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MOVIE AND TV SERIES' CHARACTERS' ENGLISH PRECEDENT UTTERANCES:LINGUO-SEMIOTIC DIMENSION

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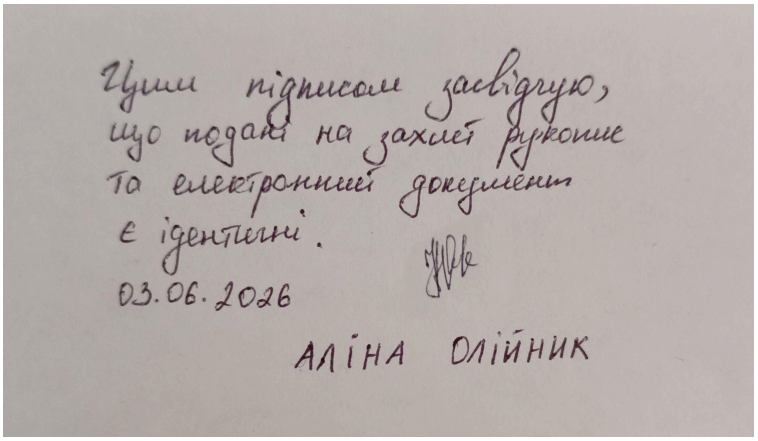

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Abstract

This study analyses the linguo-semiotic aspect of precedent utterances in film discourse, examining how cultural loaded utterances (CLUs) carry, transform and transmit compressed cultural meaning across genres, texts and national boundaries. The research examines CLUs as distinct discursive units that develop from context-dependent expressions into culturally recognised formulas. This process is driven by the semantic potential of the key word or phrase within the utterance. Using Peircean semiotic analysis, semantic analysis, structural analysis, linguopragmatic analysis and cultural classification, the study investigates a corpus of more than sixty CLUs from English-language films and television series. The analysis focuses on four main aspects: the meanings of key lexical elements, the structural features of CLUs, the main types of transformations they undergo and their communicative functions in new contexts. The findings show that CLUs are not only linguistic units but also carriers of cultural knowledge. Their successful use depends on shared cultural understanding among members of a community, while their repeated recognition and adaptation help preserve and transmit this knowledge across different texts and contexts.

Key words: *precedent utterance, cultural loaded utterance, film discourse, Peircean sign typology, semantic aberration*

CONTENT

Introduction

Cinema and television are the most powerful channels through which shared culture knowledge is created, spread and preserved in the modern world. Many expressions that first appear in films, TV series, book, songs and other cultural texts later become widely recognised and are reused in different contexts. These utterances carry cultural information, evoke shared memories and help speakers create additional meanings. In this research, such expressions are represented as Cultural Loaded Utterances (CLUs).

The object of research: English-language precedent utterances in film and TV series.

The subject of research: the linguo-semiotic characteristics of English-language CLUs

The working hypothesis of this study: the CLUs are not simply quotations but dynamic semiotic units.

The main aim of the research is to develop a comprehensive linguo-semiotic and cultural framework for understanding the structure, functions, and cultural significance of CLUs in English-language film and television discourse. To achieve this aim, the following **objectives** have been set:

- to define the CLU as a distinct type of discursive unit and explain its relationship to intertextuality and precedent phenomena;
- to classify CLUs according to Peirce's semiotic categories and examine their development as signs;
- to analyse the semantic features of their key lexical elements and determine how these elements facilitate reuse in new contexts;
- to describe the structural characteristics of CLUs, including their syntactic patterns, formulaicity, variable components, and prosodic features;
- to identify the main types of semantic transformation (aberration) found in the corpus and explain the factors that motivate them;
- to investigate the communicative functions and pragmatic effects of CLUs in different contexts;
- to develop a cultural classification of CLUs and examine how they move between national, borrowed, and universal cultural categories;
- to distinguish between monomodal and crossmodal CLUs and analyse the relationship between mode, sign type, and cultural status.

The research material consists of English-language CLUs collected from film: *The Princess Bride, Forrest Gump, The Terminator, A Few Good Men, The*

Lord of the Rings, Dead Poets Society, Se7en, Top Gun, The Mummy, Good Boys, Fight Club, Ghostbusters, Titanic, Hunger Games and others. And TV series: *Gilmore Girls, How I Met Your Mother, The Office, The Big Bang Theory, Game of Thrones, Star Wars, Lucifer, Friends, and others.* The corpus contains more than sixty documented CLUs that have been reused in different texts. These utterances are classified into six groups according to their referential source: historical and political references, song lyrics, quotations from films and television series, literary references mediated through cinema, advertising and brand-related expressions, and references to mythological, religious or ethnic traditions.

The study employs several complementary methods. These include semiotic analysis based on Peirce's theory of signs, semantic analysis of key lexical elements, structural analysis of linguistic form, linguopragmatic analysis of communicative functions and effects, cultural classification, and comparative analysis across different texts and contexts.

The combination of these methods makes it possible to examine both the internal structure of CLUs and their use in film and television discourse. As a result, the study provides a comprehensive account of how culturally significant utterances emerge, evolve, and transmit meaning across different texts, genres, historical periods and cultural communities.

Chapter 1. Theoretical foundations of the study of precedent utterances

1.1 Contemporary approaches to precedent phenomena

Despite the considerable attention paid to the issue of precedent, the very concept of the *precedent phenomenon* does not fall into the category of established and clearly defined terms. This is due to the relative novelty and dynamism of the theory of precedent itself.

Nevertheless, *precedent* is a fairly common term found across various disciplines. For instance, in design, it refers to the store of experiential (episodic) memories each designer accumulates over time expanding their future possibilities for actions or decisions (Boling, 2021, p.253). In contrast to scientific knowledge, which is based on verified facts, established laws, and empirical validation, precedent knowledge in design is formed through individual experience, including prior examples, templates and artefacts. As Boling notes, "unlike in science, where past discoveries or established facts form a solid foundation of knowledge which must be accepted or definitively proven incorrect, precedent knowledge in design is gathered by individual designers through their experiences of the world" (Boling, 2021, p.253). Therefore, in design thinking, precedent can be understood as a subjective and flexible archive that guides creative decision-making rather than a fixed system of rules.

While Boling (2021) defines precedent as an individual designer's store of memories, in the context of film discourse this concept can be scaled to the collective level, where precedent utterances function as a shared store of experiential memories within a linguistic community. In this sense, precedent utterances may be interpreted as episodic signs that refer back to an original moment from a film scene or cultural text and through this generate new meaning within a new discursive context.

It is generally accepted that the term *precedent* originates from the field of law, where, according to the *Glossary of Legal Terms* "follow precedent - meaning that they [Judges] use the principles established in earlier cases to decide new cases that have similar facts and raise similar legal issues" (United States Courts, n.d.). Given the similarity in usage and the fundamental characteristics of this term, we can agree that this assumption is correct.

Additionally moving across different dictionaries we found something slightly different between them. The *Cambridge Dictionary* defines precedent as a previous action, situation or decision that serves as a basis for similar future actions, emphasising its functional and justificatory role (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.). Likewise, the *Oxford Learner's Dictionary* describes it as an earlier event that provides a model for subsequent situations (Oxford Learner's Dictionaries, n.d.). Taken together, these definitions suggest that precedent is a past event that shapes future decision-making, highlighting both its practical applicability and its role as a comparative reference point.

The *Collins Dictionary* defines precedent as a past event that can serve as a persuasive basis for future actions (Collins Dictionary, n.d.). Similarly, the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* highlights its supportive and authoritative role, presenting precedent as a basis for reinforcing later decisions, particularly in established contexts (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, n.d.). In contrast, *Britannica Dictionary* offers a slightly different perspective by interpreting precedent as a traditional way of acting, shifting the focus from individual events to practice as a habit and established behavioural patterns (Britannica Dictionary, n.d.) .

Compared to the definitions provided by the *Cambridge Dictionary* (n.d.) and the *Oxford Learner's Dictionary* (n.d.), several patterns can be identified. The *Cambridge* (n.d.) approach aligns with the *Collins Dictionary* (n.d.) and the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (n.d.) in emphasising the functional and justificatory role of precedent in guiding future decisions, whereas the *Oxford* (n.d.) definition is closer to that of the *Britannica Dictionary* (n.d.), highlighting similarity, repetition, and tradition.

Taken together, these perspectives reveal two complementary dimensions of precedent: on the one hand, it functions as a specific prior event with argumentative and justificatory potential and on the other, it represents a conventional pattern that structures expectations and guides behaviour. This dual nature becomes particularly significant in linguistics, where precedent is manifested through culturally marked units, including precedent utterances, and acquires a linguo-semiotic dimension by operating as a system of signs that evoke shared knowledge, intertextual references and collective cultural experience.

1.1.1. Precedent utterances as discourse constructs

However, the lack of a single terminological concept in dictionaries and among researchers, coupled with the variety of approaches to defining its object and subject in linguistics, remains a key issue in research. Consequently, each scholar offers their own interpretation of the concept, drawing on the dominant methodological paradigm and the specific nature of the material under study.

Selivanova clarified precedent-related phenomena as "a cognitive component whose denotation and content are well known to representatives of a certain lingual-cultural community; the understanding of such phenomena is based on the recipient's background knowledge" (translated by A.O.) (Selivanova, 2006, p. 492).

For I.V. Bohdanova "precedent units are a unique linguistic (or speech-related, if precedent expressions are considered) phenomenon that reflects the results of the coexistence and mutual influence of the national cognitive framework, language and culture. They embody the speaker's entire body of background knowledge and beliefs, and also reflect national stereotypes in the perception of facts and events" (translated by A.O.) (Bohdanova, 2016,

p.55). Here the focus shifts to the integrative character of precedent units, highlighting their role as carriers of cultural values, collective experience and national identity, as well as their connection to stereotypes and worldview.

Although the concept of precedent utterance is not particularly common in Western linguistic traditions, the pragmatic mechanisms underpinning it have been the subject of numerous theoretical studies. In this context, the successful interpretation of an utterance rich in cultural meaning depends fundamentally on the fact that, according to Clark & Marshall (1978) define as *common ground* (Clark E., 2015) and further sociolinguistic studies have clarified this as *mutual knowledge* (Lee, 2001) and *cultural references* (Pedersen, 2011; Alfaify & Pinto, 2021).

Herbert H.Clark and Catherine R.Marshall at the same time look at it through a sociolinguistic approach. They use terms: *mutual knowledge, common ground, shared belief/knowledge* interchangeably, focusing less on infinite regression (Mutual Knowledge Paradox) and more on community membership. “Before [people] can assume mutual knowledge of what is universally known within a community, they must mutually know that they both belong to that community” (Clark & Marshall, 1981, p. 36).

Precedent utterances entirely rely on what Clark & Marshall refer to as “mutual knowledge based on community membership” (Clark & Marshall, 1981, p.36). When a character in a film or television series weaves a well-known phrase as if it were a part of an ordinary everyday conversation, they are making a specific reference that presupposes the audience belongs to the same cultural community. Such a statement is only successful provided this shared context exists.

Benny P.H. Lee approaches these terms with a high degree of technical precision, classifying them according to their degree of reliability and the source of the information. “Common (or background) knowledge is that information which members of a particular community assume to be held common by virtue of the fact they have very similar background or up-bringing” (Lee, 2001, p.24). She defined shared knowledge like knowledge negotiated and established through active, ongoing interaction. Lee was convinced that mutual knowledge is a philosophically rigid concept requiring 100% certainty, based on direct experience. In Lee’s model, precedent utterances also operate within the mutual knowledge, whereas in successful communication, there is a shared belief that debates the notion of common ground (Lee, 2001).

She also mentioned Kreckel (1981) that clarified that common knowledge as “knowledge which two or more people have in common as a result of being brought up under similar conditions such as culture, subculture, region and education” (Lee, 2001, p.25). On the other hand, shared knowledge is “the negotiated common knowledge [based on mutual interaction] used for future interaction” (Lee, 2001, p.25). Her phrase proves that a precedent utterance does not require shared knowledge to be spoken, rather it is the tool used to create

shared knowledge.

The analysis of existing approaches from Olena Selivanova to Herbert H. Clark & Catherine R. Marshall reveals a terminological gap that shows that while some scholars emphasise reliance on prior texts and others focus on shared knowledge, neither perspective fully captures the dynamic, semiotically loaded nature of utterances in film discourse.

To address this gap, this study introduces the concept of the Cultural Loaded Utterance (further referred to as CLU), which offers a more functional alternative to precedent utterance. Unlike the latter, CLU emphasises semantic intensity rather than mere reference. In our research these utterances are linguistic units saturated with cultural meaning that activates associations within a community. Moreover, it integrates the notion of shared cultural knowledge while remaining functionally flexible, as it can both rely on and generate common ground, enrich discourse with additional meaning and subtext.

In this study, a Cultural Loaded Utterance is defined as a linguistic unit whose interpretation depends on shared cultural knowledge and which evokes meanings beyond the literal, activating broader cultural, historical or media-specific associations.

1.1.2. Intertextuality as an aberration of precedent utterance

As Yuriy Velykoroda observes that "in European and American linguistic traditions precedent-related phenomena are generally recognized as manifestations of allusion or intertextuality" (Velykoroda, 2016, p.70). Examining these utterances through the lens of intertextuality allows us to analyze them not as static lexical units, but as dynamic pragmatic tools that construct a meaningful dialogue between texts and cultures. Before we move on with classification, it is necessary to clarify the concept of intertextuality itself, since much like precedent it too lacks a single, universally accepted definition.
Julia Kristeva, who is credited with coining the term, defines intertextuality as a text that unites two axes: the vertical axis, which connects a text to other texts and the horizontal axis, which connects author to reader. Crucially, Kristeva argues that attention should be focused not on the structure of a text but on the processes of its structurization (Polishchuk A., 2021, p.180). Accordingly, meaning is formed not within the text itself, but in the interaction between texts and in the process of their interpretation.

In this framework, the CLU can be understood as precisely such a point of intersection when Kristeva's vertical axis provides the link to previous texts, the CLU loads it with semiotic weight activated by the horizontal axis. Thus, CLU is not merely a reference, but a dynamic process of structuring meaning in the viewer's mind, which confirms the linguo-semiotic nature of intertextuality.

