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**Humor in the American T.V Show “Friends
Season 6 Episode 9, The One Where Ross Got
High”: A Linguistic Analysis**

A B S T R A C T

Language analysis is one of the most important vocabulary of the language. This research is an analysis of a section of one of the famous American series. This series is known as "Friends" season 6 episode 9. This series is a comedy series. It has humor in their content. The researcher dealt with the analysis of the linguistic part of this series and gave a brief description of the linguistic aspects that can be analyzed based on what was stated in the previous studies and then the researcher dealt with the cognitive analysis of this series and the analysis of linguistic phonetics and phonology and analysis pragmatically and educationally. The researcher concluded by summarizing the importance of analysis and the most important aspects that analyzed in this series.

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**الدعابة في العرض التلفزيوني للمسلسل الأمريكي "الاصدقاء" الجزء السادس الحلقة
التاسعة – تحليل لغوي**

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الخلاصة

التحليل اللغوي هو من اهم مفردات اللغة . وقد جاء هذا البحث تحليلاً لمقطع من احدى المسلسلات
الامريكية المشهورة. تعرف هذه المسلسل بعنوان "الاصدقاء" الجزء السادس الحلقة التاسعة. تعتبر هذه

المسلسل من مسلسلات الدعابة ذات الطابع الكوميدي في محتواها. لقد تناول الباحث دراسة التحليل اللغوي لمقطع من هذه المسلسل واعطى نبذة مختصرة عن الجوانب اللغوية التي من الممكن تحليلها بناءً على ما جاء في الدراسات السابقة ومن ثم تناول الباحث التحليل المعرفي لهذه المسلسل معرجاً على تحليل الاصوات اللغوية والتحليل التداولي والتربوي. اختتم الباحث بخلاصة تبين اهمية التحليل واهم ما جاء في البحث من تحليل للنص.

1. INTRODUCTION

Humor has a role to play for the sake of being a factor that closes a gap in communication between interlocutors by establishing a different channel of communication. It brings down the level of resistance between interlocutors and creates a relation that constructs an environment of trust in which that leads to a further discussion (Bell, 2007: 32). Humor can likewise be a device that helps in extracting vast and valuable information which seems to be hard to be gathered with a different device. So, the researcher going to analyze an American T.V show “Friends” for the purpose of exploring the features of the American English from different aspects: the pragmatic aspect and how Americans violate Grice’s Corporate Principle as humor strategies in their daily conversation to create humor; the social aspect and the different strategies used by both genders; the phonetic and phonological aspects in which sounds are connected together.

2. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

This video was downloaded from the website (<http://www.cucirca.eu/2011/01/04/friends-season-6-episode-9-the-one-where-ross-got-high/>). The video is titled “The one where Ross got high”. The reason that drove me to choose this particular video was that “Friends TV show episodes”, besides being fun to be watched, they are packed with expressions, sentences, phrases and words that are interesting to be analyzed. For Thanksgiving, Janine invited Joey and Ross to join her and her dancer friends the dinner in this year, but they had

to go to Monica's apartment and have dinner with their friends as usual in every year. Mr and Mrs Geller came over as well, and Chandler was told that they did not like him because they thought that he was the one who took drugs. It was Ross who lied to them and made them believe that Chandler was guilty. However, Monica revealed the truth. Rachel made an English Trifle for sweet; however, she got the formula stirred up with a Shepard's Pie. Phoebe dreamt about Mr Geller and began to see him differently until a new dream finished it for her. Eight members (Phoebe, Rachel, Monica, Joey, Ross, Janine, Mr Geller and Mrs Geller) were acting in this video for different purposes.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

In recent studies, there has been an argument over the relationships between communication and humor by various researchers (Bell, 2007: 33; Guals & Weinberger, 2006: 42; Holmes & Marra, 2002: 22-27). Those who did studies in this field have declared that "humor is a device that could be utilized to reinforce informal communication and connections among interlocutors".

3.1 Syntax

In the field of linguistics, the syntax is the review of the rules and principles for constructing expressions and sentences in general languages. The word syntax is also utilised to indicate directly the principles and rules that control the structure of the sentence of any particular language, such as in "Modern Irish syntax." Modern exploration in syntax endeavours to describe languages about such rules. Many experts in this domain attempt to find universal rules that can be applied to all natural languages (Varalakshmi, 2012: 12).

