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The Analysis of Conversational Implicature in an Extensive Listening of BBC Learning English Podcast

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Abstract

Using qualitative content analysis, this study attempts to investigate the occurrence of conversational implicature in an extensive listening of BBC Learning English Podcast. This study was conducted to find out how conversational implicature is employed by the speakers, including the types and functions of the implicature. Following Grice's theory of conversational implicature and cooperative principle, this study revealed that out of 200 samples taken, the implicature occurred in 104 utterances which were generated through flouting and violation with Particularized Conversational Implicature (PCI) dominating the exchange rather than Generalized Conversational Implicature (GCI). As for the function of implicature produced, the researcher utilized Searle's theory of Speech Act which comprises Assertive, Commissive, Declarative, Directive, and Expressive. The result showed that Assertive function dominates the utterance produced, meanwhile Declarative function was absent. The findings and result of this study is expected to be able to give some instances to the learners of English to the theory of conversational implicature, so that they will learn to avoid misunderstanding during the conversation itself. It is also expected to give contribution to the field of pragmatics, since, to the researcher's knowledge, the study of conversational implicature on the same media is still scarcely conducted.

Keywords: *conversational implicature, cooperative principle, speech act, extensive listening, BBC Learning English Podcast*

INTRODUCTION

Human as a social being use language to interact with one another; this interaction can be in a form of communication. Language and communication are interrelated as communication is a media which maintains people's social lives (Thompson, 2018). Related to communication and language as its part, the philosopher H.P Grice in 1975 propounded an idea in which he argued that there is a rule in communication which maintains the flow of the communication itself to be acceptable between one and another. Later, this rule is known as the Cooperative Principle which suggests that ones need to "make your contribution such as is

required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged” (Grice, 1975). This principle comprises of four maxims (quantity, quality, relevance, and manner).

However, in everyday life, people tend to disobey this rule either by intentionally mislead it by violating or by flouting these maxims of cooperativity. This situation is later known as conversational implicature and this idea has been becoming an influential theory especially in the field of pragmatics (Wang, 2011) and there has been a growing interest in analyzing its occurrence in verbal or non-verbal communication. *Implicature* as propounded by Grice (1975) is derived from the verb *implicate* and noun *implicature* (cf. *Implying*) and *implicatum* (cf. *What is implied*). It refers to the utterances which imply what the speakers indirectly state to their interlocutors during the process of communication. Grice (1975) stated that there are two ways of how speakers can generate the appearance of implicature in their utterances, those are by exploiting or breaking the four conversational maxims (quantity, quality, relevance, and manner) called flouting or by intentionally mislead it called violating. Moreover, Grice (1989, p.37) posits that there are two types of implicature, those which can be inferred without special background knowledge being necessary called Generalized Conversational Implicature (GCI) and those which need special background knowledge presented, Particularized Conversational Implicature (PCI).

Additionally, the term implicature falls in the scope of Pragmatics in which Yule (1996) stated that pragmatics is the study of contextual meaning, in other words, it is the organization of how people manage to say what they want to say related to where, when, under what situation or condition, and who they are talking to. In line with this, Petterson (2017) posits that during the communication process, there is a textual meaning needed to be inferred by the speakers as the sender and the interlocutors as the receiver. Therefore, in order to be able to grasp the intended meaning delivered by the senders, the receivers must have broader interpretation of the sender’s meaning.

In connection to conversational implicature, this interesting case leave the intended meaning implied and delivered implicitly to the interlocutors, therefore deeper understanding is needed to infer the intended meaning. In this case, several previous studies have unveiled that non-native English learners are struggling to infer the implicature produced in English conversation (Wang, 2011; Samaie & Arianmanesh, 2018). The difficulty appears as there is a major gap between what is being said and what is actually uttered. Added to this, Pratama et al., (2019) reported that English conversational implicature is problematic for English language learners in Indonesia. This report was derived from their previous study carried out earlier in 2016 which resulted that English language learners in Indonesia can only comprehend 72% of dialogues which included implicature in its practice. Related to this, many researchers are intrigued in analyzing its occurrence either in verbal or non-verbal communication which later makes this theory receive great acknowledgement especially in the field of pragmatics.