In contemporary linguosemiotic discourse, intertextuality appears not merely as a passive reference to a source text, but as an active process of transformation or aberration of original signs. Research by Sikorska V. Y.,

Nazarenko O. M. & Melnyk S. M. (2021) supports the claim that precedent is the foundation of this process: “precedent is a part of intertextuality; it is a kind of tip of the intertextual iceberg, clearly visible to all observers” (translated by A.O.) (p. 421). For this transformation to be decoded by the recipient, it must rely on stable mental structures. As those authors note, drawing on a cognitive framework, “precedent phenomena are units of the mental field, the cognitive base of a native speaker” (translated by A.O.) (Sikorska, Nazarenko & Melnyk, 2021, p. 420). The key criteria for the functioning of such units in film discourse are therefore “mass recognizability, identifiability and intellectual accessibility” (translated by A.O.) (Sikorska, Nazarenko & Melnyk, 2021, p. 420). Also this view is echoed by Selivanova (2011), who defines these units as “well known to representatives of a certain ethnocultural community, relevant and used in cognitive and communicative contexts” (translated by A.O.) (p. 591).

The aberration of precedent units in intertextual space arises due to a conscious deviation from its canonical form. According to the observation of O. Ryabinina, such transformations allow us to discover something new in the already known, actualizing the rethinking of the original text. The changed statement retains a recognizable structure, but acquires new meanings in accordance with the author's intention. At the same time, it is the inconsistency of the original source that serves as the main marker of intertextuality, because it is deliberately emphasized and encourages the recipient to interpret by involving background knowledge (Ryabinina, 2008, p.81)

Intertextuality in film discourse often manifests itself as a kind of playful element. Precedent phenomena are considered as a means of implementing postmodern aesthetics, which combines intertextuality with elements of play, carnival and ambivalence (Sikorska, Nazarenko & Melnyk, 2021). In terms of linguistic form, the authors of the article identify the following types of structural deviations: 1) lexical substitution, which is about the replacement of components, that according to G. Kasim, “lends the transformation a particular expressiveness, but requires non-standard solutions” (translated by A.O.) (Sikorska, Nazarenko & Melnyk, 2021, p.423); 2) syntactic-modal aberration is associated with a change in the pragmatic stance of the utterance; 3) compositional omission, which functions as a technique aimed at the active participation of the recipient. This type used to show that the addressee must reconstruct the omitted element themselves, as a result of which the process of interpretation takes on the character of intellectual interaction with the text.

The aberration of a precedent statement forms a double semantics of combining the original meaning with a new, authorial one. Such a transformed statement, especially in the position of a key element, concentrates different levels of content and acts as a semantic reference point, helping to predict the development of the text and reveal its hidden meanings.

In general, intertextuality is considered one of the key principles of understanding reality. Thanks to communicative skills, a person easily

recognizes this world, interpreting various signs and information (Polishchuk & Yurkovska, 2021). This is confirmed by Liesbet van Zoonen's thesis that the semiotic status of an object depends on the act of perception as “a particular piece of media content... is related to other media content” (Van Zoonen, 2017, p.1) and the process of interpretation itself transforms passive material into text, because meaning only comes about through acts of human interpretation.

1.1.3. Classification of precedent utterances

Since every modern text is a kind of intertext that interacts with texts of the past, Gerard Genette (1992) significantly expanded and systematized the approaches of Y. Kristeve(1967) and R.Barthes (1981), proposing the concept of *transtextuality*. As Sayyed Ali Mirenayat & Elaheh Soofastaei (2015) noted in their work, Genette identifies five categories of transtextuality, where intertextuality itself is only one of the types, based on the co-presence of two texts and including explicit forms (quotations), hidden (plagiarism) and implicit (allusions).

In this context, precedent appears as a dynamic mechanism of dialogue between the recipient and the director, and the CLU is the unit that implements it at the textual, figurative and semantic levels. Counting on this the decoding could depend on the recipient's understanding of intertextuality’s source which is critical for comprehending the sense and could be optional which only adds the depth (Fitzsimmons, 2013, cited in Van Zoonen, 2017). This turns intertextuality into a practical tool of interpretation, where precedent elements act as a key to activating cultural memory, since any single text derives its meaning from its place among other texts, from its location and importance in a wider intertextual space (Van Zoonen, 2017).

Nowadays, there is a common belief that every work of art, regardless of the author’s intentions, is the product of prior influences. Md. Golam Shahariar (2023) asserts that “every artistic work is influenced by other previous works and bears intertextual elements” (pp. 190-195). Following this logic, the author identifies the following types of intertextuality: allusion, pastiche, parody, representation, and simulation.

Contemporary screen discourse is often seen as a space of postmodernism, where CLUs acquire a special pragmatic dimension. This is most clearly manifested through the mechanisms of parody and pastiche. If parody uses a well-known phrase as a weapon for satirical mockery of the original, then pastiche appears as a nostalgic and respectful imitation of it, “glorifying the past in a positive and nostalgic manner tone” (Shahariar, 2023, p. 190).

The phenomenon of simulation attracts special attention in this context. CLU is often cited so intensively and in such diverse contexts that it is completely detached from its original source. The phrase begins to live a life of its own, turning into a simulacrum “the copy in a state that remains no relation

to the reality" (Shahariar, 2023, p. 194). It is at such moments that the boundary between the original meaning and the new, constructed meaning disappears, which we define as an aberration of precedent.

Given this, there is a need to systematize the methods of such transformation and to trace the levels at which it occurs within the text. This is precisely why Allan H. Pasco (1971) proposes a classification (title, epigraph, image, detail, character, plot parallels) that reflects the various levels of this transformation. The precedent can begin with the title, which sets the vector of expectations; when the precedent unit is taken outside the narrative as a conceptual filter is an epigraph and when visual or mental markers act as semiotic anchors it represents as an image. Also highlighted is detail, in which a single lexeme or attribute represents an entire precedent world; character, based on the transmission of characters' traits and the last is plot parallels, which emerge as the most complex aberration or "extended, parallel allusion" (Pasco, 1971), encompassing the structure of the entire work.

Drawing on the approach of Abeer Alfaify & Sara Ramos Pinto (2021), it is appropriate to consider such references not only as textual phenomena but also as culturally specific elements, the meaning of which we can discern only through the interaction of various semiotic resources. They divide them into two categories: monomodal and crossmodal references. Monomodal references (verbal, visual or auditory) are conveyed through a single sensory channel and include, for example, references to iconic characters, cultural practices, institutions or even characteristic sounds associated with a particular culture. In contrast, crossmodal references arise at the intersection of several modalities and form meaning through a "combination of signs of different natures" (Alfaify & Pinto, 2021, p. 115), where the interaction of semiotic resources ensures a holistic perception of the context.

The application of Pasco's model is methodologically justified for substantiating the thesis of the aberration of precedence, since it explains the transformation of culturally marked units into simulacra sometimes through metaphorical displacement. In this process "the meaning is communicated only metaphorically by the reader's synthesis of the two terms [ideas/references]" (Pasco, 1971, p. 461). This means that the reader does not simply recall the original in memory, but constructs a new meaning in which the previous meaning is inevitably distorted. Since precedence in this concept is dynamic, any utterance in screen discourse travels a path from imitation to a complete loss of connection with the reality of the original source, becoming part of a new semiotic construction.

1.2 Precedent phenomena in the aspect of linguosemiotics

In keeping with multiple scholars and their common knowledge, linguistics is the scientific study of language, then we can confirm that

linguosemiotics is the study of how language carries meaning across different layers of culture.

According to the *Encyclopedia of modern Ukraine*: "linguosemiotics (from the Latin lingua – language and semiotics) is a branch of linguistics and semiotics that studies natural language in terms of its similarities and differences with other sign systems used in society. It is also known as the sign theory of language" (translated by A.O.) (Bacevich, 2016).

R. H. Robins supports the idea that language acts as a cultural sign by emphasizing that linguistics cannot be separated from cultural history: "Scientists and persons of learning are also people of their age and country, and they are participants in the culture within which they live and work" (Robins, 2013, p. 4). Speakers (and filmmakers) also operate within this shared cultural matrix, which is what makes cultural loaded utterances recognizable.

Linguistic analysis transcends the mechanical decoding of lexical and grammatical structures, focusing instead on how culture encodes and transmits collective memory. At its core lies semiology – the science of sign systems, derived from the Greek semeion (sign) and logos (science) (Obradović & Vujović, 2017). To understand the operation of cultural phrases, one must apply the functional distinction established by Miško Šuvaković: "Semiotics is defined as a formal science of signs and linguistic and non-linguistic meanings. Semiology is defined as the science of the creation, transfer, functions and transformation of signs and meanings of linguistic and non-linguistic origin in social life" (Šuvaković, 2011, cited in Obradović & Vujović, 2017).

Consequently, the study of culturally loaded utterances aligns with semiology, operating as the semiotics of culture. Within this framework, CLUs function as concentrated, self-sufficient semiotic signs that facilitate the social life of meanings.

1.2.1. The role of signs in precedent statements

The question of the symbolic nature of language has fascinated scholars since ancient times. The foundations of thinking about language as a symbolic system can be found in the works of Plato, Aristotle and the Stoics. In the Middle Ages, this issue became a subject of heated debate among nominalists, realists and conceptualists, as well as in the works of thinkers such as Augustine of Hippo. However during the Renaissance, attention to language as a sign-based structure increased, but it was not until the late 19th and early 20th centuries that the foundations of modern semiotics were laid (Bacevich, 2016).

The contemporary understanding of the sign, in the context of our study, moves away from static definitions and draws on the interpretation of Charles Sanders Peirce, who is regarded as the founder of the systemic approach. According to M. Kilstrup's concept, a sign does not exist in a vacuum, "there can be no sign without a sign interpreting systems or without some kind of memory function" (Kilstrup, 2015, p. 563).

As part of the development of the concept of CLU, we view this memory function not merely as individual recollection, but as a complex network of signs. Kirstrup emphasises that “to understand and explain sign function, the process of sign utilization (semiosis) has to be divided into two temporally separated phases, a sign-establishment phase where a three-dimensional link is formed... and a later sign-interpretation phase where the established linkage is used for inferring significance” (Kilstrup, 2015, p. 563).

For the purposes of this study, this implies that CLUs progress through a definition or research phase (the first mention of the utterance in the source film), during which a strong association is formed between the phrase and its context and subsequently transition to an interpretation phase, in which this association is realised within new discourse. At this point, the CLU functions as a semiotic scaffold, enabling the viewer to instantly reconstruct meaning, since a sign interpreter necessarily operates through a structure that includes both an input mechanism and an interpretive system linked to a memory function (Kilstrup, 2015, p. 563).

This systematic approach is consistent with semiotic realism, in which the truth of a sign arises as the result of long-term collective interaction. As Mamenko T. (2025) noted, the relevance of this approach lies in understanding truth as “the ideal limit of collective research, which does not change, but is approached through experience” (translated by A.O.) (p.233). This allows us to assert that CLU accumulates in itself the collective truth of a certain linguistic and cultural community, where the meaning of a sign is “the dynamic result of collective scientific research, achieved through the endless process of semiosis – the interpretation of signs” (translated by A.O.) (Mamenko, 2025, p. 221).

This dynamic can also be observed in media discourse. If, according to Ferdinand de Saussure, language is a system of opposition (Chen, 2019), then “[film] is a system of signification that articulates experience” (Buckland, 2000, p.5). However, since we do not have direct access to pure reality, then “the whole of human experience, without exception, is an interpretive structure mediated and sustained by signs” (Buckland, 2000, p.6).

In today’s complex society, we increasingly rely on such systems to facilitate communication. Apart from everyday language, there are “numerous other semi-otic systems – such as film – that also mediate between individuals and their environment” (Buckland, 2000, p.6). Within this structure CLU functions as a trigger for symbols that instantly activates relevant fragments from the viewer’s cultural lexicon.

Finally, according to Ibrahim Taha (2016) the anthroposemiotics aspect of this process shows that we use these sign systems to make sense of our environment. By structuring the world through the screen, the CLU becomes not only a tool for understanding the information space, but also a tool for controlling it. Thus, the role of signs in context-based expression is to create

meaningful semantic nodes, thereby ensuring cultural continuity and immediate mutual understanding between the author and the viewer.

1.2.2. Precedent statements in the semantic field of contemporary pop culture

An important feature of CLU in pop culture is that they can change over time. Some cultural expressions gradually lose popularity and become incomprehensible to new generations, while new culturally significant expressions are constantly appearing in cinema (Androutsopoulos, 2012). This shows that cinema not only reflects culture, but also actively influences its development and formation.

Understanding precedent within the framework of our study also requires a shift from linguistics to the analysis of complex sign systems that contribute to a deeper understanding of these utterances. According to Dewanti's (2023) adaptation of Saussure's semiotic theory, any element of pop culture (from the film frame to the advertising slogan that he analyzes) is part of a carefully constructed system of signs. In this context, the meaning of culturally loaded utterance is not universal, because we need the context and culture that surround the sign, which is the determining factor for understanding its content, as the sign itself does not carry a universal definition (Dewanti, 2023). It is precisely this cultural coding that makes CLU a tool specific to a particular linguistic community, where context serves not merely as a background, but as a factor determining meaning.

In the context of linguosemiotic analysis, the cognitive-semiotic approach to the study of linguistic units as carriers of irrational cultural codes takes on particular significance. Following O. Kolesnyk (2025), we consider precedent units not merely as repeated quotations, but as specific semiotic constructions possessing a deep "irrationally grounded cognition" (Kolesnyk, 2025, p.2) whether mythological or sociocultural. As O. Kolesnyk notes, such linguistic devices "provide access to an infinite number of alternative realities which correlate to, mirror or remodel states of affairs and transitions in the arguably primary reality"(Kolesnyk, 2025, p. 1) .

At the same time, the analysis of CLUs in cinematic discourse requires consideration not only of the internal semiotic structure of the sign but also of the sociolinguistic parameters of its functioning. According to Jannis Androutsopoulos (2012), cinematic discourse should be viewed as "the ensemble of film-as-text and processes of its production and consumption" (p. 140), which emphasizes that CLU is not an isolated unit but is formed through the interaction of text, audiovisual means, and practices of perception. Central to this approach is the "double framework", where "communication in the fictional world is embedded into the communicative relation between 'author' (or 'producer') and 'reader' (or 'audience')" (Androutsopoulos, 2012, p. 140). In this model, CLU serves as a tool for "audience design", since "sociolinguistic

choices at the fictional level are constrained by audience design at the level of target audiences" (p. 141). That is, CLU is not random but strategically constructed to activate the recipient's specific cultural experience.

In this context, the audience emerges as a "community of inquirers" (Mamenko, 2025), where CLU attains its validity and recognizability only when this community reaches a consensus regarding its semiotic meaning. This concept is not definitive, so it leads us to the principle of fallibilism (the possibility of constant revision and transformation of knowledge) pointed out by Mamenko (2025) based on Peirce. In film discourse, fallibilism explains the mechanism of the evolution of meanings. Here a cultural sign is not fixed, it is capable of acquiring new, sometimes even opposite, meanings. Thus, a statement that was originally pathetic or heroic may, as a result of constant and repeated recontextualization in pop culture, take on an ironic or parodic tone.