3.2 Semantics

Semantics is the analysis of the meaning of any word or a phrase. It emphasises the relation among signifiers, like words, phrases, symbols and signs. Linguistic semantics is the analysis of meaning that humans use to express themselves via language. Other kinds of semantics involve the semantics of formal logics, programming languages, and semiotics (Varalakshmi, 2012: 15).

3.3 Pragmatic theory: the Cooperative principle

Grice (1975) proposed that communication is a practice that needs interlocutors to be accommodating with one another, and he also standardised the cooperative rule that directs the speakers to contribute aptly to the conversation. In the domain of social science in general and in specific linguistics, the rule of cooperation describes how individuals communicate with each other. As said by Paul Grice, who pioneered it, it states, “participate when it is required, at the phase at which it happens, by an accepted direction or purpose of the conversation exchange in which you are involved.” The principle is meant to be a description of how individuals usually act in conversation. Both the speakers and the listeners must speak reciprocally and jointly accept each other to be specifically understood. Certain examples will be considered in detail regarding the breach of Grice’s Cooperative Principle in conversations.

3.4 Relevance theory

Relevance theory (Sperber & Wilson, 1995:20) is a proposition that seeks to describe the communication technique: i.e. implicit suppositions. It claimed that the mind of a human would impulsively react to a fixed message by regarding information that it perceives as being significant to the message. In a comic story, the funny part may arise from the reality that what the listener perceives as the most relevant deduction of the speaker’s words is different from the intended meaning of the speaker. Examples will be provided in the review

section of this relevance theory.

3.5 Semantic script theory

Raskin (1985:19) suggested that the difference between non-verbal and verbal humour is that non-verbal humour means the state in which humour arises without a text. Sometimes humour arises from the person's exaggerative facial expressions or body movements (Attardo, 1994: 9).

4. COGNITIVE ANALYSIS

4.1 SEMANTICS

There are two levels of grammar analysis involved here. The first one is about the level of verb tenses. Five groups of verbs are established in this analysis (simple present, simple past, perfect forms and progressive forms of verbs and few futures and imperative forms as one group counted). The second level has described sentences. Most of the sentences in this video are short. However, there are also some complex sentences as well. For example, when Monica said to Chandler

Monica: I do not think you will ever get my parents that drunk!

As per the theory of semantic script which is suggested by Raskin (1985), the difference between non-verbal and verbal humour is that non-verbal humour means the state in which humour arises without text. In this video, humour crops up from the persons' facial expressions or body movements, which are obvious from the beginning of the video until the end of it. For example, it is amusing to see the faces of both Joey and Ross to say Thanksgiving and rush into the door.

Girls: Happy Thanksgiving!

Joey: Well, this has been great!

Ross: See ya!

[Joey and Ross go to the door, ready to leave.]

The second scene started with a sarcastic question asked by Phoebe to Monica about whether there was any other dessert made to the dinner. Phoebe, in an indirect way, was about to say that the dessert that Rachel had been making was awful. Although she said that the dessert that Rachel had been making was so good and she would eat all of it, she said that sarcastically, which means the opposite would happen.

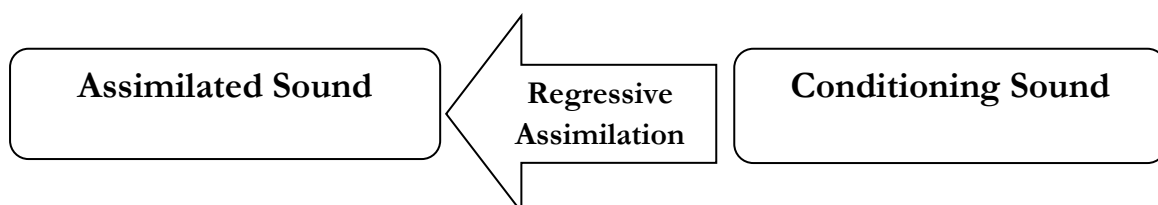
4.2 PHONETICS AND PHONOLOGY

1. Assimilation

Sotiloye (1992: 24) explains assimilation as a process whereby contiguous segments influence each other by becoming more alike. In other words, segments adapt to their environment. According to (Van Lierde et al., 2007: 17) assimilation is the process to connect speech during which a given sound, the assimilated sound takes on the characteristics of a neighbouring sound the conditioned sound. This is probably the most common phonological process in all languages. Hawkins (1998:31) describes assimilation as the phonetic processes in which two phonemes adjacent [contiguous assimilation] or very near to each other [incontiguous assimilation] acquire common characteristics or become identical. When the phoneme which produces the phenomenon associated with phoneme, it is called regressive assimilation.

