

CONVERSATIONAL IMPLICATURE IN HASAN MINHAJ'S YOUTUBE INTERVIEW WITH NEIL DEGRASSE TYSON, WHY AI IS OVERRATED

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ABSTRACT

This study examines conversational implicature in an interview titled “Why AI is Overrated – with Neil deGrasse Tyson.” The research focuses on how implicature is formed through the flouting of Grice’s Cooperative Principle maxims. The objective is to identify the types of maxim flouting and interpret the implied meanings in the interaction between Hasan Minhaj and Neil deGrasse Tyson. This study uses a qualitative descriptive method, with data collected through transcription and analyzed using Grice’s theory. A total of 47 utterances containing potential implicature were identified, but only the most relevant data were selected through purposive sampling. The findings show that all four types of maxim flouting occur in the conversation, namely quality, quantity, relation, and manner. The flouting of maxims serves various communicative purposes, such as creating humor, expressing, simplifying complex ideas, and maintaining audience engagement. These results indicate that conversational implicature plays an important role in shaping meaning and interaction in interview-based media discourse.

Keywords: conversational implicature, flouting maxim, pragmatic

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini mengkaji implikatur percakapan dalam wawancara berjudul “Why AI is Overrated – with Neil deGrasse Tyson.” Penelitian ini berfokus pada bagaimana implikatur terbentuk melalui flouting maksim dalam Prinsip Kerja Sama Grice. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mengidentifikasi jenis-jenis flouting maksim serta menafsirkan makna implisit dalam interaksi antara Hasan Minhaj dan Neil deGrasse Tyson. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif, dengan data yang dikumpulkan melalui proses transkripsi dan dianalisis menggunakan teori Grice. Sebanyak 47 tuturan yang mengandung potensi implikatur berhasil diidentifikasi, namun hanya data yang paling relevan yang dipilih melalui teknik purposive sampling. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa keempat jenis flouting maksim muncul dalam percakapan, yaitu kualitas, kuantitas, relevansi, dan cara, dengan maksim kualitas sebagai yang paling dominan. Flouting maksim digunakan untuk berbagai tujuan komunikatif, seperti menciptakan humor, menyederhanakan ide kompleks, serta menjaga keterlibatan audiens. Hasil ini menunjukkan bahwa

implikatur percakapan memiliki peran penting dalam membentuk makna dan interaksi dalam wacana media berbasis wawancara.

Kata Kunci: implikatur percakapan, flouting maksim, pragmatik

A. Introduction

Language is a fundamental aspect of human life, functioning as the primary tool for communication and social interaction. Through language, individuals are able to express thoughts, share information, and construct relationships with others. However, communication is not always limited to the literal meaning of words. In many situations, speakers convey intentions that go beyond what is explicitly stated, and listeners are expected to interpret those meanings based on the situation in which the interaction occurs. This shows that understanding language requires more than just analyzing its structure; it also involves considering how meaning is shaped within communication.

This perspective leads to pragmatics, a branch of linguistics that focuses on meaning in relation to speakers and context. According to Yule (1996), pragmatics is the study of the speaker's intended meaning and how it is interpreted by listeners. It examines how speakers adjust their

utterances depending on factors such as the participants, setting, and situation of the interaction. Furthermore, pragmatics is concerned with how speakers can convey more than what is explicitly stated, allowing listeners to infer the intended meaning. It also considers how social relationships between participants influence language use.

In order to explain how participants in a conversation are able to understand each other despite the presence of implied or indirect meanings, Grice (1975) proposed the concept of the Cooperative Principle. This principle explains how individuals cooperate in conversation to achieve effective and meaningful communication. According to Grice (1975), participants are expected to make contributions that are appropriate to the purpose and direction of the interaction. This means that speakers should provide sufficient and relevant information, consider the context, and adjust their utterances to support mutual understanding. The Cooperative

Principle suggests that communication operates under a shared assumption that all participants are working together to make the conversation meaningful and coherent.