When combined with the *semiotic condensation* mechanism proposed by Jannis Androutsopoulos (2012), CLU is capable of condensing complex social types, ideas and scenarios into a single brief utterance, creating an effect of instant cognitive activation and semiotic richness. From this perspective, it appears not merely as a well-chosen quote, but as an irrational code that transmits a ready-made algorithm for understanding the world from the original source directly into the recipient's consciousness.

If we are speaking of a code, then CLU should also be considered through Charles Sanders Peirce's triad: icons, indices and symbols, which explain whether the connection between a sign and an object is based on resemblance, a factual connection or a social convention (Bellucci, 2020). Here, the icon ensures its recognizability through resemblance (whether visual, verbal or auditory) based on a cultural code. Intertextual reference is already facilitated by the index, where the connection to the source is direct and indices "denote without connoting" (Bellucci, 2020, p. 175), functioning as pointers to the CLU. A symbol, on the other hand, establishes the cultural anchoring of meaning, where it is "a sign to which a general idea is attached by virtue of a habit..." (Bellucci, 2020, p. 173). It is here that CLU acquires the status of shared knowledge.

Additionally to emphasize the flexibility of sign-object relations regardless of their nature, we will also consider CLU as a qualisign, a sinsign and legisign according to Peirce's first typology (Marchand, n.d.). The presence of this characteristic allows us to more precisely classify the mechanisms of functioning of signs in the system.

This allows us to classify CLU as *legi-signa* in the terminology of Charles Sanders Peirce (Kolesnyk, 2025). Such units do not merely point to an object; they dictate the rules for its interpretation, since "assertive legi-signa refer to a number of typical scenarios" (Kolesnyk, 2025, p. 10). Accordingly, they automatically activate in the viewer's memory entire layers of familiar plots, ideas and emotional states, a process reinforced by the effect of ideological

erasure, where certain linguistic choices are perceived not as constructed but as natural, since they "are erased in favor of a pre-ideological or semiotic level" (Androutsopoulos, 2012, p.150), where "second-order indexicality is often misinterpreted as first-order indexicality" (Androutsopoulos, 2012, p. 150).

Within the semantic field of contemporary culture, Cultural Loaded Utterances function as complex semiotic resources whose meaning is not predetermined or fixed, but is constructed by culture itself through the process of interpretation. Consequently, understanding them requires an analysis not only of the linguistic code but also of the entire multimodal environment in which the sign exists, as well as the sociocultural context that ensures its functioning and survival in the process of semiosis. From this perspective, CLU emerges not merely as an element of discourse, but as a tool for programming the perception of cinematic narrative through the filter of existing cultural experience. This allows popular culture not only to reflect reality but also to construct complex alternative realities that correlate with primary reality, while simultaneously reinterpreting or transforming it.

1.3 Methodology for researching precedent statements

Our study was based on well-known quotations widely recognized in the target mass media culture, particularly in cinema and television series, which constitute the most frequently used quotations within the scope of the study. The second branch of our corpus consisted of CLUs selected based on the nature of their referents. The type of object and the cultural essence expressed by the precedent units were divided into 6 categories: expressions relating to real historical events or figures; expressions mentioning songs; quotations from other films; expressions from literary sources; expressions about advertising slogans; expressions mentioning mythology/religion and cultural affiliation.

To transfer theoretical principles into practical analysis, in our study of cultural loaded utterances we combine semiotic analysis, contextual semantic analysis, structural analysis and linguo-pragmatic analysis with cultural register classification. This approach allows us not only to systematically describe these units but also to trace how they function in actual cinematic discourse, from the moment of their appearance in the text to the ways in which they are interpreted by the viewer within a specific cultural context.

Within this discourse, we analyze the CLU using Peirce's three-stage semiotic analysis. First, the CLU is examined in its original context: the scene, character and communicative situation in which the unit first appeared are reconstructed. Next, the type of sign is determined based on Charles Peirce's triadic sign model. It helps us demonstrate that CLUs function through qualitatively distinct mechanisms of cultural activation via resemblance (icon), direct indication or causation (index) or learned cultural convention (symbol) (Bellucci, 2020). Each of these mechanisms guides a different cognitive route through which the viewer processes and interprets the embedded cultural

meaning. Finally, the referential type of the CLU is established: a qualisign, a sinsign or a legisign (Marchand, n.d.).

The second stage involves analyzing CLUs in new contexts. It examines how the function and meaning of a sign change in a new environment, as well as how it evolves from one type of sign to another. The third stage explains the mechanism by which a CLU transitions from a specific referent to a stabilized symbolic meaning. Particular attention is paid to the semantic characteristics of the core lexeme that provides such a transition. As a result, the analysis not only describes the changes but also explains the reasons behind them.

Using structural analysis, we create a description of precedents to compare units with one another in different contexts and trace transformations (Ryabinina, 2008).

A linguopragmatic analysis is applied to trace the communicative function of CLUs in the corpus. Here, we consider both the character's intention and the author's communicative goal regarding the audience, with the aim of tracing the presence of *common ground* (Clark & Marshall, 1981) in the recipient as the primary indicator of the audience's belonging to a specific cultural community. This leads us to employ cultural register classification to determine the prevalence of CLUs within societies. We divide them into three types: national, borrowed ethno-specific and universal. The classification depends on which audience is capable of fully activating the cultural meaning of the unit in question. At the same time, the study takes into account not only the current status of CLUs but also their development from a local cultural phenomenon to broader international dissemination.

Conclusion to Chapter 1

In Chapter 1 we analysed the not yet established term of *precedent utterance* and *intertextuality* which are still debated between scholars.For this reason we introduce our new term of Cultural Loaded Utterance (CLU) which is going deeper with semantic analysis.

We observed that precedent utterances activate *common ground* (Clark & Marshall, 1981) and *intertextual* connections (Sikorska V. Y., Nazarenko O. M., & Melnyk S. M., 2021). Therefore, a CLU is defined as a linguistic unit whose understanding depends on shared cultural experience and which evokes associations that go beyond the literal meaning. Another important mechanism in the functioning of CLUs is *aberration* (Ryabinina, 2008), defined as the deliberate changing of the canonical form of a well-known utterance. It allows the original meaning to be combined with new authorial content.

Since we are examining CLUs through the lens of semiotic changes, we have based our analysis on Charles Peirce's classification of signs (Bellucci, 2020). These will further help explain how CLUs preserve and convey cultural meanings, as well as how these meanings change during the process of interpretation. And through an analysis of modality, we will demonstrate how some expressions can exist solely in textual form, while others can only reveal the original expression when combined with verbal, visual and auditory elements (Alfaify & Pinto, 2021).

Chapter 2. Linguistic and semiotic characteristics of precedential utterances in English-language film discourse

2.1. Precedent utterances perspective

As we have already noted, CLU is based on mutual knowledge, which makes it easier to express ideas and saves time spent explaining a particular situation or context. This marks the recipient with a definition of cultural affiliation and provides viewers with a pleasant sense of involvement in decoding the message. But this model of construction, based on shared knowledge, forms the foundation for a deeper semantic structure that enhances communication between the author and the viewer.

According to Peirce's semiotics, we view CLUs not as static expressions, but as signs linked to an object that evoke a certain understanding or association in the viewer, arising from the interaction of three elements: the sign, the object and the interpreter (Nagara & Machfauzia, 2020).

Here, the precedential utterances are examined according to two Peircean dimensions, which together constitute the semiotic profile of the unit. The first criterion is the sign-ontological dimension, where the type of connection a sign maintains with its object is based on similarity, direct connection or convention (Bellucci, 2020) and the second is the referential dimension, which determines the specific type of object it denotes whether it is a single event, a certain quality or a recurring situation (Marchand, n.d.). These two approaches work together and help to explain more deeply how CLU functions.

It is important to note that determining the type of sign is impossible without considering the modal channel through which the CLU is realized in the text. In the following sections, we distinguish between monomodal and crossmodal references (Alfaify & Pinto, 2021). Initially, they are usually associated with a specific scene or event in a film or series. Over time, the audience begins to perceive a broader, generalized meaning of the key lexeme, and the CLU gradually transforms into a stable symbol. Thus, this transition completes their development as a sign, but at the same time gives them a new cultural life in other texts and contexts.

2.1.1. Modal nature of the sign

Since cinema is synthetic art through its meaning, CLU rarely functions as an isolated textual element. Because of this the study of its sign nature in films requires a detailed analysis of the channels of transmission and decoding of information. Based on the classification of Alfaify & Pinto (2021) we observe the analyzed CLUs through two basic groups: monomodal and crossmodal.

This division is explained by the ability of words to convey meaning on their own. In the case of monomodal references, only one channel is used, which is usually text. Such phrases are highly meaningful even without any additional hints (such as images or sound), they can trigger the desired source in the

viewer's memory. In this sense, the CLUs are independent of the visual sequence and retain their meaning even outside the context of the film or series.

To confirm our hypothesis we considered the reference of the main characters from an American comedy drama television series *Gilmore Girls* (2000-2007) Rory and Lorelai to the elite Chilton School: "*I remember it being smaller…and less "off with their heads "*"(Sherman-Palladino, 2000, p.7) . This line appeals to Lewis Carroll's "*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* " (1865) and demonstrates how monomodal sign activates a *common knowledge* through three interconnected levels of semiosis.

In the first place this phrase "*off with their heads*" (*Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, n.d.-b) consists of the straight quotation from the book *Alice in Wonderland* said to be Queen of Herts. It shows how it could be easily decoded without screen or further connections, when the recipients share the common knowledge.

Part with "*I remember it being smaller*" (Sherman-Palladino, 2000, p.7) is also the CLU to story about Alice, where the play with a physical size is the central topic for Lewis Carroll's work. In the context of the series, this functions as a metaphorical aberration: Chilton hasn't changed physically, but the protagonist's perception of her has. Here, CLU serves as a vehicle for conveying an inner state – a sense of the vulnerability and the smallness of the individual in the face of a majestic and intimidating institution.

Nevertheless, monomodal references are becoming increasingly rare, since it is precisely in cinematic discourse that nonverbal means play the primary role. Crossmodality allows CLU to acquire semiotic richness, where meaning is reinforced or supplemented through various channels (such as sight and hearing), which ultimately ensures its successful decoding even in the presence of additional distractions or a changed context (Alfaify & Pinto, 2021).

In the same television series *Gilmore Girls* (TV Series 2000-2007) in the first episode Rory's line "*I'm going to be in a Britney Spears video?"(Palladino, 2000, p.23)* is a good example of how sometimes a CLU can depend almost entirely on the visual layer. On its own, this phrase is ambiguously unclear: the viewer does not yet have enough information to interpret it as a cultural reference. Even the surrounding lines *"Open your present, please" (Palladino, 2000, p.23)* or "*You're going to Chilton"(Palladino, 2000, p.23)* do not provide sufficient context. At this stage, the verbal channel is not capable of establishing mutual comprehension by itself between the speaker and the audience. The meaning only becomes clear when we take the visual cues into consideration. When Rory opens the present and pulls out a blue-and-white checked skirt, the situation immediately takes on a different meaning. This item evokes certain cultural associations, allowing the viewer to link the phrase to a specific image from pop culture.

Now the *Britney Spears* video in question would be for the number one worldwide hit "*Baby One More Time*", which came out in 1999 a year before

this episode (A.O., 2017). In the video Britney Spears and her backup dancers are dressed like school girls and wearing skirts not dissimilar to the one that Rory has just received as a gift. Once this visual parallel becomes apparent, CLU makes perfect sense where Lorelai playfully presents her daughter that she accepted to school.

This example demonstrates that CLUs do not always function as purely verbal units. Their successful interpretation may depend on the interaction between language and imagery, where the visual component provides the missing link. In such cases, meaning arises through a potential association with the visual detail that confirms and complements it. As a result, the recipient experiences a moment of recognition that is both cognitive and aesthetic, reinforcing the idea that CLUs function within a broader semiotic system rather than just with language.

Typically, the recipient retains not only the phrase itself but also its multimodal context, which allows for faster decoding of the hidden CLU. When we hear a particular phrase, the brain automatically provides us with the necessary information, which has been formed based on shared knowledge. Thus, crossmodality functions as an archive where a minimal verbal impulse triggers a maximum of visual and emotional associations.

Another example that helps divide crossmodal references into two groups is the phrase "*My precious*" (Khoi, 2024), which is from *The Lord of the Rings* (series). The impact of this line lies in the unique vocal intonation (hoarse, guttural tone) of the character Gollum, created by Andy Serkis (Wikipedia contributors, 2026b). Regardless of where this CLU appears, in television sitcom (*The Big Bang Theory,* TV Series 2007-2019), or animated musical comedy (*Alvin and the Chipmunks: Chipwrecked*, 2011), or romantic comedy (*Just Go with It,* 2011), or comedy drama (*Gilmore Girls*, TV Series 2000-2007) without reproducing this specific pronunciation, CLU loses its precedential status and becomes semantically blurred, transforming into a mere descriptive phrase that describes the value of the object.

Thus, we can observe that some of the utterances are more dependent on other channels of perception that makes them more reliable on screen than monomodal ones which can only be perceived verbally and easily by the audience.

2.1.2. Symbolic-ontological dimension

According to Peirce's typology, any CLU begins its existence as an indexical sign, which, through migration across films and genres, may lose its semantic meaning, leading it to become a pure symbol maintained solely by conventional agreement. In other words, a CLU does not contain a fixed sign; it occupies a certain position that can change over the course of its development. It begins its semiotic life tied to a specific referent in a specific communicative

situation and ends it when the process of cultural consciousness is complete as a conventional symbol that no longer requires this original referent to function.

When astronaut Jack Swigert reported the words "*Houston, we've had a problem*" (Mars, 2026) to the Mission Control Centre in 1970. In the film's adaptations, this phrase was slightly altered to "*Houston, we have a problem*", but retained and even amplified its dramatic impact. Here we can see that in its original context every element of the utterance is a pure index. The vocative *Houston* indexically points to a specific institutional addressee – the NASA Mission Control Centre at the Manned Spacecraft Center (MSC) in Houston (Mars, 2026). The pronoun *we* points to a specific crew of Apollo 13. And, most importantly, here the lexeme *problem* designates a specific referent of an oxygen tank explosion in the service module, an engineering malfunction with life-threatening consequences. The utterance is an index because it migrates from a sign to a unique, irreplaceable event in real time and space, indexing the problem.

