

The Impact of Speaking Fluency on the Use of Implicatures by EFL University Students

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Abstract

This study examines the interaction between speaking fluency, gender, and the production of conversational implicatures among Kurdish EFL university students. It addresses a gap in previous research that has largely overlooked how sociolinguistic factors such as speaking fluency and gender intersect with pragmatic competence in this context. Employing a mixed-methods design grounded in conversational analysis and Grice's theory of implicature, the study analyzes spontaneous conversations among 40 Kurdish EFL students (20 males, 20 females) from the first and fourth academic years at the Department of English, University of Zakho. Conversational implicatures were identified through systematic application of Gricean maxims and quantified using frequency counts, while speaking fluency was operationally categorized into proficiency levels. The findings challenge the assumption of a linear relationship between fluency and pragmatic output reported in earlier studies: although high-fluency speakers demonstrated greater sophistication in context-dependent particularized implicatures, mid-fluency participants produced the highest overall volume of implicatures. Additionally, a gender-based functional divergence emerged, with female participants predominantly employing implicatures for relational maintenance and emotional expression, and male participants favoring humor and social persuasion. These results suggest that communicative competence in a second language is a multidimensional construct shaped by the interaction of linguistic proficiency, gendered discourse practices, and strategic pragmatic use. The study is limited to Kurdish EFL learners whose first language is Northern Kurmanji, and its findings should be interpreted within this specific sociolinguistic context.

Keywords: (conversational implicature, fluency of speech, gender).

أثر طلاقة التحدّث في استخدام الاستلزمات التداولية لدى طلبة الجامعات من متعلّمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية

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الملخص

تبحث هذه الدراسة في التفاعل بين طلاقة التحدّث والنوع الاجتماعي وإنتاج الاستلزمات الحوارية لدى طلبة الجامعات الأكراد من متعلّمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية. وتعالج فجوة في الدراسات السابقة التي أغفلت إلى حدّ كبير كيفية تداخل العوامل الاجتماعية-اللغوية، مثل طلاقة التحدّث والنوع الاجتماعي، مع الكفاءة التداولية في هذا السياق. وقد اعتمدت الدراسة منهجاً مختلطاً قائماً على تحليل المحادثة ونظرية غرايس في الاستلزام الحواري، حيث جرى تحليل محادثات عفوية لأربعين طالباً وطالبة من متعلّمي اللغة الإنجليزية الأكراد (٢٠ ذكوراً و ٢٠ إناثاً) من السنتين الدراسيتين الأولى والرابعة في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية بجامعة زاخو.

تم تحديد الاستلزمات الحوارية من خلال التطبيق المنهجي لمبادئ غرايس التداولية، وقياسها كمياً باستخدام عدّ التكرارات، في حين جرى تصنيف طلاقة التحدّث إجرائياً إلى مستويات كفاءة مختلفة. وتفنّد النتائج الافتراض القائل بوجود علاقة خطية مباشرة بين الطلاقة والإنتاج التداولي كما ورد في بعض الدراسات السابقة؛ إذ أظهر المتحدثون ذوو الطلاقة العالية مستوى أعلى من التعقيد في الاستلزمات الخاصة المعتمدة على السياق، بينما سجّل المشاركون ذوو الطلاقة المتوسطة أعلى معدل إجمالي لإنتاج الاستلزمات.

كما كشفت النتائج عن تباين وظيفي قائم على النوع الاجتماعي، حيث استخدمت المشاركات الإناث الاستلزمات في الغالب لأغراض الحفاظ على العلاقات والتعبير العاطفي، في حين مال المشاركون الذكور إلى توظيفها لأغراض الدعابة والتأثير الاجتماعي. وتشير هذه النتائج إلى أن الكفاءة التواصلية في اللغة الثانية تُعدّ بناءً متعدد الأبعاد يتشكّل من خلال التفاعل بين الكفاءة اللغوية، والممارسات الخطابية المرتبطة بالنوع الاجتماعي، والاستخدام الاستراتيجي للتداولية. وتقتصر هذه الدراسة على متعلّمي اللغة الإنجليزية الأكراد الذين تُعدّ الكرمانجية الشمالية لغتهم الأم، وعليه ينبغي تفسير نتائجها ضمن هذا السياق الاجتماعي-اللغوي الخاص.

الكلمات المفتاحية: (الاستلزام الحواري، طلاقة التحدّث، النوع الاجتماعي).

