



Universidad de Valladolid

Facultad de Filosofía y Letras

Grado en Estudios Ingleses

**"A Gricean and Multimodal Study
of Irony: Verbal and Non-verbal
realizations in *Friends*",**

Lucía García Puertas

Tutora: Laura Filardo Llamas

Departamento de Filología Inglesa

Curso: 2021-2022

ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores the use of irony from a pragmatic point of view, in particular following Grice's implicit meaning theory, which will enable us to create comedy in a series like *Friends*. The aim of this work is to explore and identify how irony is verbally and multimodally created, including its origin, how it is constructed, and the different types according to H.P. Grice. Specifically, the dissertation studies how both verbal and non-verbal conversational strategies can support and develop irony. Verbal construction of irony will be explored by relying on conversational strategies and the explanation of Gricean maxims. This will involve not only looking at the differences between them, but also at how and why they are flouted. The study of non-verbal marks of irony will focus on the identification of gestures and movements which may emphasize ironic meaning. The qualitative analysis included in this dissertation is preceded by a quantitative approximation to the number of ironic utterances found in the first twelve episodes from the first season of the series *Friends*. The results will show which maxims are most often flouted, which episodes contained more ironic utterances and which gestures and movements were most common when irony was produced throughout our corpus. Results in this study show the prominence of the quality maxim in creating irony. Likewise, irony and some of the movements produced were consistent enough as to form patterns.

Key words: irony, humor, conversational maxims, implicit meaning, Grice's cooperative principle, sitcom series, *Friends*.

RESUMEN

Este TFG explora el uso de la ironía desde un punto de vista pragmático, en particular siguiendo la teoría del significado implícito de Grice, que nos permitirá crear comedia en una serie como la de *Friends*. El objetivo de este trabajo es explorar e identificar cómo se crea la ironía verbal y multimodal, incluyendo su origen, cómo se construye y los diferentes tipos creados según H.P. Grice. En concreto, aquí se presenta cómo las estrategias conversacionales, tanto verbales como no verbales, pueden apoyar y

desarrollar la ironía. La construcción verbal de la ironía se explorará apoyándose en las estrategias conversacionales y en la explicación de las máximas de Grice. Para ello, no sólo se estudiarán las diferencias entre ellas, sino también cómo y por qué se incumplen. El estudio de las marcas no verbales de la ironía se centrará en la identificación de los gestos y movimientos que pueden enfatizar el significado irónico. El análisis cualitativo incluido va precedido de una aproximación cuantitativa al número de enunciados irónicos encontrados en los doce primeros episodios de la primera temporada de la serie *Friends*. Los resultados mostrarán qué máximas se incumplen con mayor frecuencia, qué episodios contienen más enunciados irónicos y qué gestos y movimientos son más comunes cuando se produce ironía durante nuestro corpus. Los resultados de este estudio muestran la prominencia de la máxima de calidad en la creación de la ironía y muestra cómo algunos de los movimientos producidos fueron lo suficientemente consistentes como para formar patrones.

Palabras claves: ironía, humor, máximas conversacionales, significado implícito, el principio cooperativo de Grice, serie de comedia, *Friends*.

TABLE OF CONTENTS:

1. INTRODUCTION.....	6
2. LITERATURE REVIEW.....	7
3. METHODOLOGY	14
4. ANALYSIS.....	17
5. CONCLUSION.....	31
6. BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	32
7. APPENDIX	35

1.INTRODUCTION

Have you ever watched a sitcom or a comedy movie and wondered how the characters could use language with such wit, yet being so subtle? The obvious answer for that is because they are trained actors who are given a script written by professionals. The script writers not only know what people like, but they also have an implicit knowledge about how to create appealing comical and funny utterances. For this reason, language will become more than a tool for them, which will be used depending on what is needed for a character in various moments during their performance. Previous studies on humor have shown that to create different structures they tend to follow the so-called “conversational principles” made with the purpose of being organized and congruent in a language, however, sometimes flouting these principles is inevitable, and will eventually lead to use of phenomena like the one under this study, irony. It is this the main focus of this dissertation; how this specific phenomena works and how we could use something that flouts conversational purposes, while still being accepted in the language. To explain all the process, we will use Grice’s maxim theory along with basing our theory in previous findings by other linguists, as it will be shown in the literature review. Because of all these facts, irony became more interesting, from the point of view of breaking with the norms and challenging the idea on how a good conversation should be done.

An overview of previous studies on humor and irony showed a research gap in the linguistic explanation of how irony unfolds in comedy TV. *Friends* was selected as the main source for the data of this study because it is one of the most popular sitcom series of this decade. It had everything we were looking for, including a very ample quantity of episodes and seasons and several charming characters specifically Chandler, the chosen one for our study, as he seemed to be the one with the most potential when it came to being ironic and making funny remarks.

This dissertation has 3 main sections: the literature review, the methodology and the analysis. The literature review is concerned with giving some theoretical background of previous studies on irony and humor, looking at what different theorists and linguists have studied in the previous decades. A historical overview is provided in this section, starting with the classics and their beliefs, and relating those to some recent theories.

The next section is the methodology, which mentions the steps that were followed for compiling our corpus, based on *Friends*. Likewise, the method of selection of examples is explained. All of that leads us to show the analysis and its results, both quantitative and qualitative. The former is presented with graphics while the latter has examples extracted from our corpus, making the data as original and as real as possible. How these results can help us explain uses of irony will not only be explored in the analysis section, but also summarized and reflected upon in the conclusion.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This study is focused on humor, specifically on the use of the different types of irony in the popular sitcom *Friends*. But to analyze it, first we need to know the basic studies of humor, and its definition. In this section we take a look back at the first studies on humor, starting from how it was perceived by the classics and showing how it has changed over time. Taking the classics' views into consideration is relevant in order to find a definition for humor and having this, will help us to understand the real complexity we are faced with. After that brief introduction, humor is going to be described, particularly focusing on the existence (or not) of laughter. Following some of the main studies on humor, the most important part of this section is based on Gricean approaches to the study of humor, given their contemporary prominence. Thus, Grice's maxims will be explained. This section finishes with a small reference to non-verbal modes of communication, so as to acknowledge that irony is not only verbal.

To begin with, humor theories have evolved significantly since the process was first described by the classics in Greece and Rome. Attardo (2010), provides an overview of the main ideas about humor by classical figures, beginning with the first Greek theorist of humor: Plato. The Greek author described humor as a "mixed feeling of the soul" and a "mixture between pleasure and pain" (2010, 18). He also considered humor as "ridiculous" and claimed that excessive laughter was seen "as one of the things to be avoided (...) as it is seen as an overwhelming of the soul" (18-19). Aristotle's definition, on the other hand, focused on the "ridiculous" rather than "comedy" (20). The difference between Aristotle and Plato is that while the former "recognizes the aesthetic principle in laughter" (20) and his attitude towards it is broadly positive, the latter's

focus is much more complete. In addition, Aristotle disagrees with Plato's definition of humor as “overwhelming of the soul” and sees humor as an “stimulation of the soul which puts the listener in a mood of goodwill” (20). He also believed that the opposite of humor is “not tragic but the serious or unfunny”. Finally, for him “irony is appropriate for the speaker, and buffoonery should be avoided” (Attardo, 2010: 18-21).