A critical implication for analysis of CLU is that the index is the most historically primitive type of the sign. Before a phrase becomes a widely recognized cultural symbol, it must first indexically point to a specific event, statement, situation or character in the source text. Only when the indexical connection dissolves, the phrase enters into free symbolic use. It can be applied to any referent that matches its generalized semantic features, regardless of whether the original source text is mentioned.

In fantasy adventure comedy *The Princess Bride* (1987) the line "*My name is Inigo Montoya. You killed my father. Prepare to die*"(*The Princess Bride by William Goldman - 1987 Shooting Draft*, n.d.) is also the pure index with three-part utterances. Semantically it points to *My name* – the character himself, *You killed my father* – the grievance declaration and *Prepare to die* – imperative consequences of the action. The indexical power of the phrase depends on the specificity of the referent and the transition to the symbol depends on the knowledge of the language community about the three-part. This syntactic structure is a reusable template in which lexical slots can be replaced.

Once the slots are understood as the variables [Name], [victim], [consequence], the phrase loses its indexical feature and becomes a symbolic template. This confirmed a deviation in American sitcom *How I Met Your Mother* (often abbreviated HIMYM) (TV Series 2005-2014) the line: "*My name is Rodrigo DeGoya. You killed someone I love. Prepare to dance*" (*Series 09 Episode 03 – Last Time in New York*, 2013) replaces all the content elements, while precisely preserving the three-part template. In another American sitcom *Big Bang Theory* (TV Series 2007-2019) the phrase "*My name is Puss in Boots. You killed my father. Prepare to die*" (*Series 09 Episode 05 – the Perspiration Implementation*, 2016) transports another character into the identity slot. In the science fiction television series *Doctor Who* (TV Series 2005-2022) (S7E13) "*prepare to die in agony for the glory of the Sontaran empire!*" (*Series 07*

Episode 13 – Nightmare In Silver, 2013) is the template that is adapted to the villainous context. In each case, audience recognition depends not on knowledge of Inigo Montoya, but on the assimilation of the symbolic template as a convention that defines a symbol.

The example that operates through the sonic icon could be "*Paaam-o-laaaaaa…*" (*Series 05 Episode 05 – Crime Aid*, 2008) sound from *The Office* (TV Series 2005-2013), echoing the *Ricola commercial* (1994). Through this example we observe the CLU that carries no propositional content but transmits a culturally Alpine advertising kitsch soundscape whose incongruity in the Scranton context is the entire source of its semantic value (Dent, 2024).

Another example of the transition that we observed is icon to symbol in line "*Run, Forrest, run!*" (Eric Roth, 1994) from the American comedy-drama film *Forrest Gump* (1994). This icon lies in the fact that the very syntactic and phonological structure of the phrase physically mimics the process of running through its abrupt imperative form, exclamation, rhythm and repetitive action, which imitates the impact of feet on the ground, creating a sense of the physical urgency of running. Thus, the recipient's interpretation is primarily not one suggested by the film (Jenny orders Forrest to run), but an empirical one, where form generates sensation.

Visual icons are also present, reinforced by CLU, which help decipher the icon more quickly. In a scene from the film *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty* (2013): "*Do you have any cars available?/... we have a blue one and the red one./ I take the red one*" (Stiller, 2013, 00:38:40), the choice between the red and blue car is widely considered a deliberate homage to the sci-fi blockbuster *The Matrix* (1999). The mention of cars and their color serves as a significant icon that evolves into a symbol representing the choice between a familiar life and harsh reality. The viewer quickly deciphers the scene presented, drawing on shared knowledge and an understanding of the agreed-upon symbolism of the two pills.

A symbol is a pure, unmediated connection between the signified and the object, where its meaning depends entirely on the consensus of the community. We can clearly trace this characteristic in the phrase "*Winter is coming*" (IMDb, n.d.) from *Game of Thrones* (TV Series 2011-2019). In its original context, this phrase refers to the Stark family's motto (Game of Thrones Wiki, n.d.), the approach of a harsh winter in the fictional world and the specific military-political threat it encodes. However, the appearance of this CLU in the comedy *Good Boys* (2019) in the context of domestic comfort, without any reference to *Game of Thrones* (TV Series 2011-2019), signals a purely symbolic status that carries no underlying myth about impending troubles and the need to prepare.

A similar situation can be observed in the Star Wars franchise, where the phrase "*May the Force be with you"* (Odman, 2023) becomes a symbol, losing

its indexical referentiality. The *Force* as a metaphysical entity is no longer key to explaining the phrase, because nowadays this CLU has attained cult status, where the index to a specific fictional referent is so completely dissolved that the phrase can be used sincerely by people who have never seen the movies.

CLU	Original sign type	Mechanism of transition	Established sign type	Contexts
"Houston, we have a problem"	Index (concrete accident event, Apollo 13, 1970)	Semantic generalisation of "problem" (unpleasant situation requiring resolution) -> detachment form referent	Symbol (idiomatic formula for any problematic situation)	Transformers (2009); Scream (1996); The Office(S3:E23); HIMYM (S5:E19); G.I. Joe (2009)
"Run, Forrest, run!"	Icon (prosodic urgency mimics physical act of flight)	Iconic core preserved; lexeme (escape from constraint) detaches from specific character template	Symbol (generic encouragement /comic urgency)	Fight Club (1999); The Longest Yard (2005); Chappie (2015)
"My name is Inigo Montoya…"	Index (points to Montoya's specific vendetta narrative)	Syntactic frame abstracted as substitution template (X-slot for name/victim/consequence)	Symbol (ritual declaration of identity + grievance + threat)	HIMYM (S9:E3); BBT (S9:E5); Doctor Who (S7:E13)
"Winter is coming"	Index (Stark family motto; dynastic and climatic warning, Game of Thrones)	Proverbialisation: dynastic specificity bleached; meaning of lexeme 'looming threat + preparation required' generalised	Symbol (universal warning of approaching adversity)	Good Boys (2019); Lucifer (S5:E16)

Table 2.1. Semiotic Trajectory of CLUs

2.1.3. Referential classification of signs

The second Pierce typological dimension that determines what kind of object it designates is classified on 3 categories: the sinsign, which denotes a discrete phenomenon or event, the qualisign, which accentuates a quality or attribute rather than an event and the legisign, which indicates a scenario, regularity or recurring script (Nagara & Machfauzia, 2020). We have identified patterns in the use of signs and their key characteristics.

According to our observation the defining feature of a sinsign is its specificity and the characteristic behavior of transformation followed by the lexical substitution of slots. When a recipient begins to use the sinsign in new contexts, the component that points to a specific object or event changes first. This is the easiest way to adapt an expression to a new situation: the familiar structure is preserved, but individual elements can be replaced. Thanks to this, the expression ceases to be tied to only one case and turns into a universal template for creating new meanings.

The same slot-substitution behaviour is represented in "*Come with me if you want to live*"(Cameron, 1984, p.93) from *Terminator* (1984). As a sinsign, the phrase designates a specific rescue in a specific moment. Its redeployments – "*Ms. Pembroke, come with me if you want to live*" (Movies Wiki, n.d.) from *American Pie 2* (2001), Barney's "*Come with me if you want to bang*" (*Series 07 Episode 23 – The Magician's Code (1)*, 2012) from *HIMYM* (TV Series 2005-2014) and the visually recreated car scene in *The Princess Switch 3* (2021) – all operate on the conditional clause slot (to live/to bang /new visual equivalents), while the imperative part *come with me* remains fixed. The sinsign's particular referent (the Terminator's specific rescue act) is released, the symbol is (urgent escape) is retained. So, synsignals are characterized by the presence of one variable element in the part of the utterance that originally pointed to a specific referent. It is the ability to replace this element that makes the utterance flexible and allows it to be used in new situations, while maintaining a recognizable pattern.

Unlike a legisign, a qualisign does not have a specific identity, this means that it does not exist independently but manifests itself only through concrete embodiments in various contexts. In the CLU corpus, the qualisign does not emphasize a single event, but rather a certain trait, atmosphere or characteristic, where this precedent does not simply refer to something that once happened, but conveys a quality that can be recognized in many different situations. And it is precisely the ability of this quality to be transferred between different contexts that is the main feature of the qualisign.

"*My precious*" (Khoi, 2024) is a great example for this qualisign which does not show the object but accentuates the qualities of the relationship between sign and its meaning. It does not denote Gollum's ring as an object, but highlights the qualities ('excessive attachment', 'self-constitution through an object', 'possession that possesses') and not the specific ring. It migrates across the contexts in *The Big Bang Theory* (TV Series 2007-2019) (S3:E17), when Sheldon applies the phrase to a rare collectible representing quality like object-fetishism, the pathology of the collector. In *Alvin and the Chipmunks: Chipwrecked* (2011), Eleanor applies it to the last mango on a desert island, accentuating the quality as greed caused by food shortage. In *Just Go With It* (2011), it appears in a romantic context as possessive attachment to a person.

Thus, we can see that in each usage depending on the context where a ring as a specific referent is absent, however as qualisign it is to travel across. It highlights the qualisign's characteristic behaviour of its migration of the quality, not the event.

A legisign primarily functions as a sign that indicates the type of event, scenario or pattern that recurs in various situations. In the CLU corpus, legisigns are the most productive category for transformation and cross-contextual deployment, since they do not indicate a unique event (like synsigns) nor emphasize a quality (as qualisigns do), but rather point to a recurring scenario that the audience can apply to new situations.

"*Winter is coming*" (IMDb, n.d.) from *Game of Thrones* (TV Series 2011-2019) is one of the purest legisign here. In its constant symbolic form, it indicates a threat requiring preparation of a scenario applicable to any situation that fits the template where a threat is approaching, thus necessitating action. When the protagonist in the TV series *Lucifer* (2016-2021) uses it sarcastically *"Is winter coming or something?*" (Series 05 Episode 16 – *A Chance at a Happy Ending,* 2021) to comment on his brother's theatrical armor or when this phrase is used in *Good Boys* (2019) ("*Summers, canceled. Winter is coming*" (Stupnitsky, 2019)) in an everyday context, both instances activate the same legisign, where the type of scenario remains unchanged, but the specific meaning is transformed.

"*May the Force be with you*" (Odman, 2023) from *Star Wars* (franchise) can also be viewed as a legisign, as it invokes the scenario of a farewell blessing intended to offer support, protection, and approval before a journey or the start of an important mission (Odman, 2023). Its interpretation relies not only on knowledge of the specific source but also on the universal cultural scenario of a

collective blessing, accessible even to recipients unfamiliar with the Star Wars franchise. In this case, the legisign functions as a culturally universal unit that can take on various linguistic and symbolic forms depending on the specific community.

The derivative expression "*Let the Speed Force be with you*" (*Series 01 Episode 23 – Fast Enough*, 2015) from *The Flash* (TV Series, 2014-2023) demonstrates the mechanism of crossmodal transformation of a precedent utterance. It retains the structure and pragmatic function of the legisign, while the key component *Force* is supplemented by the contextual and key element *Speed*, which is associated with the universe of *The Flash* (TV Series 2014-2023). Thanks to this, the expression conveys the same meaning of a wish for support and good luck, while adapting it to a new cultural context.

2.2. Precedent utterance in aspect of semiosis

The importance of using CLUs lies in their role in real-world communication, where what matters is not only what the expression itself means, but also how the recipient interprets it and how the meaning changes depending on the situation or context. According to Peirce's theory, the process of meaning formation is never fully complete, because each new use of a sign can generate new associations and meanings to infinity (Mamenko, 2020). They are flexible cultural units that can acquire new interpretations, be transferred to other contexts and create additional meanings while remaining recognizable. This is precisely why CLUs do not function as unchanging quotations with a single fixed meaning.

2.2.1. The semantics of verbalizers of the core concept

Given the ability of tropes to migrate across narratives and genres, the key feature that determines their interpretation is their structure and core lexemes, which adapt to the context. The semantic features of core lexemes enable CLU to become universal or transform into a symbol that can be applied to different people, situations or objects, rather than just the original context. In other words, it is precisely thanks to this ability to transfer meaning in core lexemes that the linguistic community begins to recognize an utterance, reuse it and gradually assign a new symbolic meaning to it.

In the phrase "*Houston, we have a problem*" a lexeme *problem* is central, denoting 'something unpleasant', 'something that requires a solution, removal or elimination', 'something that creates an obstacle between the current and desired states'. These characteristics are not specific to the Apollo 13 accident, as they

represent the semantic potential of the word in the English language in general. However, the semantic features of this word in the context of the historical event are entirely determined by the situation: ‘an event of a technical nature’, ‘unplanned and dangerous’, ‘requiring immediate expert intervention’, ‘taking place in space’. Although common semantic features are present (something unpleasant and something requiring an immediate solution), the use of this CLU in new contexts (*Transformers* (2009), *Scream* (1996), *The Office* (S3:E23)) conveys a general meaning, weakening the indexical link to the specific 1970 event and reinforcing the symbolic convention where the phrase means ‘we are facing a problematic situation’. The lexeme *truth* in line “*You can't handle the truth!*” (Sorkin, 1991) contains semantic features such as ‘hidden reality’, ‘uncomfortable knowledge’ and ‘information whose disclosure could destabilize the situation’, whereas in the original context of *A Few Good Men* (1992), these features are contextually narrowed to ‘classified military information’, ‘moral interests’, ‘courtroom drama’ and John Joseph Nicholson’s performance style, which provides the viewer with context and aesthetic appeal. This lexeme reveals this CLU more precisely and deeply, explaining exactly how this phrase reinterprets the situation in a new context.

In *HIMYM* (TV Series 2005–2014), when Lily tells Ted, adapting the коли Jessep’s speech, that she has organized his breakups because “*you don't want the truth*” that “*none of these women would have been the mother of your children*” (*Series 04 Episode 17 – The Front Porch*, 2009). CLU functions here as an indexical-symbolic source that highlights Lily’s revelation with a clear emphasis on the hierarchy: the defender (Lily herself), who does the dirty work and the naive civilian (Ted), who is being protected. The essence works not through the theme of the army or the court itself, but through the general ideas embedded in the lexeme ‘the one who hides the truth’, ‘the one who thinks they know better than others’, ‘the one who takes it upon themselves to decide what others need to know’.

Those lexemes that contain universal features accessible to any linguistic community tend to acquire universal status. For example, in the phrase “*Winter is coming*” (IMDb, n.d.) the lexeme *winter* contains the features ‘cold’, ‘hardship’, ‘scarcity’ and ‘the suspension of growth’, all of which point to seasonal changes. This semantic universality is the structural reason why such a CLU spreads more readily across all human cultures than, for example, “*You can’t handle the truth!*” (Sorkin, 1991), where the lexeme *truth* remains more culturally specific to the American legal system.