1. Introduction

In the normal communication, people tend to communicate something different than what they are saying. Such connotations, or implicatures, emerge when interlocutual participants base their interpretations of intent upon some shared assumptions, contextual cues and principles of cooperation (Grice, 1975). The pragmatic competence of understanding and creating implicatures is one of the primary focuses of potentially successful communication in both first and second languages (Kasper & Rose, 2002). In the case of EFL learners, pragmatic competence is not limited to grammar and vocabulary, but it allows communicate in a subtle and socially acceptable way in everyday interaction.

Along with the studies in interlanguage pragmatics, the research indicates that pragmatically based knowledge emerges differently as compared to grammatical competence and learners have a tendency to exhibit pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic gaps in their knowledge (Bardovi-Harlig, 1999; Kasper & Rose, 2002). EFL students also often have problems with understanding and producing pragmatic phenomena of requesting, refusing, routines and implicatures, which may cause communicative breakdown even with the presence of grammatical competence. Interlanguage pragmatics studies reveal that pragmatic knowledge is developed at a different pace than grammatical competence, whereby learners exhibit disruptions in pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic competencies (Taguchi, 2011). Inferential competence is reflected in implicature, in particular, wherein learners must balance what they say and contextual assumptions.

The fluency of speech, its fluent, fast, and automatic nature, is the focus of spoken L2 performance and a factor affecting cognitive resources which can be used in pragmatic reasoning (Kormos and Denes, 2004; Kormos, 2006). Planning, monitoring can be impaired due to dysfluency, lowering the rate of implicature use, and inappropriateness of various implicature use, and higher fluency may support context-sensitive implicature-rich speech (Mitchelson, 2011). In spite of these theoretical connections, there are limited studies which research the predictions of

fluency in the production of implicature in EFL situations (Tavakoli & Skehan, 2005; Bardovi-Harlig, 1999; Taguchi, 2011).

This paper explores how temporal and cognitive aspects of fluency relate to the application of implicatures in oral work by EFL learners with the combination of acoustic fluency indicators and discourse analyses on whether higher fluency can promote more frequent and contextually valid pragmatic performance.

1.1. Research Gap

Although pragmatic competence in L2 learning has been widely researched, the relationship between speaking fluency and implicature use has not been well studied especially among the Kurdish EFL university students. Fluency and pragmatics are investigated as two different concepts (Skehan, 2009; Tavakoli and Hunter, 2018; Taguchi, 2011), whereas indirectness difference based on gender has not been discussed in the given context (Holmes, 2013; Mills, 2003).

1.2. Research Questions

The following research questions can be answered considering the research gap that has been identified in the present study:

1. What types of implicatures are most frequently produced by Kurdish EFL university students?
2. Does gender influence the frequency of implicatures used by the students?
3. How does speaking fluency affect the use of implicatures by the students?

1.3. Analytical Framework

This research paper has chosen the pragmatic-oriented discourse analytic approach in exploration of the application of implicatures in Kurdish EFL students. Discourse Analysis (DA) is applied to analyze the implied meaning and pragmatic strategy in context (Gee, 2014; Schiffrin, 1994), whereas Conversation Analysis (CA) studies the features of interactions (pauses, turn taking, time pattern) that apply to the fluency (Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson, 1974). Implicatures are also examined on the basis of Grice's maxims (Quality, Quantity, Relation, and Manner) taking into consideration frequency and appropriateness and gender

variation. With this hybrid method, it becomes possible to interpret qualitatively and quantitatively measure pragmatic behavior.

1.4. Scope and Limitation

The research is restricted to the English as a foreign language Kurdish students. It analyzes the role of fluency and gender in the use of the implicatures in spoken dialogues and only. The pragmatic performance is influenced in other ways including cultural background, level of proficiency or writing skills are not taken into account and the results may not be generalized outside the group or context of study.

1.5. Value of the Study

This paper illuminates the effect of both fluency and gender on the application of implicatures by Kurdish EFL speakers. It provides a theoretical information on the pragmatic competence and gives us practical information on how to teach strategies to facilitate natural and contextually suitable English communication.

2. Theoretical Background

Grice (1975) proposed the principle of implicature which implies the meanings expressed indirectly, and is not the direct meaning of utterances. These meanings are assumed by the listeners depending on the common knowledge, the context of conversation and principles of cooperation. Levinson (1983) also describes implicatures as deduced meanings as a result of the interaction of linguistic form and contextual matters. In essence, implicatures rely on language, context, and inference: while Grice emphasizes the cooperative rules guiding meaning, Levinson focuses on contextual interpretation. For instance, in the exchange “*Can you pass the salt?*” followed by “*I’m still eating,*” the speaker indirectly implies that the salt will not be passed yet. This depicts the way in which meaning goes beyond literal meaning. In a similar manner, coherence can also supersede cohesion in discourse analysis:

A: “Did you finish the report?”

