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Analyzing Conventional Implicatures in Conversations of Students at Undergraduate Level



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Abstract

Conventional implicatures are one of the essential fields of pragmatics, which deals with the meaning of a linguistic expression as it goes beyond what is written in the actual word meanings. Conventional implicatures are assigned to a specific lexical item and construction, and are fairly context-stable. This study attempts to explore meanings and the interpretations of conventional implicatures in English in conversations of undergraduate students. The study takes a quantitative approach using a structured questionnaire in which the participants' capacity to detect imputativeness of conventional implicature triggers and other conventional linguistic expressions (but, even, therefore, only, although, and non-restrictive relative clauses), which are connected to them, are evaluated. The data are gathered from the undergraduate students, studying in various fields. Participants are recruited via online forum and social networking with a snowball sampling technique, in which the researchers send out the questionnaire to different students. Data obtained from the participants are computed statistically with descriptive and inferential techniques to describe the participants' pragmatic competency levels. The results are planned to support development of understanding of pragmatic awareness among university students and insights for pragmatic aspects of language education and on pragmatic studies.

Key words: Conventional implicatures, undergraduate students, pragmatic analysis, snowball sampling

1. Introduction

Pragmatics refers to the study of meaning in context related to communication and interpretation that occurs in discourse. In contrast to semantics, which studies the meaning of the literal expression of language, pragmatics looks at meanings which are not expressed explicitly in a communication and at what meanings listeners assign when it occurs (Yule, 1996). One of the core principles in pragmatics is implicature as proposed by Grice (1975) which refers to 'outside-of-the-literal' meaning which is implied by speakers.

Grice (1975) came up with two categories of implicatures: conversational and conventional. Conversational implicatures are those that emerge as a result of co-operative principles of conversation and which are contextually determined. The conventional implicatures are those that attach to particular lexical choice or language structure or context and carry over meanings beyond the context in which they are used. These meanings usually go hand-in-hand with specific words and phrases and tend to stay the same in certain contexts.

Conventional implicatures are important in human communication because they help us to convey attitudes, assumptions, evaluations and relations between ideas without making a direct statement. The conjunction but not only serves to connect the two clauses, and also introduces a contrast between poverty and honesty in the sentence, Ali is poor but honest. The implied contrast is not related to the sentence's truth-conditional interpretation: it is a conventional meaning that attaches to the lexical item but (Grice, 1975; Levinson, 1983). Likewise, other words like even, therefore, only and although, and non-restrictive relative clauses adds to an expression beyond its semantic

content in a speech.

The ability to recognize and interpret conventional implicatures is an important aspect of pragmatic competence. According to Kasper & Rose (2002) pragmatic competence is how much people understand or apply language with an awareness of its context in communication. Studies indicate that interpretations of the implications can be problematic for second language learners as this is not always covered in the language class (Taguchi 2015). Thus, learners can be clearly informed what the speaker intends at the literal level and not picked up on what he or she unwittingly embodies using conventional implicatures.

Though pragmatic competence is an important aspect in LVL, research on the learners' perception of conventional implicatures in Pakistan is found to be comparatively scarce focusing on University undergraduate learners. Research into students' understanding of the implied messages involved could offer significant insights into the pragmatic awareness and comprehension of the nuanced messages in communication in English. The results of such findings can also aid in developing pedagogical approaches towards the enhancement of learners' pragmatic competence.

In light of the above, the present study titled "Investigating Undergraduate Students of Understanding of Conventional Implicatures: A Quantitative Study of Pragmatic Interpretation" aims to examine the level of students understanding and conventional interpretation of projects in English in the conventional implicatures. Linguistic devices like but, even, therefore, only, although and non-restrictive relative clauses are given special attention. It also seeks to find out that certain conventional implicatures are easier than others for students to pick up, in order to make a contribution to the general area of pragmatics and language teaching.

Research Questions

The present study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. To what extent do undergraduate students understand and interpret conventional implicatures in English?
2. Which types of conventional implicatures create the greatest difficulty for undergraduate students?
3. Which types of conventional implicatures are most easily recognized by undergraduate students?

Significance of the Study

The study is important because the conventional implicatures have been found to have a significant role in successful communication and pragmatic interpretation. The analysis of implications of students' STs may give insights into the pragmatic competence and students' language competence of undergraduate students in this study. The results might be helpful for language teachers to create teaching strategies that increase students' understanding of conventionally implied meanings in discourse such as those marked with linguistic devices (discourse markers, focus-sensitive expressions, etc.). Moreover, the study's emphasis on conventional implicatures, as opposed to conversational implicatures, makes it part of the emerging "pragmatics" literature in Dutch Language and Literature aimed generally at "linguistic" conventional implicatures. This result can also be useful as a basis for further research in the area of pragmatic comprehension in the learning context.

