Understanding French Conversational Implicatures by Foreign Language Study Program Students

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Abstract

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Learners of French as a foreign language are expected to be able to use French as French native speakers (bien français). In communication, not all meaning comes from the words spoken. Speeches that contain things like this are called conversational implicatures. Understanding foreign language conversational implicatures is difficult. Learners are required for this ability to be able to communicate like native speakers. The present study intends to know to what extent learners understand conversational implicatures. This study follows Bouton and Pratama's research examining the understanding of conversational implicatures in English as a second language. Respondents of this research were 55 students studying French as a foreign language. In collecting the data, three types of tests were used, namely: (1) a Test of Conversational Implicatures, (2) a Test of Vocabulary Mastery, (3) and Test of Structure Mastery. There are 30 questions about 10 types of conversational implicatures, 30 vocabulary questions, and 30 structure questions. The results of the study revealed that there were 8 questions answered incorrectly by more than 50% of respondents. It also shows that the most difficult types of Conversational Implicature are (a) Indirect Criticism, followed by (b) Quantitative, (c) Qualitative, (d) Manner, and (e) MRR. By using Multiple Linear Regression Analysis, statistically it is revealed that vocabulary and structure mastery contributes to Conversational Implicatures understanding.

Extrait

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Les apprenants de français langue étrangère doivent être capables d'utiliser le français en tant que locuteurs natifs français (bien français). En communication, tout le sens ne vient pas des mots prononcés. Les discours qui contiennent des choses comme celle-ci sont appelés implicatures conversationnelles. Comprendre les implicatures conversationnelles en langue étrangère est difficile. Les apprenants sont tenus pour cette capacité de pouvoir communiquer comme des locuteurs natifs. La présente étude vise à savoir dans quelle mesure les apprenants comprennent les implicatures conversationnelles. Cette étude fait suite aux recherches de Bouton et Pratama examinant la compréhension des implicatures conversationnelles en anglais langue seconde. Les répondants de cette recherche étaient 55 étudiants étudiant le français comme langue étrangère. Lors de la collecte des données, trois types de tests ont été utilisés, à savoir : (1) un test d'implicatures conversationnelles, (2) un test de maîtrise du vocabulaire, (3) et un test de maîtrise de la structure. Il y a 30 questions sur 10 types d'implicatures conversationnelles, 30 questions de vocabulaire et 30 questions de structure. Les résultats de l'étude ont révélé qu'il y avait 8 questions auxquelles plus de 50% des répondants avaient répondu incorrectement. Il montre également que les types d'implicature conversationnelle les plus difficiles sont (a) la critique indirecte, suivie de (b) quantitative, (c) qualitative, (d) manière et (e) MRR. En utilisant l'analyse de régression linéaire multiple, il est statistiquement révélé que la maîtrise du vocabulaire et de la structure contribue à la compréhension des implicatures conversationnelles.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of Conversational Implicature was developed by Grice in his phenomenal work delivered at Harvard University in 1967. According to Grice, the speakers convey information not only by what they say, but also by what they do not say. Pratama (2016) stated that "Conversational implicature is when speakers produce utterances to convey certain intentions, then the speech partners translate these intentions accurately and intuitively."

In Indonesia, the speech of a mother to her daughter's friend still in their house, "It's 09.00 at night," not only shows the time that it is already 09.00 at night, but also means that her daughter's friend should go home immediately because it is already night. The utterance includes what is called conversational implicature.

Learning Conversational Implicature in a foreign language or even in a second language is more difficult than in the first language or mother tongue (Lestari 2017). Inferring conversational implicatures also requires language intuition. Mother tongue or first language intuition is strong in speakers. Even though in learning and mastering a foreign language, students are expected to also master Conversational Implicatures, as expressed by Celce-Murcia, Dornyei and Thurrell (1995) that, "In an ideal exchange of communication, second language learners are expected to be able to convey meaning and intention to his/her listener effectively. Second language learners are expected to be able to interact, negotiate, and have a transactional communication using the target language." That in ideal communication, second language learners are expected to be able to send messages and their intentions to their speech partners effectively. Second language learners are expected to be able to interact, negotiate, and communicate transactionally using the target language (the language being studied). Wijana (1997: 29) also states that learning a foreign language does not only involve differences in language structure, but also involves differences in social rules that determine speech forms. This situation is also revealed by Ishara and Cohen (2010), cited by Choraih, Loutfi & Mansoor (2016), that there is a gap between what research in pragmatics has revealed and how language is generally taught today.