B: “Yes.”

A: “Did you finish the report?”

B: “I’ve been in meetings all day.”

The second response, albeit not cohesive is coherent, in that it suggests the report is not complete, and this shows how implicature works using relevance, and not through direct linguistic connection.

2.1. Types of Implicatures

As already mentioned, implicature plays a major role in the interpretation of the way in which speakers can communicate meaning indirectly. The identification of its types can be used to understand how listeners can deduce unspoken meanings in various communicative actions. Grice (1975) distinguished two broad groups of implicatures, that is conventional implicatures and conversational implicatures. The latter could be further subclassified as generalized conversational implicatures (GCIs) or specific conversational implicatures (PCIs) (Levinson, 2000).

2.1.1 Conventional Implicature

The traditional implicatures are linked to particular linguistic forms the add-on meanings of which do not change with the context. These implicatures are not based on the principle of cooperation or conversational maxims but are rather engraved in some lexical signs or structures (Grice, 1975; Horn, 2007). For example, in the sentence “*She is rich but unhappy*,” the conjunction *but* conventionally implies a contrast between being *rich* and being *unhappy*. This contrastive meaning is automatized and does not change even in case the sentence is taken out of any larger context. Because the meaning arises from the lexical choice itself, conventional implicatures are non-cancellable which attempt to negate them (“*She is rich but unhappy, though I don’t mean to suggest a contrast*”) would sound incoherent. Therefore, they introduce an additional level of semantic interpretation which does not substitute the literal meaning of the utterance but rather augments it.

2.1.2 Conversational Implicature

Contrary to traditional implicatures, conversational implicatures are context-based, and they develop out of the presupposition that conversation participants cooperate according to Grice Cooperative Principle and its four maxims: Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner (Grice, 1975). When a speaker seems to break or even disobey one of these maxims, the listener implicates a further meaning. Depending on the application of context in

interpretation, conversational implicatures can be grouped into generalized and particularized ones (Levinson, 2000).

Generalized conversational implicatures are automatic results of more general linguistic expressions that do not depend on a particular situation but are default pragmatic inferences of the everyday language (Levinson, 2000). As an example, in Some of the students passed the exam, the word some conventionally has the meaning to blame not everybody. These implicatures are defeasible and cancellable, as some of the students passed the exam; in fact, all of them did.

Contrarily, particularized conversational implicatures are extremely context-governed and only arise in case of the availability of certain background knowledge or situational clues. They are the intentional violation of a Gricean maxim to make a meaning that goes beyond the actual utterance (Grice, 1975). Indicatively, a reference letter saying that John is never late and that he finishes his tasks on time could be a factor that could point the absence of the good traits. In opposition to generalized implicatures, the particularized implicatures are not generalizable, because their meaning is depended on the immediate context of conversation and mutual knowledge of the interlocutors.

2.2 Implicatures in EFL Learning Contexts

The core of communicative proficiency in the acquisition of the second and foreign languages is pragmatic competence, particularly, the capacity to comprehend and apply implicatures. EFL students, who do not have much exposure to the English language, may have difficulties in both getting the implied meanings and giving the contextually relevant answers (Taguchi, 2011; LoCastro, 2012), which depends on the explicit teaching (Bouton, 1988; Aufa, 2011). Grice's (1975). The understanding of implicature is guided by Cooperative Principle however with little input may lead to pragmatic failure (Thomas, 1983; Mohammed, 2023), especially in the context of culturally distant learners (Sengul, 2018). There is an interaction between instruction and pragmatic fluency (Taguchi, 2011; Ziafar, 2018;

Sagdic and Hirschi, 2018) and communicative fluency (Rossiter, 2009; Taguchi, 2008) and can be gender specific (Namdari and Bonyadi, 2024).

2.3. Fluency and Utilizing Implicatures

Fluency is an essential aspect of oral proficiency as well as a major marker of communicative competence in L2 performance. It is the capacity to deliver speech effectively, correctly and smoothly, and with the right time, which is the manifestation of the efficiency of the cognitive and linguistic processing (Segalowitz, 2010). According to Lennon (2000), broad fluency, which includes communicative ability in general, and narrow fluency which is narrow in the sense that it is concerned with the time dimension include the speech rate, pauses, and repairs. Equally, Skehan (2003) cites fluency as one of 3 major elements of L2 performance with accuracy and complexity.