2. Literature Review

Pragmatics is interested in the way meaning is interpreted in the context, and is the belief that language users have the ability to express meaning wider than the content of

an utterance. This has led one of the most impactful ideas, that of implicature, is put forward by Grice (1975), who suggests that a lot exists that speakers convey indirectly and hearers work to implicate in the text linguistically and contextually. Grice differentiated between two types of implicature: conversational, which is related with the contextual assumptions in addition to the co-operative principles; and conventional, related to particular lexical items and constructions. Conventional versus conversational implicatures: while conversational implicatures are inferred by the conversant, conventional ones are more permanent than conversational ones and are contained in the language itself (Grice 1975).

Grice (1975) has categorized conventional implicatures as meanings which are conventionally present in specific words and phrases like "but," "as well," "even" and other linguistic structures which have extra meaning beyond their truth-conditional content. These expressions provide supplemental information to a speech performance that doesn't change the denotational or truth conditions of what is being said. For instance, in the sentence Ali is poor but honest, but lets off a contrast between the two propositions. If but is replaced by and, the sentence is still true, but the sense implication but' is lost. This is the one thing that makes implicatures different from the semantic meaning and makes them significant in interpreting.

The difference between said and conventionally implicated is an essential principle of contemporary pragmatic work carried out against the background of Grice's distinction. He has laid the groundwork in the study of linguistic forms that carry meanings which are understood by the speaker and listener as part of 'communicative competence'. As a result, conventional implicature has been a meaningful field of study in language acquisition, discourse analysis and language pragmatics.

Focusing on Grice's pioneering research, researchers have built up and elaborated the concept of conventional implicature. In discussing conventional implicatures Levinson (1983) noted that the implicatures added to the meanings of lexical items are those that people already understand and use without depending on contextual inferences. He suggested that conventionally encoded pragmatic meanings as well as semantic information needs to be recognized by the speaker and the listener in order for effective communication to take place. Levinson's work was an extension to the connection of implicature and pragmatic competence, as he has shown that knowledge of the extralingual aspects is needed in the interaction of the language user.

Likewise, Yule (1996) gave comprehensible explanations of traditional implicatures in an everyday communication to illustrate each one. Even Lexical items like but connote contrast behaviour and/or unexpectedness as well, but connote continuation of a state opposite of what is expected. A focus on the 'how' of this in terms of ordinary everyday discourse and language did not get to the chapter that is seemingly scribbled into the sand by Yule. In ordinary everyday discourse and language learning, however, the 'how' of them is not addressed in the chapter seemingly scratched out by Yule.

There has been a lot of debate on the theoretical status of conventional implicatures among philosophers. Bach (1999) wondered about the appropriateness of considering all meanings traditionally treated as conventional implicatures as a separate category of meaning. He suggested that in certain instances there is some presupposition or other mechanism of pragmatics that better explains such an instance. However, although some lexical phrases do regularly add meaning beyond propositional sense, Bach was aware that further research was needed to explore the concept of conventional implicature.

One state-of-the-art development was Potts' (2005) multidimensional semantic mechanism. Potts suggested that the conventional implicatures represent a type of meaning that is different from truth-conditional content. His model assumes "conventional implicatures" are linguistically encoded, speaker-specific and are, in general, not cancelable. Potts' model gave a general account of the functioning of explicit implicatures within discourse, and is one of the most successful methods for investigating implicatures today.

Following scholars studied 'conventional implicatures' further from a theoretical perspective. Amaral, Roberts, and Smith (2007) critically assessed Potts' approach and emphasized that more needed to be done to better connect the semantic and pragmatic approaches. Similarly, Salmon (2011) explained the difference between Grice's idea and subsequent interpretations of it, whilst reminding researchers how important it is to be exact in their research into conventional implicature. All these studies show that the conventional implicature continues to be a field of on-going research in pragmatics. A pragmatic competence for understanding conventional implicatures involves being able to "make sense of" and appropriate "understand" conventional implicatures in communicative situations (Kasper & Rose, 2002). Pragmatic competence goes beyond others' notion of grammatical competence and involves internals of other kinds; namely, the ability to identify/detect implications, speaker intentions, and discourse relationships. Learners can have good language competencies, but be struggling at times when the meaning is not directly expressed.

Adopting pragmatic comprehension is always a challenging aspect in language use, according to a variety of research. Given that the content of the utterances is clearly understood, but not their meaning, Thomas (1983) believed that pragmatic failure is often a result of misinterpretation of intended meanings. This failure can have a detrimental impact on people's communication skills and their interpersonal relationships. This study of implicature understanding has, therefore, come to be an important field of both pragmatics and L2 acquisition.