It is necessary to use conversational implicature in mastering a foreign language so that students can communicate as native speakers. Based on the researchers' observations, conversational implicatures have not been practised by French learners of my faculty. This research will discuss:

(1) Which Conversational Implicature causes difficulties for learners of French as a foreign language and why?
(2) To what extent is the ability of French language learners as a foreign language to understand Conversational Implicature?

Researches on Conversational Implicatures have been carried out. One of the most recent works was Pratama et al. carried out in 2017 and 2019. His research was about Second Language Learners' Comprehension of Conversational Implicatures in English in which the objectives are: (1) Knowing the most appropriate implicature it is difficult for learners of English as a second language, and (2) What are the factors that influence the competence of English as a second language to understand implicatures. The results of Pratama's research reveal that the indirect critical implicature is the most difficult implicature for all groups of students.

The research by Pratama et al. (2017, 2019) used data on English as a second language. As French lecturers, the researchers want to reveal whether the phenomenon of learning English also occurs in learning French as a foreign language. The French language system is very different from the Indonesian language system. On the other hand, French language learners are expected to have the ability to speak as native speakers (bien français) so that knowing the ability to understand Conversational Implicature can be used to improve the process of teaching and learning. The research of Bouton and Pratama et al. was used as the prominent reference in this research including using certain instruments in collecting data.

The discussion about conversational implicature cannot be separated from the theory of the Cooperative Principle from Grice (1975). The notion of implicature can be defined is a new way of describing meaning (Moeschler 2012). Conversational implicature provides an explicit explanation of how it is possible to mean more than what is said, i.e. "more than what is literally expressed by the conventional sense of the linguistic expressions uttered (Levinson 1983: 97). Levinson used this utterance.

A: Can you tell me the time?
B: Well, the milkman has come.

Grice's theory of implicatures is an attempt to deal with patterns of inference in natural language that cannot be fully explained by formal logical devices. According to Grice, 'speaker's meaning' can be better understood by understanding the conditions that govern the conversation. For example, he observed that there may be differences between what a 'speaker' says and what a speaker implies.

Grice's theory, called the Cooperative Principle, consists of four well-known maxims. What is the Cooperative Principle can be seen from the following statement "Make your conversational contribution as required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the

talk exchange in which you are engaged". The Cooperative Principle consists of four maxims, namely: (1) Quality, (2) Quantity, (3) Relevance, and (4) Manner which can be explained in following maxims.

Quality

(1) Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purposes of the exchange)
(2) Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

Quality

(1) Try to make your contribution one that is true.
(2) Do not say what you believe to be false.
(3) Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence

Relation

Be relevant

Manner – Be perspicuous

(1) Avoid obscurity of expression
(2) Avoid ambiguity
(3) Be brief (avoid unecessary prolixity)
(4) Be orderly

Moechler (2018) in his article "*L'Implicite et l'interface sémantique et pragmatique* où *passe la frontière*" states that in addition to conventional implicatures, which are triggered by certain linguistic expressions, conversational implicatures are also triggered by the speaker's perceived respect for the principle of cooperation. Moerchler uses the following speech to explain implicature.

According to Moescheler, for the Maxim of Quantity, the utterance "*Quelques étudiants ont réussi leur examen de pragmatique*" has the implicature *"Quelques étudiants n'ont pas réussi leur examen de pragmatique*".
In the Maxim of Quality, the story of "*Anne a trois doctorats*" has the implicature "*Je crois qu'Anne a trois doctorats, et j'ai la preuve qu'elle les a*". In Maxim Relation, the conversation between A and B. A *: "Je suis en panne d'essence".* B : "*Il y a un garage au."coin de la rue"* has the implicature "*Le garage est ouvert et on y trouve de l'essence".* In Manière's Maxim, the utterance *"Lucky Luke enfourcha Jolly Jumper et disparut dans le couchant"*, has the implicature *"Lucky Luke enfourcha Jolly Jumper et ensuite disparut dans le couchant" .*