In addition to speed, fluency is also a concept that implies coherence, interactional management, and pragmatic adaptability (Tavakoli & Hunter, 2018; Rossiter, 2009). Psycholinguistically, it represents the ability to control the lexical retrieval and processing in a time pressured situation, which is a sign of automatization and a lower cognitive load (De Jong and Perfetti, 2011). According to Taguchi (2008), increased fluency is associated with the improved production of implicatures and the improved conversational turn taking.

The question of the interaction between fluency and conversational implicatures is a theoretically important issue which has not been addressed extensively. Fluent speakers are able to allocate more of their mental capacity to pragmatic inference, which then allows them to use implicature in a timely and contextually suitable manner (Mitchelson, 2011). Closely associated with fluency, L2 proficiency improves comprehension and production, although even advanced learners might not be similar to natives because of processing or context sensitivity, especially in scalar

implicatures (Sagdic, 2015). The performance is also affected by individual differences, with females performing better than males (Namdari and Bonyadi, 2024).

2.4. Previous Studies

The connection between fluency and the application of implicature in second language acquisition has been well recognized, with little studies on the topic of EFL learners. The context-dependent or specifiable implicatures can be a problem of EFL students, as they do not get enough exposure to real-life interaction and do not get much pragmatic training (Hasan, 2022; Imad, 2022). The results of such studies indicate that pragmatic competence goes past grammatical accuracy and includes the capacity to make inferences of indirect meanings in authentic communicative situations.

Kurdish EFL studies confirm these observations. Hussein and Mohammadzadeh (2021) discovered that fluency of learners in terms of spontaneously responding to contextually relevant situations had a significant effect on comprehension and production of implicatures, especially when they had to be supported by contextual inferences. Likewise, Abdulrahman (2012) established that, Kurdish EFL learners with higher fluency achieved more success using implicature as an effective method of communication, as compared to less fluent learners who used literal expression. Similar findings can be found in other EFL settings; Alrefaee and Al-Shammari (2025) found that more proficient Yemeni EFL speakers successfully used contextual cues to derive relevance-based implicatures, but less proficient speakers tended to miss the hidden meaning. Imad (2022) also associated pragmatic failure in Kurdish learners with low fluency causing them to interpret the literal meaning when using real-time conversation.

Although most studies establish the relationship between fluency and implicature use, most of them look at how it is understood and few interactions with other variables like gender of the learner. Most of them also depend on written or controlled work, which does not reflect the spontaneous and interactional use. According to Mouzughi (2025), fluency facilitates the process of handling subtle, culturally implicit meanings and

thus it is implied that pragmatic competence requires both linguistic and contextual competence. The fill-in of these gaps is important in explaining that individual differences such as fluency and gender determine the pragmatic performance of the EFL learners.

3. Methodology

A mixed-methods design was used in this study to combine both quantitative and qualitative research methods, and investigate the role of fluency and gender in the use of implicature among EFL students. The main source of qualitative data analysis was Conversational Analysis (CA) which was used to examine nature and contextual aspects of implicatures in natural speech (Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson, 1974). Quantitative data were used to measure the levels of fluency and to determine the correlation between gender and the use of implicatures. Data were organized, transcribed, coded and categorized in order to maintain pragmatic meaning and interactional detail as elaborated in the subsequent subsections.

3.1. Data and Participants

Forty Kurdish EFL students (20 males and 20 females) who study the Department of English Language in the University of Zakho were the participants of data collection. The participants were identified according to their availability and readiness to participate in the study. To reflect the level of proficiency and fluency, the sample contained first-year students (10 males, 10 females) and fourth-year students (10 males, 10 females). All the participants are native speakers of Bahdini Kurdish with English as a second language. This provides the analysis with linguistic and cultural homogeneity.

3.2. Recording

The data collection included the instruction to the participants to record spontaneous conversations using the English language. They were split into ten pairs (five female pairs and five male pairs) each to sample the student population (the first-year and fourth-year) and get a total of twenty recorded conversations. To capture the real speech patterns, each pair was involved in a naturally occurring conversation on their subject of interest. The purposive sampling approach was used to be sure that the

tapes represented meaningful conversational interactions that can be analysed in terms of fluency and the use of implicature.

3.3. Transcribing

The transcription of all the recorded conversations was done word-to-word in order to capture all the utterances, even including the pauses, hesitations, repetitions and even overlapping speech. Such detail ensures that there were minor elements of the fluency and use of implicature that were sustained. It provides a valid foundation to later categorization, coding and conversational analysis.