Taguchi (2011, 2015) stressed the importance of the cognitive and linguistic processes needed for interpretation of implied meanings. Her study showed that the problems that language learners face have to do with pragmatic information, thus in order to achieve a successful language interpretation, one needs to be sensitive to subtle linguistic cues and context. Most of this work is concerned with conversational implicatures but the results show that conventional implicatures might be equally problematic for learners. Studies of communicative competence have also justified the fact that the pragmatic knowledge plays a vital role in the process of learning foreign languages. The communicative competence account pioneered by Canale and Swain (1980) has led researchers to believe that this competence is not just based on communicative ability, as inferred from the system of grammar, but it is also necessary to correctly interpret certain implied meanings and discourse relationships. Conventional implicatures thus play a crucial role in the effectiveness of communication since they allow the communicant to express attitudes, evaluations and relationships indirectly.

Previous empirical studies of understanding implicatures have concentrated on the interpretation of conversational implicatures instead of conventional implicatures. The accuracy in recognizing the implied meaning in the target language has been reported to be very different among various learners, and the proficiency in the target language, educational experiences, the ability to use the language in authentic situations, and pragmatic awareness have all been found to have a large effect on accuracy (Bouton,

1994; Taguchi, 2011).

According to experimental pragmatics studies, implicature processing is an inferential and cognitive process. Noveck and Sperber (2007) held that pragmatic interpretation cannot be literal since the person interpreting must get beyond the literal and make inferences and/or use the information from the language and coupled with the communicative expectations. Their work, however, was mostly on inferential pragmatics, and the results showed that the ability to interpret meanings commonly implicit in the message is also related to the awareness of a learner of the pragmatic cues.

In the educational field, researchers' interest in the quantitative assessment of pragmatic competence has grown day by day. Questionnaire-based investigations have successfully been used to gauge the level of meaning that learners pick up and to identify the pragmatic challenges that they have (Kasper & Rose, 2002; Taguchi, 2015). The studies themselves provide useful information about learners' communicative competence and support the teaching of more pragmatic competence.

In spite of this, research into empirical data which specifically addresses conventional implicatures in cases where it is provided, is limited. Much of the literature has been focused on theoretical exchanges, semantic representation and philosophy, instead of on how conventional implicature markers are interpreted by language users in real communicative scenarios. Consequently, little is known about learners' understanding of familiar implicature signals and the corresponding linguistic devices such as but, even, therefore, only, although and non-restrictive relative clauses etc.

From the available literature, it is evident that conventional implicatures play an important role in the theory of pragmatic and the communicative competence. Theoretical understanding of the phenomenon has greatly improved through the work of Grice (1975), Levinson (1983), Yule (1996), Bach (1999), Potts (2005), Amaral et al. (2007), and Salmon (2011). Likewise, studies on pragmatic competence have identified the role of an accurate interpretation of implicit messages as a communicative competence (Canale & Swain, 1980; Kasper & Rose, 2002; Taguchi, 2011; Taguchi, 2015).

Yet there are significant empirical studies of the understanding of conventional implicatures which are lacking in the literature on undergraduate students. The comprehension of conventionally encoded meanings has so far not received a comparable interest as the understanding of conversational implicatures nor been discussed in the framework of theoretical models or in terms of general pragmatic ability. Additionally, few quantitative research studies have focussed on the meaning of these particular conventional implicature markers in English and on related constructions used by undergraduate learners.

In order to mitigate the shortcomings aforementioned, the current project is grounded on the theory of conventional implicature put forward by Grice (1975) and a quantitative questionnaire is used to explore the interpretation of conventional implicature triggers and implicated linguistic expressions (but and although and even and therefore and only and non-restrictive relative clauses) among undergraduate students. The study aims to make a contribution to the knowledge of the pragmatic competence in higher learning and to give information for language and communication teaching, especially for pragmatic development, based on ability to recognize and interpret the literal meanings within the linguistic context which are learned conventionally.

3. Research Design and Methodology

3.1 Research Design

In conducting this study, a quantitative approach was used. Undergraduates' knowledge of conventional implicatures and other conventional means of encoding were gathered by a survey method dealing with the collection of numerical data. The study is cross-sectional since the data were gathered from a selected sample of subjects at just one specific time.

3.2 Population

Target groups are undergraduate students in colleges / universities in Lahore, Pakistan. The study involved students from various academic fields and educational backgrounds.

3.3 Sampling Technique

A non-probability sampling technique was used - snowball sampling. The researchers involved personal contacts, friends and undergraduate students in the initial distribution of the questionnaire. Participants were then asked to pass the questionnaire along to their undergraduate friends, classmates, and siblings. This referral process is expected to be a progressively increasing sample size.

3.4 Sample Size

A sample of approximately 50 undergraduate students were targeted to ensure sufficient data for statistical analysis. The final sample size depends on participant availability and response rates.

3.5 Research Instrument

The primary instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of two sections:

3.5.1 Section A: Demographic Information

- Age
- Gender
- Academic Discipline
- Semester of Study

3.5.2 Section B: Conventional Implicature Assessment

- Multiple-choice questions
- Sentence interpretation tasks
- Meaning identification exercises involving conventional implicature triggers and related linguistic expressions such as *but*, *even*, *therefore*, *only*, *although*, and non-restrictive relative clauses

Participants were required to select the interpretation that best reflects the implied meaning conveyed by the target expression or construction.

