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## AMERICAN ANIMATED SERIES: ANALYSIS OF FAMILY CONVERSATIONS

*Family discourse represents communicative interaction among family members. An individual communication style of each family member in its turn is represented through his or her idiolect. Children's communication style is formed under the influence of their parents' communication behavior and family's core values, which is reflected in the familect, which is interpreted not only as specific vocabulary family members use, but also as a specific communication mode of the whole family. The animated series – F is for Family – depicting a middle-class American family, pictures stereotypical dialogues in the family environment. Corpora of the animated series have been created, processed and interpreted in order to outline main characters' idiolects and familect of the family.*

*Idiolects of the parents in F is for Family have been studied paying particular attention to collocations with I, which illustrate the characters' position in the family and their attitude to other family members. Sue's idiolect portrays her as a caring mother and Sue's necessity to work to provide the family, while Frank's idiolect demonstrates the usage of swearing words in talks with his family, which does not add any masculine features to his portrait while he tries to preserve his place as the head of the family.*

*The analysis of the Murphies' familect displays the frequency of low-flown vocabulary produced by the father and its distribution in family dialogues. The daughter's name Maureen is on the second position and she proves to be the only member in the family to whom the father uses kind and soft words. The father, however, cannot accept his daughter's progressive views and asks her to stick to 'girl stuff'. However, Kevin, the son, seems to copy father's communication style as his speech is characterized with swear words and he acquires an aggressive manner in communication behavior.*

*The Murphies' familect is mostly built on the husband/wife dialogues as children appear less often compared to parents in animated series for adults.*

**Key words:** *familect, idiolect, family discourse, corpus analysis, F is for Family.*

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## АМЕРИКАНСЬКІ АНІМАЦІЙНІ СЕРІАЛИ: АНАЛІЗ СІМЕЙНИХ РОЗМОВ

*Сімейний дискурс представляє комунікативну взаємодію між членами сім'ї. Індивідуальний стиль спілкування кожного члена сім'ї, в свою чергу, представлений через його або її ідіолект. Стиль спілкування дітей формується під впливом комунікативної поведінки батьків та базових цінностей сім'ї, що відображається у фамілекті, що трактується не лише як специфічний словниковий запас членів сім'ї, а й як специфічний спосіб спілкування всієї родини. Анімаційний серіал – F is for Family – зображуючи американську родину середнього класу, відтворює*

стереотипні діалоги в сімейному оточенні. Корпуси анімаційного серіалу були створені, оброблені та інтерпретовані з метою окреслення ідіолектів головних героїв і фамілекту родини Мерфі.

Ідіолекти батьків у серіалі *F is for Family* досліджуються з особливою увагою до словосполучень з І (я), які ілюструють позицію персонажів у родині та їхнє ставлення до інших членів сім'ї. Ідіолект Сью зображує її як турботливу матір, а також вказує на необхідність працювати, щоб забезпечити сім'ю, а ідіолект Френка демонструє вживання лайливих слів у розмовах з родиною, що не додає його образу маскулінності, коли він намагається зберегти своє місце голови родини.

Аналіз фамілекту родини Мерфі показує частоту вживання стилістично зниженої лексики, вживаної батьком, та її дистрибуцію в сімейних діалогах. Ім'я доньки Морін стоїть на другій позиції, і вона виявляється єдиним членом сім'ї, до якого батько звертається ласкаво і ніжно. Батько, однак, не може прийняти прогресивні погляди доньки і просить її дотримуватися «дівчачих речей». Однак син Кевін, схоже, копіює стиль спілкування батька, оскільки його мова характеризується лайливими словами та набуває агресивної манери спілкування.

Фамілект родини Мерфі здебільшого базується на діалогах між чоловіком і дружиною, оскільки діти рідше з'являються в епізодах в анімаційних серіалах для дорослих.

**Ключова слова:** фамілект, ідіолект, сімейний дискурс, корпусний аналіз, *F is for Family*.

**Introduction.** Family, as a group of people who have regular communication, develops its own distinctive ways of interaction. In this way, the types of communication and strategies used within a particular family reflect unique discourse patterns that do not tend to occur in the context outside the home. They depend on family member's gender, age, position in the family and other social factors. Knowing other family members' specific communication style helps to establish interpersonal interaction among family members more successfully enabling them to reach understanding and avoid misunderstanding as often as possible. Communication failures within a family are inevitable, though.