3.4. Categorizing and Coding

To conduct systematic analysis, the conversations were matched based on the academic year of students and gender with a balanced representation of the first-year students and fourth-year students, male and female students. The conversations were coded and given a distinct identifier to enable easy reference and coding. First-year conversations were labeled C1ST1, C1ST2, C1ST3, and so on, while fourth-year conversations were labeled C4TH1, C4TH2, C4TH3, etc. This coding system was suitable as it could be categorized in an organized manner and this was easy in following patterns of fluency and implicature usage across various groups of participants in the process of the analysis.

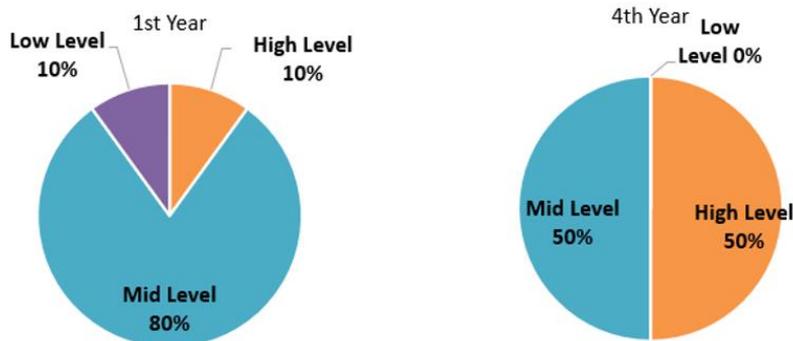
3.5. Evaluating Speaking Fluency Levels

To demonstrate the desired correlation between the use of the implicatures by the Kurdish EFL students and their speaking fluency, it was desperate to determine their levels of fluency. The speaking fluency of the participants in the present research was measured through a rubric that was verified by Abdulla and Mohammed (2023) and measures the speech rate, pausing, hesitation, and fluency in discourse in spontaneous L2 speech. All the conversations were graded a quantitative fluency score, which was subsequently compared with the frequency implicatures to assess the role of fluency in pragmatic performance among Kurdish EFL learners.

The comparison of the fluency in speaking shows that there is a great difference between the first year and fourth year students. Most of the students are in the category of Mid Fluency and only 10% is in the Low Fluency category and 10% is in the High Fluency category. Fourth-Year

students, in turn, demonstrate much better results: 50% of them have the status of High Fluency, 50% of them have the status of Mid, and no one has a status of Low Fluency. This development shows the beneficial impact of greater exposure to language and academic experience during the studies of students. The pie charts below can be used to demonstrate the distribution of the level of fluency.

Figure 1: Fluency Levels of the Participants



4. Data Analysis and Discussion of Results

The chapter gives the detailed analysis of the verbal data that was gathered during the research with the participants and provides the detailed discussion of the findings in connection with the research questions. All the taped interviews were transcribed and discussed in the context of a conversational analysis. All transcripts were analyzed to provide the implicatures that were present and their occurrences among the participants. Specific emphasis was placed on the patterns related to gender and the impact of gender on the production of implicatures. The findings are brought out in separate subheadings to facilitate easy interpretation on a systematic basis.

4.1. Statistical Analysis of Implicature Use

In this section, the analysis of implicature use among the participants will be provided by category of year and level of fluency.

4.1.1. First-Year Students' Implicatures

The patterns of using conversational implicatures among the First-Year students can be noticed in the analysis and seem to be associated with the level of fluency, social awareness, and communicative strategies among them. Out of the ten documented conversations, there were 78 implicatures discovered mostly Particularized Conversational Implicatures (PCI). There were fewer instances of Generalized Conversational Implicatures (GCI) and Conventional Implicatures (CI).

The average fluency of most First-Year students was of middle level with the grades being 5-12 out of 15. The level of fluency also affected the number and the complexity of the implicatures generated. For example, C1ST1 (score: 10/15) produced six implicatures, such as: "Wow, that's a lot. I just had a cup of tea this morning," which implied greater hunger than the interlocutor, a context-dependent PCI. Lower-fluency students, such as C1ST9 (score: 5/15), produced fewer and simpler implicatures, such as: "I feel that I've been running on caffeine and three hours of sleep since Monday," representing a Generalized Conversational Implicature (GCI).

Most implicatures were PCIs, which depend on context of conversation in the moment, and frequently violate maxims like Quantity or Relation in order to express indirect meanings. For instance, C1ST4 stated: "Maybe somewhere in the mountains, just to get out of the city for a bit," implying a desire for relaxation. Similarly, C1ST7 remarked: "We dream of Mars like it's our next home. But we haven't finished cleaning the one we already have," implicitly criticizing neglect of Earth.