Sigalingging & Sinaga (2014) conducted a study to analyse the occurrence of conversational implicature in the *Inception* movie which unveiled that there are two types of implicature encountered; those are Generalized and Particularized conversational implicature where Generalized took up the domination. Accordingly, in 2016, Saragi also carried out a study to reveal the occurrence of conversational implicature in Ellen Degeneres talk show which reported that two types of implicature were produced with Generalized Conversational Implicature dominating the exchange of information. In the following year, Sujiyani & Ramadhani (2017) analyzed and investigated the occurrence of conversational implicature in short dialogues of five junior high school textbooks which revealed distinct results from the previous studies’ results. It found that Particularized Conversational Implicature is proven to appear more frequently rather than Generalized Conversational Implicature. The latest study conducted by Ariyanti, Setiawan, and Wedawati (2020) revealed that the case of conversational implicature can also be encountered in a WhatsApp chat. This study analyzed the implicature produced in a chat between students and their lecturers and discovered that the use of producing Particularized Implicature by flouting the cooperativity maxim can also be useful in order to shorten the conversation and make the information delivered faster and avoid making such redundancy of delivering unnecessary information.

Although numerous studies have been conducted, study carried out on a podcast is still relatively scarce. The occurrence of conversational implicature can also be encountered on a podcast which includes verbal communication. Podcast is an audio program which has been massively used nowadays. In English Language Teaching, podcast is also known and greatly employed as an extensive listening in which learners of English

can listen to it everywhere at any time in which they take control of their own learning and this is also seen as a breakthrough to the traditional classroom instruction for the past twelve years (Al Qasim & Al Fadda, 2013 in Alshaiki & Madini, 2016). In line with this, Pathan (2012) in Miranty & Rachmawati (2016) suggests that the utilization of podcast could bring good impact to the learners as they are exposed to the dimension of target language. Realizing its urgency, many institutions which concern with ELT later adopt podcast as a means to enhance listening skill, one of them is BBC under the division of BBC Learning English. This podcast is hosted by two people discussing several phrases or English slang words which are beneficial for learners since they are exposed to the dimension of the target language to get more familiar with it.

As reflected from the previous studies, there is still a need to analyze conversational implicature in a podcast, therefore, in order to fill this gap, this study takes podcast as the data source to answer the question of how conversational implicature is employed by the speakers in an extensive listening of BBC Learning English podcast by implementing Grice's theory of Cooperative Principle and Conversational Implicature. With respect to the main question, the sub-questions were addressed to find out the types and the functions of the implicature. As for the function of implicature, the researcher utilized Searle's theory of Speech Act (in Leech 1983: 105-106) consisting of Assertive, Commissive, Declarative, Directive, and Expressive.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study applied qualitative research as the methodology, specifically content analysis. Qualitative research is seen to be relevant to the aim of this study which later resulted in stories rather than statistical report (McMillan, 2010). Also, the object of content analysis as stated by Mayring (2004), can be in a form of transcripts, documents, discourses, and protocol observations. Since this study took podcast as the data source which utilized transcripts of the dialogue, this research design is chosen.

The total of 200 selected samples were taken from BBC Learning English Podcast: The English We Speak retrieved from "The University of Life" which aired on 05 July 2016 until "Cabin Fever" which aired on 17 April 2020 where the context are distinctive from one to another. The transcript used in this study were collected from <https://www.bbc.co.uk/learningenglish/features/the-english-we-speak/>.

In order to achieve the objectives, this study was conducted through a number of ways. First, the utterances are classified based on the way the speakers generate the implicature that is either through flouting or violation of the four maxims of conversation with respect to Grice's theory of Cooperative Principle and Conversational Implicature. After that, the classified utterances are categorized based on its type, those are Generalized and Particularized Conversational Implicature, also by paying attention to the textual and contextual meaning of the utterances. Later, the researchers determined the function carried by each implicature-related utterance by paying attention to Searle's theory of Speech Act. Lastly, the researchers reported the results by interpreting the implicature produced.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study attempts to answer the questions of how conversational implicature is employed by the speakers in an extensive listening of BBC Learning English podcast including the types and functions of the implicature. The discussion is broken down in three sections regarding the questions posed.

A. *How conversational implicature is employed by the speakers in an extensive listening of BBC Learning English Podcast*

A speaker and the interlocutors can generate implicature through two ways: flouting or violating the maxim of cooperativity. To be able to infer the implicature behind the utterances, the interlocutors should pay attention to the textual and contextual meaning which are included during the communication process.

