



Universität  
Basel

## Research Project

### Repetition in Telecinematic Humour – How US American sitcoms employ repetitive patterns in the construction of multimodal humour

#### Project funded by own resources

**Project title** Repetition in Telecinematic Humour – How US American sitcoms employ repetitive patterns in the construction of multimodal humour

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#### **Organisation / Research unit**

Departement Sprach- und Literaturwissenschaften / English Linguistics (Locher)

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This dissertation examines the roles multimodal repetition plays in constructing humour within the communicative setting of Telecinematic Discourse (the discourse of fictional film and television). It brings together research in pragmatics, stylistics and humour theory and empirically analyses a corpus of US American sitcoms in order to create a comprehensive overview and a typology of repetition-based humour in telecinematic discourse, which remains a lacuna in each of the mentioned research traditions.

The corpus for the analyses consists of 8 randomly selected US Sitcoms produced between 2010 and 2016, which feature a laugh track and thus metacommunicatively mark where humour is intended. Based on these empirical analyses, the study establishes the typical patterns of repetition in the humour of US American sitcoms with a laugh track and further defines that particular genre, but it also demonstrates the variation between the subcorpora consisting of the individual sitcoms analysed here. Thus, it also pays heed to the heterogeneity of multimodal repetition-based humour.

In terms of contributions to theory, the dissertation also addresses interactions between surprise and repetition, which lead to a critical re-examination of the mechanisms of incongruity and resolution commonly understood as the defining processes in humour production and reception. This means that one result will be a reformulated theory of humour that is based on the processes of incongruity and resolution and pays particular attention to the notions of surprise and repetition.

Given the fact that the language of film and television has only recently become a subject of linguistic study in its own right, the research done in this dissertation is also important as a contribution to the description of language use in this specific genre and setting and thus to the telecinematic branch of the pragmatics of fiction. Finally, it is one of very few book-length studies of humour in film and television and, using repetition-based humour in sitcoms as an example, also serves as a worthwhile addition to linguistic humour research more generally.

**Keywords** telecinematic discourse; (linguistic) humour theories; sitcom humour; repetition and incongruity; (multimodal) discourse analysis

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## Add publication

### Published results

3541472, Messerli, Thomas C., Extradiegetic and character laughter as markers of humorous intentions in the sitcom "2 Broke Girls", 0378-2166, Journal of pragmatics, Publication: JournalArticle (Originalarbeit in einer wissenschaftlichen Zeitschrift)

4051520, Messerli, Thomas C., Sitcom humour as ventriloquism, 0024-3841, Lingua, Publication: JournalArticle (Originalarbeit in einer wissenschaftlichen Zeitschrift)

4051521, Messerli, Thomas C., Participation structure in fictional discourse: Authors, scriptwriters, audiences and characters, 978-3-11-043970-0 ; 978-3-11-043112-4, Pragmatics of Fiction, Publication: Book Item (Buchkap., Lexikonartikel, jur. Kommentierung, Beiträge in Sammelbänden etc.)

4600277, Messerli, Thomas C., Repetition in sitcom humour, 978-1-350-04285-8 ; 978-1-350-04286-5, Telecinematic Stylistics, Publication: Book Item (Buchkap., Lexikonartikel, jur. Kommentierung, Beiträge in Sammelbänden etc.)

4621756, Messerli, Thomas C., Repetition in Telecinematic Humour: How US American sitcoms employ formal and semantic repetition in the construction of multimodal humour, Publication: Thesis (Dissertationen, Habilitationen)

## Add documents

## Specify cooperation partners