A separate subtype of the core verbalizer is the proper name, which functions as a qualisignum. In "*My name is Inigo Montoya…*" (*The Princess Bride by William Goldman - 1987 Shooting Draft*, n.d.) that we mentioned previously, the proper name *Montoya* carries semantic features that are cultural rather than lexical, where the use of Spanish indicates belonging to a specific cultural tradition and reveals the character's identity, whose existence is defined by a singular obligation of vengeance. In the deviant variations (*Rodrigo DeGoya, Puss in Boots*), the substitution of the name slot is comical, since the substitute names either preserve or mock these cultural-semantic features, as *Rodrigo DeGoya* retains the Spanish register, while *Puss in Boots* applies the name of an animated character to the register of deadly vengeance.

The name *Forrest* in "*Run, Forrest, Run!*" (Eric Roth, 1994) carries semantic connotations of 'childlike innocence', 'extraordinary physical abilities that mask cognitive differences' and 'vulnerability'. These traits are qualisigns because it is precisely these characteristics that the name emphasizes in any given context. When actors in *Fight Club* (1999)*, The Longest Yard* (2005) and *Chappie* (2015) use CLU in contexts related to escape and urgency, the name Forrest emphasizes the quality of escape, making CLU simultaneously an expression of the character's vulnerability and the physical urgency of the encouragement, as well as a reference to the defining quality of the original character.

Thus, based on our analysis of the CLU corpus, we determined that the core lexeme almost always appears as a noun or noun phrase, which is characteristic of the English language, as they denote a category of referents and serve as the site of lexical semantic migration. The most common generalized potentials are evaluative ('vulnerable', 'dangerous', 'precious') and functional ('requires a solution', 'conceals power'), which highlight the main features of CLUs and create conditions for adaptation to the context.

2.2.2. Structural characteristics of precedent utterances

The structural features of utterances help recipients recognize CLUs with ease and serve as an indicator of how the listener perceives the subsequent context. For this function to be fulfilled, the utterance must retain a syntactic structure that can be either transformed or preserved so that the CLU can function as a recognizable marker. Structural analysis here reveals what can be changed and where, what must be preserved for recognition, and how easily something can be replaced without losing the effect and understanding.

CLUs in cinematic discourse are structurally heterogeneous, but a typological analysis of the corpus reveals three dominant syntactic models, each associated with a characteristic pragmatic meaning. The first and most mobile is the imperative construction; since it lacks an explicit subject, it is universally addressed and migrates between contexts. Simple imperatives ("*Prepare to die*"), doubled imperatives with the vocative ("*Run, Forrest, run!*") and the imperative-conditional mood ("*Come with me if you want to live*") all share this openness regarding the addressee, where any listener can be the second person addressed. This is the primary structural factor behind the CLU's migratory capacity, allowing the imperative to be easily transposed into new situations without losing its original meaning.

Declarative sentences are the most common, where certain elements can be substituted depending on the context. Most often, such sentences are used to express an idea quickly, which leads to substitutions for various reasons, which we will examine in more detail later.

Exclamatory sentences include expressions such as "*You can't handle the truth!*" (Sorkin, 1991), "*Good Morning, Vietnam!*"(Script-O-Rama, 1987) and "*Let the Speed Force be with you*" (*Series 01 Episode 25 – Fast Enough*, 2015). They are expressive rather than descriptive. These expressions convey a specific emotional orientation within the context (challenge, enthusiasm, blessing) rather than describing or commanding. This construction is the most resistant to lexical substitution, since the form itself is the meaning and any change in vocabulary risks disrupting the expressive orientation that constitutes the semiotic core of CLUs, where their form is not merely a means of expressing content but is itself part of the content. Such expressions should also be considered high formulaicity, as they require the preservation of the entire lexical sequence for recognition. Medium and low formulaicity "*Houston, we have a [X]", "Come with me if you want to [X]", "My name is [X]...*" have one or few slots in the most semantically possible positions. A fixed structure contains a core lexeme, where a specific slot serves as a site of transformation. For example, replacing the name *Inigo Montoya* or the word *problem* will not affect the overall structure of the phrase; that is, it will remain familiar to the recipient. Thus, these transformations influence the acquisition and recognition of CLUs in new contexts. In Figure 2.2 we show the main types of transformations that we have identified and the frequency of their usage.

The most common type of transformation is lexical substitution, which is considered the simplest change that occurs with CLU by replacing a single word

or phrase to fit the context. Such a change is easily noticeable, does not modify the structure and allows the recipient to recognize it easily.

In The Big Bang Theory (TV Series 2007–2019), the transformation of Spider-Man's "*With great power comes great responsibility*" (Moreno, 2026) into "*With minimal power comes minimal responsibility*" (*Series 11 Episode 19 – The Tenant Disassociation*, 2018). The substitution is antonymic: both instances of the adjective *great* are replaced by *minimal*. The syntactic frame remains unchanged ("*With [X]comes [X]*") so that the recipient can more easily recognize the original CLU.

Another concept that differs slightly from lexical substitution is template substitution, which retains only the rhythm and form of the original while replacing all components with context-specific ones. In "*My name is Rodrigo DeGoya. You killed someone I love. Prepare to dance*" (*Series 09 Episode 03 – Last Time in New York*, 2013) all three components are completely replaced, creating new meanings while preserving the core motif and recognizability.

Compositional ellipsis, where the CLU is not explicitly named but only hinted at, is less common. A striking example is the reference to *The Pixar desk lamp* in HIMYM: "*watch a movie that doesn't start with a desk lamp jumping on a capital I"* (*Series 08 Episode 24 – Something New*, 2013) when *Pixar* is never named. But given the cues that trigger shared knowledge, the recipient quickly and easily decodes the CLU. Something similar happens in another example from *HIMYM* (TV Series 2005-2014), where a combination of shots makes it easier to decipher the iconic signs that turn into cues and are then perceived as symbols during Marshall's entire Ghostbusters sequence. First, he sees the logo, then the firehouse and finally he sees Ernie Hudson's cameo, and only then does the phrase "*Who ya gonna call?*" (Moreno, 2026) sound. The CLU was being decoded all this time until the viewers saw the visual cues and heard the symbolic phrase referencing *Ghostbusters* (1984).

A clear example of genre aberration is the phrase "*Good Morning, Vietnam!*" (Script-O-Rama, 1987) which is based on the 1987 film with the same name. This CLU is based on the real-life figure of Adrian Cronauer, a radio host in Saigon (1965-1966), for whom this exclamation served as a way to fill the silence and signal the start of the broadcast in conditions of wartime media censorship (Wikipedia contributors, 2026).

The use of this CLU in the TV series *The Office* (S2:E17) and *Gilmore Girls* (S4:E12; S5:E19) demonstrates a radical pragmatic shift. In the first case, it is used to draw attention to a problem that arose during work and in the second, the direct quote serves as a tool for rousing the audience. In both cases, the phrase loses its original military context and becomes a semiotic template for an energetic greeting.

This instance of the phrase "*Good Morning, Vietnam!*" (Script-O-Rama, 1987) illustrates a genre aberration. The expression, which was once a symbol of the military's presence in a conflict zone, has completely lost that association

in its modern interpretation. For Vietnam veterans, this phrase remains legendary and a marker of their identity. In sitcoms (*Gilmore Girls* and *The Office)*, its use by Michael Scott or Rory Gilmore is based on mutual knowledge of 1980s film classics, not historical facts. This confirms the idea that cinematic discourse shapes its own history, where CLUs become key nodes of memory.

Antonymic substitution and syntactic-modal transformation occur least frequently, though they are the simplest. "*That's so not Raven*" (*Series 03 Episode 12 – No Tomorrow*, 2008) from HIMYM (TV Series 2005-2014) transformed an affirmative sentence into a negative one, creating a meaning completely opposite to the original title and its reference to the American television fantasy teen sitcom. And the change in the person of the statement "*My wife doesn't have money, but what she does have is a special set of skills*" (*Series 05 Episode 13 – Jenkins*, 2010) from first to third person is a clear syntactic variation.

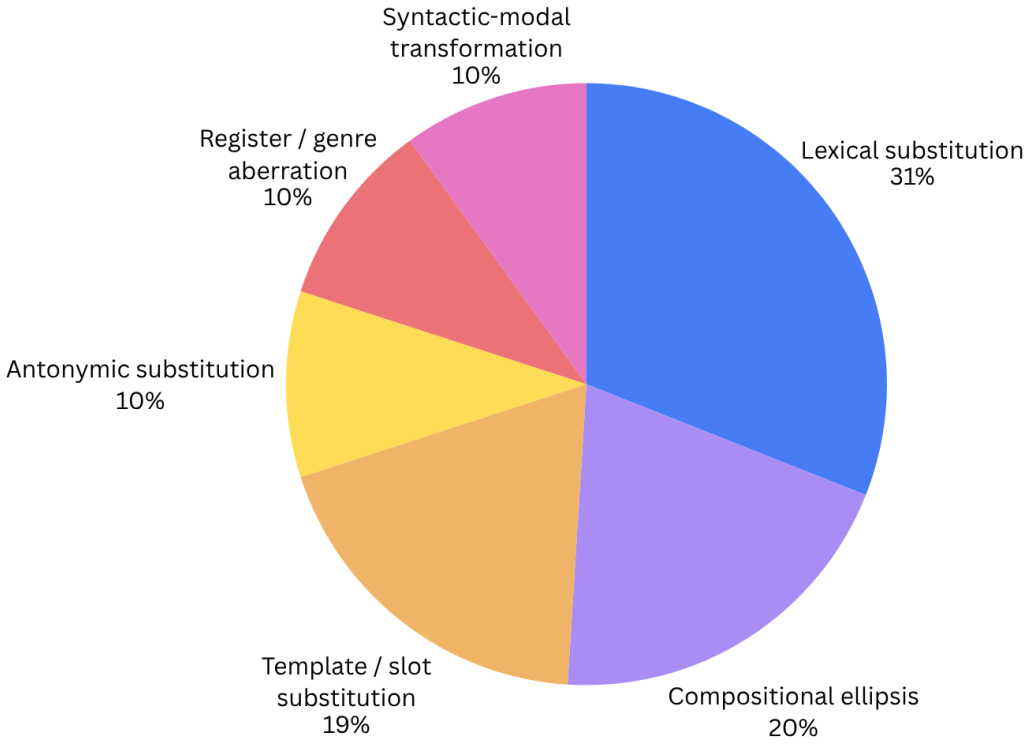

Figure 2.2. Semantic aberration types of CLUs

Through this we can see that due to transformation CLU has the ability to adapt to the new context and be able to continue to be recognizable to the audience.

2.2.3. Linguopragmatic characteristics of precedent utterances

CLU has the ability of instantly shrinking a complex emotional state into a few words that immediately resonate with the audience. These utterances do not merely describe emotion, they trigger it, activating feelings that viewers have already experienced through an earlier cultural encounter. A clear example

is the recurring use of the phrase *"I'm the king of the world!"* (Cameron, 1997) from iconic American epic romantic disaster film *Titanic* (1997). When this line is reused, it does more than signal happiness or pride, it reactivates the powerful sense of freedom, exhilaration and youthful triumph associated with Jack Dawson standing at the bow of the ship.

CLUs are also developed as efficient instruments of plot construction, compressing exposition, generating narrative tension or marking turning points. This process manifests as a cognitive goal, where instead of revealing a character's inner state (the joy of victory or a sense of superiority) through detailed description, the speaker relies on a culturally loaded unit that delivers maximum emotional impact with minimal linguistic effort. Here is working recognition so the audience does not need explanation anymore.

It is important to note that this effect is rarely purely verbal. This phrase is often accompanied by a visual reflection of the original scene – arms spread wide, the body standing up straight, facing an open space. This creates a kind of semiotic layering, where the gesture reinforces the speech, and together they reproduce the original meaning. In this sense, what we are observing is not simply a quotation, but a fragmentary reproduction is a compact multimodal reference that combines language and imagery.

The widespread use of this phrase in works of various genres: slasher horror (*I Still Know What You Did Last Summer*, 1998); parody film (*Scary Movie*, 2000); romantic comedy (*Bridget Jones's Diary*, 2000); sport comedy (*BASEketball*, 1998); black comedy (*Rough Night*, 2017); live-action animated jukebox musical comedy (*Alvin and the Chipmunks: The Squeakquel*, 2009); police procedural sitcom (*Brooklyn Nine-Nine*, 2013-2021); mockumentary sitcom (*The Office* (TV Series 2005-2013)) demonstrates that the CLU *"I'm the king of the world!"*(Cameron, 1997) has evolved into more than just a memorable quote. It functions as a semiotic benchmark of triumph, a ready-made expressive shortcut that allows speakers to instantly communicate a peak emotional state while simultaneously inviting the audience to share in a familiar, cultural experience.

The ironic reversal of the source material's meaning is the next function that is most visible in comedic genres, is the deployment of CLUs for purposes of pragmatic inversion. For the same example, but a little adapted *"I'm the coleslaw king of the world!"*(Kohn & Silverstein, 1998) from romcom *Never Been Kissed* (1999) is used in an absurd context that produced comic dissonance. As the methodology notes, this is the configuration in which irony, sarcasm and hyperbole most readily arise, where the literal meaning diverges from the visual or situational context.

The phrase gained widespread popularity and recognition after the release of *Apollo 13* (1995), which dramatized the real events of the Apollo 13 mission in 1970. During the mission, astronaut Jack Swigert reported a fault with the oxygen tank to Mission Control, saying: *"Houston, we've had a problem"*

(Mars, 2026). In the film adaptation, this phrase was slightly altered, but retained and even amplified its dramatic impact. Since then, the phrase has been used far beyond its original context and is now used to describe any sudden critical situation requiring immediate action and emotional focus.

Again we can observe the understandable across genres and even generations. Whether in science fiction action (*Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen* (2009; G.I. Joe: The Rise of Cobra (2009); *Armageddon* (1998)), superhero film (*X-Men: Dark Phoenix* (2019)), mockumentary sitcom (*The Office*, TV Series 2005-2013) or family comedy (*Home Alone 3* (1997)), the phrase efficiently conveys urgency while simultaneously activating a shared cultural memory.

At the same time, the function of such utterances in cinema is not limited to meaning alone. They also have an important aesthetic dimension. CLU is not merely a technical means of conveying information, it is part of the film's artistic canvas. By weaving recognisable cultural codes into the dialogue, directors add an extra layer of depth to the narrative. For viewers who recognise these references, this creates a moment of intellectual pleasure, a delicate interplay between recognition and interpretation that enriches the general viewing experience.