Furthermore, Moeschler uses the Gricean perspective to state that the speaker's meaning is unconventional. In other words, the speaker's understanding is not a matter of convention (linguistics), but the speech partner's conclusions must recognize the communicative intention (second-order intention) to access his informative intent (first level). Conversational implicatures, however, vary according to context and are therefore more flexible and harder to interpret (Thomas 1995:57). Pratama (2017:53) in his journal states that:

(1) Manipulation of quantity maxim produces *quantity implicature.*
(2) Manipulation of quality maxim produces *quality implicature.*
(3) Manipulation of relevance maxim produces *relevance implicature*
(4) Manipulation of manner maxim produces *manner implicature*

In addition to the four things above, Ishihara and Cohen (2010), cited by Pratama et al. (2017), consider the following factors can cause difficulties in using Pragmatics for English learners as a second language, namely

(1) The negative transfer of language features and cultures from the first language
(2) The limited ability and knowledge of grammar and vocabulary of the second language.
(3) Overgeneralization of English pragmatic rules
(4) Effects of improper teaching or learning materials.
(5) Resistance to using English pragmatic norms.

METHODOLOGY

The research data sources were 55 students of the French Literature Study Program of Universitas Negeri Semarang (Semarang State University). Their age is between 19 - 23 years. They have been studying French for 2 - 4 years, with a grade point index of 2.5 - 4. To collect data, three tests were carried out: (1) Conversational Implicatures. For Understanding Conversational Implicature, a test was provided by using Google Forms. There are 30 questions, each of which is in the form of a conversation containing conversational implicatures. There are 3 choices and the respondents must choose the most appropriate intention from the existing speech. The 10 types of Conversational Implicatures are (1) Qualitative, (2) Quantitative, (3)

Relevancy, (3) Manner, (5) Pope Q, (6) Scalar, (7) Indirect Criticism, (8) Idiomatic, (9) MMR, and (10) Sequence. From the results of understanding conversational implicature, it is revealed which type has more than 50% errors. In addition to the conversational implicature understanding test, there is also a vocabulary test and a structure test. To find out whether there is an effect of Vocabulary Mastery and Structure Mastery on Conversational Implicature understanding, Multiple Linear Regression Analysis is used. Multiple linear regression is a regression model that involves more than one independent variable. Multiple linear regression analysis was carried out to find out the direction and how much influence the independent variables have on the dependent variable (Meiryani 2021). In this research, the independent variables are Vocabulary Mastery and Structure Mastery, while the dependent variable is Conversational Implicature understanding. The effect appeared from the results of this multiple linear regression analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results of Understanding Pragmatics, Vocabulary, and Structure
In this study three tests were carried out, namely: (1) Pragmatic Understanding, (2) Vocabulary, and (3) Structure. Each test contains thirty questions. The results of the three tests can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1 Results of Conversational Implicatures understanding, Vocabulary, and Structure

No	Respondents	Conversational Implicatures understanding	Vocabulary	Structure
1	ASS	20	15	12
2	AK	19	25	23
3	AT	22	27	25
4	AW	22	26	25
5	ALQ	17	18	16
6	AS	24	21	22
7	ADW	25	26	23
8	ACA	24	27	22
9	ADP	23	26	23
10	AOM	19	26	26
11	AR	24	25	18
12	ATW	20	25	22
13	ARL	15	23	23
14	CPK	23	24	24
15	DUC	14	27	22
16	DRM	11	23	17
17	DHS	20	26	21
18	DUA	23	24	19

19	DIS	18	24	22
20	EHS	20	25	14
21	FAM	20	24	22
22	FN	21	23	20
23	FN	16	25	20
24	FFS	18	25	16
25	HFI	21	26	15
26	HAS	17	25	18
27	HP	23	27	24
28	HDF	19	25	22
29	LRA	22	26	26
30	LS	19	20	19
31	LH	12	23	10
32	MSP	19	23	19
33	MA	18	23	21
34	MAA	24	22	21
35	MF	21	18	20
36	MIH	24	25	25
37	MCA	17	27	13
38	NL	20	25	17
39	NMH	24	25	21
40	N S	19	23	29
41	PGP	21	24	28
42	PNO	22	22	21
43	PAR	15	21	19
44	RA	15	25	11
45	RAT	25	26	20
46	RU	22	25	22
47	SP	23	22	23
48	SN	21	23	23
49	TYW	20	25	26
50	TAR	16	23	16
51	VR	21	26	21