**The article is aimed at** tracing family and individual discourse patterns shared among members of fictional families in *F is for Family* animated series. The series is centered around a dysfunctional family consisting of parents and their children. The family in this animated series represents middle class American families, whose everyday conversations reflect dialogues of ordinary Americans, though some scenes can be treated as exaggerated, still many family problems raised in the animated series discourse are familiar to the audience. The corpus of each character as well as corpora of the family have been compiled in order to identify specific lexical items that constitute idiolect of key characters as well as familect of the mentioned fictional family.

#### **Literature Overview. Family Communication.**

Family discourse is characterized with specific communication style of each family member, with parents being an example for their children how to form their own communication behavior. *Family discourse is significant not only because everyone experiences spoken interaction with family members, but also because the types of miscommunications and strategies found in discursive interaction within the family unit are also evident in the larger society* (Johnson, 2007: 1). However, children cannot be seen

as passive observers in families, whose communication style is only developed under their parents' influence, on the contrary, children can become active agents (Barbato, 2003) and in their turn affect the interaction mode cultivated in the family.

**Idiolect / Familect.** To characterize a specific unique communication style of a person or a fictional character, the term *idiolect* is used. Bernard Bloch was the first to delineate the term as *the totality of the possible utterances of one speaker at one time in using a language to interact with one other speaker* (Bloch, 1948: 7). Dictionaries define *idiolect* as 1) *the language or speech pattern of one individual at a particular period of life* (Merriam-Webster Dictionary); 2) *as a language the linguistic (i. e. syntactic, phonological, referential, etc.) properties of which can be exhaustively specified in terms of the intrinsic properties of some single individual, the person whose idiolect it is* (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy). The formation of an individual's idiolect (Dittmar, 1996; Kuhl, 2003) is determined by the features of their inner world, personal consciousness, life experience, worldview, and individual language practice. Over time, an individual's speech changes under the influence of various factors (Petré Freek, 2018: 870), so an individual's idiolect is not stable but changeable; it acquires new features, especially if we speak about children's or teenagers' idiolects.

Idiolects of members of one family comprise familect, i.e., *a set of words and expressions that are used within a family or a small group* (MacMillan Dictionary). Familect may be seen as *a part of the intimate register of language, the way we talk "backstage" with the people we are closest to* (Hymes, 2021). Another interpretation of familect is *home dialects in which words are given private meanings – reveal that everyone has a creative and playful linguistic story* (Powney, 2013).

One more term is familylect – words and phrases shared exclusively among the members of a particular

family (Søndergaard, 1991: 23-40). We give preferences to the term *familect*, while considering *familect* and *familylect* to be synonymous in their meaning.

The two notions – idiolect and familect – may influence each other, for instance, idiolect can develop gradually into familect (Lepore, 2006: 23-40). Due to the lack of relevant large corpora, idiolect and familect have not been compared and studied together, particularly in fiction. Regarding corpus linguistics, idiolect was studied by Barlow M. (Barlow, 2010), Mollin S. (Mollin, 2009), Seminck O. (Seminck, 2021), whereas there has been a number of more recent studies into the matter of idiolect in fiction (Shcherbak, 2015; Levchenko and Lototska, 2021).

Characters in the animated series are prescribed some specific roles and accordingly to them their communication style is created. In the animated series under study the roles of all characters are rather stereotypical. Taking into consideration the fact, that dialogues are written by scriptwriters and can be altered if necessary, which does not happen in real interaction, communication style of each character is comparatively stable and can be easily recognized by the audience.

**F is for Family. Main characters' idiolect.** A corpus software #Lancsbox was used to analyse the

idiolect of key characters. As for *F is for Family*, the research is focused on the family talk of mother Sue Murphy and father Frank Murphy (the subcorpora have been compiled from 10 episodes in season 2). Concerning Sue's lines addressed to family members, collocations with *I* have been identified by means of the GraphColl tool (see table 1). A particular attention has been paid to the subject pronoun *I* for the reason that it shows how the character identifies herself or himself in family discourse. The presence of such verbs as *believe*, *think*, *know*, *mean* in the table suggest that Sue's function in the family concerns mostly mental abilities while verbs *care* and *love* emphasise her caring function as a mother. Still, words like *job* and *work* reveal Sue's intentions to provide her family financial support fulfilling stereotypically man's function.