To further understand on how this principle operates in actual communication, it is necessary to examine the specific guidelines that structure conversational contributions. Grice (1975) proposes four conversational maxims: Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner, which guide cooperative behavior in conversation. These maxims function as general principles that help speakers organize their utterances and assist listeners in interpreting the intended meaning.

However, in real communication, speakers do not always fully observe these maxims. Non-observance of maxims does not necessarily indicate a failure in communication; instead, it often encourages listeners to go beyond the literal meaning of an utterance and seek additional interpretation. One important type of non-observance is flouting a maxim. Flouting occurs when a speaker deliberately does not follow a maxim in an obvious way, expecting the listener

to recognize this and infer an indirect meaning. In this case, the speaker still maintains a cooperative intention at a deeper level, and such flouting gives rise to conversational implicature.

Flouting can occur in four conversational maxims: Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner. For example:

A: Did you finish the assignment?

B: I wrote the introduction.

In this case, the speaker provides limited information, which may imply that the assignment has not been fully completed.

This is different from violating a maxim. Violating occurs when a speaker secretly breaks a maxim with the intention to mislead or deceive the listener, without allowing the listener to recognize the breach. Therefore, while flouting generates implicature and maintains cooperation implicitly, violating may lead to misunderstanding because it lacks cooperative intent. These phenomena highlight how indirect meaning is conveyed in communication, leading to the concept of conversational implicature.

Based on the discussion of maxim flouting, it can be seen that

speakers often convey meanings beyond the literal interpretation of their utterances. Instead of expressing ideas directly, speakers rely on listeners to infer the intended message based on context and shared assumptions. This phenomenon is known as conversational implicature. According to Grice (1975), conversational implicature refers to meaning that is not explicitly stated but can be understood through the Cooperative Principle. In this way, speakers imply certain meanings while listeners actively interpret them. Thus, conversational implicature becomes an essential concept for understanding how indirect meaning operates in real communication.

In contemporary communication, conversational implicature frequently appears in various forms of media, including films, television series, podcasts, and literary works. Previous studies have shown that the flouting or violation of conversational maxims plays a significant role in shaping meaning, character development, and interactional dynamics. For instance, Wang (2022) found that characters in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* frequently violate the Cooperative Principle to

express hidden intentions and enrich character portrayal. Similarly, Chen and Zhang (2020) demonstrated that implicature in the film *Flipped* helps reveal characters' personalities and enhances audience understanding of dialogue. In another study, Zhang (2024) analyzed the sitcom *Friends* and concluded that implicature contributes to the deeper interpretation of both plot and character traits.

In the context of digital media, particularly podcasts and interviews, implicature also plays an important role in shaping communication. Zulhantiar et al. (2025) found that violations of Gricean maxims in podcast discourse do not indicate communicative failure, but instead function as strategic tools to maintain humor, manage interaction, and convey indirect meanings. Similarly, Anggrarini and Rosdiana (2020) revealed that maxim flouting and violation in podcast interactions often serve specific communicative purposes, such as delivering information effectively and constructing implied meanings. Furthermore, Sabrina (2023) highlighted that the deliberate flouting and violation of maxims can be used

as a strategy to create humor, particularly in conversations involving comedians.

Although numerous studies have examined implicature in literary works, films, and podcasts, research focusing on interview-based interactions that combine scientific discourse and humor remains limited. One example of such interaction can be found in the interview between Hasan Minhaj and Neil deGrasse Tyson, where spontaneous dialogue, humor, and scientific explanation intersect. In this interaction, speakers frequently produce indirect responses, exaggerations, and deviations from expected answers, indicating the presence of implicature through maxim flouting.