3.6 Data Collection Procedure

A survey form (Google Forms, etc.) was created for the questionnaire. The survey was promoted via social media (email, WhatsApp and Facebook). The participants were told of the purpose of the study and their voluntary participation. They were further encouraged to pass the survey on to other undergraduate students, to make the snowball sampling process easier.

3.7 Data Analysis

The data were analyzed through the use of Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Data were summarized using descriptive statistics, such as the rank frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations, where appropriate statistical tests that allow inferences to be drawn (inferential tests) were used to determine differences between participants in their performance across demographic variables.

4. Results

This section detailed the analysis and interpretation of the information gleaned through the completion of the questionnaire to the undergraduate students. The data were analyzed on grounds of the objectives of the study. The demographic variables of the subjects are presented first to give an overview of the sample. Responses to each of the items are then individually analyzed to explore participants' understanding and interpretation of the implied as well as the conventional encoding of those implicatures. In the discussion findings are taken for granted on the bases of Grice's theory of conventional implicature (1975), and pragmatic competence as suggested in pragmatic research. Descriptive statistics measures (e.g., frequencies and percentages) are used to look for trends in student responses and identify whether certain conventional implicatures were more challenging or easier for students to comprehend.

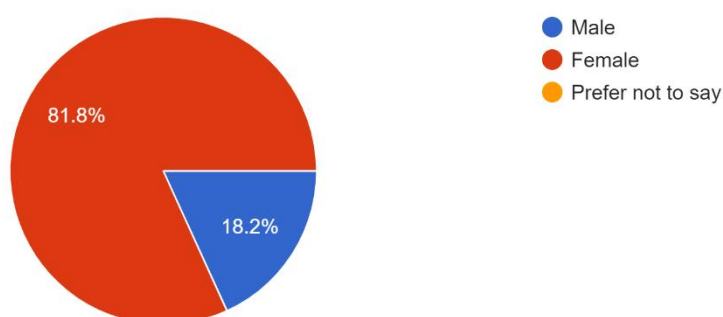
4.1 Demographic Profile of the Participants

Overall, 22 undergraduate students were involved in the study. Demographic data gathered was gender, age, academic programme, current semester and previous exposure to pragmatics. These variables give context to the participants and can be useful in understanding the context of the sample.

Gender Distribution

Among the 22 participants, 18 (81.8%) were female and 4 (18.2%) were male. The analysis of results showed that the majority of the sample were women. The study does not make a specific assessment of gender differences in pragmatic competence but the distribution that is attained show that the answers expressed are mainly on the part of female undergraduate students.

Gender
22 responses



Age Distribution

The participants belonged to two age groups. Twelve respondents (54.5%) were between 18 and 20 years of age, while ten respondents (45.5%) were between 21 and 23 years old. The relatively balanced distribution suggests that the study represents undergraduate students at different stages of early adulthood, providing a suitable sample for investigating pragmatic interpretation skills.

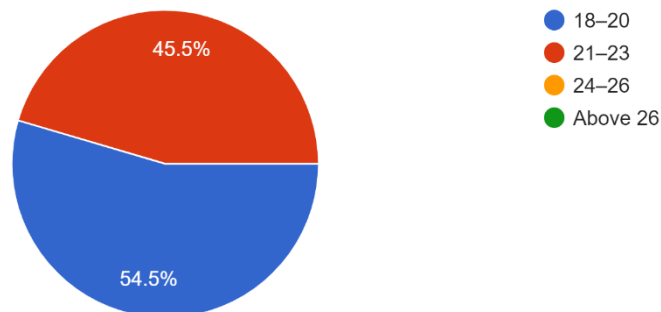
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Age

22 responses

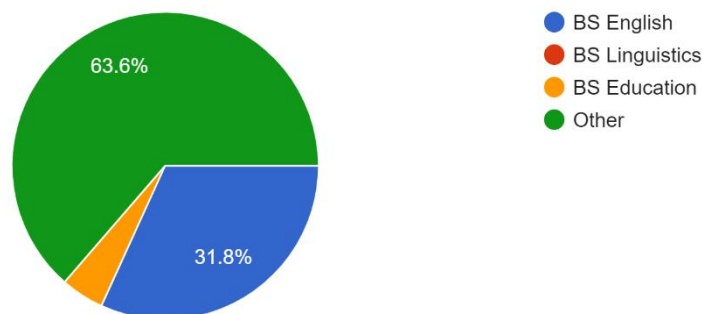


Academic Program

The majority of participants, 14 students (63.6%), were enrolled in academic programs categorized as “Other.” Seven participants (31.8%) were enrolled in BS English, while one participant (4.5%) belonged to BS Education. This diversity of academic backgrounds enhances the relevance of the study because it allows the investigation of conventional implicature comprehension beyond students specializing exclusively in language-related disciplines.