Aristotle's main thought on comedy can be found in the *Tractatus Coislinianus*. It is claimed in it that “laughter arises from the words and from the facts,” (2010: 24) and the author labels the categories either as “verbal or referential”. Verbal humor is “subdivided into different categories like homonyms, synonyms, repetition, paronyms, diminutives, deformations, and figures of speech” (24); and referential humor includes similarity, deception, the possible, or the unexpected among other things. The famous Latin writers also wrote about humor, as they were greatly influenced by the Greeks. For example, Cicero in the *De Oratore* makes a similar distinction as the *Tractatus Coislinianus* between referential “humor (anecdotes and imitations) and verbal humor (ambiguity, paronomasia, false etymologies, proverbs, literal interpretation of figurative expressions, allegory, metaphors, and irony)” (Attardo, 2010: 23-27).

After the classical periods, in the Middle Ages, a dark period from the point of view of humor theories spread, where the only relevant writer is John Tzetzes (1110-1185?), who wrote a pedagogical poem dealing with comic poetry. During the Renaissance, the Greek ideas were redeveloped, with studies focusing on the “formulations of some set of rules for distinguishing between the medieval farce and the cultivated comedy” (2010: 35). In this period, we can mention Trissino, who starts a conversation about how “pleasure itself does not generate laughter” and how when it arises “the object that generates pleasure is mixed with some ugliness”, “like an ugly and distorted face, an inept movement, and pronunciation.” (Attardo, 2010: 33-40).

New theories on humor developed after the Renaissance, based on a modern division of science in academic branches. A variety of theories can be found in modern times, including references to incongruity, hostility, and release theories proposed by Freud who again also acknowledges Cicero's distinction between verbal and referential humor.

After seeing all these theories, now the focus will be directed towards contemporary studies, focusing particularly on what concerns the relationship between humor and laughter. Two approaches to this can be found in contemporary authors. On the one hand, Attardo (2010) defines laughter as “a non-defining criterion for humor”, claiming that laughter “largely exceeds humor” or that it is “not proportionate to the intensity of humor” (Olbrechts 1974) (2010: 11). Attardo (2010) as well as Buján (2019) as cited in Morreall (1983), claim something similar, in that “laughter and humor do not consistently go hand-in-hand, as “the former can occur without the latter and vice-versa” (2019: 11). On the other hand, Norrick (1993) argues that “laughter is the natural response to humor by the hearer, and that its absence would point to failed humor” (11). Likewise, Holt & Glenn (2013); Gironzetti (2017) believe that “laughter remains a valid indicator of humor in the literature, given how frequently it co-occurs” (Buján, 2019: 11). It is this latter view about laughter the one that will be considered in this dissertation.

If we argue that humor is closely connected with laughter, then we could also agree with Dynel’s (2009) description of it as a “binary category representing a stimulus’s theoretical capacity to induce a humorous response, while funniness is a gradable category indicating the degrees of appreciation of a humorous text” (2009: 7-8). After defining this, she is also able to divide humor into two main types: canned jokes and conversational humor. Similar to Dynel’s (2009) identification of two types of humor are the ones included in Attardo et al. (2011). It shall be noted, however, that Dynel focuses on the structural representation of the different parts: canned jokes as a narrative recounted by a speaker with an introduction, a setting of the background, a dialogue, and a punchline, and conversational jokes as an umbrella term for various intentionally formed verbal chunks. Slightly more comprehensive is Attardo et al’s (2011) classification of different types of humor. For them, a joke is “a narrative largely, but not entirely, separated from the rest of the conversation, usually containing a punchline at the end of the text, which builds on and exploits the narrative (usually called the set-up of the joke)” (2011: 38), while conversational humor is not part of a separate narrative. Furthermore, “it cannot build on a narrative and must build either on a previous term or be interjected without previous preparation”. (Attardo et al. 2011: 38)

In this last category is where we find irony, the rhetorical device upon which this dissertation is focused. It belongs to the subcategory of witticisms along with, teasing, retorts, quips, and banter, which are all humorous units of texts entwined with conversational exchanges. These are normally bound within the context but can be spontaneous and isolated from conversations while still preserving meaning and can be categorized as a metaphor or irony/ teasing, put down humor, self-deprecating humor.

Besides looking at the origin of irony as conversational witticism, this phenomenon can be also explored following some pragmatics theories. The most common approaches to humor are based on Grice's Conversational Maxims, Relevance Theory, Pretense Theory, and the implicit display Theory. However, in this study only Grice's conversational maxims are going to be analyzed following the Spanish research group GRIALE's explanation of ironic markers/indicators from a neo-Gricean perspective (Gurillo, 2010).

According to Sadehvandi et al. (2011) to convey the meaning, (...) "the interlocutor should follow certain strategies" to which H.P. Grice termed it as "the Cooperative Principle (CP)" (2011, 122). He mentions how "This principle consists of four maxims (...) which represent how people are anticipated to perform in a conversation" and it says how "The CP imposes certain restrictions on participants to adjust their speech in correspondence with the maxims" (122). Therefore, if those principles are not followed then there is a clear flouting of the maxims, which according to Grice (1975), "takes place when speakers intentionally refrain from applying certain maxims in their conversation to cause misunderstanding on their participants' part or to achieve some other purposes." (Sadehvandi et al. 2011: 122).

As mentioned, Grice proposes four conversational maxims: quantity, quality, relation, and manner. Here we will follow those descriptions compiled by Adresen (2014: 7-9), (Adapted version from Grice, 1975: 45-46) and supported with some examples of the flouting of the maxims made by (Detmar, 2004: 4-7) and (Attardo, 2010: 272) to present them.

The first one is the quality maxim, which is flouted when "a speaker deliberately says something that is untrue or for which the speaker has inadequate evidence" (Adresen,

2014: 7). For the quality maxim not to be flouted one needs to be truthful and not give information that is not supported by evidence. We can see this in example (1) below.

(1) Reporter: So were you celebrating your birthday last week?

Old film diva: Yes, I turned 40!

Reporter: I'll actually turn 150 next month. (Detmar, 2004: 5)

Example (1) shows how the speaker says information which is not truthful and that provokes a reaction from the listeners. What he is trying to imply is that there is no way one could believe that the old film diva is 40 years old.

The quantity maxim claims that one should “make your contribution as informative as is required” (Detmar, 2000: 6). Therefore, this specific maxim is flouted when “a speaker deliberately gives more or less information than is needed within a conversation” (Adresen, 2014: 8). We can see this example in (2) below.

(2) A: I met John and Mary the other day. They have two children now.

B: Are they planning on having a third?

A: Well, actually, they already have a third child. (Detmar, 2004: 6)

(3) A: Excuse me, do you know what time is it?