Total	Ways of generating implicature		Occurrence
18	Violation	Violation of quantity	3
		Violation of quality	1
		Violation of relevance	8

		Violation of manner	6
86	Flouting	Flouting of quantity	36
		Flouting of quality	15
		Flouting of relevance	11
		Flouting of manner	24
		Total	104

Table 1. Ways of generating conversational implicature

As depicted in the table above, the speakers tend to produce implicature by flouting the maxims of conversation rather than violating it, with maxim of quantity taking up the domination among others with 36 occurrences and the least is through violating the maxim of quality with only 1 occurrence. The result indicated that the speakers were still paying respect and obeying the rule of maxims in their conversation rather than intentionally misled it by lying or violating. By flouting the maxims, rather than directly state or deliver their purposes or ideas, the speakers offer an opportunity to the interlocutors to construct the inference and interpret the true meaning of the speakers. The result is explained further below.

Feifei : And me Feifei. Hello! So how did your interview go?
Rob : **Quite good... ok... well not bad**

The above evidence indicated that Rob has violated the maxim of quantity as he only gave very little answer or information to the question asked by Feifei with a hope that Feifei would not know the truth that he did not make it to the next step. Contextually and textually, Feifei as the sender has an intention to show that she cares about Rob's condition and that Rob could tell her everything but unfortunately, Rob did not give enough contribution to Feifei by only saying "not bad". This evidence is taken from data number 26 which discusses the phrase "slap in the face".

*I somehow made it to the singing competition final this year. **Think the judges need their ears testing!***

In this single utterance, the sender has violated the maxim of quality as she stated something which did not represent her inner feeling and wanted to look humble in front of everyone which in reality she actually bragged about her success. This utterance is taken as an example in data number 116 which discusses the phrase "humblebrag".

Rob : Well, I could give you a bell – what's your number again?
 [DOORBELL]
Feifei : **Ah, saved by the bell – sorry, got to go, maybe next time. See ya.**

In this conversation, Rob as the sender had an intention to be friendly with Feifei by asking her phone number, unfortunately Feifei opted to violate the maxim of relevance to avoid giving her number to Rob by referring to the sound of the doorbell with an expectation that it would not offend Rob's feeling rather than blatantly refused it. This conversation is taken from data number 58 which discusses the phrase "give us a bell".

Neil : and hello, I'm Neil. So Feifei, did you enjoy Jane's leaving party last night?
Feifei : **Oh yeah, it was great. Free food and free drink...**

In this conversation, Neil as the sender was concerned whether Feifei enjoyed last night party, Feifei as the receiver answered the question by giving obscure reference since she was saying that the party was great but only referring to the food and drink which clearly did not represent what "great" is. Here, Feifei had violated maxim of manner as she gave ambiguous answer with an expectation that the interlocutors (Neil) would only know the surface meaning and thought that Feifei really enjoyed the party. This conversation is taken from data number 32 which discusses the word "frenemy".

Neil : What's in that bag, Feifei?

Feifei : Oh this – it’s a box of the best washing powder there is – Dazzlebright non-bio washing powder!

Neil as the sender was curious about what Feifei brought to the office, Feifei as the receiver wanted to give clear explanation of the thing she brought but it made her flout the maxim of quantity where she gave more information than what was required. This conversation is taken from data number 44 which discusses the phrase “it won’t wash”.

Feifei : Neil, a question – if you looked into my purse, what would you find?
*Neil : Not much! **Probably** lots of small coins that aren’t worth much.*

Feifei as the sender wanted Neil to guess what was inside her purse, Neil as the receiver tried to answer her question by flouting the maxim of quality since he had no clear evidence of what was inside Feifei’s purse. Rather than simply saying “I don’t know”, he opted to flout the maxim of quality by still delivering his thought. This conversation is taken from data number 97 which discusses the phrase “small change”.

Feifei : My word, Neil! What’s happened to you? You look like a lobster!
*Neil : **It’s very hot and sunny out there!***

Feifei as the sender was shocked after seeing Neil’s appearance as he got sunburn. Neil as the receiver tried to answer Feifei’s question by flouting the maxim of relevance as he referred to the present situation and condition outside the office rather than directly answered that he got sunburn. However, he still hoped that Feifei could infer his implied meaning behind his utterance. This evidence is retrieved from data number 93 with the title “rub it in”.

