

Conversational Implicature in Grade VII EFL Textbooks: A Content Analysis

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Abstract

This study investigates conversational implicatures embedded in an English textbook for Grade VII EFL learners under Indonesia's Merdeka Curriculum. Employing a qualitative content analysis, the study analyzes textbook dialogues using Grice's theory of conversational implicature, focusing on generalized and particularized implicatures and their associated maxim violations. The findings reveal that both types of implicature are present, with generalized implicatures occurring more frequently in descriptive and instructional contexts, while particularized implicatures emerge in interactional and transactional dialogues through violations of relevance and quantity maxims. These findings indicate that the textbook implicitly introduces pragmatic knowledge; however, pedagogical guidance for implicature interpretation remains limited. This study contributes to pragmatic textbook evaluation by highlighting the role of implicature in developing learners' pragmatic competence within the Merdeka Curriculum framework.

Keywords: *Conversational Implicature, Pragmatics, EFL Textbook, Merdeka Curriculum, Content Analysis*

INTRODUCTION

English textbooks have a central role in the learning process of English as a foreign language (EFL), especially in Indonesia, where English is not the main language (Li & Fernandez Deocampo, 2022). Textbooks not only present grammar and vocabulary, but are also the main means to develop students' communicative competence (Prasetyaningtyas et al., 2022). The material contained in the textbook will greatly influence students' perception of how English is used in real contexts. The content of the textbook must reflect language practices that are relevant, accurate, and in accordance with pragmatic principles, including the concept of implication (Alshumaimeri & Alharbi, 2024). In the context of the Merdeka curriculum that prioritizes context-based learning, understanding the implications is very relevant to improve students' overall communicative skills (Widodo & Khoiriyah, 2025).

Meanings that are not explicitly stated but can be deduced from speech or text, known as implications, are an important component of pragmatic analysis (Adam & Sailuddin, 2025). In English textbooks, especially in the dialogue or narrative discourse section, speech that has an implied intention is often found (Khotimah et al., 2022). Understanding the implications does not only require linguistic skills but also requires pragmatic competence, namely the ability to understand the speaker's intentions in a particular social and cultural context (Siti Nur Azizah et al., 2025). For EFL students, mastery of implications allows them to not only master the structure of language but also to be able to interpret meaning in real interactions (Amir et al., 2025). Without an

understanding of the implications, communication can become rigid, literal, and contextual, which will ultimately hinder the achievement of language learning goals (Habibah et al., 2024). The concept of implication introduced by Grice through the theory of the principle of cooperation and the maxims of conversation became the main framework in understanding indirect communication (Husna et al., 2025). In the context of English Education, the existence of implications in textbooks provides added value in the form of strengthening high-level language skills (Octaviyanti et al., 2025). Implicit understanding hones students' critical and interpretative thinking skills, as students are required to not only read words, but also relate them to certain contexts, speakers' intentions, and social norms (Maghsoudi & Khodamoradi, 2023). The existence of implications in learning materials is not underestimated, but must be a concern in the process of designing and evaluating textbook content (Fitriyah et al., 2025). This is especially important in the implementation of the Merdeka curriculum that supports meaning-based learning and contextual experiences (Hanifah, 2025).

This research is based on attention to the importance of pragmatic aspects, especially implications, in English teaching materials for EFL students. The textbooks used in the Indonesian national education system, especially under the auspices of the Merdeka curriculum, have undergone various improvements in terms of content and approach (Damayanti & Mukarto, 2024). The extent to which the implications are present and used pedagogically in these books has not been systematically studied (Rouki, 2023). This research focuses on how implications arise, the dominant types of implications, and the contexts that underlie their appearance in English textbooks at the junior high school level of the Merdeka curriculum. With a pragmatic-based content analysis approach, this study aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the function and distribution of implications in the textbook.

Research conducted by Zahra & Arianti, (2022), Found that international textbooks present more complex implications compared to national textbooks, with the use of more explicit contextual conversations. Rosyidah, (2024), also states that 101 implications in the online TOEFL class, with the maxim of quantity being the most dominant, indicate the importance of the role of teachers, students and the complexity of the material in the emergence of implications. Moreover, Lestari et al., (2025), noted that referential expressions are the lexical form that most often appears in EFL textbooks for junior high schools based on the Merdeka curriculum. While this study underlines the importance of pragmatic studies, it has not explicitly dissected how implicit structures work in the national textbooks of the Merdeka curriculum.