B: Yes. (Attardo, 2010: 272)

In example (2) we can see that the speaker's A first utterance is not informative enough, which causes the cooperative maxim to be flouted. As Detmar said “We usually assume that people are telling us everything we need to know. If they don't say something, then we assume they simply don't know that information” (2004, 6). In our case we are missing relevant information about John and Mary having more than two children. By being told at first they have two children, we believe that is all, but then we realize speaker A is omitting information on purpose.

While in example (3) speaker B is extremely brief in his production. In it, we are missing a lot of information, which does not help the listener in any way.

The third maxim is the manner maxim. This states according to Detmar (2004) that “the utterance should be brief, orderly, trying to avoid ambiguity and obscure expressions”

(7). According to Adersen (2013) it is flouted when “a speaker deliberately fails to observe the maxim in what was previously mentioned” (2013: 9). An example of this can be seen in (3) below.

(4) *Postmaster: Here's your five-cent stamp*

Shopper, with arms full of bundles: Do I have to stick it on myself?

Postmaster: Nope. On the envelope. (Detmar, 2004: 7)

Example (3) is a clear example of ambiguity in the relation to the polysemy of a stamp as a bundle but also as a sticker for an envelope, as well as the preposition and the relation to “myself”, as it can have two interpretations; one is for the shopper to stick the stamp by herself on the envelope, and the other is for her to stick it on her body. The use of ambiguity causes double times more confusion to the listener.

Finally, the relation maxim shall be mentioned. This maxim deals with incongruity and states that utterance should be relevant. This prevents random, incoherent conversations lacking continuity and makes it possible to understand conversations such as the one in example (4). This maxim specifically is flouted when “a speaker is giving a response or making an observation that is deliberately not relevant to the topic that is being discussed”. (Adresen, 2013: 8)

(5) *A: Will Bob go to that party?*

B: Is the Pope catholic?. (Detmar, 2004: 4)

Example (4) clearly shows the flouting of the relation maxim, when speaker A asks for a specific answer, while the other instead of saying yes or no, asks another question which has the same answer as the question posed.

These are the four maxims proposed by H.P. Grice to explain cooperation in conversation. However, it has been observed that in some cases there may be a clash of maxims, where according to Thomas (1997), the speaker “found himself unable simultaneously to observe the maxims of quality and quantity, signaled his dilemma by flagrantly failing to give the right amount of information, and prompted his interlocutor to draw an inference.” (1997: 389). We can see this in example (5) where the quality

maxim is flouted for not being truthful and the quantity one which is lacking the necessary information for the correct understanding.

(6) *A: Has Chris given up smoking?*

B: Well, he's certainly stopped buying his own. (Thomas, 1997: 389)

The descriptions included above focus on the relation between verbal humor, irony and to some degree, funniness. However, recent accounts of humor also include a reference to non-verbal means of communication. These mainly focus on explaining how irony is indicated by using body gestures and specific movements.

For example, according to de Vries (2021) “performing and understanding conversational irony requires a complex management of multiple viewpoints and to communicate and negotiate these intricate viewpoint shifts, speakers (and addressees) often use nonverbal means (e.g. gaze shifts, shrugs, shifts in body orientation, hand gestures, etc.) next to verbal viewpoint strategies.” (2021, 65). Tabacaru, also mentions how in the study of irony, “hand gestures have not yet been considered (with the exception of González-Fuente et al. 2015), because they are believed to convey more referential meaning” (de Vries et al. 2021: 65,69).

Tabacaru & Lemmens (2014) also present a corpus-based study of sarcasm in interaction and Tabacaru (2019) uses this study and illustrates how raised eyebrows function as “gestural triggers” (2014: 11) of humor. It is also mentioned how “head movements can be elicited to signal the humorous nature of what is being said” (Lee & Marsella 2010) or to “give prominence to the elements of the utterance which carry the humorous meaning” (Tabacaru 2014) in (Buján, 2019: 15).

In this section we have seen how different theories about humor have evolved throughout time, by looking at the proposals of different authors. We have not only tried to explain which elements are related to humor, but also how different types of humor can be found. Amongst them, irony has been included. In the study of this phenomenon, Grice's maxim has been prominent, hence these have been explained and some examples of their flouting have been provided. To finish, a final mention to the theories on non-verbal irony has been made.

3. METHODOLOGY

This section is concerned with the different steps that were followed when creating the corpus on irony in the popular sitcom *Friends*. This involves explaining the selection of the episodes and characters, as well as the collection of transcriptions and the criteria followed for analyzing ironic utterances. At the end of this part non-verbal irony will also be mentioned, and a brief summary will be presented.

To begin with, as there were many episodes and seasons in the sitcom *Friends*, some limitations needed to be established for selecting the data under analysis. First, we decided to just focus on the first half of the first season, which consisted approximately of 252 minutes. So as to consistently analyze irony, it was decided to focus only on one of the main characters of the series: Chandler, played by actor Matthew Perry. This choice was made considering he was popularly known for his sarcastic and witty sense of humor. For example Deirdre Molumby (2021), a writer of *entertainment.ie*, claims in her paper “5 reasons why Chandler Bing is the best '*Friends*' character”¹ that “With his self-deprecating remarks and constant teasing of his friends, Chandler values humor above all else.”

Once these parameters were established, we gathered all the transcriptions from the first 12 episodes of the first season. While the transcriptions were obtained from an internet site², it was checked that these were faithfully done, and to those that caused any issue, some corrections were made.

In order to organize the analysis, all of Chandler’s utterances were taken, organized, and classified in two categories: either as humorous or humorless utterances. The distinction considered between one or the other, was done based on **Table 1**, in which it was considered to be humorous if it provoked any kind of reaction in the listeners (laughs, sighs, claps, etc.), as well as thinking about the context of the storyline.

¹ Website: *entertainment.com* <https://entertainment.ie/tv/tv-news/chandler-bing-best-friends-character-485112/>

² Website of the transcriptions of the series of *Friends*: <https://fangj.github.io/friends/>

	reaction from the audience	other factors
humorous utterances	laughs, sighs, claps	context, flouting maxims
humorless utterances	silence	context, not flouting maxims

Table 1: Humorous distinction

After finding all the utterances made, they were chronologically ordered according to the time they were produced on the series, and onto an Excel document, where some additional sections were added for easier access. This was called the classifications and consisted of the name of the character and the season (Chandler, Season 1), the specific chapter (from 1 to 12), the time when it was uttered (exact minutes and seconds), and a final transcription of the humorous utterances. This will be used to provide the source of examples in the analysis, which can be seen in more detail in the appendix section. For now, the example below (6) shows how it will appear when mentioned:

(7) *“Oh how well you know me” [Chandler, 1.1 - 17:43]³.*

It is also relevant to mention that the non-ironic sentences were not added to the list but were all compiled in another document and were considered for final conclusions. In the final analysis, both, the ironic and non-ironic utterances, were compared to see if there was any recurrent pattern.