Feifei : Are you sure? Have you booked a room, prepared notes, got your laptop working?
*Rob : **Of course... there’s plenty of time to sort that out... isn’t there? I’m afraid I’ve just got to head off now, things to do... Bye!***

In here, Feifei as the sender wanted to know whether Rob was ready for the presentation or not, Rob as the receiver startled as Feifei suddenly asked him about this as in reality he was not ready but he made it less obvious by giving obscure answer rather than directly said “I’m not ready yet” but by doing so, Rob was still hoping that Feifei could infer the inner meaning of his utterance. This evidence is taken from data number 87 which discusses phrase “happy go lucky”.

B. The types of conversational implicature

The analysis reveals that there are two types of conversational implicature found, those are Generalized Conversational Implicature (GCI) and Particularized Conversational Implicature (PCI). The result will be depicted thoroughly on the table below.

Types of conversational implicature	Occurrence
Particularized Conversational Implicature	69
Generalized Conversational Implicature	35
Total	104

Table 2. Types of conversational implicature

From the table above, it is evident that PCI dominated the exchange of information between speakers and the interlocutors with total occurrence of 69. The result indicated that most of the implicatures produced need special background knowledge to infer. The speakers tend to produce particularized implicature with an expectation that the interlocutors could infer the hidden meaning in their utterances since they were friends and on the same age, however, the interlocutors should pay attention and consider the context of the conversation itself in order to be able to get the true meaning of speakers’ utterances. The result is elaborated below.

Feifei : *What are you going to do with that hammer?*
 Neil : **Keep calm – it's OK, I'm not going to hurt you.**

In this evidence, Feifei as the sender wanted to know Neil's motive of bringing hammer to the studio while Neil as the receiver avoided to answer the question directly which made him violate the maxim of relevance as he could just reply "I'm going to do some experiments here". This violation is categorized as PCI as Neil's utterance can only be inferred if special background knowledge is included. This conversation is retrieved from data number 15 discussing the phrase "kneejerk reaction".

Neil : *And did you know Feifei that it's also a verb – to mansplain? **Yes, language changes all the time, Feifei. New words change meaning. That's something all language learners need to know.***

In this conversation, Neil has flouted the maxim of quantity as he gave more information than is required. This evidence also classified as GCI as to infer the implicature of Neil's utterance, context or special background knowledge is unnecessary. This conversation is taken from data number 22 entitled "mansplaining".

C. The functions of conversational implicature

The theory of Speech Act by Searle (in Leech 1983: 105-106) which comprises of such five acts as Assertive, Commissive, Declarative, Directive, and Expressive is utilized to answer the question regarding the functions.

Functions	Occurrence
Assertive / Representative	94
Commissive	1
Declarative	0
Directive	3
Expressive	6
Total	104

Table 3. Functions of conversational implicature

As shown by the table, assertive or representative function dominated the conversation that occurred with 94 occurrences, followed by expressive function with six occurrences, directive function with three occurrences, commissive with only one occurrence, and declarative function with 0 occurrence.

Neil : *And do you?*
 Feifei : *what?*
 Neil : *Like darts?*
 Feifei : **Erm, that's not the point. I'm trying to give an example.**

In this conversation, Feifei's utterance carried function of assertive in which she stated something which represented her thought by saying "that's not the point". This conversation is encountered in data number 47 discussing the phrase "not half".

Feifei : *Hey Neil, would you like to try one of my homemade cookies?*
 Neil : *Well, we shouldn't really eat while we're presenting but... go on then.*
 Feifei : **I made them last night and I thought I'd try them out on you! You've got a sweet tooth so I know you can't resist!**

The bold utterance of Feifei's showed that Feifei performed an act of offering which carried the function of commissive. This evidence is taken from data number 121 discussing the phrase "something to chew on".

Man : Push your foot down a bit harder on the clutch before you try to change the gear. It'll make it much smoother.

Woman : Quit the mansplaining. I'm a taxi driver, OK?

In this conversation, with an act of ordering or commanding, the man had an intention to show that he knew more about driving than the driver herself. The man's utterance retrieved from data number 22 discussing the word "mansplaining" had a function of directive.