In one of the early scenes of classic television drama *Gilmore Girls* (TV Series, 2000-2007), during a conversation in which Sookie and Lorelai are trying to figure out how to obtain money, Sookie proposes a solution that Lorelai clearly finds unacceptable. In response, Lorelai remarks:

"Sookie, there are several chapters from a Stephen King novel that I would re-enact before I'd resort to that option"(Palladino, 2000, p.26).

This utterance functions as an example of CLU, where meaning is constructed through reference rather than explicit description, which also show us several main functions of CLU. We have already determined that the recipient must share common knowledge with the author, which after all helps him recognize the culturally loaded utterance. The reference to Stephen King – an American author who's widely recognized as a central figure in horror fiction activates a broad spectrum of associations connected with fear, psychological tension, and extreme situations (King & DeFilippo, n.d.). Rather than describing her emotional state in detail, Lorelei summarises it with a single term that is rich in cultural knowledge. which represent economy of explanation

After that it enables the creation of vivid mental images. In the case with Stephen King it instantly invokes iconic horror scenes in the imagination of all his written novels, for instance, the figure of Pennywise from the film *It* (2017) or the anxious atmosphere of the Overlook Hotel in *The Shining* (1980). So, the viewer's curiosity arises not only because of Lorelai's refusal, but also because he imagines familiar cultural images, deriving a kind of pleasure from recognizing them. As a result, this statement conveys not only rejection, but also a complex mix of anxiety, unease, a sense of inevitability, and even a touch of

fatalistic exaggeration. This adds dynamism to the dialogue, making it more expressive and semantically richer. Here we can additionally inspect an ironic semiotic shift in which elements associated with the horror genre are transported into the area of everyday social interaction and exaggeration where Lorelai elevates the proposed action to a level of extreme horror.

Thus CLU always has the main reason to be present in any context starting from adding new meanings through old utterances and ending with highlighting the irony. They enhance the communicative impact of the statement due to the shared cultural memory of the author and the audience.

Conclusion to Chapter 2

Based on our analysis in Chapter 2, we identified the main linguosemiotic features of CLU at three levels: typological, semiotic and linguopragmatic.

At the typological level, we established that CLUs can be described using two Peircean classifications of signs. Using these, we determined that most units follow a path from iconic or indexical origins to symbolic status. A connection was also found between the referential types of signs and their semiotic nature: sinsigns are more often associated with indexicality, qualisigns with iconicity and legisigns with symbolism. Furthermore, iconic CLUs typically require multiple modalities for full interpretation, whereas symbolic ones can be understood only through verbal reproduction.

At the semiotic level, it has been established that the ability of CLUs to be transferred to new contexts is determined by the semantic potential of their key lexemes. It is these elements that enable the generalization of the original meaning and its subsequent cultural consolidation. Structural analysis revealed three main syntactic models (imperative, declarative and exclamatory) and three levels of formality (high, medium and low). Six types of aberrations were also identified, among which lexical substitution is the most common, indicating the special role of the nominal component as the primary locus of CLU variability.

At the linguopragmatic level, three main scenarios for the use of CLU were identified: creating a comic effect, characterizing a character and establishing a sense of community among communication participants. It was found that the choice of one scenario or another depends on the degree of formality of the utterance, its sign type and cultural recognizability.

Chapter 3. Linguistic and cultural dimension of English-language precedential utterances in cinema

3.1 National and cultural meanings of English-language precedential utterances

Films are generally considered an international art form, where delving into the analysis and identification of national references is essential for understanding and enriching the cultural experience through the concepts depicted on screen. Culturally loaded utterances are among the key elements through which this perception is observed.

CLUs preserve a people's cultural and historical memory and become symbolic markers that facilitate navigation within the multidimensional semantic field of culture. Thanks to the viewer's accumulated knowledge or experience, cultural expressions acquire a cognitive function through which they rapidly convey a meaning shared by the entire culture. As a result, communication between the viewer and the filmmaker becomes more effective, and understanding becomes deeper.

National and cultural CLUs are built on cultural memory that is especially close to one national or media community. In the corpus, the strongest group is connected with the United States, because many examples come from American sitcoms and American popular culture. The viewer can understand the grammar of such lines without recognizing the CLU, yet the humorous or evaluative force becomes weaker. The phrase remains linguistically clear, but culturally incomplete. This difference between understanding words and reading the sign is the main reason why national CLUs are productive in screen discourse.

Sitcoms turned out to be the genre richest in national and cultural significance in our corpus. Their distinctive feature lies in the fact that events typically unfold in a relatively stable, everyday setting and revolve around a limited cast of characters who appear from episode to episode. This structural consistency creates an immersive effect, as the viewer gradually becomes accustomed to the characters' speech patterns, behavioral patterns, social roles, and the cultural realities surrounding them. As a result, the sitcom forms a kind of micro-biome, where cultural codes are not only represented but also regularly reproduced and varied.

A clear example appears in *How I Met Your Mother* (TV Series 2005-2014) when Barney explains Marshall's unusual street behaviour through an indirect Sesame Street reference: "*There is only one street where it's normal. Here's the hint: a giant yellow bird lives on it*" (*Series 05 Episode 23 – The Wedding Bride*, 2010). The phrase never names Sesame Street or Big Bird directly. Instead, it gives the viewer a semiotic puzzle. The phrase "*giant yellow bird*" is the key. It is iconic because the words create a mental image resembling Big Bird: size, colour and non-human form are enough for recognition. At the same time, the phrase is indexical because it points to a definite source in

American children's television. Once the viewer recognizes the reference, the whole utterance becomes symbolic as Sesame Street in their understandings stands for childhood safety, educational kindness, simplified morality and a world where helping strangers in the street looks normal rather than suspicious (Muppet Wiki, n.d.).

The cultural knowledge of this CLU is not limited to the identification of Big Bird. It also marks the difference between two social spaces where the CLU functions as a gentle mockery. In the scene Marshall's behaviour is generous, open and almost childlike, which leads to Barney's comment about such behaviour. This shift into the Sesame Street code and therefore suggests that such kindness belongs to a protected pedagogical world, not to the ordinary adult city. The line works because the American viewer carries a stored image of Sesame Street as a space where neighbours sing, children learn, adults explain, and social danger is softened (Muppet Wiki, n.d.). The iconic sign *giant yellow bird* opens that frame while the index leads to the common knowledge. The symbol finally marks Marshall as someone whose moral style does not fit the urban adult setting.

This example also shows how CLUs use compositional ellipsis. Big Bird is not shown, the title of the programme is not spoken and the scene does not stop to explain the reference. The viewers must restore the missing cultural object themselves. This creates a small pleasure of recognition, when the audience becomes a participant in decoding. But in that sense, the CLU divides viewers into at least two groups. One group hears a funny description of a large bird and another group immediately sees the American children's television reference. Thus, we can observe that the same sentence therefore has different depth depending on cultural knowledge.

The Big Bang Theory (TV Series 2007-2019) uses a related Sesame Street code in "*Jim Henson for, quote, "putting a terrifying, giant yellow bird on television and in my nightmares"*" (*Series 12 Episode 04 – The Tam Turbulence*, 2018) when Jim Henson and a "*terrifying, giant yellow bird"* are mentioned in a comic context. Here the CLU is not simply repeated, but it is semantically inverted. Big Bird is expected to index comfort, children's education and harmless television, instead the recipient who gets the adjective *terrifying* pulls the sign in the opposite direction. Sheldon's parallel accusation of Jim Henson constitutes an ironic aberration by semantic inversion, transforming a symbol of comforting educational television into a symbol of childhood anxiety. The humour comes from the clash between the established symbol and the new evaluation. And the viewer's task is to combine these two concepts together to determine the final meaning. The CLU therefore becomes a diagnostic sign of the speaker's personality, because the same national icon is filtered through an unusual emotional reaction.

A significant point of the national CLU is taken up by the material culture of American consumer society: various types of advertising and television

programs. These statements contain signs that locate the speaker that distinguishes them from narrative-derived CLUs. The viewer can understand the grammar of such lines without recognizing the CLU, yet the humorous or evaluative force becomes weaker and at the same time the phrase remains linguistically clear, but culturally incomplete. This difference between understanding words and reading the sign is the main reason why national CLUs are productive in screen discourse.

American public television culture gives another kind of national CLU in the formula "*Do you know where your children are?*" (Wikipedia contributors, n.d.). This phrase is historically connected with television announcements that addressed parents at night. Its literal meaning is a question about location, but the cultural load is much heavier. The lexemes *children* and *where* build a domestic and civic scenario of 'responsible parents', 'a dangerous outside world', 'late-night broadcasting' and television as an institution that reminds adults of their duties. When such a formula is echoed or modified in sitcom *The Office* ("*Do you know where your kids are?*" (*Series 05 Episode 23 – Broke*, 2011)), it brings a serious social ritual into a lighter scene. The indexical link points to an American media habit, while the symbolic value marks parental responsibility and social control.

A phrase from a commercial slogan may be born as an advertisement and later behave like common speech. The Budweiser (1999–2001) "*Whassup*?" (Calix & Calix, 2025) reference is used in *How I Met Your Mother* (TV Series 2005-2014) when Lily recalls "*the time when everyone was going: Whassup?*" (*Series 06 Episode 13 – Bad News*, 2011) in order to estimate how long ago she took karate classes. After this phrase was launched, it became a common greeting in American popular culture, quickly making its way from advertising into everyday speech. At the scene the utterance is literally only a relaxed greeting, but its real value lies in sound, repetition and period marking. The stretched vowel, the exaggerated casual pronunciation and the group rhythm are all iconic traces of the original commercial performance. However here it migrates to a symbol and marks an entire media moment when a beer commercial became an everyday greeting.

The "*Whassup*?" (Calix & Calix, 2025) CLU is important because its cultural load is mostly audial, which shows crossmodal usage of precedent utterance, because if the line is read silently, it loses part of its meaning. The viewer is expected to hear the voice pattern behind the word. This means that a CLU may be stored not only as a lexical unit but also as a sound memory. Similar advertising-based examples, including imitations of brand calls like "*Paaam-o-laaaaaa…*" (*Series 05 Episode 05 – Crime Aid*, 2008) from *The Office*, depending on phonetic recognizability. The sign is carried by intonation, stretched pronunciation and rhythm. The new utterance resembles the remembered sound of the advertisement when the iconic layer is not visual but acoustic.

Toy and consumer culture also produce national CLUs. In *Friends* (TV Series 1994-2004), Rachel explains her sudden escape from the wedding by describing Barry through the image of Mr. Potato Head: *"And then I got really freaked out, and that's when it hit me: how much Barry looks like Mr. Potato Head. Y'know, I mean, he always looked familiar, but... "* (*Series 01 Episode 01 – The one where Monica gets a roommate*, 1994). The literal comparison is absurd, but the cultural code is clear for viewers who know the toy. Mr. Potato Head is the Hasbro toy produced since 1952, which has a detachable face, a comic body, a childish object and a figure connected with playful rearrangement of identity (Wikipedia contributors, n.d.) . When Rachel applies this image to the groom, she reduces the seriousness of the wedding ritual. Barry is no longer a romantic partner in her speech, he becomes a plastic, comic, almost replaceable object. An audience member who does not know the toy misses this dimension entirely as they receive only the surface information that Barry has a face that reminds Rachel of something else. Still the CLU helps Rachel explain a personal crisis through a familiar American consumer sign.

The comparison has an iconic component because it invites the viewer to imagine a visual resemblance. It is also represented as an index that points to a specific object of American toy culture. But in the end it becomes symbolic because Mr. Potato Head has a culturally stabilized meaning as comic artificiality, childishness and a body made of changeable parts (Wikipedia contributors, n.d.). In the scene, the CLU supports Rachel's emotional break from the expected life script. The wedding dress, the altar and the groom belong to an adult social ritual, while the toy reference moves the groom into a childish and ridiculous register. A similar mechanism works when a name is attached to Disney culture. A personal name such as *Minnie* mentioned in *Friends* (TV Series 1994-2004) may be ordinary until another character interprets it as *Minnie Mouse* ("*Still, you- you say Minnie, you hear Mouse*" (*Series 01 Episode 02 – The One With The Sonogram At The End,* 1994, p.24). The transformation happens instantly because the name has been captured by a global brand but still keeps a strong American media origin. The lexeme *Mouse* indexes Disney, animation, childhood and consumer entertainment that leads it to stop being only a name and becomes a symbolic door into a cultural universe. Such examples show how proper names can become CLUs even when no complete quotation is used.

Another crossmodal national CLU appears in *How I Met Your Mother* (TV Series 2005-2014) when Marshall uses a Venn diagram: "*This circle represents 'People Who Are Breaking My Heart,' and this circle 'People Who Are Shaking My Confidence Daily.' And where they overlap, Cecilia*" (*Series 04 Episode 22 – Right Place, Right Time*, 2009). The humour depends on the song *"Cecilia" by Simon & Garfunkel* (1970) is activated through a compositional ellipsis, with the song's lyrics serving as captions to the diagram which is represented as an index. The diagram itself is iconic because it visually models

the overlap of two semantic fields and the name *Cecilia* becomes symbolic singsign because it carries the whole song into the scene. Without knowing the song, the viewer sees a funny chart, but with knowledge of the CLU, the viewer understands the full intermodal joke. The effect of recognizing a precedent statement is created by the connected logic between the visual diagram and the verbal representation of the song. It is this act of connection that creates the recognition effect. Thus, through this example, we see that CLU in screen discourse can simultaneously be in the oral text, the written text on the screen, the visual presentation, the rhythm and memory of music, therefore the cultural meaning appears not in any separate channel, but in the interaction at once.

Film quotations that belong to American legal, like military or political discourse also work as national CLUs. In *How I Met Your Mother* (TV Series 2005-2014), Lily adapts the famous courtroom confrontation from A Few Good Men (1992) when she explains to Ted that she interfered with his relationships: "*You don't want the truth, because deep down, you want me to watch over you*" (*Series 04 Episode 17 – The Front Porch*, 2009). The source phrase "*You can't handle the truth*" indexes A Few Good Men, but Lily's version changes the field of application. The original speech justifies military violence and the uncomfortable work of protection. The sitcom version transfers the same logic to friendship and romantic interference.

The national-cultural load here is tied to American courtroom drama, military authority and the myth of the person who does morally dirty work for the safety of others. The CLU creates a hierarchy between characters. Lily casts herself as the protector who knows more and acts behind the scenes. Ted becomes the protected civilian who cannot accept the truth. The mismatch between the heavy source and the ordinary sitcom conflict creates comedy, but the underlying lexeme remains visible. The line makes Lily's behaviour sound excessive, self-righteous and strangely heroic at the same time.