Regarding father Frank's key collocations with *I* (see table 2), numerous negative forms (*can't*, *didn't*, *don't*) stand out. The presence of mental verbs (*guess*, *know*, *think*) makes it similar to his wife's idiolect, yet the word *sh\*t* is prominent and reveals Frank's tendency to use swearing language, even towards his family.

Although Frank Murphy is stereotypically portrayed as the head of the family, actually his wife has to solve many family problems as well as to go

Table 1

Collocations with I in Sue's subcorpus (F is for Family)

Index	Status	Position	Collocate	▼ Stat	Freq (coll.)	Freq (corpus)
1	o	R	am	5.86396923...	17	8
2	o	R	believe	5.09843448...	5	4
3	o	R	think	4.89198361...	13	12
4	o	R	care	4.77650639...	5	5
5	o	R	could	4.65097551...	11	12
6	o	R	know	4.64526183...	21	23
7	o	R	need	4.58386131...	14	16
8	o	R	talk	4.58386131...	7	8
9	o	R	mean	4.51347198...	5	6
10	o	R	do	4.37596844...	25	33
11	o	L	too	4.36146889...	6	8
12	o	R	had	4.24599167...	9	13
13	o	R	don't	4.24599165...	18	26
14	o	L	up	4.13907647...	9	14
15	o	R	love	4.09843448...	5	8
16	o	R	just	4.07606665...	16	26
17	o	R	have	4.06281056...	25	41
18	o	L	today	4.01097164...	10	17
19	o	R	job	3.99889881...	7	12
20	o	L	sorry	3.96915147...	8	14
21	o	R	want	3.92850948...	5	9
22	o	L	did	3.88342159...	7	13
23	o	L	in	3.82231006...	16	31
24	o	R	work	3.77650639...	6	12
25	o	L	but	3.68339696...	15	32
26	o	R	can	3.66959116...	13	28

Collocations with *I* in Frank's subcorpus (F is for Family)

Index	Status	Position	Collocate	▼ Stat	Freq (coll.)	Freq (corpus)
1	o	R	guess	5.66848116...	7	3
2	o	L	question	5.66848116...	7	3
3	o	R	should've	5.18305433...	5	3
4	o	M	said	5.12416061...	8	5
5	o	M	am	4.96066186...	10	7
6	o	R	feel	4.93151553...	7	5
7	o	M	great	4.70912311...	6	5
8	o	L	when	4.66848108...	7	6
9	o	R	know	4.58359221...	22	20
10	o	R	think	4.57161956...	12	11
11	o	R	was	4.56156589...	26	24
12	o	R	can't	4.44608868...	9	9
13	o	R	did	4.44608866...	14	14
14	o	R	didn't	4.44608866...	8	8
15	o	R	don't	4.23458457...	19	22
16	o	L	shit	4.18305425...	5	6
17	o	R	got	4.16598075...	14	17
18	o	L	what	4.10905369...	19	24
19	o	L	how	4.09816535...	11	14
20	o	L	going	4.03105116...	6	8
21	o	L	but	4.00551608...	14	19
22	o	L	because	3.96066186...	5	7
23	o	L	good	3.96066186...	5	7
24	o	R	here	3.96066183...	10	14
25	o	R	do	3.93912868...	19	27
26	o	L	why	3.93151548...	7	10
27	o	R	come	3.86112616...	8	12

to work and keep the family. Frank tries to present it as 'mommy's little hobby', but in reality, it is a part-time position of a saleswoman and a secretary later on. Sue's idiolect shows that she has to combine two roles: a mother/wife and a working woman, which became widespread in the 1970s in the US, so Frank's image of a breadwinner is ruined.

Children in Murphy's family do not meet stereotypical expectations. The youngest 9-year-old Maureen is not interested in typical girlish things; instead, her vocabulary consists of such words as *rockets*, *computers*, *pirate* that are usually associated with boys.

(1) **Maureen:** *I don't want to be a Honeybee Scout.*

**Frank:** *Yes, you do. That's why you're joining the Honeybee Scouts, so you can play with normal kids instead of those two animals.*

**Maureen:** *I like rockets and computers.*

**Frank:** *So marry an astronaut. But for now, go play with those girls down there doing girl stuff.*

(2) **Maureen:** *Daddy, I'm a pirate!*

**Frank:** *Oh, for Christ sakes, Maureen, girls can't be pirates!*

As illustrated, Maureen's aspirations are neglected, as her father Frank does not want to accept any other point of view except his own one. However, he tries to maintain his daughter's femininity with words

like *ladylike*, though they are quite rarely used by Maureen in her speech.