After a preliminary analysis, it was found that further categories were needed in the compilation table, which were called the analysis elements in **Table 2**. These, which were added in a second stage, included the verbal types of irony that were being used in the utterances, meaning of the types of maxims that were flouted and some indicators/marks which proved their validity as humorous attempts of irony. Following neo-Gricean approaches to the study of humor (as shown in the literature review), only the four maxims proposed by Grice were analyzed in this dissertation.

Once utterances had been classified into different types of irony, it was also observed whether they were accompanied by non-verbal communication. Thus, in this last stage

³ Character, season, episode, time (minutes and seconds).

of the analysis, two main patterns of non-verbal communication were included: head movement and hand gestures. These were also considered in the analysis because of their potential for expressing and adding emphasis to ironic meaning. For analyzing this, the twelve episodes selected for the analysis were watched again, focusing on the use (or not) of non-verbal gestures that could accompany ironic utterances.

Classification	Character, season, time (minutes, seconds), transcription
Analysis elements	-Verbal communication: types of maxims flouted, indicators and marks. -Non-verbal communication: gestures and movements produced

Table 2: Sections on the Excel document

In the table all ironic utterances were given a specific maxim or a few maxims about which they flouted, they were also assigned some textual cues which indicated why the maxim was flouted. Furthermore gestures were added depending on the movement the character did, and if there were more than one, they were also added in another column.

Having said all of this, it is also relevant to mention that to understand some of the humorous instances, we needed to know the context, as sometimes what was produced needed more information and could not be easily understood unless there was some knowledge. An example taken from our corpus can be seen in example (7) below:

(8) *"Yep, we sure showed those Hasidic jewelers a thing or two about softball." [Chandler, 1, 3 - 9:53]⁴.*

Utterances like the one in (7), may be difficult to understand if the terms are not known. For example here Hasidic jewelers is a play on words between The Hasidic Jews, a very religious Jewish group, and the Jews, who are stereotypically seen as very successful in the jewelry business. "The Hasidic Jewelers' is a joke name for a softball team. Overall, this was the process that took part when organizing this section, and which was relevant for the next section dealing with the analysis of it. For cohesion matters, each

⁴ In order: Character, season, episode, time (minutes and seconds)

part had to be revised carefully, making sure the transcriptions were aligned with the other categories and were not for the sake of it.

4. ANALYSIS

This section will contain the description of both the qualitative and quantitative findings in the analysis of ironic utterances in *Friends*. Here, we will present the results taken from our corpus and collected into different graphics, whose purpose was to sum up these findings in a descriptive and visual way. These results were concerned with the presence of irony, the flouting or not of some conversational maxims, along with a brief section dealing with other aspects concerned with irony which were not necessarily verbal. Once quantitative findings on the use of irony have been discussed, some examples taken from our corpus will be provided, hence functioning as a qualitative explanation of the previous findings. Problematic cases will be discussed at the end of the section, and they will cover specifically how we dealt with cases where sometimes an utterance looked like irony because of the tone and the way it was said, but where no maxim was clearly flouted.

Firstly, we will present the quantitative part of the analysis, which contains the results from our corpus gathered all together into some graphics. The quantitative analysis is based on the categories mentioned in the methodology section, i.e. Grice's maxims and verbal and non-verbal communication.

Here, the main purpose is to see what results we obtained which are presented in our corpus, mostly in relation to Grice's maxims, and see which were the most common patterns. That included seeing if there were any irregularities, or specific cases where it would take more than Grice's theory to understand. Following we will see the representation of the qualitative results in relation to irony and both its internal structure and external factors (including participation or non-verbal marks).

To begin with, **Figure 1** deals with every utterance, ironical or not, produced by Chandler in the first 12 episodes from the first season. Beginning with this is important, as first we need to make sure our perception matches reality, meaning that there are enough relevant instances of irony for an accurate representation of it in our corpus.

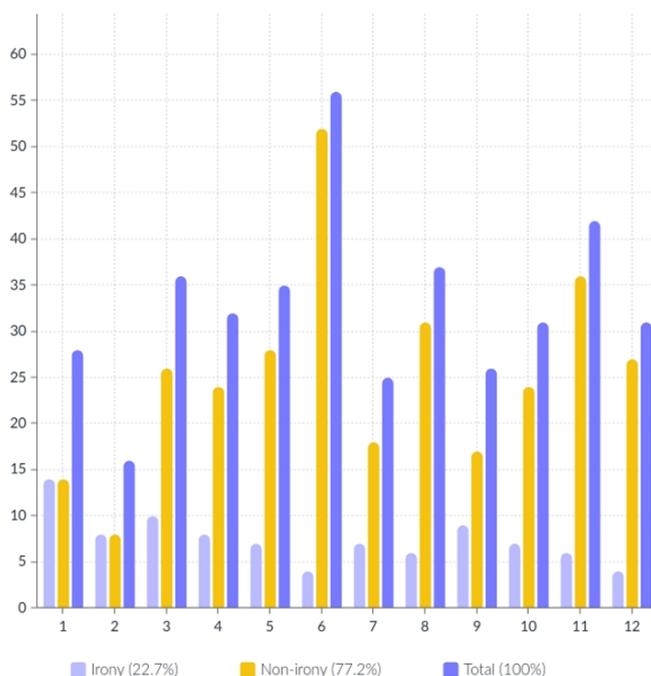


Figure 1: Ironic utterances in *Friends*

In Figure 1, all the utterances from each episode of the first half of season one produced by Chandler, were summarized. In it, we can affirm that our perception about an average usage of irony is, in fact, confirmed, and we also see that Chandler's overall production varied depending on the episode and the importance the character had on it, generally producing an average 33 utterances per episode. It shall be noted that, while there were episodes where he barely appeared, there were others in which his presence was the most prominent one. This explains variation in utterance numbers across episodes. For example, while in episode 2 he barely participated, in episode 6 he not only exceeds the average but also doubles episode 2 utterances.

As shown in **Figure 1**, Chandler produces an average of eight ironical utterances per episode, which consists of around a 23% percentage of his production, this could be considered as relatively low if we look at all 33 utterances done by him in an episode. However, what needs to be mentioned here is that the ironical utterances that he actually produced, seemed to have an order and to be regulated. Regarding what we mentioned previously about the character's presence in the chapters, it was also relevant to see if there was any relationship between the active participation from Chandler and an

increase of his use of irony. The results show, however, that there was not necessarily a relationship between them. The best example of this can be found in episode 6, where Chandler produced the most utterances and had the highest participation rate. However, his production of irony did not align with that. In fact, this is the episode in which he produced the least ironical utterances among all the ones analyzed here. It seems, thus, that the use of irony is related not so much to the amount of character exposure, but to the content and the events in which this character is involved. Episode 6 narrates Chandler's journey dating a woman, who is simultaneously dating various other different men. The situation itself does not call for much humor, as Chandler feels serious about their relationship. Therefore, we could say that if the topic is more comical, then we may expect more irony, but if the character is experiencing different serious life matters, then ironical features may not be as common.