Political and historical phrases form a more delicate layer of national-cultural CLUs. For instance, "*Free at last*" (*Series 06 Episode 01 – Gossip*, 2009) carries the memory of the American civil rights movement. In casual or comic contexts in Office it may be used to mark relief, but its cultural weight is not erased. The line indexes a history of collective struggle, public speech and emancipation. When the expression is pulled into everyday screen dialogue, the viewer feels the disproportion between the solemn source and the new situation. This disproportion may produce humour, but it can also expose a character's superficial handling of national memory.

References to Henry VIII, Joan of Arc and Columbus are different because they do not belong only to American culture, yet in English-language screen discourse they function as part of a shared educational archive. When *Gilmore Girls* (TV Series 2000-2007) uses a formulation such as "*very Henry VIII*" (*Series 01 Episode 05 – Cinnamon's Wake*, 2000), the name becomes a symbol of appetite, excess and theatrical power. Or another example when a

character says that "*the world was flat until someone took a boat trip*" (*Series 01 Episode 03 – Kill Me Now*, 2000), the utterance indexes the simplified school version of Columbus and the age of discoveries. The literal historical accuracy is less important than the cultural script: risk, discovery, movement beyond accepted limits and a shift in worldview. National CLUs also operate as social markers inside the fictional world. The character who recognizes the sign belongs to a certain media generation, educational background or consumer environment. The character who does not recognize it remains outside that circle. This does not necessarily block the plot, but it changes the degree of participation.

The Ghostbusters reference gives one more form of national-cultural recognition. In the *HIMYM* (TV Series 2005–2014), Marshall's encounter with Ghostbusters signs is built gradually: the vehicle, the firehouse-like building, the familiar visual emblem and finally the line "*Who ya gonna call?*" (TV Tropes, n.d.) connected with Ernie Hudson's cameo (*Ghostbusters*, 1984; *How I Met Your Mother*, TV Series 2005-2014). The phrase is a verbal symbol, but it is prepared by icons before it is spoken. The car resembles the well-known Ecto-1 image; the building resembles the Ghostbusters headquarters; the no-ghost sign indexes the franchise even before the catchphrase appears. When the catchphrase finally arrives, the viewer has already been guided through a chain of visual clues. This example is important because the CLU is not concentrated in one utterance. It is staged as a semiotic route. The viewer first sees possible icons, then reads them as indexes of a particular film world and only then receives the verbal symbol. The line "*Who ya gonna call?*" (TV Tropes, n.d.) does not need to be explained because the previous signs have prepared the recognition. Such a sequence shows how screen discourse can distribute the cultural load across several moments of the scene. The final words are short, but the scene has already built the necessary cultural environment around them.

Thus, throughout our analysis we determined that the national meaning in such examples is not always patriotic or official. It is often domestic, televisual and generational. American culture appears through places where characters meet, objects they remember, commercials they imitate and children's programmes they share. This is why CLUs are valuable for linguocultural analysis: they register the unofficial cultural archive, the things people quote not because they are monuments, but because they have lived with them through repeated media exposure.

3.2 Borrowed ethno-specific meanings

The utterances that enter English-language screen discourse from other ethnic traditions, language, classical antiquity, religious practice, military history or a fictional culture, in our analysis, are established as borrowed ethno-specific CLUs. Such utterances are considered not merely as simple coping mechanisms, but as a sign that migrates into a new context. The new text usually does not

reproduce the whole source culture when this sign finds the new interpretation in a new environment. Instead it takes one recognizable lexeme and makes it influence the scene.

A small but telling example is the reference to Jordan almonds in *Gilmore Girls* (TV Series 2000-2007): "*200,000 tons of Jordan almonds have been delivered*" (*Series 01 Episode 03 – Kill Me Now*, 2000). In many Mediterranean and especially Italian ceremonial practices, Jordan almonds are far more than simple confectionery items, they function as symbolic cultural objects that carry ideas of ritual abundance, sweetness, bitterness, fertility, hospitality and ceremonial order (Sconza Chocolate, 2021). However, the phrase does not explain the tradition, it uses the object as a sign of Mediterranean wedding pressure. Here the character used it to create the comic effect by exaggeration and using compositional ellipsis to force the recipient to test their background knowledge that will lead them to the happening event – wedding .

The CLU is more symbolic because the object has a conventional ritual meaning: it does not merely denote candy but also marks the cultural expectation of what a proper wedding should include. In the end this lexeme turns a borrowed ritual object into a sign of social overload.

Food and ceremonial objects are especially useful for borrowed CLUs because they connect language with material culture. They show that ethnicity is not only a matter of abstract identity. It is also carried by taste, gifts, sweets, tables, rituals and quantities. In screen discourse such objects can be used quickly because the viewer does not need full ethnographic knowledge to feel that the object belongs to a ceremonial system. Even partial recognition is enough to create the sense of cultural specificity.

Another kind of borrowed ethno-specific meaning comes from the usage of different languages. In *Everything Everywhere All at Once* (2022) the form of address "*Gong Gong*" (Kwan & Scheinert, 2022) is kept inside English-language dialogue. It could be replaced by "*grandfather*", but such a translation would remove part of the sign. "*Gong Gong*" (Kwan & Scheinert, 2022) indexes a Chinese family structure, a position of age and authority, and a diasporic home where English and Chinese coexist. The word is symbolic because its meaning depends on a learned linguistic convention, but in the film it also functions indexically because it points to a concrete role in the family hierarchy.

The cultural force of "*Gong Gong*" (Kwan & Scheinert, 2022) is an example of how ethno-borrowed utterances could resist the complete deformation to fit the new surroundings. A viewer who does not know the language can infer the basic relation from the context, but the sound of the term still marks the family as culturally specific. The CLU preserves intimacy and distance at the same time: intimate because it belongs to family speech and distant for outsiders because it keeps a piece of language that cannot be fully absorbed into neutral English. Despite the fact that the family is of Chinese

origin and moved to America, they continue to maintain traditions that highlight their cultural heritage. The result is a compact sign of cultural identity when the family speaks in an English-language film, but not only in English.

A similar but more popularized pattern appears in The Fast and the Furious franchise, where expressions such as "*mi familia*" and repeated family formulas create a hybrid code of loyalty (Cronin, 2025). The Spanish lexical material carries ethnic colouring, but in the franchise it becomes inseparable from the action-film myth of chosen family. In a scene from *Furious 7* (2015) *"I don't have friends. I got family"* (Lewis, 2020) is not ethnically marked by vocabulary, yet the lexeme *family* is surrounded by a semiotic field of food, toasts, respect, masculine loyalty and transnational belonging. The borrowed signs help the franchise make family sound like a ritual rather than a biological fact.

In this group, the CLU does not simply name a relation. It performs belonging. The words create a boundary between the group and the outside world. If the national CLUs in the previous section often test whether viewers belong to an American media community, the family CLUs in The Fast and the Furious test whether a character belongs to the group's moral code. The key lexeme migrates to a new context as 'loyalty', 'risk', 'protection', 'sacrifice' and 'ritual repetition'. The borrowed lexical material strengthens these lexemes by making the family value feel warmer, older and more communal.

Classical antiquity supplies another large source of borrowed ethno-specific meanings. *The Hunger Games* (franchise) uses names that are not neutral: *Seneca, Caesar, Cinna, Plutarch, Castor, Pollux, Coriolanus, Panem etc* (The Hunger Games franchise). These names act as CLUs because they open Greek, Roman and Latin references inside a dystopian English-language narrative. The viewer may follow the plot without recognizing the classical references, but recognition adds an extra interpretive layer. The names become semiotic hints about power, spectacle, empire, fate and violence.

They are most clearly revealed when the fate of the characters identically repeats a historical or mythological plot. *Seneca Crane* is one of the most interesting examples. He was named after the Roman philosopher Seneca the Younger, who was an advisor to the emperor, but later fell out of favor and was forced to commit suicide (Beckford, 2017). The cognitive connection works brilliantly in the finale of the first film, where Snow has Peacekeepers escort Crane to a room containing only a bowl of nightlock berries and lock him inside. It is likely that he committed suicide by eating some of the nightlock (The Hunger Games Wiki, n.d.). The CLU works as a sign that works as a prediction. At first it may sound like an elegant classical name, but later it becomes an index of forced death under a cruel regime. As a symbol, it helps connect the Capitol with the Roman imperial imagination, where intellectual refinement and political brutality can exist together.

The same goes for the Greek names *Castor and Pollux* – brothers, where Castor was mortal and Pollux was immortal. To the culturally competent viewer, these names are a direct spoiler for the events of *The Hunger Games: Mockingjay – Part 1* (2014): the cameraman Castor dies, while his brother Pollux survives (The Hunger Games Wiki, n.d.). This does not mean that the film mechanically repeats the myth, rather the names create a mythic shadow over the characters. The CLU functions as an interpretive hint, not as a direct explanation.

In addition to the revealed plot, they provide a characterization of the character, his role in the film or the definition of a psychological profile. The most striking example is *Coriolanus Snow*. Initially, the recipient fixes the iconic visual of the name in combination with the cold Snow, which forms the primary image of power, distance and control. After that, the indexical level is activated, which directs to the tragedy of the same name by Shakespeare (based on the biography of a Roman commander *Gnaeus Marcius Coriolanus* who was known for his contempt for the common people (The Hunger Games Wiki, n.d.). And finally, the symbolic level provides a full interpretation through the activation of background knowledge: the name suggests the idea of tyranny, while the image of snow consolidates associations with cold, emotional sterility and death. At this stage, the formation of a semiotic image of the hero takes place, his complex cultural and psychological profile, which is compressed into one name, which functions as a legisign, that functions as a rule, which automatically sets the framework for interpretation.

And first of all, *Panem* becomes an image of the New Rome. This is not a minor allusion. The very name Panem comes from the Latin expression Panem et circenses ("*bread and circuses*" (Wikipedia contributors, n.d.)), which was a formula for maintaining power over the crowd by Roman emperors. Using the names of the era of the First Triumvirate (Crassus), emperors (Nero, Trajan) and gods (Juno, Persephone), the author turns the entire discourse of the Capitol into one continuous macro-CLU. The viewer understands: just as ancient Rome fell due to its own cruelty and excessive luxury, so the Capitol will inevitably fall.

Latin phrases also appear in a more direct form in Dead Poets Society through "*Carpe diem*" (Schulman, 1989). Here, the use of this language evokes the *common knowledge* of classical education, ancient wisdom, dark academia aesthetic and a certain authority to show the American school environment in the film as an ancient cultural code. Additionally the main lexeme of the phrase highlighted youth, risk, self-expression, rebellion against institutional routine and the desire to give life a personal meaning. It is also important to note that the expression is not translated as *seize the day*, but continues to be used in its original configuration. This preservation of the Latin form is necessary in order to preserve the symbol of cultural prestige and authority. As the result, migrating between plots and genres, "*Carpe diem*" (Schulman, 1989) leaves its permanent

meaning unchanged, which shows that borrowed ethnospecific CLUs are able to remain stable in their original form, despite the change of environment.

Nevertheless, a change in context often influences the further use of an expression, which may eventually lose its original meaning entirely. The phrase "*Good Morning, Vietnam!*" (Script-O-Rama, 1987) was originally associated with the experiences of American soldiers in Vietnam and the popularity of radio host Adrian Cronauer, whose story served as the basis for the film *Good Morning, Vietnam* (1987). For war veterans, this phrase remains a recognizable marker of a specific generational and historical experience. Though, in contemporary popular culture, its meaning has shifted significantly from a historical event to a cinematic source. Thus, when characters in the TV series *The Office* (S2:E17) and *Gilmore Girls* (S4:E12; S5:E19) use this phrase to get a conversation partner's attention or wake someone up, they are primarily appealing to the collective memory of the cult film and Robin Williams's charismatic performance, rather than to the actual events of the Vietnam War. Since the lexeme *Vietnam* no longer demands historical reflection in the new scene. Such a genre aberration demonstrates how cinematic discourse forms its own cultural archive, in which CLUs gradually detach from their original historical context and begin to function as independent signs of collective memory.

The borrowed group can also include references to cultural identity when a proper name becomes an ethnic or stylistic marker. For instance, the mention of Chevalier in *Gilmore Girls* ("*Back of Chevalier*" (*Series 01 Episode 04 – The Deer Hunters*, 2000)) for Michel's description connected with Maurice Chevalier (Wikipedia contributors, 2026b). In screen dialogue such a name index Frenchness, dramatic, old-fashioned charm, performance, elegance and a particular type of male persona. As a Michel is said to resemble Chevalier, the viewer is invited to read appearance and behaviour through a cultural stereotype. Even though the CLU works through a proper name, its semantic load includes accent, age, behaviour, theatricality and national style of a person.

We should mention that this kind of name-based CLU differs from the early mentioned classical names in The Hunger Games. Seneca or Panem are represented to show the dystopian world of political depth, while Chevalier gives a character social colour. Yet the mechanism remains similar: one name opens a cultural file. Such simplification is exactly what makes the borrowed CLU usable in fast dialogue.

Different positions of names represented through Joan of Arc reference in *Gilmore Girls* (TV Series 2000-2007) through line "*fresh is my first lifetime as Joan of Arc*"(*Series 01 Episode 04 – The Deer Hunters*, 2000). This use of the expression is similar to the aforementioned "*Whassup*?"(Calix & Calix, 2025), where the phrase refers not to the event itself, but to its time frame. Here, Lorelai says that the coffee is so old and not fresh that it's as if it were prepared during the time of Joan of Arc. In this context her name is functioning as a

signifier that in this case is treated as a qualisign through lexemes expressed as ‘extremely long ago’, ‘the Middle Ages’, ‘something belonging to another era’.

This demonstrates that a proper name, as a CLU, can activate only the relevant part of its cultural reference, while leaving the rest of the signs unnoticed. Therefore, it is precisely this partial activation that serves as evidence that the CLU has archived symbolic status. Now the name no longer requires a complete cultural context to function, because it operates through a single generalized semantic feature that the community has agreed to associate with it.

The most important observation here is that borrowed ethno-specific CLUs make the boundary between cultures visible. They show English-language cinema as a space that constantly imports names, rituals, words, voices and mythic patterns. These signs do not remain untouched. They are absorbed into genres. Comedy makes them lighter; dystopia makes them political; action cinema makes them emotional; family drama makes them intimate. The CLU is the point where the source culture and the recipient screen text meet.

