavior. Kimmy meets the same man later in the second season and asks him "So what happened? Did you ever get to be jeans?" (Season 2, Episode 4).

Similarly to Example 8, a maxim is also being flouted in Example 9, but this time it is the maxim of Quantity. Jacqueline says too little for Kimmy to understand her, thus leading to confusion.

Example 9 S01E07 3:40

Jacqueline went to China to confront her husband Julian about a suspicion that he is cheating on her, but he denied everything, leaving Jacqueline feeling unsure. They arrive home and Jacqueline wants to speak about Julian with Kimmy.

1 J: Kimmy, the elevator.  
 2 K: Jacqueline, the refrigerator. °What are we doing?°  
 3 J: ((takes Kimmy to the elevator)) Do you think I'm paranoid?  
 4 K: No, Vera does say stuff about you behind your back. ((chuckles))  
 5 Sometimes she does this thing where she's all ((stretches her  
 6 mouth with hands)) "Where's my husband?" ((pretending to be  
 7 Jacqueline))  
 8 J: No, I'm talking about Julian.  
 9 K: Oh, right. What happened in China? Was everything upside down



10     there? ((excitedly))

The utterance “Kimmy, the elevator” has an implicated meaning of “come to the elevator with me”, but Kimmy does not understand it. Jacqueline’s briefness may be caused by the presence of her husband; she does not want to draw too much attention to her and Kimmy going to the elevator. Jacqueline’s overbearing and arrogant nature may also be a reason for her briefness. By asking “Do you think I’m paranoid” Jacqueline wants to know if Kimmy thinks her suspicions about her husband are reasonable. It was Kimmy who encouraged Jacqueline to confront Julian and knew Jacqueline went to China to do that, yet she fails to understand what Jacqueline is expecting from her. This example, therefore, shows how Kimmy loses context easily: she rambles on about how Jacqueline’s housemaid talks about her behind her back even though it is rather clear Jacqueline is talking about her husband. In the ninth line, Kimmy again becomes distracted by asking “Was everything upside down there?”, which is irrelevant to the context.

Example 10 shows Kimmy’s naivety and gullibility. She is being lured by a stranger to come to his van, and even though she was kidnapped by a man with a van 15 years ago, she lacks judgment of the situation and is willing to go with the stranger.

Example 10 S01E09 00:00

Kimmy stops a somewhat old looking man on the street to ask him to buy her booze.

1 K: Oh, excuse me sir? Sir? Today is my birthday. The big thirty-oh.  
2 I need alcohol for my party, and these are the only picture IDs  
3 that I have - - So, if I give you money, could you buy booze for  
4 me?

5 M: I got some liquor in my v↑an. You can have all you want if you  
6 come to my v↑an. ((points to his van))

7 K: Your van? ((chuckle)) Awesome. ((about to go with the man but  
8 Titus arrives and stops Kimmy))

9 T: What is wrong with you, Kimbecile? Thank God I was out for my  
10 morning run (.) to the gas station bathroom.

11 ((the man runs to his van and leaves))

Titus and Kimmy exit the liquor store; Kimmy talks about how she has come a long way since the bunker.

12 K: I’m getting my diploma, I have a boyfriend, and I finally have a  
13 bra that fits right, thanks to the bra salesman in the other van.

14 T: ((looks at Kimmy in disbelief)) Damn it, Kimmy.

15 K: ((looks pensive and then mouths “oh”))

It could be assumed that the man actually does not have liquor in his van. The repetition and emphasis on the word *van* with rising intonation makes the utterance sound more like an unsure suggestion rather than a truthful statement. The way the man flees the situation when Titus arrives

also suggests he was lying. In Gricean implicature, lying is violating the maxim with the purpose to mislead: the person knows their utterance is false (violation of Quality) and assumes the hearer will believe them (Birner 2013: 43). Kimmy believes the man and does not hesitate to go with him. In fact, she had apparently believed “the bra salesman in the other van” as well prior to this situation. Titus’ reactions “What is wrong with you, Kimbecile” and “Damn it, Kimmy” also suggest he thinks Kimmy is acting recklessly and should have someone watching over her.

## 5 CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to find out what kinds of features were used to create Kimmy’s character by focusing on her appearance, way of talking, lexis and reactions to implicature. The findings indicate that various features were used together to create a complex and unique character (also Kettunen 2015). Kimmy’s character is built strongly around language but would not be complete without her visual and paralinguistic features.

All the features analyzed express Kimmy’s naïve childlike identity, from the way she looks to the way she speaks. The bright colors, patterns, and light up shoes are not common for a 30-year-old to wear, and she often gets comments that she looks like a cartoon character or someone from the 90’s. Kimmy also gets excited easily, even for the little things, and smiles and laughs often. Kimmy’s lexis and the way she speaks also give a childlike impression of her. She uses outdated and rather simple words and often confuses scientific words (e.g. ‘urethra’ instead of ‘eureka’). Kimmy is also unfamiliar with the modern world and modern words, which leads to confusing situations. However, even though Kimmy grew up in isolation, she is not a helpless character: she manages to get a job, an apartment and a boyfriend during the first few episodes. Therefore, the show’s slogan “Females are strong as hell” represents her well; after all, she is supposed to be “unbreakable”.

Kimmy’s identity is revealed the most in the dialogue. Her interactions with other people show her worldview and how she thinks. Examples 3 and 8 (‘molly’ and catcalling) prove that Kimmy still has a mind of a child; she is unable to associate the situations with drugs or sex. Kimmy’s reactions to implicature also indicate she is not capable discerning implied meanings. She often takes things literally, and talking to Kimmy can sometimes be, as Xan says on episode 10, “like

talking to a chicken”. Even though Kimmy does not want people to know about her past, her unusual word choices and behavior quickly reveal that she is different from others.

Since *Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt* is a comedy series, Kimmy’s character is created to be humorous. Kimmy’s appearance, behavior and language are already humorous, but her interaction with other characters is what makes the show funny. Kimmy sees the world so differently from other people that confusing and amusing situations are expected to happen. According to Mayerhofer (2013: 211), “perspective clashing”, such as misunderstandings or the character’s lack of information, is a common humor mechanism in narratives. In *Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt*, Kimmy’s perspective is different from the perspectives of other characters and the viewers. In fact, her perspective could be seen as “erroneous due to a false committed belief”, and therefore other characters and the viewers are superior, because they have more knowledge of the world than Kimmy (Mayerhofer 2013: 211, 212). Therefore, when Kimmy asks “Do people have robots now?” or calls the iPhone Macintosh, the viewers find her silly and laugh.

This study gives ground for further research on character identity. However, because of the scope of the study and limited data, it gives a more generalized overview on Kimmy’s character and characterization in general. It is possible to analyze Kimmy’s character even deeper by, for example, analyzing the entire series and the way Kimmy’s character changes and develops. Since the dialogue is an important part of Kimmy’s identity construction, analyzing her interaction with other characters more could be an interesting point of view for further research. Furthermore, fictional characters and their identities are often affected by other characters. They can learn and adopt different features from each other, like people in real life, and therefore character identity construction in relation to other characters could also be an interesting and relevant topic for research.

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**APPENDIX**

Transcript symbols adapted from Jefferson (2004) in Lerner (2004)

Underline a raise in volume or emphasis

↑ rise in intonation

◦ quite speech

(.) micro pause

(( )) contextual information