52	WW	22	27	25
53	WES	21	24	26
54	ZSF	24	26	29
55	ZIY	22	26	22

There were 55 respondents in this study, consisting of 44 female students and 11 male students, aged between 19 to 23 years old. They were the students of the French Literature Study Program at the Faculty of Languages and Arts, Universitas Negeri Semarang. Forty four respondents have learned the French language more than two years. Seven people have learned it more than three years. Seven people have learned the language more than four years, and two have learned it more than five years. There were five respondents with Grade Point Average between 2.5 - 2.9. Thirty-three students between 3.0 - 3.5, and seventeen students got GPA between 3.6 – 4.

In this study, to find out the results of Conversational Implicatures understanding, 30 questions with ten types of Conversational Implicatures, and each type is used in three questions. The following is the question number and the conversational implicature they contain. (1) Pope -Q, (2) MRR, (3) Sequential, (4) Indirect Criticism, (5) Scalar, (6) Idiomatic, (7) Quantity, (8) Quality, (9) Manner, (10) Relevance. This is in line with Pratama's studies (2017; 2019). The 30 questions were arranged as follows: (1) Quantitave, (2) Relevancy, (3) Manner, (4) Qualitative, (5) Pope Q, (6) Scalar, (7) Scalar, (8) Indirect Criticism, (9) Idiomatic, (10) MRR, (11) Relevancy, (12) Qualitative, (13) Scalar, (14) Indirect Criticism, (15) MRR, (16) Quantative, (17) Manner, (18) POPE-Q, (19) Sequence, (20) Idiomatic, (21) MRR, (22) Indirect Criticism, (23) Scalar, (24) Qualitative, (25) Relevancy, (26) Idiomatic, (27) POPE-Q, (28) Quantitative, (29) Sequence, (30) Manner. Overall, the types of implicature used can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2 Types of Conversational Implicatures