Feifei : Hey, Neil. Would you like to try this new coconut smoothie I bought from that new cafe?

Neil : Coconut? Yuk, I hate coconut.

On the above conversation, Neil's refusal showed that he expressed his hatred towards coconut which is clearly depicted expressive function of an implicature. This conversation is taken from data number 194 discussing the word "hater".

The result revealed that Assertive function is taking up the domination among other functions. Therefore, it is evident that the speakers tend to generate implicature while delivering or stating their personal ideas, thoughts, and opinion as these acts are classified as Assertive function, followed by Expressive, Directive, and Commissive. This could happen because the speakers want to sound less obvious in stating their ideas and give the chance to the interlocutors to interpret and infer the intended meaning. In this case, the mutual understanding between speakers and the interlocutors plays an important role.

Compared to several previous studies, the result of this study was the same as research conducted by Sujiyani & Ramadhani in 2017 which aimed to analyze the occurrence of conversational implicature in 5 English junior high school textbooks which found out that Particularized Conversational Implicature (PCI) appeared more frequently than Generalized Conversational Implicature (GCI). Nevertheless, distinctive result is reported by two different previous studies carried out by Sigalingging & Sinaga (2014) and Saragi (2016) which revealed that GCI dominated the exchange of information between speakers and their interlocutors in a movie and a talk show. In addition, a recent study conducted by Ariyanti, Setiawan, & Wedawati (2020) reported that in a conversation between lecturers and their students in a university in Indonesia, implicature was also generated through flouting maxim which is also acceptable and appropriate in order to make the information deliver faster. This study also found out that the two types of implicature also appeared during the conversation. As for the study concerning speech act, similar to the result of the present study, Cahyaningati (2012) reported that from Section One Listening in TOEFL tests of ETS (English Testing Service) Test Preparation Kit Workbook, four out of five acts appeared, those are Assertive, Directive, Expressive, and Commissive, meanwhile Declarative function is absent. This study also suggested that Grice's theory of implicature and Searle's classification of speech act are helpful to infer the true meaning of the utterance in an English conversation.

To sum up, the results of the previous studies and this present study can be somewhat distinct considering the context and the circumstances in which the conversation occurred. However, they show that the case of conversational implicature and cooperative principle can both happen in conversation of native as well as non-native speakers of English. In addition, studies reviewed seemed to agree that the theory of conversational implicature and cooperative principle permeate our lives and are helpful in many ways, especially in communication, since they could provide guidance for the speakers and the interlocutors to make the communication run smoothly.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study was conducted to find out how conversational implicature is employed by the speakers in BBC Learning English podcast as an extensive listening. The result of the study, as reported, revealed that there were two apparent ways for implicature to be generated, those are flouting and violating maxims. In this study, flouting maxim dominated the conversation rather than violation, indicating that even when the speakers disobeyed the principle of cooperativity, they still expected the interlocutors to infer their inner meaning. The result also revealed that there were two types of implicature produced, with PCI dominating the occurrences over GCI, depicting that most of the implicatures can only be inferred if the listeners aware of the context and

special background knowledge that is presented. In addition, the implicature in the data also carried certain functions classified by such Searle's classification as Assertive, Commissive, Directive, Declarative, and Expressive, in which Declarative function was absent. Furthermore, the result of this study also suggested that even when the maxim of cooperativity is disobeyed, the speakers and their interlocutors could still engage in their conversation.

By noticing and paying attention to the conversational implicature, learners could be better in understanding and improving their listening skill as what is suggested by Wang (2011) that "melting the theory of pragmatics with the listening comprehension is the key to improve the ability of listening"; thus, it is expected that this study could give insights and spread awareness, especially among ESL or EFL learners, regarding the occurrence and the application of conversational implicature in an English conversation.

As this study's scope is limited only on two ways of generating implicature (flouting and violating), it is expected that the next study could also include the other three non-observant maxims (infringing maxim, suspending maxim, and opting out maxim) in analyzing conversational implicature. Additionally, this study only focused on analyzing podcast which only represents audio; therefore, the next study could also analyse implicature in another media which includes face to face representation and gesture. Another limitation of this study is that the data used in this study vary in terms of context; thus, the next researchers could analyse implicature in a more specific context so that the result can be more detailed.

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