In general, what the results presented in **Figure 1** show, is that Chandler produced considerably more non-ironic utterances than ironical ones. However, that does not mean the character is not humorous enough, but rather that the writers of the script and him are aware and know when is appropriate to produce irony, so the series has a degree of humor but does not miss the reality component. If Chandler were to be always producing funny and witty comments, then the series would lose part of its credibility, and some may consider it as a big joke instead of what it actually is. It is also curious how Chandler becomes much more likable as the series goes on, and as people resonate with him and his humorous way of dealing with certain moments in life. In a way irony, makes him more relatable and likable as people feel closer to him and the fourth wall between him and the audience is partially broken. This was something that Sorlin (2015) claims, which is related to the use of the second person breaking with the "fourth wall" as it "traditionally separates the fictional world from the reception world" (2015: 125), but even if he says this about the number of the pronouns, it can be also applied to irony, and other linguistic aspects.

In the next figure, the results regarding Grice's maxims are going to be presented. In addition to the four main maxims which were flouted, there is going to be another section explaining whether the flouting of two different maxims co-occurs in the same utterance.

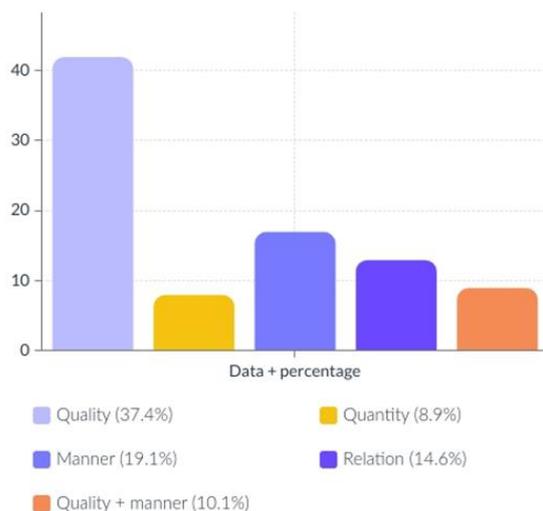


Figure 2: Irony and the flouting of maxims

As it can be seen in **Figure 2**, the most common maxim, which was flouted when irony occurred, was the quality one. The other maxims were produced to a lesser extent compared to it. For example, the manner maxim, which was the second most common one, was produced nearly half times less than the quality maxim. The other two, relation and quantity, were not produced as much, but their use was still relevant in our study. Seeing that the flouting of the quality maxim was the most common pattern when dealing with irony, tells us this is probably the one most common in other contexts. It shall be likewise noted that the flouting of the two maxims within one utterance, is something present that we find throughout our corpus. This was something that Grice had already seen and mentioned in his studies. In them, he claims that there is a possibility in which two maxims co-occur in the same sentence, in specific the quality maxim with some of the other ones.

Besides the textual flouting of the maxims, there are other features equally significant when explaining how irony functions in *Friends*, concerning aspects like tone or non-verbal communication strategies, but we are only going to focus on the latter, as we considered tone to be a complicated aspect to measure in our analysis. For that reason, following previous findings in the literature, the analysis has mainly focused on those movements and gestures which have been commonly identified as mechanisms for

emphasizing humorous interaction: in our case they are related to certain body parts like hand, head, whole body etc. For that, the next graphic will present everything that was found in our corpus related to that.

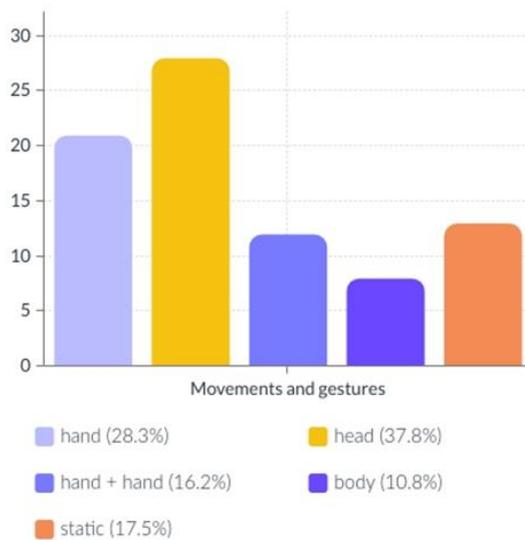


Figure 3: Non-verbal irony (head vs hand)

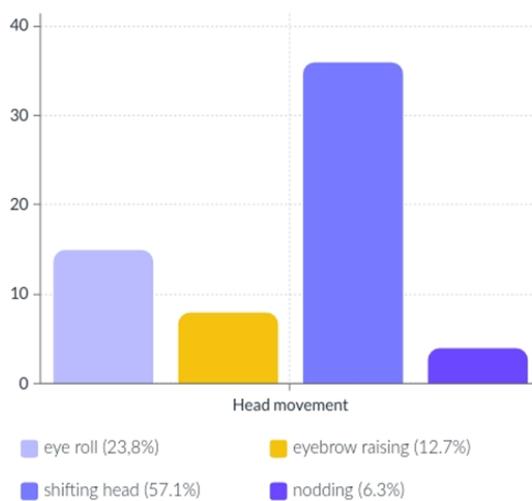


Figure 4: Specific head movement

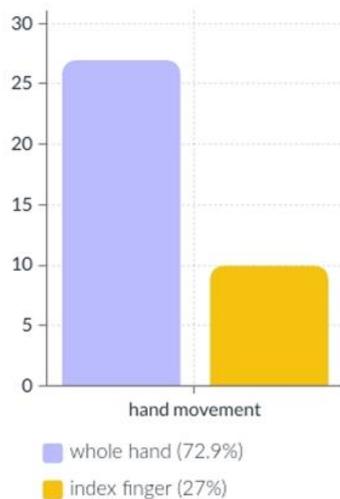


Figure 5: Specific hand movement

In the last three graphics taken from our corpus, **Figure 3, 4 and 5**, we can see which movements and gestures the most common emphatic indicators were used when irony was produced. In **Figure 3**, we see a general view of these, which is concerned with both movement related to hand, head and whole-body movements, and movements related to the absence of it and therefore being static. In this section the two most characteristic movements were both hand movement, which helped give emphasis through frantic or sudden movement, and head movement, mostly concerned with facial expressions. A reproduction of both kinds of movement can be found in **Image 1 and 2** below.

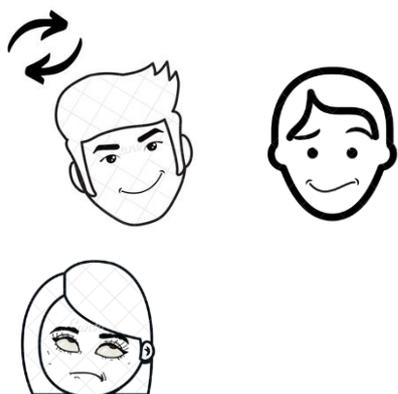


Image 1: Head gestures⁵**Image 2: Hand movement⁶**

The non-verbal movements and gestures taken from our corpus, were consistent throughout the episodes we considered. As it can be seen in **Table 3**, the various gestures and movements were differentiated in two main categories regarding the meronymy terms and its specific parts. However, in our study, because we were not concerned with a particular body part, but rather to the specific movement we added a section after the specific body part. I.e. rolling eyes, raising eyebrows etc.