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                                          ┌──────────────────────┐
                                          │      POPE - Q         │
                                          └──────────────────────┘
                                          ┌──────────────────────┐
                                          │     Minimum          │
                                          │  Requirement Rule    │
                                          └──────────────────────┘
                                          ┌──────────────────────┐
                                          │     Sequential       │
                                          └──────────────────────┘
                          ┌───────────┐   ┌──────────────────────┐
                          │ Formulaic │───│  Indirect Criticism  │
                          └───────────┘   └──────────────────────┘
                                          ┌──────────────────────┐
                                          │       Scalar         │
                                          └──────────────────────┘
  ┌────────────────┐                      ┌──────────────────────┐
  │ Conversational │                      │      Idiomatic       │
  │  Implicatures  │                      └──────────────────────┘
  └────────────────┘
                                          ┌──────────────────────┐
                                          │      Quality         │
                                          └──────────────────────┘
                                          ┌──────────────────────┐
                                          │      Quantity        │
                          ┌──────────────┐└──────────────────────┘
                          │ Idiosyncratic│┌──────────────────────┐
                          └──────────────┘│       Manner         │
                                          └──────────────────────┘
                                          ┌──────────────────────┐
                                          │      Relevance       │
                                          └──────────────────────┘
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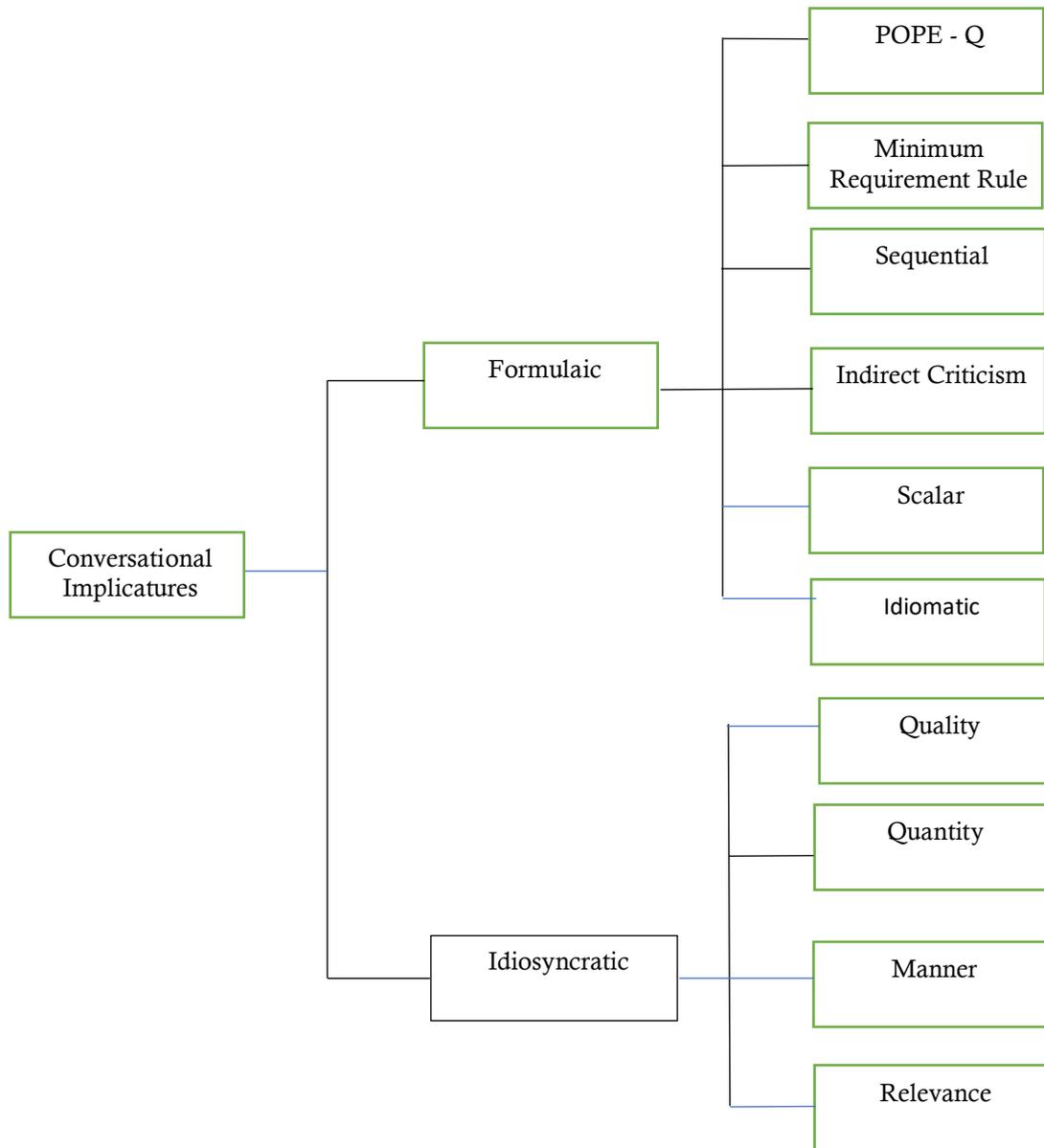
Source: Pratama et al. (2017, 2019)

Formulaic implicatures are implicatures which have certain semantic and pragmatic patterns, and idiosyncratic implicatures are implicatures that are highly dependent on the context inherent in the conversation (Bouton 1992).

The result shows that there are 8 of 30 questions with 10 types of conversational implicatures of which more than 50% of respondents answered incorrectly. The conversations contain (1) Indirect criticism, in questions numbers 8,14, and 22; (2) Quantitative, in question number 16, (3) Relevance, in question number 25, (4) MRR, in question number 15, (5) Qualitative, in number 4, and (6) Manner, in question number 30. The implicature that is difficult to understand is Indirect Criticism, Quantitative, Qualitative, Relevancy, Manner, Minimum Requirement Rule. The eight difficult questions are as follow.