Conventional implicatures, though rare, appeared occasionally, such as in C1ST1's "Pizza or vegetables?", using the word "or" to suggest alternatives. GCI were also present, especially when conveying everyday inferences, such as tiredness or unpreparedness.

Finally, the First-Year students were dependent on PCIs and infrequent GCI and CI. The level of their fluency influenced the degree of their use of implicatures, and students with higher results in the test could use more sophisticated and contextually-based implicatures.

4.1.2. Fourth-Year Students' Implicatures

Discussion analysis of conversations of the Fourth-Year students indicates that they favor the use of Particularized Conversational

Implicatures (PCI) which is an indicator of high fluency and competence as regards pragmatics. Out of the ten Fourth-Year students, the majority of them were only generating PCI with few mid-fluency students sometimes employing Generalized Conversational Implicatures (GCI). None of the Conventional Implicatures (CI) were present.

High-fluency students (e.g., C4TH1, C4TH2, and C4TH4) produced contextually rich and nuanced PCIs. For example, C4TH1 responded: "Girl, I've never seen you play any games. Like why? Is there a reason?" This PCI implied curiosity and surprise without direct criticism. Similarly, C4TH2's statement, "I'm not too much into technology games. I'm more into practical games," implied preference and was both socially considerate and truthful.

Mid-fluency students (e.g., C4TH7–C4TH10) occasionally used GCI, such as in C4TH9's remark: "Many companies want people who speak English nowadays," which implied the importance of English proficiency without directly asserting it.

In general, the Fourth-Year students showed the high level of implicature use, as they applied a great variety of conversational functions: indirect persuasion, emotional expression, and polite negotiation. It is an indication of high fluency and pragmatic competence as opposed to simpler strategies of First-Year students.

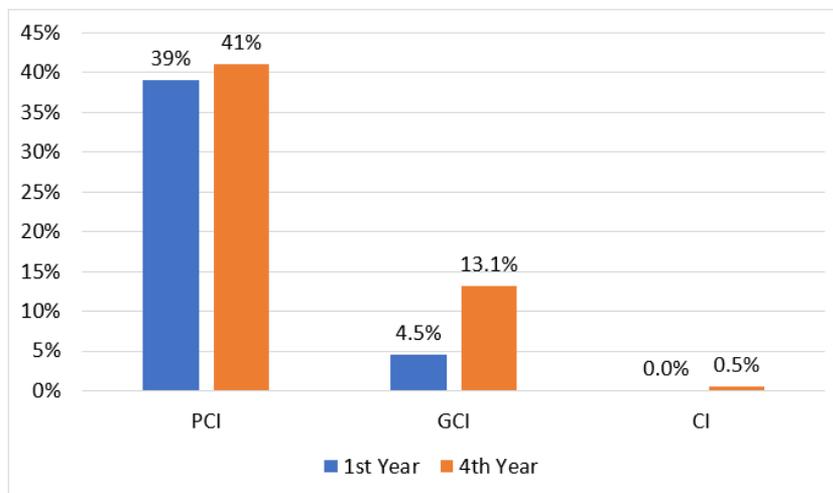
4.1.3. Comparative Analysis of First-Year and Fourth-Year Students' Implicatures

Comparative analysis of the interviews held with the First-Year and Fourth-Year students indicates that there are certain developmental differences in pragmatic proficiency and it is manifested in the frequency and complexity of conversational strategies of the students. Both groups use Particularized Conversational Implicatures (PCI) mostly, with the First-Year group at 39 percent, and the Fourth-Year group at a negligible margin higher at 41 percent. The practical use of these implicatures varies quite a lot, even though they share this dependence; in general, First-Year students use PCIs which are comparatively simple and overly context-dependent, as evidenced by the simple declaration of desire to relax in C1ST4. Conversely, Fourth-Year students are more socially sophisticated because

they incorporate indirect persuasion, humor or face-saving techniques into their PCIs, such as the capacity of C4TH1 to provide curiosity and surprise without using direct criticism.