Academic Program

22 responses

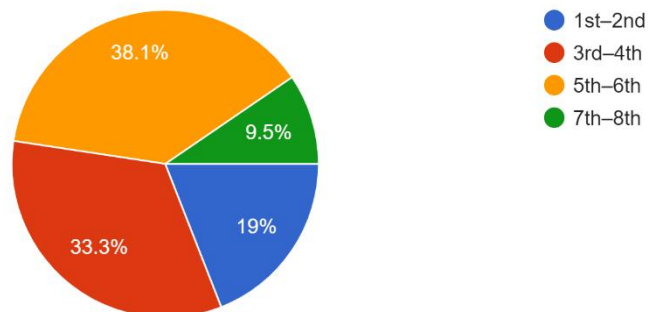


Current Semester

Regarding semester distribution, eight participants (36.4%) were studying in the 5th–6th semester, seven participants (31.8%) were in the 3rd–4th semester, four participants (18.2%) were in the 1st–2nd semester, and two participants (9.1%) were in the 7th–8th semester. One participant (4.5%) did not indicate a semester. The findings suggest that most respondents were in the middle stages of their undergraduate education, where exposure to academic reading and communication is relatively extensive.

Current Semester

21 responses



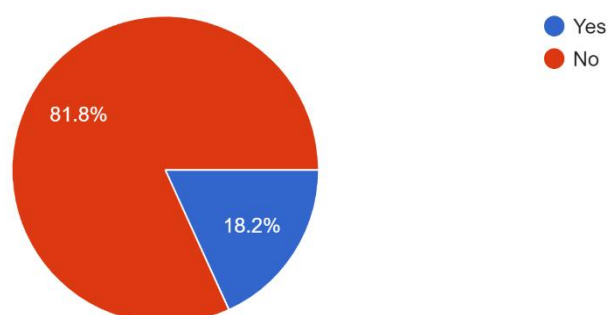
Prior Exposure to Pragmatics

When asked whether they had studied pragmatics before, only four participants (18.2%) responded “Yes,” whereas eighteen participants (81.8%) responded “No.” This finding is particularly important because it indicates that most participants had not received formal instruction in pragmatics. Consequently, their responses provide valuable insights into their natural ability to interpret conventional implicatures and related linguistic meanings without specialized academic training.

Overall, the demographic profile suggests that the sample consisted primarily of female undergraduate students from diverse academic disciplines, most of whom had not previously studied pragmatics. This background information is important when interpreting the findings because differences in academic exposure and linguistic training may influence the comprehension of conventionally implied meanings.

Have you studied Pragmatics before?

22 responses



Analysis of Questionnaire Items

Statement 1: “Ali is intelligent, but he is careless.”

Out of 22 respondents, 10 participants (45.5%) selected the correct interpretation, “Carelessness contrasts with intelligence,” while 11 participants (50%) selected “Ali is intelligent and careless,” and 1 participant (4.5%) selected “Ali is not intelligent.” The findings suggest that many respondents recognized the literal meaning of the sentence but failed to identify the contrastive implicature conventionally associated with the

conjunction *but*. According to Grice (1975), *but* conveys more than simple coordination; it conventionally signals a contrast between two propositions. The high proportion of literal interpretations indicates that a considerable number of students focused on semantic content rather than the implied pragmatic meaning. This finding suggests a moderate level of difficulty in interpreting contrastive conventional implicatures and highlights limitations in participants' pragmatic awareness.

Ali is intelligent, but he is careless.

22 responses

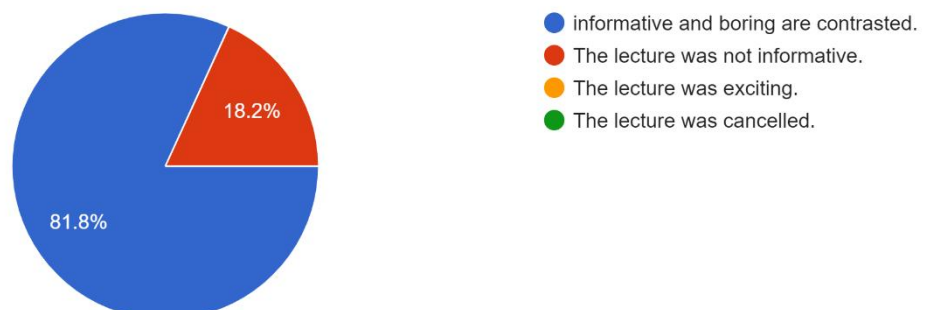


Statement 2: “The lecture was informative, but it was boring.”

A majority of respondents, 18 out of 22 (81.8%), correctly identified that “informative and boring are contrasted,” while 4 participants (18.2%) incorrectly believed that the lecture was not informative. The high success rate indicates that most participants successfully recognized the conventional implicature conveyed by *but*. Unlike Statement 1, the contrast in this sentence is more explicit and perhaps more familiar in everyday discourse, making the intended meaning easier to identify. This finding supports Grice’s (1975) claim that conventional implicatures are conventionally attached to specific lexical items and can be recognized when language users possess adequate pragmatic competence.