Based on this background, this study focuses on analyzing conversational implicature in the interview, particularly in relation to the flouting of Gricean maxims and the implied meanings generated from such interactions. The objective of this study is to identify the types of maxim flouting and to interpret the implicatures that arise in the conversation. This research is expected to contribute to the development of pragmatic studies,

especially in understanding how implicature functions in media based communication, and to provide insights for future research on similar topics.

B. Method

This study employs a qualitative descriptive design using discourse analysis with a pragmatic approach to analyze conversational implicature in natural discourse. Discourse analysis focuses on examining language as it is used in real communication, while the pragmatic approach emphasizes the interpretation of meaning in context. This study is supported by the theory of conversational implicature proposed by Grice (1975). Qualitative descriptive research aims to provide a detailed account of phenomena as they occur in real contexts. According to Robert C. Bogdan and Sari Knopp Biklen (1982), descriptive research presents a comprehensive depiction of settings, participants, actions, and conversations. In this study, such an approach is used to describe how conversational implicature emerges in an interview setting.

The data source of this research is an interview between Hasan Minhaj and Neil deGrasse Tyson, obtained

from a YouTube video. The interview is selected because it contains spontaneous interaction, humor, and scientific discussion, making it a rich source of pragmatic phenomena, particularly conversational implicature.

The data are collected through several steps: watching the video, transcribing the dialogue, and identifying utterances that potentially contain conversational implicature. In selecting the data, this study applies purposive sampling. According to Sugiyono (2019), purposive sampling is a technique of selecting samples based on specific considerations to ensure that the data align with the research objectives. Therefore, only relevant and significant utterances that clearly demonstrate implicature are chosen for analysis.

C. Finding and Discussion

a. Finding

The selected video has a total duration of approximately 56 minutes and 17 seconds. Based on the analysis, a total of 47 utterances were found to flout Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle maxims. These data were selected through purposive sampling, focusing only on utterances

that clearly demonstrate maxim flouting for further analysis.

The identified maxim flouting includes the maxim of quantity, quality, relation, and manner. These instances of maxim flouting occurred in various parts of the interaction, particularly in moments involving humor, spontaneous responses, and situations where the speaker demonstrated uncertainty or lack of knowledge.

The distribution of these findings can be seen in the table below.

Table 1. The Number of Maxim Flouting in Conversation

Type of Maxim Flouting	Frequency
Quantity	5
Quality	23
Relation	9
Manner	10
Total	47

A. Type of Flouting Maxim

The following section discusses the four types of flouting maxim based on Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle found in the interview titled "Why AI is Overrated – with Neil deGrasse Tyson." The analysis focuses on how the maxims of

Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner are flouted within the interaction between Hasan Minhaj and Neil deGrasse Tyson.

1) Flouting Maxim of Quantity

The maxim of Quantity, Grice (1975) states that speakers should make their contribution as informative as it requires. If a speaker provides too little information, the listener may fail to understand the message. Conversely, providing too much information can lead listeners to search for additional implied meaning

☐ **Utterance 1 - [00:00 - 00:12]**

Hasan : Look, you've spent so much of your life explaining science to people.

Neil : yes

Hasan : Basically, being a human well-actually meme, okay?

Neil : Yeah, *although I've learned to not use the word actually.*

Hasan :yes

Neil : Because that annoys people.

In this conversation, Neil initially responds with a minimal acknowledgment “*yeah*”, which would have been sufficient to answer Hasan’s statement. However, he continues by adding further explanation, stating that he has learned not to use the word “*actually*”

because it annoys people. This additional information goes beyond what is required in the context of a simple confirmation, making him flout the maxim of Quantity.

☐ **Utterance 2 (15:46 - 21:59)**

Hasan : Okay. Now, why are you not as worried about AGI's impact on humanity?

Neil : It'll happen with AGI. I don't think AGI is what we're going to go for. I think you want to do things that are useful and practical. And that's how we've brought technology to our hearts.

Hasan : What does that mean, useful and practical? Just what, what do you expect?