1.1 Regressive assimilation

Regressive assimilation is leftward assimilation; the phone assimilates to a preceding phone. Assimilation is more persistent as an entirely phonological procedure compared to progressive assimilation. In the case of regressive assimilation, the integrated sound precedes and is influenced by the conditioning sound.



Examples of this type from the text are the words in the tables below:

1.1.1 / d / changes to / b / before / m / / b / or / p /.

Examples from the text	Transcription
Would be	/'wʊb 'bi:/

1.1.2 / n / changes to / m / before / m / / b / or / p /.

Examples from the text	Transcription
Can be	/kəm bi:/

2. Linking

As per Ladefoged (2004: 23), to the linguistically local, a silent attribute of much non-native English words is its 'choppy' feature. The skill of speaking English 'smoothly,' to pronounce syllables or words that are suitably connected, involves the utilisation of linking, which connects the last sound of a syllable or a word with the first sound of the next. The quantity of linking that takes place in the speech of native-speaker depends on several aspects; such as the casualness of the situation, the speaking rate, and the speaker's particular speech profile. Therefore, the quantity of linking that takes place is not entirely predictable. Linking takes place with evenness in the instance from the text:

2.1 When a syllable or a word ending in one consonant is succeeded by a syllable or a word that starts with a vowel, that consonant is often generated intervocalically, such that it was of both syllables:

- Out of
- Eat-in
- Come over

- Fall in
- Well if
- None of
- All of

2.2 When a syllable or a word ending in a cluster of consonants is succeeded by a syllable or a word beginning with a vowel, the last consonant of the group is often uttered as a segment of the next syllable. Here are examples of the target text:

- Thinking of
- Joke around
- Eat around

2.3 When two same consonants get together due to the juxtaposition of a couple of words, there is a single, elongated pronunciation of the consonant.

Examples from the text	Transcription
Place since	/'pleisins /
Want to	/'wɒntə /
For real	/'fɔ:ri:l /

3. Deletion

An even more radical form of adjustment in connected speech is deletion it is also known as, elision (Kohler, 1990: 7-10). The process whereby sounds disappear or are not clearly articulated in certain contexts. In some situations, the English spelling system is susceptible to this occurrence, representing removal in the contracted forms created by auxiliary verbs or not. However, in other situations, removal occurs without any notice in the English spelling system. The following are examples from the text:

3.1 The deletion of consonants in the table below:

Examples from the text	Transcription
<u>Cause</u> (supposed to be because)	/ 'kɒz /
<u>Tell em</u>	/ 'tel 'em/
<u>Nothing</u>	/ 'nʌθɪŋ /

5. PRAGMATICS ANALYSIS

According to Attardo (2001: 11), humour is viewed pragmatically as a breach of Grice's Cooperative Principle. Grice's quality maxim stated that talkers have to strive to make their contribution in conversation match with the facts. In this video, four types of humour strategies (exaggeration, pretending, irony, and excuse) were found to be in use and which violated this maxim. To our knowledge, it is difficult for the listener to discern that the speaker is articulating something which is opposite to his or her real feelings; nevertheless, the listeners of these TV shows easily perceive the speaker's feelings by viewing the overblown expressions on the face or observing the phenomenon of canned laughter. In this video, the irony strategy was used, E.g. when Phoebe said to Monica that she would eat all the dessert that Rachel had been making. By looking at the face of Phoebe, it is obvious that she was ironically making fun of Rachel and did not mean what she said, and it was the opposite.