There is a greater divergence when it comes to the use of Generalized Conversational Implicatures (GCI). As per the statistics data, the GCI frequency increases drastically, as it stands at 4.5-percent in the First-Year group but at 13.1-percent in the Fourth-Year group. Whereas, First-Year students tend to employ GCIs when indicating predictable inferences, e.g., when they experience tiredness or are unprepared, fourth-year students apply them more strategically and frequently place such traditional inferences inside a context-specific PCI in order to provide communicative enrichment. Conventional Implicatures (CI) are the least used category at both levels of study with a 0.0% in the case of First-Year students and 0.5% in the case of Fourth-Year students indicating that these rigid linguistic markers are not very important in the acquisition of their pragmatic competence. Data is shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Percentages of Implicatures Used by Kurdish EFL Students



4.2. Statistical Co-relation between the Use of Implicatures and Gender

The numerical data display a clear association between gender and the rate of using implicature, as there is a larger overall participation of the

male students in pragmatic indirectness. In particular, male participants used a total of 108 implicatures with an average of 10.8 implicatures per speaker and the female participants used 91 total implicatures with an average of 9.1 implicatures per speaker. The given quantitative difference is further emphasized by personal peaks in performance; the maximum individual performance was 17 by a male learner (C4TH7), which is much higher than 12 by a female learner (C1ST2, C4TH9).

The gendered patterns among First-Year students are present in the variety of types that are used. Displaying a combined Particularized Conversational Implicatures (PCI) and Generalized Conversational Implicatures (GCI) and Conventional Implicatures (CI), female respondents (including C1ST1 and C1ST9) indicated a more diverse application to nuanced or relational purposes. Conversely, C1ST4 and C1ST7 are among male students who very nearly used PCIs but this means that they concentrate on direct, contextual expressions at an earlier part of their educational progress.

In the Fourth-Year group, female students including C4TH1 and C4TH4 were mostly using PCIs, which is an indication of high level of fluency and social sensitivity. Implicatures were also commonly used by these students to communicate relationally or emotionally. At the same time, male students, such as C4TH6 and C4TH7, added a more complicated combination of PCIs and GCIs. The statistical increase in frequency among males in this group especially those having the highest numbers of 17 and 15 numbers as revealed in Table 1, which tends to imply a strategic application of implicature as a tool of social persuasion, humor or generalization.

Finally, although female students are more concerned about relational and emotionally sensitive communication, the evidence clearly indicates that male students use more implicatures in general, especially to convince people indirectly and manipulate social interactions.

Table 1: Quantitative Data by Gender

Participants/ Metrics	Total Impicature	Average per Conversation	Highest Count	Lowest Count
Female Participants	91	9.1	12 (C1ST2, C4TH9)	6 (C1ST1)
Male Participants	108	10.8	17 (C4TH7)	6 (C1ST3)

4.3. Effect of Speaking Fluency on Impicature Use

The correlation between the speaking fluency and production of conversational impicatures is analyzed and yielded a complex relationship. In a more linguistic sense, communicative competence can be taken to refer to fluency; the data indicate that higher fluency tends to correlate with a less dynamic use of impicatures, but the impicature use is the greatest in mid fluency speakers, especially within further stages of study.

4.3.1. Comparative Analysis of Fluency Levels

The evidence shows that there is a definite improvement in the fluency scores of first-year students and fourth-year students. The scores in fluency among first-year cohort include a majority of the first-year cohort that scored in the Mid fluency range, which is between 5 and 12 of 15. The mean of the impicatures in this group is about 8.9 per speaker. Interestingly, the same student with High Fluency (C1ST5, score of 12) generated 10 impicatures, which is a little higher than the averages of the group, which indicates that, in spite of the fact that it is still early in academic development, an enhanced fluency allows using non-literal meaning.

Conversely, both ceiling of the fluency and impicature frequency are higher among the fourth-year students. Five High Fluency speakers are also part of this group with the highest score of 14. The trend however is counter-intuitive, with the highest volume of impicatures not belonging to the category of the High Fluency, but instead belonging to the category of the fourth-year students that is considered to be of the Mid fluency. As an example, speakers C4TH7 and C4TH8 who had a fluency score of 6

generated 17 and 15 implicatures, respectively. It indicates that the higher the students advance to the 4th year of their study, the faster their progress in using implicatures can be compared to their formal fluency scores, perhaps to counteract linguistic deficiencies or due to a rise in social-pragmatic awareness.

4.3.2. Correlation Between Fluency and Implicature Volume

Looking at the two cohorts directly, it seems that the mediating factor in the relationship between the Effect of fluency on implicature is the year of study of the student, as indicated by Table 2.