Neil : Like I said, *I want computer to make my coffee. I don't even like coffee*, but that's the one everyone cares about.

In this conversation, Neil responds to Hasan’s request for clarification by providing an example: “*I want computers to make my coffee,*” which serves as a metaphor for practical and everyday technological applications. This example alone is sufficient to answer the question. However, Neil

adds an extra statement: "*I don't even like coffee,*" just to clarify that although he uses coffee as a metaphor, he personally does not like coffee at all, which goes beyond the required information and makes him flouting the maxim of Quantity.

☒ **Utterance 3 - [02:09 - 02:29]**

Neil : What is entropy?

Hasan : *I should know this. This is in physics one in high school, 10th grade.* Entropy is things happening. Things are happening, and they will continue to happen. Entropy. Objects in motion stay in motion. Entropy. Maybe it could be. I don't have so much time for the exam, please. I have to finish the exam.

In this Conversation, instead of directly answering Neil's question, Hasan provides information that is not really necessary, such as recalling his high school experience, "I should know this. This is in physics one in high school, 10th grade." Which makes this considered as flouting the Maxim of Quantity.

☒ **Utterance 4 - [02:56 - 03:12]**

Neil : Did humans walk on the moon?

Hasan : *I remember in school I saw the astronaut put the American flag on the*

moon. But I've also seen some YouTube videos that have said that that was photoshopped.

Instead of giving a direct "yes" or "no" answer to Neil's question, Hasan provides too much information that is not necessary by recalling school memories and events. Therefore, this can be considered as flouting the Maxim of Quantity.

☒ **Utterance 5 - [06:00 - 06:46]**

Hasan : When did you realize you were famous?

Neil : Great question. There are a couple of checkpoints here. So one of them was.....

Neil : So when I became the subject of other people's arguments and debates and conversations.

Hasan asks Neil when he realized he was famous?. Instead of giving a brief and direct answer, such as "*when I became the subject of other people's arguments and debates and conversations.*" Neil provides longer responses by first introducing a story and mentioning multiple checkpoints. This makes his answer more detailed than needed, which makes him flouting the Maxim of Quantity.

2) Flouting Maxim of Quality

The maxim of Quality concerns truthfulness. Grice (1975) states that speakers should not say what they believe to be false and should not say something for which they lack sufficient evidence. This maxim requires speakers to contribute information that is honest and reliable. When a speaker appears to give information that is doubtful or exaggerated, listeners may interpret the utterance as carrying an implied meaning rather than a literal one.

☐ **Utterance 1 - [00:50 - 01:05]**

Neil: What causes high tide?

Hasan : *The tide is high and the tide is the ocean, which is somehow connected to the moon. That also is connected to a woman's cycle. But in this case, the moon is making the ocean rise.*

Hasan intentionally gives a scientifically inaccurate explanation of tidal movement in here, as can be seen in several aspects. First, the phrase “*somehow connected to the moon*” this indicates uncertainty and a lack of precise knowledge, rather than a clear and evidence based explanation. Second, the reference to “*a woman’s cycle*” showing a

biological concept that is not scientifically relevant to tidal movements. And both of these phenomena are loosely associated with the moon, also there is no direct causal relationship between human biological cycles and ocean tides. This combination of unrelated concepts results in a misleading and scientifically unsupported explanation, which makes Hasan flouting the maxim of Quality.

☐ **Utterance 2 - [02:09 - 02:29]**

Neil : What is entropy?

Hasan : I should know this. This is in physics one in high school, 10th grade. *Entropy is things happening. Things are happening and they will continue to happen. Entropy. Objects in motion stay in motion. Entropy. Maybe it could be. I don't have so much time in the exam, please. I have to finish the exam.*

In this conversation, Hasan’s explanation can be considered inaccurate for several reasons. First, when he defines entropy as “*things happening,*” the explanation is too simplistic and does not represent the actual scientific concept of entropy. Second, Hasan states that “*objects in motion stay in motion,*” which is not

related to entropy. This idea actually comes from Newton's First Law of Motion. By mixing this concept with entropy, Hasan combines two unrelated ideas, resulting in an explanation that is not logically consistent and scientifically inaccurate, making him flouting the maxim of Quality because provide information that is not truthful and supported by sufficient evidence.