In all these cases the CLU gives the viewer a feeling that the scene is connected with a culture beyond the immediate English-speaking environment. Sometimes this feeling is respectful and intimate, as with “*Gong Gong*” (Kwan & Scheinert, 2022) or it is playful or stereotyped, as with Chevalier like Frenchness or politically loaded, as with Vietnam or it is mythological and structural, as with Panem. The borrowed sign enters the screen text as a small foreign body and then begins to work according to the rules of the receiving genre.

3.3 Universal meanings as a tool of globalisation

CLU always starts with origins, but those origins have been carried across borders by cinema, television, translation, education, franchises, advertising, memes and everyday speech. It is then that they gain universal significance, which can be understood by any recipient, even those who may not belong to the original community. The phrase becomes useful because it is memorable, repeatable, and structurally flexible and can be adapted to new contexts without losing its recognizability. Therefore, it is precisely the frequency of use of these examples that determines their universality and shared semiotic foundation.

The movement from local to universal can be seen in “*Houston, we have a problem*” (Apollo 13, 1995). As we already mentioned in that first stage the phrase is strongly indexical because it belongs to a unique situation in space history and to its cinematic reconstruction. But it becomes universal because the lexeme *problem* has a general semantic meaning as ‘something unpleasant’, ‘something that needs to be resolved, removed or eliminated’. The meaning is not fixed only in the original explanation, but acts as a qualisign, which transfers its quality of 'problem' to new contexts. In this way, the phrase can change for better assimilation in the context, while preserving the structure and meaning.

Such transformations are fundamental to the recognition of CLU as globally used.

How I Met Your Mother (TV Series 2005–2014) demonstrates this symbolic stability through the transformed line "*Houston, we have a moaner*" (*Series 05 Episode 19 – Zoo or False*, 2010). The substitution of *problem* by *moaner* is funny only because the phrase is already recognizable by its structure which is represented as a symbol. The viewer does not need the original spacecraft context anymore.

Another example of temple transformation shows the same pattern. In line "*My name is Inigo Montoya. You killed my father. Prepare to die*" (The Princess Bride, 1987) the three parts are semantically precise: self-identification, naming of the crime and announcement of consequence. Later the constant usage of the utterance moves it from the icon into a symbol with constant temple: "*My name is [X]. You did [Y]. Prepare to [Z].*" *HIMYM*(TV Series 2005-2014) transforms the temple into "*My name is Rodrigo DeGoya. You killed someone I love. Prepare to dance*" (How I Met Your Mother, S9E3). *The Big Bang Theory* (TV Series 2007-2019) uses "*My name is Puss in Boots. You killed my father. Prepare to die*" (The Big Bang Theory, S9E5). *Doctor Who* (TV Series 2005-2022) adapts the threat into "*prepare to die in agony for the glory of the Sontaran empire!*" (Doctor Who, S7E13). These variants show that recognition no longer depends only on Inigo Montoya as a character, it depends on the audience's knowledge of the three-part template and an idea that it presupposes.

This type of universal CLU is especially useful for comedy because it allows to control deformation. Little changes represent repetition and too much changes show that the source is lost. The successful comic version keeps the rhythm and pragmatic order during the replacement of the elements that fit the new scene.

"*Run, Forrest, run!*" (Eric Roth, 1994) illustrate another path of becoming universal (Forrest Gump, 1994). In the original film, the line is tied to Forrest, Jenny and a physical moment of escape. Yet the phrase has an iconic power that helps it travel as we mentioned previously. This iconic urgency makes the phrase easy to perform in other contexts like in *Fight Club* (1999), *The Longest Yard* (2005) and *Chappie* (2015). These examples show us that the name Forrest can function less as a person and more as a cultural signal for running away, pushing through or reacting with sudden movement. Thus, we can affirm that the phrase therefore moves from icon to symbol while preserving its iconic core where source is still recognizable, but the line can now be addressed to people who are not Forrest. The name became a stable symbolic slot which couldn't be replaced. The CLU highlights itself as a qualisign that can stay stable and remain the main lexeme constant regardless of context and could be easily adapted to many situations.

Important to note that the fictional ethno-cultures can also become sources of CLU's globalization. In *Gilmore Girls* (TV Series 2000-2007), the phrase

"*She's got her Vulcan death grip on that one*" refers to the *Star Trek* franchise (*Series 01 Episode 06 – Rory's Birthday Parties*, 2000). *Vulcans* are not a real ethnic group, yet *Star Trek* (TV Series 1966-1969) has created a stable fictional culture with its own gestures, values, physical techniques and emotional rules. When using this phrase, Lorelai does not explain what Vulcans are. She assumes that her conversation partner and audience already know this, since such expressions can become globalized even faster than real cultures, as they spread through the media without linguistic or geographical barriers. The phrase is indexical, pointing to that franchise and its fictional people,but moves to symbol as the viewers have learned the main lexeme *Vulcan* means logic, discipline, alien restraint and a specific science-fiction body code. The use of such a phrase highlights Lorelai's mother's firm position regarding family tradition, which cannot be changed under any circumstances. That is, the Vulcan death grip here functions as a qualisign conveying the quality of 'the impossibility of escaping the problem', 'iron control' and 'inevitability'.

We see that real ethno-specific culture globalizes slowly through migration, education, history, tourism, etc., while fictional media culture globalizes instantly through universally accessible broadcasting. Star Trek as a franchise has been broadcast in dozens of countries over the past 60 years, which is what led to the spread of Vulcan culture around the world. The CLUs that emerge from fictional culture are born with the potential for universal status, because they do not follow a path from the national to the universal, since their source is not tied to any real nation or geography from the outset.

Literature works in a similar way, as it too is becoming global. References to Alice in Wonderland (*Gilmore Girls*, S1:E6), Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, Peter Pan, A Christmas Carol (*How I Met Your Mother*, S4:E17) and Tolkien's (*The Office*, S4:E11) fantasy world have moved through books, films, animation, theatre, school reading and popular speech. They no longer belong only to one national literary archive, because they operate as a transnational set of images. A phrase such as "*off with their heads*", that we analyse before, activates qualisign of the Queen of Hearts: 'arbitrary authority', 'absurd punishment' and 'theatrical cruelty'. When a character says that something is smaller and less "*off with their heads*", the line does not need to retell the plot of the novel since the CLU supplies an atmosphere.

Barney's phrase "*Nice to fly to Neverland with Peter Pan? Me, again! It was nice to get out of bed to accompany Charlie to the chocolate? Oh, me, me! Something about Scrooge*!" (*Series 04 Episode 17 – The Front Porch*, 2009) is an excellent example of CLU's literary globalization. Barney is using such teasing when Marshall is wearing a nightgown. The mentions of all these characters provide an icon function, when the image of each of the characters in a nightgown appears in the recipient's mind, the lexeme of 'childishness', 'naivety', 'old-fashionedness' is immediately triggered. But such a comparison would not work if the CLU data were not known to the audience. However, the

audience does not always need to read original books directly, as thanks to numerous adaptations, films, cartoons and a general presence in popular culture, these characters have become recognizable cultural symbols. Now that they are established, these precedent images can be used in new contexts for different purposes.

Another example of how literature can become global use there is in Tolkien-related CLUs. The phrase *"My precious"*(Khoi, 2024) has moved far beyond *The Lord of the Rings* (trilogy). In the source it indexes Gollum, the Ring and the corruption of desire. In later use, it becomes a symbol of obsessive attachment to any object or person. It is also considered as crossmodal reference because of the phrase that is remembered with a specific voice, posture and body deformation from the film adaptations. Therefore the CLU is verbal, audial and visual at once. The line from an American sitcom *The Office* (TV Series 2005-2013) "*You resemble the Tolkien character*" (*Series 04 Episode 11 – Night Out*, 2008) also works through a global fantasy code. It does not need to specify every feature of a person, because the name *Tolkien* itself functions as a symbol of his universe: elves, hobbits, wizards, quests, invented languages, moral struggle and mythic geography. When a character is compared to a Tolkien figure, the viewer interprets appearance or behaviour through the fantasy archive in their background knowledge. Such CLUs demonstrate that globalisation often works not through full texts but through main lexeme/s that contain symbols inside.

Based on this, we would like to emphasize that any culture with a well-developed internal system of values, gestures, rules, and so on can serve as a source, provided it has achieved widespread recognition within the community. The only important question is whether the code is recognizable. In media culture, fictional traditions can behave like real cultural references because they are repeated, memorized and shared.

Biblical and mythological signs in The Mummy form another universal category of CLU (The Mummy, 1999). The film uses expressions and motifs such as "*The Book of the Dead", "The Book of the Living", "Death is only the beginning*" (Sommers et al., 1999), curses, plagues and resurrection. These signs do not require specialist knowledge from the viewer. They rely on widely circulated images of forbidden books, ancient punishment, sacred danger and the return of the dead. The phrase "*Death is only the beginning*" (Sommers et al., 1999) is especially compact. Literally it contradicts the ordinary idea of death as an end and connotatively it opens the lexemes of 'afterlife', 'curse', 'rebirth' and 'narrative continuation'.

The Mummy shows that universal CLUs are often hybrid. The film combines Egyptian settings, biblical-sounding danger, adventure cinema and Hollywood humour. A curse may be ancient Egyptian in decoration, biblical in emotional force and cinematic in rhythm. The CLU works because global media, history, education, religion have already taught viewers to connect old books,

desert tombs, plagues and resurrection with danger. The signs are culturally specific in origin, but their screen use is universalized through genre.

Celebrity names also could become CLUs when they operate as symbolic resources. For example a reference to Tom Cruise in *Sex and the City* (1998) ("*They got charisma. Like Tom Cruise, they're the Tom Cruise of families* " (*Series 02 Episode 15 – Shortcomings*, 1999)) and *Hustlers* (2019) ("*He looks like Tom Cruise. Right?*" (Scafaria, 2019)) may activate action cinema, charisma, stunts, Hollywood masculinity and star confidence or a reference to The Beatles (*The Wedding of River Song* (2011) "*I could invent a new colour, save the Dodo, join the Beatles…*" (Rebellato, 2024)) activates music history, British cultural influence, the 1960s, fandom and recognizable sound. The viewer does not need a full biography here, because the proper name carries a bundle of lexemes.

However, celebrity CLUs are less stable than mythological or literary ones because public images change. This instability is not a weakness, it gives screen discourse flexibility. The universal status of it comes from global circulation, while the exact meaning is adjusted by the scene.

The global use of CLUs depends on three semiotic processes. The first is detachment: the phrase separates from its original character, scene or event. The second is abstraction: the phrase keeps only a smaller set of lexemes. The third is reapplication: the phrase is inserted into a new scene and made useful for another purpose. These processes can be seen in every utterance where the source is not erased, but it becomes only one layer among others.

Thus, universal CLUs show the power of English-language screen culture to export ready-made formulas for interpreting life. At the same time, the global spread of CLUs may produce semantic bleaching. The more a phrase circulates, the less necessary the original source becomes. A viewer may know the template but not the film. The phrase then functions almost like an idiom. This is not a failure of the CLU but a later stage of its life. It means that the index has weakened and the symbol has strengthened. The source remains recoverable, but everyday use no longer depends on it.

Conclusion to Chapter 3

The analysis of Chapter 3 shows that English-language CLUs in cinema and television are best understood through concrete semiotic work rather than through general theoretical description. Each analysed unit functions because a short verbal form activates a larger cultural frame. The viewer does not simply decode vocabulary, but reconstructs a source, identifies the relevant signs, compares the original meaning with the new context and decides what cultural value has been transferred.

The national-cultural group demonstrates how screen dialogue uses American media memory, advertising, children's television, toys, public formulas, songs and historical phrases. This analysis shows that lexemes can operate iconically, indexically and symbolically at the same time and that sound and intonation may carry cultural memory as strongly as words. We also show that a verbal phrase may describe a visual sign and activate a whole identity. These cases confirm that national belonging can be marked by small signs that seem casual in dialogue. The borrowed ethno-specific group shows that English-language screen discourse constantly imports cultural signs from other systems. The universal group shows how global media circulation turns source-bound utterances into flexible symbolic templates. We represented how literary, biblical, celebrity and action-film CLUs become global because of their complex stories into short, repeatable signals.

Finally, the Peircean analysis confirms that CLUs rarely belong to only one sign type. The same phrase may include an iconic image, an indexical link to a source and a symbolic convention accepted by a speech community. This movement explains why CLUs can keep recognizable traces of their origin while functioning freely in new contexts.

General conclusions

In this study we have determined that the precedent utterance occupies a special place in the system of cultural communication through media. Unlike ordinary quotations, they not only refer to the source text but also preserve cultural knowledge and associations that can be activated in new contexts. That is why it is reasonable to use the newly introduced concept of Culturally Loaded Utterance (CLU) for their analysis, which takes into account both intertextual connections and the shared cultural knowledge of these units.

The study confirmed that CLUs are dynamic units. Over time, they may lose their direct connection to a specific source and become understandable to a wide range of members of the culture. Key lexemes of the utterance play an important role in this process, as their meanings allow the utterance to be used in new situations and contexts. It is precisely because of this that individual utterances gradually transform into widely known cultural formulas.

A typological analysis has shown that different types of CLUs have different modes of functioning and transformation. It has also been established that the nature of changes in an utterance depends to a large degree on its semiotic features. This allows for a better understanding of the patterns of their use and adaptation in new contexts.

An analysis of the corpus identified six main types of semantic changes. The most common of these is lexical substitution, that is, the replacement of individual words or components of an utterance. Such changes do not undermine the original meaning of the CLU, but on the contrary, they demonstrate its recognizability and ability to adapt to new communicative situations.

The study also showed that the cultural status of CLUs can change. Expressions that were originally associated with a specific culture, nation or media work may, over time, become understandable to an international audience. Popular films, TV series and media franchises play a special role in this process, contributing to the spread of culturally significant expressions in the global sphere. Through our analysis, we also found that how CLUs are used depends on their type. Some expressions require a combination of verbal, visual and auditory elements for full understanding, while others can function effectively in verbal form alone.

A linguopragmatic analysis allowed us to identify three main functions of CLUs in the target texts: creating a comic effect, characterizing characters and fostering a sense of community among the participants in the communication. Thus, CLUs perform not only an informational function but also an important social and cultural one.

Overall, the study's findings confirmed the effectiveness of combining semiotic, semantic, structural, linguopragmatic and cultural analysis for the study of CLUs. The comprehensive application of these methods provided a complete picture of the structure, meaning and functioning of CLU in English-language film discourse. Therefore, the results obtained can be used in

further studies of precedent phenomena, intercultural communication, media discourse and other types of culturally significant linguistic units, in particular advertising slogans, political slogans and memes.

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