<u>Meronymy</u>	head	hand
<u>Parts</u>	eyes, eyebrows etc.	finger(s), arm
<u>Specific meronym movement</u>	I.e., rolling eyes, eyebrow raising etc.	I.e., raising index finger etc.

Table 3: Classification of the meronyms and its parts

Now that the **Table 1** classification has been explained, we can sum up the results that are presented in **Figure 3**, in which we find that head movement was the most common, and in **Figure 4**, that within this category the most used gesture was the head shift and eye movement, specifically rolling eyes. We could say that these two gestures are not definitive or decisive in order to claim that there is irony, but they function as a potential flag for irony. Hand movement, which can be seen in **Figure 5**, was also extremely common, and within it, one of the movements Chandler did the most when producing ironical utterances, which can be seen in **Image 1**, was to point with his index finger towards someone or something that he wanted to emphasize.

⁵ In order: Head tilt, eyebrow raising, rolling eyes

⁶ In orden: Index finger movement, whole hand movement.



Image 1: *Friends*, Season 1, episode 2, min 20:36

In addition, irony is not only something we can see on TV, but it is also present in our everyday life. We use it in our discourse, and this according to Gibbs et al. (2017), is “most often examined as a specific pragmatic phenomenon in which speakers indirectly communicate a complex set of pragmatic meanings” and can be found in different fields like “in bodily violations,” (2017: 52) or in “pretense” (2017: 46). To talk about the latter, he shares an example regarding two friends, where one leaves the other one hanging when they agreed they were going to do something together and when they see each other again the friend who was left behind says, “Thanks Bob for your help last weekend” (2017: 46). Reactions like these are a clear example of the typical irony someone would say to another when expectations don't match reality. All in all, when someone is mocking himself or someone else, he or she will use different means to catch the attention, and in order to do that certain emphasis means will be used like raising his eyebrows, moving his finger or by rolling his eyes.

All these features work mostly for emphatic purposes because it is the actual verbal utterance where irony is produced. Still, it seems to be common to find a mixture of both verbal and non-verbal features in ironic utterances.

The next section is the qualitative section. In it, we will be using specific examples from our corpus, to reach some conclusions⁷. First, we will begin with verbal irony, including examples where each of the four maxims were flouted. This will be followed by examples aimed at showing how those textual features interact with non-verbal

⁷ All of these examples can be found at the end in the appendix section, where everything is presented as it was written in our corpus.

elements. To do so, we will focus on some of the gestures that were done in some specific instances.

As we mentioned in the literature review, Grice's maxims are four, and the flouting of them is used to convey information in an indirect way. Following the maxims should be a guide for the hearer to find out how to interpret what the speaker wants to say, but if those maxims end up being flouted, then the hearer is affected by it and has to use other means to understand and follow what is being said.

If we start by analyzing the most-commonly flouted maxim in our corpus, we need to mention some examples of the quality maxim, previously mentioned in the qualitative section in **Figure 2**. This maxim is concerned with being truthful and not saying things you do not mean. However, as our graphics have shown, flouting the quality maxim is not unusual; in fact, we found the most instances of it, and were there when Chandler said something but actually meant the opposite. A clear example may be found in example (9) when the cast of friends try to persuade Chandler into trying other ways to stop smoking, by which he responds that now he feels better when he does not. Or in (10), when Monica apologizes to her friend group because she has broken up with someone they liked, and Chandler says that if she is sorry then they feel better, when in fact he means that being sorry does not make things better.

(9) *“Ooh, I'm alive with pleasure now.”* [Chandler, 1, 3 - 17:48].

(10) *“Oh, she's sorry! I feel better!”* [Chandler, 1, 3 - 19:49].

Or finally in (11), when Chandler's mum is being interviewed on national television and she says some uncomfortable things about her private life, and while Chandler is watching it on the TV, someone interrupts him, and his quick response implies that not only is he embarrassed by her mum being on TV and saying some ridiculous things, but that he would rather be doing anything else rather than being there. In fact, what Chandler wants is based on the opposite of being silent. Apart from these specific instances, he is always saying things like the ones in (12) which is a compilation of different instances through the twelve first episodes where he flouted the quality maxim, implying the opposite. These utterances being commonly associated with him seem to reinforce the idea that he is an ironic character.

(11) *“Shhh, busy beaming with pride.”* [Chandler, 1, 11 - 3.55].

(12) “Oh great”, “Oh yeah”, “That is amazing” “Yes and we’re very excited about it” [Chandler, 1].

The second most flouted maxim was the manner one. This maxim is focused on the form of speech used and recommends avoiding obscure or ambiguous expressions, as well as maintaining briefness and cohesion between elements. In some instances, Chandler flouts this maxim and creates obscure expressions, as we can see in (13) after Pheobe says “Doy! Probably right before she lost it!”. This example uses the word “doy”, an outdated way of saying “no kidding”, and which has been substituted recently for the expression “duh”. Chandler uses this old expression in order to make fun of her friend, whom he is trying to portray as not as young as expected. This utterance was difficult to understand and for that, some research had to be done by searching in dictionaries. Chandler also creates this type of irony by being ambiguous, and the best example can be found in (14) which can be seen visually in **Image 2**, when Joey finally finds a job in which he could be the face of one of the diseases for the city free clinic poster, in specific, one for Lyme disease. After Chandler finds this out, he expresses his support on getting it, meaning the role not the actual disease. But the way he says it, is clearly meant to be intentionally ambiguous.

(13) “You don't get a lot of 'doy' these days...?” [Chandler, 1, 2 - 5.52].

(14) *Good luck man. I hope u get it* [Chandler, 1, 9 -2.38].



Image 2: *Friends*, season 1, episode 9, minute: 3:11

Finally, within the manner maxim, Chandler flouts it by repeating the same words “some guy” (15) and “Saturday night” in (16), repeatedly. In specific (15) is flouted by not being brief and by not following the English syntactic sentence organization of SVO⁸, in it we find the object “some guy” being fronted. While in (16) we can also see excessive repetition, which flouts the briefness principle.

(15) “*Some guy. Some guy. Hey Jill, I saw you with some guy last night. Yes, he was some guy.*” [Chandler, 1, 7 - 2.53].

(16) “*So, Saturday night, the big night, date night, Saturday night, Sat-ur-day night!*” [Chandler, 1, 5 -1.45].

After seeing **Figure 2**, we could conclude that the quality and relation maxims are the less frequently flouted maxims. Although not as common, they can still be found in our corpus. In the case of the quantity maxim, it is based on producing the correct amount of information which contributes to the conversation. By flouting the maxim, the hearer may face some difficulties, and as we mention before, like Detmar (2004) said that we expect “the speaker to tell us what we need to know (2004, 6). Therefore, by not adding relevant information the quantity maxim will be flouted.