☐ **Utterance 3 - [17:04 - 17:16]**

Hasan : What do you mean by in the offing?

Neil : I don't see why we would value it. It sounds highly useful.

Hasan : Right.

Neil : Okay. However, we're humans and we're in charge. *At least we still tell ourselves that.*

Neil's phrase "*at least we still tell ourselves that*" signals that the idea of humans being fully in control may not be entirely true. This suggests a subtle skepticism about human dominance over technology, implying that our sense of control could be partially illusory or overstated.

☐ **Utterance 4 - [25:11 - 26:25]**

Neil : Okay It's not the same job that you had with a buggy whip, but it's another job being put back into society. I collected phone books. is there anyone remember phone books.
Hasan : *Sure. It was like when you printed out the Internet.*

Neil : You actually printed phone numbers.

Hasan humorously exaggerates the function of a phone book by comparing it to "*printing out the Internet,*" which is not literally accurate. This implies that phone books were once a comprehensive source of information, similar to how people perceive the Internet today.

☐ **Utterance 5 - [36:42 - 36:52]**

Neil : I have to care about data, but they don't.

Hasan : *No, it's going to be pumping out millions of horoscopes a second. So many Britonies will be given the signs they need.*

Hasan exaggerates the telescope's function by claiming it will generate horoscopes, which is clearly false. This implies a satirical critique of astrology and the people who rely on it, contrasting it with scientific data production.

3) Flouting Maxim of Relation

The maxim of Relation requires speakers to make contributions that are relevant to the topic of conversation. Grice (1975) emphasizes that utterances should be connected to the ongoing discussion. When a response seems unrelated, listeners usually assume that the speaker intends to convey an indirect or implied meaning.

☐ Utterance 1 - [02:47 - 02:56]

Neil : What are the names of the base pairs that make up our DNA?

Hasan : I don't know. Next question. *You look really constipated. Let's just get, let's get through this.*

After Hasan explicitly admitting that he lack of knowledge by saying “*I don't know*”, he shifts to an irrelevant comment about Neil's appearance, “*You look really constipated*” and urges to move on. This change of topic implies an attempt to deflect from the question and avoid engaging with it seriously, using humor to redirect the interaction and reduce the focus on his inability to answer.

☐ Utterance 2 - [11:54 - 12:00]

Neil : Yeah, I have never done drugs ever in my life.

Hasan : *Okay You Muslim?*

Neil : No.

Hasan : Okay.

Hasan suddenly connects Neil's statement about avoiding drugs to a religious identity (Muslim), implying that such behavior might be associated with religious restrictions. This introduces an unexpected link and humorously shifts the topic from scientific reasoning to personal/religious assumptions.

☐ Utterance 3 - [36:37 - 36-41]

Neil : There's no way we could have done that ourselves.

Hasan : *This is going to be huge for astrology.*

Hasan shifts from astronomy to astrology, which is not scientifically related in this context. This implies a humorous contrast between rigorous science and popular pseudoscience, signaling that the comment is not meant seriously.

4) Flouting Maxim of Manner

The maxim of Manner relates to how information is delivered rather

than what is said. According to Grice (1975), speakers should avoid obscurity and ambiguity, be brief, and present information in an orderly manner. Clear and structured expression helps listeners understand the intended meaning more easily. When a speaker deliberately uses vague or disorganized language, listeners may infer an additional meaning behind the utterance.

☐ **Utterance 1 - [00:00 - 00:12]**

Hasan : Look, you've spent so much of your life explaining science to people.

Neil : yes

Hasan : Basically, *being a human well-actually meme*, okay?