(3) **Frank:** *Goddamn it, Maureen. Don't sit like that. It isn't ladylike.*

**Maureen:** *I don't want to be ladylike.*

Furthermore, Frank's idiolect, which is full of swear words, seems to influence his oldest child Kevin, who is 14 years old. He uses offensive words abundantly, coping verbal behavior of his father. When he refers to younger children at school, he uses *little d\*cks* (*Step aside, little dicks!*); while in order to mention his peers he uses an adjective *f\*ckhead* (*I'll teach you about fuckhead class!*).

(1) *God, I hate this house! I'm getting out of here as soon as I turn 16!*

(2) *I can't take this anymore! My room sucks! I got no privacy! It's affecting my school work!*

(3) *I hate school! I'm not good at it! I only like playing my guitar! I'm trying to write hit records so I can save the family, but how can I do that with f\*cking Bill in the next f\*cking bed?!*

(4) *What kind of dildo gets a job that starts at five in the morning?*

(5) *Dildos just went around in circles anyway.*

Kevin does not seem to feel ashamed of using obscenities even in presence of his parents, consequently he often uses them at home. In the following example, Kevin uses a modifier *f\*cking* to mention his younger brother Bill and the whole situation that annoys him.

Lemma	Lemma	Lemma	Lemma	Lemma
1 cking ...	11 plast-a-ware ...	21 ssy ...	31 ll ...	41 asssh ...
2 maureen ...	12 sue ...	22 goddamn ...	32 daddy ...	42 jeez ...
3 fuck ...	13 smokey ...	23 gonna ...	33 aw ...	43 oh ...
4 tosser ...	14 cked ...	24 tryout ...	34 vivian ...	44 ooh ...
5 ck ...	15 whoa ...	25 shit ...	35 lettuce ...	45 rolodex ...
6 agh ...	16 locket ...	26 kevin ...	36 sh ...	46 ladylike ...
7 pogo ...	17 cker ...	27 cks ...	37 cockpeople ...	47 okay ...
8 ow ...	18 frank ...	28 rosie ...	38 p-p-p-paid ...	48 busybody ...
9 mohican ...	19 holtenwasser ...	29 bolo ...	39 ryetown ...	49 mommie ...
10 honeybee ...	20 dunbarton ...	30 dildo ...	40 ller ...	50 dad ...

Pic. 1. The key words in the Murphies' familect corpus

**Fis for Family's familect.** The Murphy family corpus (processed with the help of sketchengine), representing the Murphies' familect through the frequency of key words in dialogues, outlines family members' roles in family communication (see picture 1).

The most frequently used words in the familect are swear words produced by Frank Murphy (see picture 2), so Frank's idiolect adds negative colouring to the family verbal interaction.

Babel</s><s>Go back inside, you f\* cking busybodies!</s><s>  
 ling in a bread line.</s><s>It's that f\* cking Vic's fault.</s><s>If  
 my oldest son in front of the entire f\* cking neighborhood!</s><  
 and your smart mouth through that f\* cking wall!</s><s>Well, I \  
 so dead.</s><s>I have to bury this f\* cking thing!</s><s>I stole,  
 's my kid up there.</s><s>Another f\* cking night.</s><s>Sue E:  
 father and I'll put you through that f\* cking wall! - Move your as  
 ><s>I broke my stick because my f\* cking dad can't take me to  
 ><s>Shit!</s><s>So stupid! - You f\* cking dildo!</s><s>Aw, sh  
 some beer money.</s><s>Oh, you f\* cking motherless whore!</  
 ing motherless whore!</s><s>Oh, f\* cking Kevin!</s><s>Shit!<

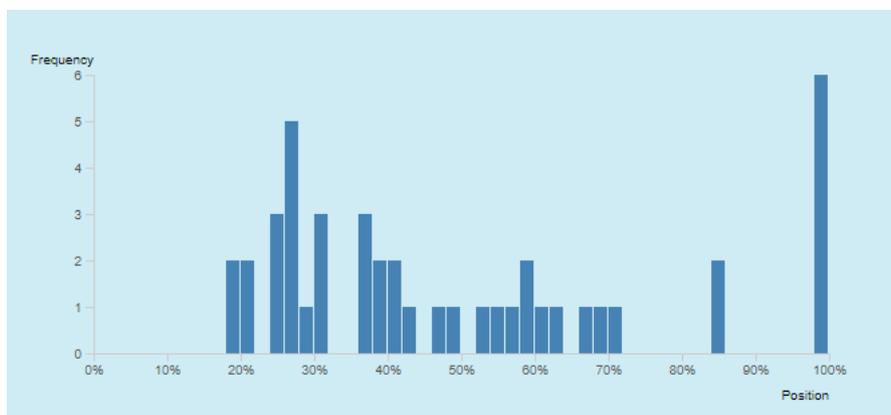
Pic. 2. Frank Murphy's low-flown vocabulary