Regarding the exaggeration strategy, it is noticed when Chandler said that he would be charming when Monica's parents come to the Thanksgiving dinner and he would make them fall in love with him. However, Monica hinted to the fact that he was exaggerating by mentioning that he should get their parents so drunk if he wanted to do so and that was so impossible, especially when he knew that they hated him. For the excuse strategy, when

Phoebe said to Rachel that because of the existence of beef in the dessert she could not eat it, she knew already that there was a beef in the dessert, and that was obvious when she smiled after she went off the dinner to her bedroom, but she did not want to tell Rachel that her dessert was so bad, so she made an excuse and went off. Finally, Monica was pretending that she liked the dessert by making the sound that Joey taught her to do and by rubbing her stomach which meant that she did not like it at all, but she did not want to embarrass Rachel or hurt her feelings. Rachel wanted her to believe that by saying that everyone should taste it.

Another maxim, which was violated, was the maxim of relation. It was very obvious during the conversation between Chandler and Monica.

Monica: (on the phone) Okay, great! Bye. (Hangs up as Chandler enters.) So guess who is coming to Thanksgiving dinner?

Chandler: Sydney Portier? Hehheh.

[Chandler throws his coat on the couch]

Monica: (not amused by Chandler's joke) I miss Rachel. (To Chandler) No, my parents.

Chandler: Oh! That's great, they haven't seen the place since I moved in!

[Monica goes to fiddle with something on the table.]

Monica: Yeah, and y'know, if you could not mention to them that we live together, that would be great! (Quickly trying to change subjects), I thought we would eat around four.

[Monica goes to the stove.]

Chandler: (shocked at the news) Why can't I tell them that we live together?

Monica: Because they do not know we're dating. (Again, trying to quickly change subjects.) Do you think we should eat in the kitchen? (Goes to the sink and the stove to cook.)

Chandler: Why haven't you told them?!

Monica: Um, well, I was going to, I-I-I really was. But um, then somewhere, just

out of nowhere, I didn't.

Chandler: Why haven't you told them?! Wouldn't they be happy?!

Monica: (trying to change subjects, excitedly) So! Dinner in the kitchen around four! I'll see you then. (Pats Chandler on the shoulder and goes into the living room.)

So the underlined sentences show for us that Monica was trying to change the topic and avoid answering Chandler's questions by talking or asking about something irrelevant.

5.1 SPEECH ACTS

Systematic turn-taking was obvious during this video. It started with one speaker and went on as the speaker lost control to the next person. The second speaker then had the conversational floor. As soon the speaker was done talking, he/she gave control back to another person (in this case, the beginning speaker), and thus a cycle was created. We also notice in the video that when a speaker had nothing more to say, a time of silence was the signal which warned another speaker that his/her turn was on. There was no interruption, which showed the speakers' attitude towards turn taking and being polite to each other. Adjacency pair was also present here. Several pairs were produced in this video: question-answer, order -answer, greeting-greeting etc. This can be seen in the video. E.g. when Phoebe came in, she greeted Rachel and Rachel greeted back. Many questions were answered (e.g.

Chandler: (annoyed) Do you know why?

Ross: I don't know, maybe it's because you're really sarcastic. Or maybe it's cause you uh-

The first scene continued with a conversation when Rachel asked Monica about the butter. Monica was able to answer it directly but she replied ambiguously and humorously by saying “*It's done about two minutes before it looks like that.*”

5.2 CO-TEXTUAL CONTEXT

The elements of coherence and cohesion in the text were found. We can see that there was a sequence of ideas, so the text as a whole made sense to the listener. The sentences were internally related to each other. This video was also full of cohesive devices. A lexical cohesion was one of those elements which were seen by the repetition of many words like thanksgiving, beg, cooking, dinner,etc. Another element was references which were many in the text. E.g.

Monica: Well, it has done about two minutes before it looks like that.

It refers here to the butter which was mentioned previously by Rachel.

5.3 SOCIAL ASPECTS

Another aspect was noticed in the second and fourth scenes. It was actually about the language of gender and how both sexes tended to use different strategies and styles. In this video, Ross changed the tone and intonation of his voice the moment Janine entered in Chandler's apartment. Ross and Joey spoke in a very soft and polite way. Some features of the language of women had been used in this video like Backchannel, in which terms were included such as *mhm*, *yeah*, *oh* and *right*. It has been typical that backchannel terms are used more by women to show agreement and enhancement with the speaker. Using tag Questions forms was also present in this video, e.g. "*Phoebe: So, now, Rachel, this is a traditional English trifle, isn't it?*"

It is supposed that women make use of more interrogative questions compared to men, apparently as a technique to keep conversation live. It is also thought that people having more power use more queries in conversation compared to those with less power. Usually,

females try harder to prolong a conversation, using phrases such as ‘you know (?)’, at times when pauses are not filled by whatever person they are talking to (Tannen, 1991: 16-19).

6. PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATION

There is a growing body of research which investigated the use of humor and its positive effect on teaching and learning. Civikly (1986: 56) has indicated that humor can increase students’ interest in learning. It can also lesson students’ stress and boost self-confidence. Students prefer a teacher who has a sense of humor.

Humor can also have a pedagogical role to play in helping students understand and enjoy hard courses, such as statistics, simply because humor can have a positive impact on content retention. This is supported by Garner’s analysis of humor as an appreciated teaching tool. Even in health, at the grassroots level, humor has shown to have an impact on students’ productivity and creative ability. Flavier (1990: 17) believes that humor is instrumental in teaching health.

7. CONCLUSION

The ninth episode in the sixth season of Friends TV show, which has been considered as one of the most famous TV show in America, was analyzed. During the analysis, there was much concern about the violation of the cooperative principle, in which humor is usually created. People use different humor strategies to amuse the audience such as irony, excuse, pretending, exaggeration,...etc. Friends episodes are full of sentences, expressions and even words that can be analyzed semantically and pragmatically. A textual analysis was involved in which we examined whether the text was cohesive and coherent or not. The show portrayed the lives of six friends (Monica, Phoebe, Rachel, Ross, Chandler, and Joey) in New

York City, and the different issues they faced while growing from their early twenties to their early thirties: life, love and relationships, work, and so on, made part of the different episodes throughout these ten seasons. A question can be raised here for further study and analysis is that “Do Friends TV show episodes represent the kind of life in New York? Moreover, why are there no black people acting there in the episodes?

Generally, males fail to give responses at all in non-cooperative speech, and participate in more delays and pauses than females. One thing was also noticed, and that was women had the same power to have a conversation as men. There is no dominance in conversation. Within a sociolinguistic context, it is argued that since men are dominant in social settings, women may be expected to be more silent; therefore, when women talk it is perceived as talkative. Research shows that rank holds less power than gender in conversation dominance: men dominate conversation more than women. However, what is noticed here is something different than that as women have the same right to be involved in a conversation and dominate it if they know more about the topic of the communication. It can be seen that the language that speakers were using was informal throughout the conversations. Some ellipses were present in this video (e.g. It sure is., and Oh I am!).

There are other things which can be analyzed in this text like intonation, deleting the letter ‘g’ from verbs like ‘killin’ instead of ‘killing’, and the influence of sounds in the conversations to convey messages. By analyzing texts (video or written), we become able to highlight the socially functional nature of language; to explain the two-way relationship between the vocabulary and grammatical (lexicogrammatical) choices which speakers make and the cultural and social contexts in which language is used. It allows us to analyze the structure, organization and development of texts systematically. Further researches should be conducted in this field because they will reveal some more secrets of human beings, which

are not known yet.

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APPENDIX: DATA TRANSCRIPT

Written by: Greg Malins
Transcribed by: Eric Aasen

Monica: (on phone) Okay, great! Bye. (Hangs up as Chandler enters.) So guess who's coming to Thanksgiving dinner?

Chandler: Sydney Portier? Hehheh.

[Chandler throws his coat on the couch]

Monica: (not amused by Chandler's joke) I miss Rachel. (To Chandler) No, my parents.

Chandler: Oh! That's great, they haven't seen the place since I moved in!

[Monica goes to fiddle with something on the table.]

Monica: Yeah, and y'know, if you could not mention to them that we live together, that would be great! (Quickly trying to change subjects), I was thinking we would eat around four.

[Monica goes to the stove.]

Chandler: (shocked at the news) Why can't I tell them that we live together?

Monica: Because they don't know we're dating. (Again, trying to quickly change subjects.) Do you think we should eat in the kitchen? (Goes to the sink and the stove to cook.)

Chandler: Why haven't you told them?!

Monica: Um, well, I was going to, I-I-I really was. But um, then somewhere, just out of nowhere, I didn't.

Chandler: Why haven't you told them?! Wouldn't they be happy?!