In this session, Hasan uses the phrase "*human well-actually meme*" as an informal and humorous description of Neil, implying that Neil is known for correcting people's statements in conversations.

☐ **Utterance 2 - [01:06 - 01:10]**

Neil : I can't say anything about your answer.

Hasan : You can't. I know this is like you being *waterboarded*, but this is no.

In this session, after Neil gives the first question to Hasan, instead of answering it properly, Hasan intentionally gives a scientifically inaccurate explanation. Then he uses hyperbolic and humorous comparison "*waterboarded*" to emphasize discomfort and exaggerate the intensity of Neil's reaction, implying the situation is intentionally chaotic and comedic.

☐ **Utterance 3 - [39:57 - 40:13]**

Neil : And if they all saw it coming, then okay, this is a democracy. And it's government by the people, for the people. And as they say, *you make the bed, now you sleep in the bed*.

In here Neil uses a metaphor instead of a direct statement. The expression implies that people must accept the consequences of their political choices, even if those outcomes are negative.

☐ **Utterance 4 - [50:34 - 50:40]**

Hasan : Do you know what deeply depresses me, though? And *I love this... I love the espresso you're hitting me with, this espresso of positivity*.

Hasan uses a metaphor (“*espresso of positivity*”) to describe Neil’s enthusiastic explanation. This implies that Neil’s ideas are intense, energizing, and delivered rapidly, rather than literally referring to coffee.

☐ **Utterance 5 - [55:34 - 55:44]**

Hasan : What is one question that you wish people asked you more?

Neil : I don’t think that way. I’m a servant as an educator, yes. But more importantly, *I’m a servant of people’s curiosity.*

Neil uses a metaphor (“*servant*”) to describe his role. This implies that his purpose as a communicator is to respond and support others’ curiosity rather than impose his own agenda.

b. Discussion

The findings show that the maxim of quality is the most frequent, followed by manner, relation, and quantity. The dominance of quality flouting indicates that implicature is often created through inaccuracy and uncertainty. For example, Hasan frequently gives oversimplified or incorrect explanations, such as defining entropy as “*things happening.*” Rather than causing

misunderstanding, these responses create humor and show a self-aware lack of knowledge. This supports Zuhantiar et al. (2025), who state that maxim violations in podcasts serve as a strategy for maintaining humor and interaction.

The frequent use of flouting also reflects the informal and spontaneous nature of the interview. Since the conversation is unscripted, the speakers respond more freely and creatively. This is in line with Anggrarini and Rosdiana (2020), who argue that maxim flouting helps convey implied meanings and keep the conversation engaging.

Humor is another important factor. As a comedian, Hasan often uses exaggeration, metaphor, and irrelevant responses to create comedic effects. This finding is consistent with Sabrina (2023), who shows that maxim flouting is commonly used to generate humor in conversations.

Compared to previous studies in films and literature (Wang, 2022; Chen & Zhang, 2020; Zhang, 2024), this study shows a similar function of implicature in revealing character. However, unlike scripted works, the implicature in this interview appears

naturally and spontaneously, reflecting real-time interaction

D. Conclusion

As for the conclusion, this study demonstrates that conversational implicature is widely used in the interview between Hasan Minhaj and Neil deGrasse Tyson through the flouting of Grice's conversational maxims. All four maxims quality, quantity, relation, and manner—are present, with the maxim of quality being the most dominant. The frequent use of inaccurate, exaggerated, and humorous responses indicates that implicature is intentionally employed to create entertainment, maintain interaction, and simplify complex scientific concepts.

Furthermore, the findings confirm that maxim flouting does not lead to communication failure; instead, it serves as a strategic communicative tool that enhances audience engagement and supports the dynamic nature of spontaneous conversation. This study suggests that future research may explore conversational implicature in different types of media or compare its use across various communicative

contexts to gain deeper insights into its pragmatic functions.

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