The lecture was informative, but it was boring.

22 responses



Statement 3: “Even Ahmed understood the lesson.”

The results show that 18 participants (81.8%) selected the correct interpretation, “Ahmed was among those least expected to understand.” Three respondents (13.6%)

believed that Ahmed taught the lesson, while one respondent (4.5%) assumed that Ahmed failed to understand. The findings demonstrate that most participants successfully interpreted the conventional implicature associated with *even*, which signals unexpectedness or deviation from expectation. According to pragmatic theory, *even* directs listeners to infer that the referenced individual occupies an extreme or unlikely position on a contextual scale. The high percentage of correct responses indicates a relatively strong understanding of this implicature trigger among the participants.

Even Ahmed understood the lesson.

22 responses

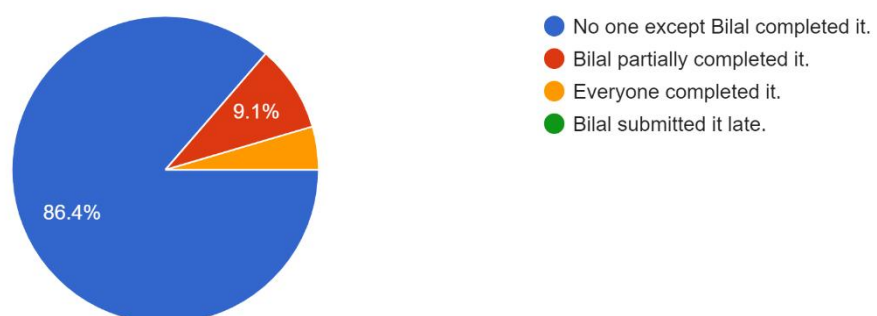


Statement 4: "Only Bilal completed the assignment."

Nineteen respondents (86.4%) correctly interpreted the statement as meaning that no one except Bilal completed the assignment. Two participants (9.1%) selected "Bilal partially completed it," while one participant (4.5%) believed that everyone completed the assignment. This item achieved one of the highest accuracy rates in the questionnaire. The findings suggest that participants had little difficulty interpreting the focus-sensitive expression *only*. The strong performance indicates a high level of awareness regarding exclusivity and restriction, demonstrating that certain conventionally encoded meanings are more readily recognized than others.

Only Bilal completed the assignment.

22 responses



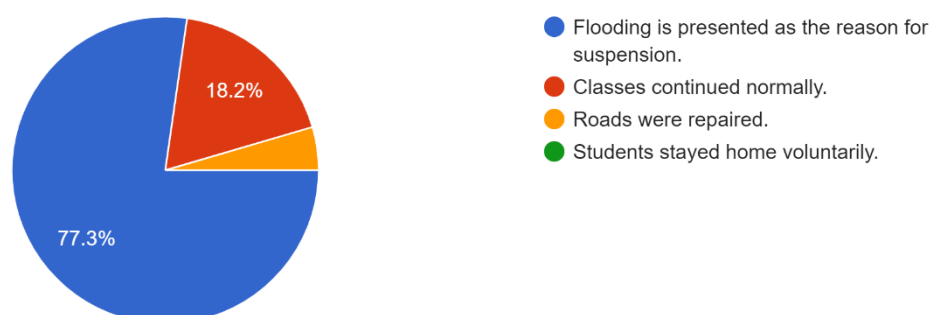
Statement 5: "The roads were flooded; therefore, classes were suspended."

Seventeen participants (77.3%) correctly identified that flooding was presented as the

reason for class suspension. Four respondents (18.2%) incorrectly believed that classes continued normally, while one respondent (4.5%) selected the option indicating that roads were repaired. The results suggest that most participants understood the causal relationship conventionally expressed through *therefore*. This finding indicates that students generally possess the pragmatic ability to recognize logical and consequential relations embedded within discourse markers. The relatively high accuracy rate reflects familiarity with causal connectors in academic and everyday communication.

The roads were flooded; therefore, classes were suspended.

22 responses

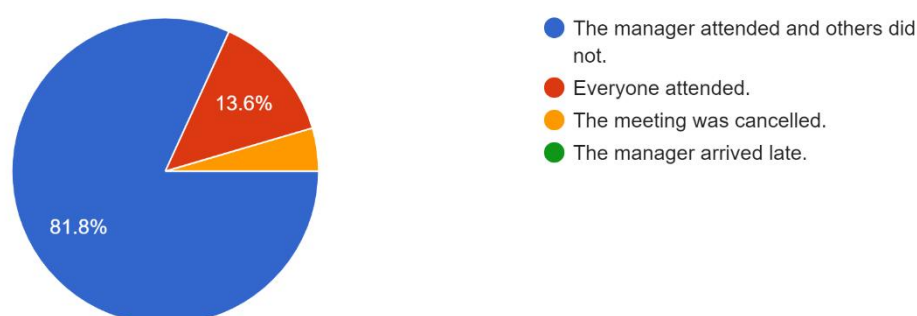


Statement 6: “Only the manager attended the meeting.”