(1) Indirect Criticism is in question number 8 with 98.2% answered wrongly.

Context: Calvin and Martin are friends. Calvin asks if Martin has been watching "Robin Hood".

Calvin : As-tu vu "Robin Hood ?
Martin : Ouais. J'y suis allé hier soir.
Calvin : Qu'en as- tu pensé ?
Martin : La cinématographie était genial.
   (Source: Bouton 1994)

Question: What is the meaning of Martin's last words?
a. Martin stated that the cinematography was excellent.
b. Martin stated that the film was not good.
c. Martin stated that he watched Robin Hood the evening before.

(2) Indirect Criticism is in question number 14 with 94.5% answered incorrectly.
 Context: Nathalie and Marine, the lecturer and assistant, are talking about
   a paper written by Marie, their student.
Nathalie : Astu déjà fini avec le travail de Marine ?
Marine   : Ouais, je l'ai lu hier soir.
Nathalie : Qu'en as- tu pensé ?
Marine   : Eh bien, je pensais que c'était bien tapé :
    (Source: Bouton 1994)

Question: What does Marine's last words mean?

a. Marine stated that the assignment was well typed.
b. Marine stated that he had read Marie's work.
c. Marine stated that Marie's job was not good.

(3) Indirect Critisism is in question number 22 with 50.9% answered wrongly.
 Context: Two lecturers – Marie and Martine are talking about a new student – Louisa who has lived in
Europe for more than a year
 Marie : Martine, comment est la compétence de production écrite de Louisa ?
 Martine : Elle est jolie et elle a beacoup d'amis.

Question: What does Martine mean?
a. Martine stated that Louisa was beautiful.
b. Martine stated that Louisa's writing skills were not satisfactory.
c. Martine stated that Louisa had many friends.

(4) Quantitative is in question number 16 with 100% answered incorrectly.
 Context : Agnes invites Adèle to the library.
 Agnes : Si on va à la bibliothèque ?
 Adèle : C'est dimanche. Mes parents vont venir me voir.

Question: What does Adele mean?

a. Adèle informs her that it's Sunday. His parents will come to visit him.
b. Adèle informs her that she cannot go to the library.
c. Adèle informs that the library is closed.

(5) Relevancy is in question number 25 with 98.2% answered incorrectly.

 Context: Mireille and Nadine are friends.
   Mireille asked Nadine who had not returned the book she had borrowed.

 Mireille : Tu n'as pas rendu mon livre de grammaire ?
 Nadine : Silvie, ma sœur est en train de faire ses devoirs.

Question: What does Nadine mean?
a. Nadine tells Mireille that Silvie, her sister, is doing her homework.
b. Nadine tells Mireille that she hasn't returned her book because her sister is still using it.
c. Nadine tells Mireilla that she hasn't returned her book.

(6) The Minimum Requirement Rule is in question number 15 with 74.5% answered incorrectly

Context: During the COVID 19 Pandemic, Marie and Philippe will get married.
They are planning how many guests to invite.

Marie   : Nous allons inviter combien d'amis ?
Phillipe   : 30

Question: How many guests to invite

a. More than 30
b. At most 30
c. Exactly 30

(7) Qualitative is in question number 4 with 67.3% answered wrongly.
Context: Marie and Martin have just finished attending lectures.

Marie : On rentre maintenant ?
Martin : Il pleut.

Question: What is meant by Martin's utterance?
a. Martin says it's raining.
b. Martin told them to wait until the rain let up.
c. Patrick told them they couldn't go home yet.

(8) Manner is in question number 30 with 54.5% answered wrongly.
Context: Pierre and Martin are friends.
They were talking about Jean, their friend.
Pierre   : Dans quelle ville habite Jean, maintenant ?
Martin   : Dans une ville à l'Ouest de l'Indonesia. Il doit travailler là pour un an.
Il habite là sans sa famille.

Question: What does Martin mean?
a. Martin doesn't know exactly where Jean lives.
b. Martin know Jean lived in the western part of Indonesia.
c. Martin knows where Jean lives.