The distribution of swear-words in dialogues (see picture 3) demonstrates that the father of the family uses low-flown vocabulary on the regular basis, exceptions are dialogues with daughter.

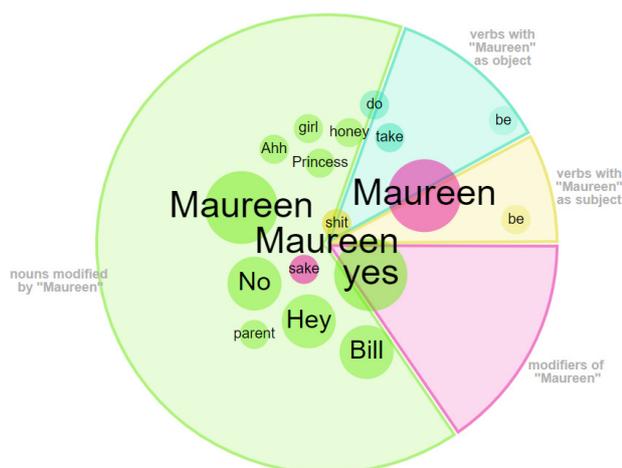
The second position in the key word list is Maureen, the daughter in the family. Frank's attitude to the daughter is very special, she is the only family member to whom he uses sweet words – *Maureen, Princess, you'll do lots of coloring in Honeybees* – and whom he supports and encourages. The n-gram of the lemma Maureen demonstrates father's vocabulary while addressing his daughter (see picture 4).

Frank Murphy works for Mohican and the word has a rather high position (9) in the corpus (see picture 1). He speaks about his job not only with family members, but the fact he becomes jobless makes him be aware of losing his position in the family and he admits it to his wife (see picture 5).

Sue's work is also discussed (position 11 in the list of the key words), but Sue has to find time for both work and family: *Maureen Maureen, honey, I have to*



Pic. 3. The distribution of swear words in the corpus



**Pic. 4. The n-gram of the lemma Maureen**

*do some Plast-A-Ware runs today, but I'll be back in time for our Honeybee Scouts meeting, so buzz right on home after school.*

Children appear less often in the animated series for adults, therefore there are less dialogues with children in *F is for Family* animated series. Most dialogues are between Frank and Sue Murphy, so the familect is mostly based on their husband/wife communication.

**Conclusion.** *F is for Family* depicts an ordinary middle-class American family from the 1970s. The main characters having stereotypical roles mirror main problems of families they had then and which are still true nowadays: women being unsatisfied with marriages search for satisfying jobs, for most of them it is not / was not an option but necessity to earn for living and help husbands to keep their family, women have to be engaged in work and housework.

The family discourse represents family roles and relationship between family members. Frank Murphy loses his position of the breadwinner, which is difficult for him as he sticks to traditional patriarchal views on relationships and children's upbringing.

Corpus analysis enables to unveil idiolects and familects of fictional characters in animated series for adults. Mostly frequently used words outline the main topics in conversations between husband and wife and in dialogues with children. Idiolect of every character contributes to familect of the whole family, in this way picturing a unique verbal portrait of communication style in the family.

Further perspectives presuppose the study of familect of other animated series (e.g. *American dad!*) and its comparison with the results obtained in this research.

<s> **Mohican** needs me!</s>

<s> **Mohican** will realize their mistake and take you back.</s>

<s>Well, Bob, I know it wasn't easy for you to bring me back, but it would be my honor to help make **Mohican** great again.</s>

<s>I'm not making as much as you did at **Mohican** .</s>

<s>Once I get back to **Mohican** , I won't have to work at night anymore.</s>

<s>I'm sure I could go full-time at **Mohican** .</s>

<s>Sue, when I got fired, I lost two jobs: **Mohican** and being head of our house.</s>

**Pic. 5. Sentences with the lemma Mohican**

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