Eighteen participants (81.8%) correctly interpreted the statement as meaning that the manager attended while others did not. Three respondents (13.6%) believed that everyone attended, whereas one participant (4.5%) assumed that the meeting was cancelled. Similar to Statement 4, the findings indicate a strong understanding of the exclusivity expressed by *only*. The consistency between these two items suggests that participants are generally proficient in interpreting focus-sensitive constructions and their associated pragmatic implications.

Only the manager attended the meeting.

22 responses



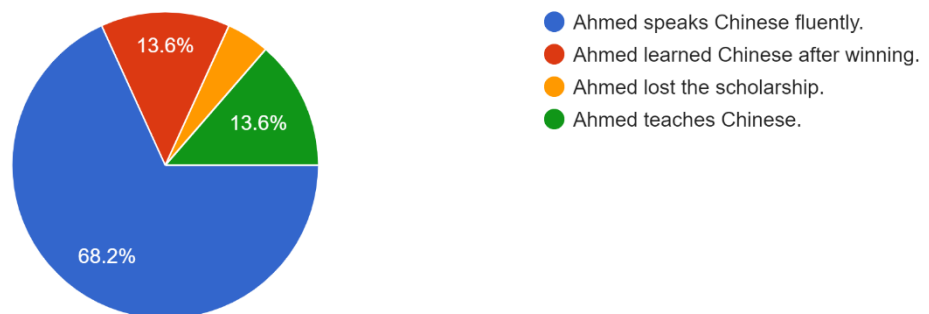
Statement 7: “Ahmed, who speaks Chinese fluently, won the scholarship.”

Fifteen participants (68.2%) correctly recognized the implied meaning that Ahmed speaks Chinese fluently. Three respondents (13.6%) selected the option stating that Ahmed learned Chinese after winning the scholarship, another three (13.6%) believed

that Ahmed teaches Chinese, and one participant (4.5%) assumed that Ahmed lost the scholarship. This item examined understanding of information conveyed through a non-restrictive relative clause. Compared to previous items, the lower accuracy rate suggests that participants experienced greater difficulty interpreting conventionally conveyed background information. The findings indicate that appositive constructions may present a greater challenge than more familiar lexical markers such as *but* or *only*.

Ahmed, who speaks Chinese fluently, won the scholarship.

22 responses

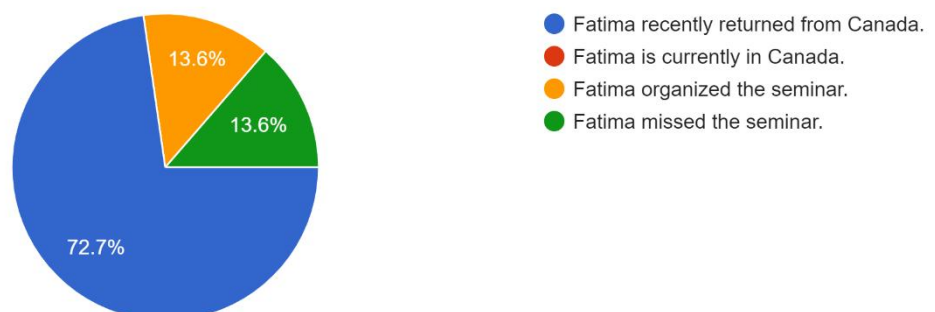


Statement 8: “Fatima, who recently returned from Canada, joined the seminar.”

Sixteen respondents (72.7%) correctly identified that Fatima had recently returned from Canada. Three participants (13.6%) believed that she organized the seminar, while another three (13.6%) assumed that she missed it. The results demonstrate a generally satisfactory understanding of non-restrictive relative clauses, although the accuracy rate was lower than that observed for several lexical implicature triggers. This finding supports the view that conventionally encoded meanings expressed through grammatical constructions may require greater pragmatic processing than meanings attached to common discourse markers.

Fatima, who recently returned from Canada, joined the seminar.

22 responses



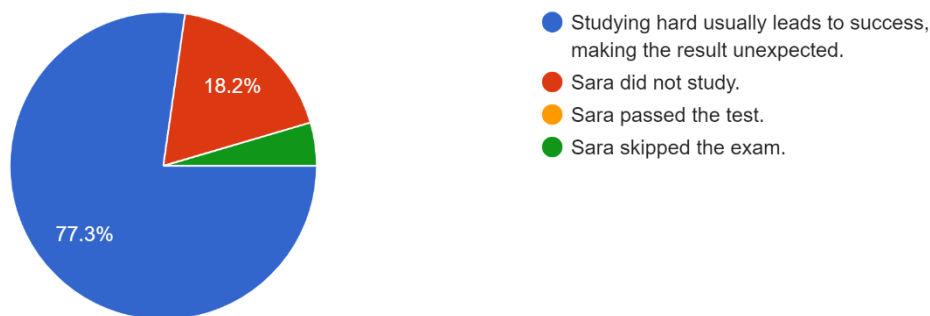
Statement 9: “Although Sara studied hard, she failed the test.”