From question number eight containing Indirect Criticism, 98.2 % of respondents answered incorrectly. From the reasons they answered, the utterance "La cinématographique est génial" is understood as a statement with the meaning as it is. The Indirect Criticism question number 14, with the answer "Eh bien, je pensais que c'était bien tape" was interpreted as it is by 94.5% respondents. The utterance that contains Indirect Criticism with 50.9% wrong answers because they consider the answer "Elle est jolie et elle a beaucoup d'amis" is not a criticism. The other 6 questions were not optimal results, because more than 50% of respondents answered wrong. The respondents of this study have difficulties in understanding 8 questions containing Conversational Implicatures. From the results of his research, Nguyen (2005) says that students of Pragmatics as a second language are not equipped with complete knowledge. Likewise, with low linguistic competence, students will use limited linguistic devices.

The wrong answers in the Indirect Criticism type indicate that the respondents understand the speech as it is, and it reminds us (the lecturers) not to only focus on grammar, as stated by Choraih, Loutfi, and Mansoor (2016) "We provide evidence that language proficiency should not only be equated with grammatical well-formedness but also with how to use it appropriately and efficiently in the target language"

However, they also state that implementing this view is far from easy, especially in light of the long-standing trend characterized by a focus on grammatical competence in training and curriculum design.

To answer the second research question, the following tables are used as a reference.

Table 3 Mean of Conversational Implicatures understanding, Vocabulary, Structure

Test	Mean	STD Deviation	N
Conversational Implicatures understanding	20,13	3,261	55
Vocabulary	24,15	2,430	55
Structure	20,89	4,276	55

The mean of Conversational Implicatures understanding is 20.13 , the vocabulary is 24.15 and the Structure is 20.89.We can see in the Table 3 above.

Table 4 Anova Table

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Meas Square	F	Sig.
Regression	127,925	2	63.962	7,454	,001[b]
Residual	446,185	52	8,580		
Total	574,109	54			

The ANOVA table above explains whether there is a significant effect of the Vocabulary (X1) and Structure (X2) simultaneously on the Conversational Implicatures understanding (Y). From the output it can be seen that the value of prob. F count (Sig.) is smaller than the level of a significance or probability of 0.01 <0.05, then regression can be used to predict the value of Conversational Implicatures understanding.

Table 5 Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized	Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig
	B	Std Error	Beta		
(Constant)	11,336	4,055		2, 796	, 007
Vocabulary	,064	,172	,047	, 370	, 713
		,098			
Structure	,347		, 455	3,545	, 001

Dependent Variable : Conversational Implicature Understanding

In the Coefficients Table above, column B in Constant (a) is 11.336, while the value of the Vocabulary variable (b1) is 0.64 and the Structure (b2) is 0.347 so that the regression equation can be written:
    Y = a+ b1X1 + b2X2 or Y= 11.336 + 0.064X1 + 0.347X2

The Coefficient of Vocabulary is positive. It means that if the Vocabulary (X1) increases by one unit, then the Conversational Implicature understanding (Y) will increase by 0.064 or 6.4%.

Furthermore, the structural coefficient is also positive, meaning that if the structural(X2) increases by one unit, then the pragmatic understanding (Y) will increase by 0.347 or 34.7%.

The result of this study reveals that Vocabulary and Structure have an effect on Conversational Implicatures understanding. Thus the lectures should also focus in improving the teaching and learning process of vocabulary and structure. The result of a research informs that compared to the teaching of grammatical and lexical knowledge, the area of pragmatics still lags far behind (Choraih, Loutfi,and Mansoor 2016) and also the statement that   the efficiency and proficiency of language use can only be achieved when the interlocutors are speaking in a socio-culturally-informed context/setting, where considerations of a number of social factors are at play. The suggestions is   that lecturers of French as a foreign language should prepare textbooks whose contents provide the material needed for learning Pragmatics including Conversational Implicatures.

CONCLUSION

The conclusions of this study are:
(1) Learners still have difficulty in understanding Conversational Implicatures
(2) Statistically it is revealed that vocabulary and structure mastery contributes to Conversational Implicatures understanding.
(3) It is suggested to develop textbooks that can be used to teach Vocabulary, Grammar by using conversations that contain Conversational Implicatures.

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