The gap arises when looking at the fact that most previous research has placed more emphasis on the frequency and form of implications, but has not linked the findings to the pedagogical goals of the Merdeka curriculum. This creates a significant space for

this research to fill in the gaps in the existing scientific discourse, as well as make a theoretical and practical contribution to the development of pragmatic sensitive teaching materials (Rabab'ah et al., 2024). An in-depth analysis of the representation of implications in the English textbooks of the Merdeka curriculum will show how pragmatic values are implicitly instilled in students (Oktoma et al., 2025). This study aims to not only to describe the types and frequencies of implications, but also assess the extent to which these implications contribute to the development of EFL students' communication skills. Thus, this research is expected to be a new perspective that combines pragmatic studies with the evaluation of textbook content, as well as its relevance to national education goals in the context of the latest curriculum.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative content analysis to examine the realization of conversational implicatures in an English textbook for Grade VII developed under the Merdeka Curriculum. This approach was selected to allow in-depth interpretation of implied meanings in naturally occurring textbook dialogues, particularly those that reflect pragmatic use of language in instructional contexts.

The data were drawn from dialogues and conversational texts contained in one officially used Grade VII English textbook. The textbook was selected purposively because it aligns with the national curriculum and emphasizes communicative competence as a key learning objective. The unit of analysis consisted of individual utterances that contained implied meaning, which were identified through observed violations of Grice's cooperative maxims, namely quantity, quality, relevance, and manner.

The data analysis followed three systematic stages. First, utterances containing conversational implicature were identified from the selected dialogues. Second, the identified implicatures were classified into generalized conversational implicature or particularized conversational implicature. Third, each implicature was analyzed to determine the violated maxim and the inferred meaning. To ensure analytical rigor and consistency, the classification and interpretation of implicatures were guided by the theoretical frameworks proposed by Grice (1975) and Cutting (2002).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

RESULTS

This section presents the findings of the analysis of conversational implicatures identified in a Grade VII English textbook under the *Merdeka Curriculum*. The analysis focuses on the types of conversational implicature, namely generalized conversational

implicature (GCI) and particularized conversational implicature (PCI), as well as the Gricean maxims involved in each instance.

Based on the qualitative content analysis, the findings indicate that the textbook contains both GCI and PCI across a range of communicative contexts, including descriptive, interpersonal, instructional, and transactional dialogues. Overall, generalized conversational implicatures occur more frequently than particularized conversational implicatures, suggesting a preference for more accessible forms of implied meaning.

1. Generalized Conversational Implicature

Generalized conversational implicatures are implied meanings that can be inferred without reliance on a highly specific situational context. In the analyzed textbook, GCI predominantly appears in descriptive and instructional dialogues, where the intended meaning is relatively transparent to learners.

1.1 GCI in Social Descriptive Dialogues

Example:

Dewi: *“Have you met our newest English teacher?”*

Vina: *“Yes, I have. She is so beautiful. She looks like a model.”*

In this dialogue, Vina’s response generates a generalized conversational implicature that expresses admiration and a positive evaluation of the teacher. The implied meaning can be inferred through common social knowledge without requiring additional contextual information. The utterance adheres to the cooperative principle and does not violate any conversational maxim.

1.2 GCI in Descriptive Dialogues about Animals

Example:

Sari: *“Look at the giraffe. They have long necks and legs.”*

Luna: *“Yes, they do. They also have curly eyelashes.”*

Budi: *“And look at the zebras. They have black and white stripes.”*

This exchange produces a generalized conversational implicature that the speakers are observing animals in a zoo, even though the setting is not explicitly stated. The inference is based on shared world knowledge, and the dialogue complies with all Gricean maxims, reinforcing its classification as GCI.

1.3 GCI in Interpersonal Descriptive Dialogues

Example:

Sani: *"Your living room is very unique."*

Lulu: *"It has three purple chairs and a yellow bookshelf."*

Lulu's response conveys an implicature of accepting and elaborating on a compliment. The implied meaning is easily inferred and does not depend on a specific situational context. The cooperative principle is maintained, indicating a generalized conversational implicature.

1.4 GCI in Expressions of Personal Interest

Example:

Teacher: *"What is your favourite school subject?"*

Intan: *"I love math. It's challenging."*

Dira: *"I enjoy science."*

The implicatures in this exchange reflect the students' personal preferences and positive attitudes toward learning. The implied meanings are explicit, context-independent, and consistent with the maxims of relevance and quantity.

1.5 GCI in Direction-Giving Dialogues

Example:

Alex: *"Do you know where the library is?"*

Amar: *"Go straight and turn left."*

This dialogue generates a generalized conversational implicature indicating that Amar is providing helpful guidance to someone unfamiliar with the location. The meaning is clear and does not require additional contextual inference.

2. Particularized Conversational Implicature

Particularized conversational implicatures arise when implied meanings can only be interpreted through specific situational or social contexts. In the analyzed textbook, PCI appears mainly in interpersonal and transactional dialogues and frequently involves violations of Gricean maxims, particularly relevance and quantity.