Table 2: Comparative Analysis of Fluency Scores and Implicature Frequency across Academic Levels

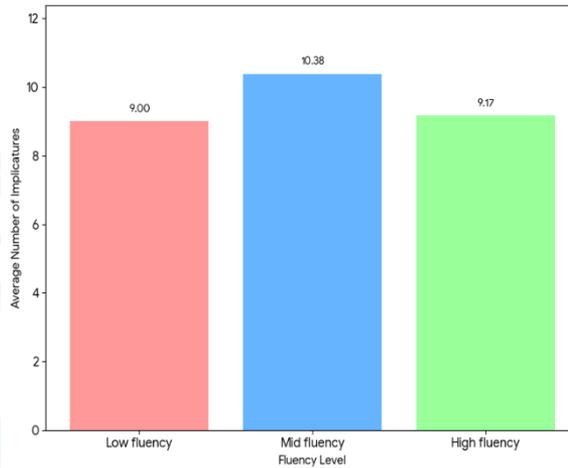
Participants/ Metrics	Fluency Score Range	Implicature Range
First-Year Students	5 – 12	6 – 12
Fourth-Year Students	6 – 14	7 – 17

It can be observed that the shift between the first year and the fourth year demonstrates the increment of the density of implicatures. Although a first-year student who has a score of 6 (C1ST7) generates 11 implicatures, a student in the fourth year with the same score of 6 (C1ST7/C1ST8) generates as many as 17 implicatures. It means that the impact of speaking fluency on the use of implicature is not always linear. Rather, the program (Level) seniority is a catalyst and the students are able to apply more complex pragmatic tools such as implicatures when their fluency scores are still at moderate level.

It means that the implicature generation ability at the baseline is mostly supported by higher speaking fluency, and is not the only determinant of frequency. The statistics indicate that fourth year students utilize implicatures more violently than first year students, whether they are rated as being "Mid" or as being "High" in fluency. It means that academic progress would raise pragmatic competence, the capacity to read between the lines, although oral performance (fluency) of the speaker might not have been raised to a native-like level yet. General statistics of the research

are depicted in Appendix 2. The relationship between the levels of fluency and the mean frequency of application of implicatures are demonstrated in the chart below:

Figure 2: The Correlation Between Fluency Levels and the Average Use of Implicatures



The result of this research provides a subtle elaboration of the existing literature on the existence of a relationship between fluency and pragmatic competence. Although Hussein and Mohammadzadeh (2021) and Abdulrahman (2012) propose a direct proportional relationship, with increased fluency resulting in the ability to use implicature more, this data indicates a phenomenon termed fluency-implicature paradox in the fourth-year cohort. In particular, the largest amount of implicatures was generated by the students of mid-fluency level (C4TH7 and C4TH8), as they produced up to 17 instances of implicature, which indicates that implicature can be used as a beneficial compensatory feature in the case of mid-fluent students. This is contrary to the belief of Imad (2022) that low fluency results in pragmatic failure and instead, academic seniority enables students to employ indirectness despite having an average level of formal fluency.

In addition, the significant increase in the Generalized Conversational Implicatures (GCI) on the average 4.5% in the first year to 13.1% in the fourth year is in line with the claim of Mouzughi (2025) that pragmatic competence is developed with greater contextual sensitivity. Although as Hasan (2022) indicated, context-dependent meanings are

problematic with EFL learners, the present data proves that fourth-year students can effectively switch simple, literal-dependent constructions to complex, nested implicatures as an element of humour and persuasion. This transition proves the idea that academic development serves as an influential stimulus of the practical maturity, which succeeds in filling the gap between the linguistic and the communicative expertise.

Lastly, the research fills a gap that is critical in the literature of Alrefaee and Al-Shammari (2025), and others who have mostly ignored gender as a variable. This study offers a sociolinguistic aspect to the Kurdish EFL learner by recording that male participants applied a greater frequency of implicatures (10.8 average) to socially maneuver rather than in a more relational and diversified manner by females (9.1 average). Finally, these findings prove the existing researches correct in that, though fluency gives a baseline of communication, it can be stated that the density and functional complexity of implicatures are more significantly determined by the level of academic education of the speaker and gender-specific communicative interests.

5. Conclusions

This study has come to the following conclusions:

- 1- Higher fluency is related to the generation of more advanced, more context-specific Particularized Conversational Implicatures (PCIs) making it possible to be more precisely pragmatically.
- 2- Mid-level fluency learners tend to generate more overall amount of implicatures in a compensatory mechanism because they use indirectness to maneuver through a discourse when they have no particular words.
- 3- The functional intent of speech is largely determined by gender, and female students are more focused on relational nuances whereas male students have to use more generalized implicatures and humor.
- 4- The exchange between the variables shows that the structural complexity of a message is regulated by the fluency, the academic level and gender influence the frequency and social style of the implicature usage.

6. Suggestions for Further Studies

There is a need to conduct future research to investigate whether explicit pragmatic instruction can influence the production of implicatures in low-fluency Kurdish EFL students in terms of recognizing and producing Particularized Conversational Implicatures (PCIs).

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