Seventeen participants (77.3%) correctly interpreted the sentence as indicating that studying hard normally leads to success, making Sara’s failure unexpected. Four respondents (18.2%) believed that Sara did not study, while one participant (4.5%)

assumed that she skipped the examination. The findings suggest that most participants successfully understood the concessive meaning associated with *although*. The conjunction signals a contrast between expectation and outcome, and the relatively high accuracy rate demonstrates participants' ability to recognize this pragmatic relationship.

Although Sara studied hard, she failed the test.

22 responses

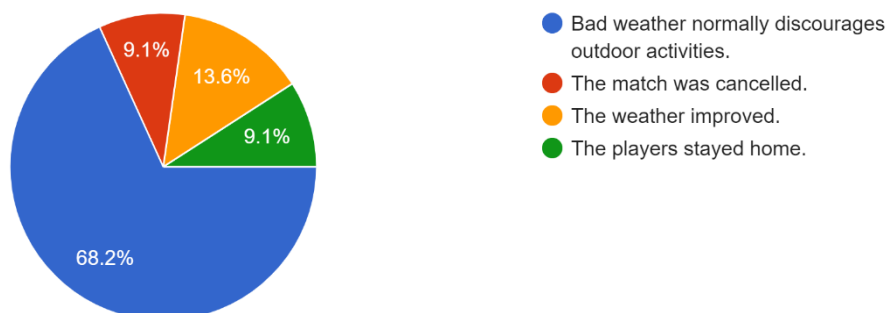


Statement 10: “Although the weather was bad, the match continued.”

Fifteen participants (68.2%) correctly identified that bad weather normally discourages outdoor activities. Three respondents (13.6%) selected the option indicating that the weather improved, while two participants (9.1%) believed that the players stayed home and another two (9.1%) assumed that the match was cancelled. The comparatively lower accuracy rate suggests that some participants focused on potential real-world outcomes rather than the concessive implicature encoded by *although*. This finding indicates that concessive constructions may require more advanced pragmatic interpretation than causal or exclusivity markers.

Although the weather was bad, the match continued.

22 responses



Discussion

The current research examined the conventional implicatures and related conventionally encoded meanings that are understood by undergraduate students in English. The first purpose of the study was to investigate how many meanings could be detected and understood by conventional implicature from the linguistic expressions, but, even, therefore, only, although and non-restrictive relative clauses, within the

framework of Grice's (1975) theory of conventional implicature. A research design that used a quantitative approach, data collection methods included an online questionnaire about attitudes toward the use of dominance theory in family relationships were used with undergraduate students from varying academic fields.

The results showed that the pragmatic comprehension of conventional implicatures was at a moderate to high level for the participants. Most of the respondents were able to accurately identify meanings behind phrases like only, even, and therefore, which indicated a reasonably comprehensive grasp of the concepts of exclusion, unexpectedness and causation. Likewise, there was a considerable proportion of participants who got the "although" concessive meanings correct. BUT and NRRCs did, however, show a lower level of performance when compared to other items. These observations indicate that while, overall, undergraduates are capable of perceiving the conventionally implied meaning, the perceptual sensitivity needed for learning the meaning of some conventional implicatures is greater than that needed for others.

The findings confirmed that Grice (1975) is right in stating that certain lexical items and constructions have meanings that go beyond their literal semantic meaning, which are transmitted in a conventional manner. The results also confirm the 'pragmatic competence is more than grammar' theory and the notion that pragmatic competence requires the ability to detect the inferences or presuppositions contained implicit in a discourse (Kasper & Rose, 2002). As in previous studies, the present study revealed that students could grasp the literal sense but sometimes had problems understanding the pragmatic implications of the utterances (Taguchi, 2011; Taguchi, 2015).

The study further builds upon the existing literature as it provides contribution for a relatively unexplored pragmatic area. Most of the previous studies have been on conversational implicatures or theoretical considerations of meaning, yet the present study offers empirical support and findings on the ability of undergraduate students to understand conventional implicatures. It contributes to the existing knowledge of pragmatic interpretation in educational settings and emphasizes the significance of teaching pragmatic awareness as a component in language learning.

Conclusion

As a whole, the research shows that conventional implicatures are one of the essential parts of pragmatic competence, and have played a large role in successful communication. The results confirm the importance of focusing on the pragmatic aspects of language in higher-education contexts and the possibility of making the conventionally inferred meaning of higher-order overt in students' awareness can benefit their proficiency in communication. Future work can follow upon these results and expand the study design with sizeable and a larger number of participants and include conventional implicatures in other communicative and other educational settings.

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