Monica: (trying to change subjects, excitedly) So! Dinner in the kitchen around four! I'll see you then. (Pats Chandler on the shoulder and goes into the living room.)

Chandler: Why wouldn't they be happy?

Monica: Well, um, because mainly, um, they don't like you. I'm sorry.

Chandler: What? What? Why?!

Monica: Maybe because you used to be aloof, or that you're really sarcastic, or that, y'know, you joke around all the time. Or that you take off your clothes and throw them on the couch.

Chandler: Is this why they don't like me or why you don't like me?

Monica: Look, I know that I should've told them. I know I shouldn't care what they think. I'm sorry.

Chandler: Y'know, it'll be okay. It'll be okay. Because when they come over, I will be all charming, I will make them fall in love with me, and then we'll tell 'em.

Monica: You really think that'll work?

Chandler: Hey, I can be pretty charming, babe, I won YOU over, didn't I?

Monica: (hugging Chandler) I don't think you'll ever get my parents that drunk!

Opening Credits

[Scene: Joey and Janine's, Joey and Ross are playing *Sony Playstation*. Chandler enters.]

Chandler: Hey! (Sees Ross is there) Oh, good, Ross! You're parents like me, right?

[Chandler goes to stand to the side of the TV.]

Ross: (only half-paying attention) Yes, of course they like you!

Chandler: Well Monica just told me that they don't.

Ross: (not paying attention) Yeah, they don't like you.

Chandler: (annoyed) Do you know why?

Ross: I dunno, maybe it's because you're really sarcastic. Or maybe it's cause you uh-

Chandler: (angry) Well if people don't know they shouldn't just guess!

[Joey and Ross get annoyed with Chandler's outburst.]

Chandler: This is great, another Thanksgiving with nothing to give thanks for.

Joey: Maybe I could give thanks for you shuttin' up, eh?

Chandler: Maybe I could give thanks by taking my *Playstation* over to my new apartment.

Joey: Well maybe I love ya'.

Chandler: [mocks that last comment].

[Chandler starts to leave as Janine enters]

Janine [to Chandler]: Hey.

Chandler: Hey.

[Chandler exits]

Janine: Hey guys!

[Joey and Ross drop their video game controllers.]

Ross: (trying to act manly in front of Janine) No I don't want to play video games, Joey!

Janine: Are you guys going to Chandler's for Thanksgiving?

Joey: Yeah! Yeah, why? What's up?

Janine: Well, me and my dancer friends are thinking of doing Thanksgiving uptown. I thought you guys might like to come.

Ross: For real?

Janine: No, but you should go to Chandler's. Because none of us knows how to cook, we'll probably just end up drinking all day.

Joey: Ye-ye, we go to yours!

Ross: Yeah, see, we-we-we have to stop across the hall, because it's my sister. But, uh, uh y'know actually, growing up with a sister was nice because it really helped me understand women. Yeah, you- you should tell your friends that.

Janine: (not sure of what to make of that) Okay.

[Janine leaves]

[Ross looks at Joey coyly.]

Joey: How you got three women to marry you, I'll never know.

[Scene: Monica and Chandler's, Phoebe enters with a paper turkey.]

Phoebe: Hey!

All: Hey!

Rachel: Hey! Hey, Pheeb, check it out. Yeah, for my desert, I have chosen to make a traditional English truffle!

Phoebe: Wow, that sounds great! And what are you making Monica, in case Rachel's dessert is...[about to say "bad"] so good that I eat all of it. There's none left for anybody else!

[Monica, Phoebe, and Rachel laugh]

Monica: Nothing.

Rachel: (worried) Nothing?

Monica: No, sweetie, I-I trust you.

Rachel: So, if-if I mess this up, there's nothing else for dessert?

Monica: You're not gonna mess it up.

Rachel: Wow, Monica, I love that, you really have faith in me. Thank you. Technical question, how do you know when uh, the butter's done?

Monica: Well, it's done about two minutes before it looks like that.

[Joey and Ross enter.]

Joey and Ross: Hey!

All: Hey!

Joey: Oh, ooh the food smells great, Mon!

Ross: And the place looks so nice!

Joey: Yeah, hey hey, Happy Thanksgiving everybody!

Ross: Happy Thanksgiving!

The Girls: Happy Thanksgiving!

Joey: Well, this has been great!

Ross: See ya!