In the case of our corpus, there were some instances, like the one in (17) when Chandler talks about Halloween already knowing that is not what the rest are talking about. This flouts the quantity maxim as there needs to be more information.

(17) “*Eleven days before Halloween... all the good costumes are gone?*” [Chandler, 1, 4 - 3.09].

Amongst the many other examples that can be found in the corpus, one more shall be mentioned. In it, crucial information is omitted, which causes irony to appear. It happens in (18), when Chandler, who was escaping from his girlfriend Janice, is found by her. When she does, she tells him how worried she was because he was nowhere to be found. As an answer to Janice's concern, Chandler says that she has already found him, but omits the most important part (and I hoped you didn't).

⁸ English SVO structure: Subject, Verb, Object

(18) *“But you found me”* [Chandler, 1, 10 - 16.27].

The final maxim proposed by Grice and the last one that we are going to mention is the relation one. This type of maxim is based on saying things that are related to each other and relevant to the conversation. The opposite of this will lead to incongruence, random comments and will stop the fluidity of the conversation. For all of this, when the relation maxim is flouted, it is easy to differentiate it from others as it stands out for its lack of sense in the context where it was produced. Several instances of this were found in our corpus. In example (19), we can see that Chandler says words out of nowhere, implying a sense of disgust, after Ross was talking about how he felt *“I just feel like someone reached down my throat, grabbed my small intestine, pulled it out of my mouth and tied it around my neck...”*. In fact, the whole contraposition makes sense in terms of oppositeness, and Chandler is able to turn the situation around in a witty and clever way. He does the same thing in one of the later episodes, when someone says something disgusting and he responds with an answer which is apparently unrelated, as we can see in (20).

(19) *“Cookie”* [Chandler, 1, 1 - 2.03].

(20) *“And, we're done with the yogurt.”* [Chandler, 1, 12 - 2.16].

To conclude this, we will mention one last example of the many we found, concerning incongruent things that do not match to real life. This last example can be seen in (21), when Ross asks Chandler the favor of taking care of his pet monkey. This is not all, as Ross emphasizes that Chandler needs to make sure the animal knows he is there to see him and not to help Ross, to which Chandler answers that if the animal asks him, he will not be able to lie. The level of incongruence here is very high as an animal is not able to produce any congruent words and it is even less likely that it could ever ask him such a question.

(21) *“Okay, but if he asks, I'm not going to lie”* [Chandler, 1. 10 - 8.00].

Again, in **Figure 2**, we can see some cases, where not only one maxim was flouted, but two in the same utterance. Within that, the most common patterns in our corpus, were based upon the combination between our two most recurrent maxims: the quality and

manner ones. Here are some examples taken from our corpus that present this fact. One can be found in (22). In it, Chandler does not only flout the quality maxim by saying he does not know something, when in fact he does. But also flouts the manner one by using ambiguous and obscure expressions like “attack the Enterprise”, a Star Trek reference, which means that something is about to attack the ship carrying it. While what is being shown on the TV is a scan of Ross' baby inside her mum's belly.

(22) “*I dunno, but... I think it's about to attack the Enterprise.*” [Chandler, 1, 2 - 20.30].

The same happens in (23) and (24). Both are characterized by saying something untrue like “*I thought you were great*”, “*We sure showed*” and then using ambiguity or obscure expressions which confuse the listener, who may be unable to understand the real meaning or phrases like “*Hasidic jewellers*”, or “*Silence of the Lambs*”. In these last examples, we can see that the obscurity and the flouting of the manner maxim come from the use of cultural references, which need to be known by the audience, otherwise the right effect will not work.

(23) “*Yep, we sure showed those Hasidic jewellers a thing or two about softball.*” [Chandler, 1, 3 - 10.48].

(24) “*Oh, I thought you were great in Silence of the Lambs.*” [Chandler, 1, 4 - 19.35].

Similar to findings in previous studies of humor, in some examples non-verbal language appeared as a flag indicating the use of irony. For example, gestures were really common when Chandler was really trying to emphasize something specific. For example, in (25), when Chandler not only uses intonation but also moves his arms and hands along to emphasize, to show that he is exaggerating something that it is not likely to happen, this can be seen in **Image 3**. He uses the gestures of eye rolling and eyebrow raising throughout the corpus, causing his utterances to be even more powerful and exaggerated. An example of this can be seen in (26), when Joey tells Chandler what he could do with Jill Goodacre, a famous model, and Chandler raises his eyebrows in a way which tells us exactly what he is referring to, which is mainly sexual. This works as a mechanism to avoid an explicit reference to taboo topics.

(25) *“And I just want a million dollars”* [Chandler, 1, 1 - 3.21].

(26) *“Yeah, like that thought never entered my mind.”* [Chandler, 1, 7 - 5.14].



Image 3: *Friends*, season 1, episode 1, minute: 3:21

While most of the findings were successfully included in the quantitative and qualitative analysis, we experienced some problems when trying to identify how irony was produced by Chandler. This reflection is meant to show the difficulty of dealing with the analysis of pragmatic effects, as (humorous) meaning has been found to be often contextual. One of the first problems was identifying how humor was created in utterances which had no clear flouting of a maxim, but which seemed to have a humorous sense to them. For the sake of consistency in the qualitative analysis, these examples were discarded because even if they were humorous none of Grice's maxims had been flouted. An example of this can be found in (27). This sentence was uttered by Chandler to a non-animated object: an intercom machine. The example seems to be more likely to be based on absurd-based humor as it contains humor, but it is not necessarily ironic. Likewise, (28) and (29) do not flout any specific maxim, but they seem to be ironic.

(27) *“Please don't do that again, it's a horrible sound.”* [Chandler, 1, 1 - 7.22].

(28) *“Hey, look, we're on that TV thing!”*. [Chandler, 1, 4 - 12.08].

(29) *“Listen, it's kind of an emergency. Well, I guess you know that, or we'd be in the predicament room.”*. [Chandler, 1, 4 - 12.38].

Other problems related to the use of non-verbal language, movements, and gestures, appeared sometimes when the character was talking but the camera was not focused on him directly or he was not the focus of attention, which made it harder to figure out which exact gestures he was producing. However, most of the utterances Chandler produced, the camera was focused on him, and the gestures were clear and could be seen in an easy way.

In terms of the maxims, there were some which were more common than others. But in general, we saw how varied communication is and how the maxims are useful and important in conversational exchanges. Then, the non-verbal language showed us how different aspects which are not verbally produced, can and will intensify the ironic performance. After having analyzed the different aspects of irony in our corpus, in the next section we will sum up the findings and we will try to give some answers as to what we have found out.

5. CONCLUSION

The analysis of our corpus on the series of *Friends*, helped us understand not only how irony works but how it is constructed and used. In the case of the quantitative findings, we can see that all of Grice's maxims appeared in the corpus, with a higher prominence of the quality one. It also showed that irony was not produced as much as we expected, considering that the character was known for his thorough use in irony. However, his production remained constant throughout the corpus. And finally, we saw how other non-verbal communication strategies helped convey irony, in particular, hand and head movement. These results contribute to supporting other studies and offer interesting paths in which it could be further developed.