2.1 PCI in Interpersonal Descriptions of People

Example:

Anya: *"She is Selma. She is clever and beautiful."*

Danu: *"Doni looks calm, but he is very active in student organizations."*

Danu's response generates a particularized conversational implicature suggesting that external appearance may not accurately reflect personal characteristics. The utterance violates the maxim of relevance by shifting the focus from appearance to behavior, requiring contextual interpretation and shared social assumptions.

2.2 PCI in Environmental Descriptive Dialogues

Example:

Beni: *"There are trash cans here."*

Udin: *"This place is nice for healing."*

Beni's utterance implies responsibility for maintaining cleanliness, while Udin's response implies emotional comfort and relaxation without stating it explicitly. Udin's utterance violates the maxim of quantity by providing indirect information. Interpretation depends on situational inference, classifying the exchange as PCI.

2.3 PCI in Transactional Classroom Dialogue

Example:

James: *"Did you bring your notebook?"*

Rosa: *"I forgot it, but I brought my calculator."*

Rosa's response produces a particularized conversational implicature indicating an attempt to mitigate responsibility. The utterance violates the maxim of relevance by diverting attention from the missing notebook. The implied meaning can only be understood within the classroom context.

3. Distribution of Implicature Types

Overall, the findings indicate that:

- Generalized conversational implicatures dominate the textbook, particularly in descriptive and instructional texts.
- Particularized conversational implicatures occur less frequently but are found in socially nuanced and interactional dialogues.
- Violations of the maxims of relevance and quantity are the most common triggers for PCI.

These patterns suggest that while the textbook introduces learners to implicit meaning, pragmatic complexity is unevenly distributed across dialogue types.

DISCUSSION

The present study investigated conversational implicatures in a Grade VII English textbook under Indonesia's Merdeka Curriculum and identified systematic patterns in both the distribution and function of implicature types. The findings demonstrate that generalized conversational implicatures occur more frequently than particularized conversational implicatures, reflecting the pedagogical orientation of the textbook toward clarity and accessibility.

The dominance of generalized conversational implicatures supports Grice's (1975) assertion that GCI relies on shared linguistic conventions and minimal contextual dependence. In the textbook, GCI frequently appears in descriptive and instructional dialogues, enabling learners to infer implied meanings without complex pragmatic reasoning. This finding aligns with Zahra and Arianti (2022), who reported that national EFL textbooks tend to prioritize generalized implicatures to accommodate learners' developing language proficiency. While this approach enhances comprehensibility, it may limit learners' exposure to pragmatically rich interactions.

In contrast, particularized conversational implicatures were less frequent and primarily embedded in interpersonal and transactional dialogues. These implicatures required learners to interpret meaning through contextual cues, social norms, and shared assumptions. The frequent involvement of violations of relevance and quantity maxims is consistent with previous pragmatic research (Cutting, 2002; Rosyidah, 2024), indicating that such violations function as key triggers for inferential processing. When appropriately supported, PCI has strong potential to develop learners' pragmatic awareness.

Compared with earlier studies, this research extends the literature by linking implicature types to specific communicative contexts within the textbook. While Zahra and Arianti (2022) emphasized frequency comparisons between national and international textbooks, the present study highlights how implicatures function pedagogically within a curriculum that emphasizes contextual and meaning-based learning. Similarly, whereas Rouki (2023) focused on learners' pragmatic awareness, this study contributes by examining textbook input as a source of pragmatic exposure.

From a pedagogical perspective, the findings suggest that the textbook partially supports the pragmatic goals of the Merdeka Curriculum, which emphasizes communicative competence, contextual understanding, and learner autonomy. Although implicatures—particularly PCI—are present, the lack of explicit instructional guidance or reflective activities limits their pedagogical effectiveness. Without teacher mediation or follow-up tasks, learners may not fully notice or interpret implied meanings (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001).

Therefore, English textbooks developed under the Merdeka Curriculum would benefit from integrating explicit pragmatic instruction, such as activities that guide learners to identify implicatures, analyze violated maxims, and reflect on speaker intentions. Such integration would align with the curriculum's emphasis on critical thinking and contextual learning while addressing the pragmatic competence gap in EFL contexts (Rabab'ah et al., 2024).

Overall, this study contributes to pragmatics and EFL material evaluation by demonstrating that conversational implicature is present but unevenly exploited as a pedagogical resource in national textbooks. By aligning implicature analysis with curriculum objectives, the study offers practical insights for textbook developers, curriculum designers, and EFL teachers seeking to enhance learners' communicative and pragmatic competence within the Merdeka Curriculum framework.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that Grade VII English textbooks under the *Merdeka* Curriculum contain both generalized and particularized conversational implicatures, with generalized implicatures occurring more frequently. While the presence of implicature indicates implicit support for pragmatic development, the uneven distribution and lack of explicit pedagogical scaffolding limit its instructional potential. The findings highlight the importance of incorporating explicit pragmatic guidance in EFL textbooks to enhance learners' communicative competence and pragmatic awareness.

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