Subsequently in the qualitative findings, we applied the results taken from the quantitative section, and saw how specific cases appeared in our corpus. Through it, we can derive some of the reasons why Chandler used irony and how it unable him to represent his personality. Most utterances made by him seemed to be said in order to avoid the discomfort that came when saying certain unpleasant things. In general, irony worked for him as a defensive and/or protective mechanism, as anyone could back up

their words by claiming that it was all a joke. This is something that Attardo (2010) mentioned, taking up Mulkay's (1988) claim about the "several uses of joking", which mentions that "by using humorous utterances the speakers can avoid committing themselves too strongly to what they say" (Attardo, 2010: 288). Therefore, with all this, we could say irony seems like an "open space" in which everything seems to be acceptable, and does not have the same importance or depth, as if it was said directly.

Besides showing how irony works in the case study undertaken in this dissertation, we believe further work can be done in the field, not only by continuing with the analysis of the series of *Friends*, but in the comedy or sitcom series fields. Some ideas could be regarding the effect that irony has on the other characters once this ironical utterance has been produced, the use of tone in irony or the classification of those utterances that seemed to be ironic or to have an ironic sense to it, but which did not flout any specific maxim. Overall, there is always a gap to be filled regarding language, and this one could be developed further in the future, as more knowledge is found.

6. BIBLIOGRAPHY

-WORKS CITED

Andresen, Niclas. "Flouting the maxims in comedy: An analysis of flouting in the comedy." *Journal of Pragmatics* 38, 2013, pp. 1206-1238. Academia.edu
<https://www.academia.edu/>

Attardo, Salvatore. *Linguistic theories of humor*. Vol. 1. Walter de Gruyter, 2010.
 (print)

Attardo, Salvatore, Lucy Pickering, and A. A. Baker. "Prosodic and multimodal markers of humor in conversation." *Pragmatics and Cognition//Prosody and Humor* 55
 2013, pp. 37-60. Tamuc.eu <https://www.tamuc.edu/>

Buján, Marta. "The function of face gestures and head movements in spontaneous humorous communication." *The European Journal of Humour Research*, volume 7.2, 2019, pp. 1-29.

Detmar Meurers. Introduction to language: How to make sense of a conversation, *Linguistics 201*, Handout 4, 12 April 2004, pp. 1-8.

Dynel, Marta. *Humorous garden-paths: A pragmatic-cognitive study*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009. books.google.com.

de Vries, Clarissa Martine, Bert Oben, and Geert Brône. Exploring the role of the body in communicating ironic stance. *Languages and Modalities 1*, 2021, pp. 65-80. books.google.com.

Gurillo, Leonor Ruiz. "Para una aproximación neogriceana a la ironía en español." *Revista española de lingüística 40.2*, 2010, pp. 95-124. Dialnet dialnet.unirioja.es .

Gibbs, Raymond, and Patrawat Samermit. How does irony arise in experience?. *Irony in language use and communication*, 2017, pp. 43-60. books.google.com.

Molumby, Deidre. 5 reasons why Chandler Bing is the best 'Friends' character, entertainment.ie, 2021 <https://entertainment.ie/tv/tv-news/chandler-bing-best-friends-character-485112/>.

Sadehvandi, Parvaneh Khosravizadeh and Nikan, and P. Khosravizadeh. Some instances of violation and flouting of the maxim of quantity by the main characters (barry & tim) in dinner for schmucks. *International Conference on*

Languages, Literature and Linguistics, 2011, pp. 122-127. Academia.edu

<https://www.academia.edu/>.

Tabacaru, Sabina, and Maarten Lemmens. "Raised eyebrows as gestural triggers in humour: The case of sarcasm and hyper-understanding." *The European Journal of Humour Research* 2.2, 2014, pp. 11-31.

Tabacaru, Sabina. *A Multimodal Study of Sarcasm in Interactional Humor*. A Multimodal Study of Sarcasm in Interactional Humor, De Gruyter Mouton, 2019.

Thomas, J. Conversational maxims. *Concise encyclopedia of philosophy of language*, 1997, pp. 517-518. Academia.eu <https://www.academia.edu/>.

Sorlin, Sandrine. *Breaking the fourth wall, The pragmatics of personal pronouns* 171, 2015, pp. 125. books.google.com.

- WEBSITES

Friends, Season 1, Directed by: David Crane and Marta Kauffman, NBC, HBO Max, September 22, 1994.

Friends transcripts <https://fangj.github.io/friends/> Accessed date: (10/06/20222)

7. APPENDIX (table compiled for the corpus)

Table 2:

Character	Season	Chapter	Time:mins/ sec	Maxim(s) flouted	Textual cues	Gestures	Transcription
Chandler	1	1	2:03	relevance	random, incoherent, lack continuity	hand gesture	Cookie?
Chandler	1	1	3:21	relevance	phraseology	hand gesture	And I just want a million dollars
Chandler	1	2	5:52	manner	obscurity expression	moving head	You don't get a lot of doys these days?
Chandler	1	2	20:36	quality manner	ambiguity	finger gesture	I dunno... but I think it is about to attack the Enterprise
Chandler	1	3	10:58	quality manner	ambiguity, fakeness	moving head and eyes	Yep, we sure showed those Hassadic jewls a thing or two about softball?
Chandler	1	3	17:48	quality	tone, fakeness, acotations	moving head	(deadpan) Ooh, I'm alive with pleasure now.
Chandler	1	3	19:49	quality	tone, fakeness	hand and head movemen t	(sarcastic) Oh, she's sorry! I feel better!
Chandler	1	4	3:09	quantity	Lack of information,	moving head	Eleven days before Halloween... all

							the good costumes are gone?
Chandler	1	4	19:35	quality/ manner	tone, fakeness, obscure expressions	hand gesture	Oh, I thought you were great in Silence of the Lambs
Chandler	1	5	1:45	manner	Not being brief	moving body and hands	So, Saturday night, the big night, date night, Saturday night, Sat-ur-day night!
Chandler	1	7	2:53	manner	Not being brief	moving face and body	(to himself) Oh! Some guy. Some guy. 'Hey Jill, I saw you with some guy last night. Yes, he was some guy.
Chandler	1	7	5:14	quality	tone, fakeness	raising eyebrows	Yeah, like that thought never entered my mind.
Chandler	1	10	8:00	relevance	Incoherent, absurd	moving head and hands	Okay, but if he asks, I'm not going to lie
Chandler	1	10	16:27	quality	tone, fakeness	moving head	But you found me!
Chandler	1	11	3:55	quality	tone, fakeness	hand gesture	Shhh, busy beaming with pride

Chandler	1	12	2:16	relevance	incongruent	hand gesture	And we're done with the yogurt.
----------	---	----	------	-----------	-------------	-----------------	------------------------------------