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**Exploring Implicature via WhatsApp:  
The Maxim of Conversation Analysis**

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### **Abstract**

This research explores the type of conversational implicature conducted by the lecturers in the context of generalized and particularized implicature, and how the lecturers flout the maxims in responding the students' questions via WhatsApp. This research is a qualitative case study that describes a case of flouting the maxim of conversation between the lecturer and the students. The case study was done because it investigated a group of people that have distinctive phenomena with a bounded space and time. The result shows that between the generalized and particularized implicature, the lecturers used particularized implicature to shorten the conversation. Moreover, the lecturers also broke the maxim of conversation by flouting the answer. However, this flout did not cause any misunderstanding, even this way can help the students to get the information faster without asking too many useless information.

**Keywords:** *Cooperative principle, implicature, flouting the maxim, communication, language.*

### **Introduction**

WhatsApp since its discovery by Brian Acton and Jan Koum in 2009 has widely used by billion people worldwide (Yeboah & Ewur, 2014). The platform is a free of charge SMS, photo, text, video call communication that is easier and faster (Yeboah & Ewur, 2014). Today, WhatsApp likes over one billion users every day, with about 55 billion messages sent by one billion users per day. Using these texts, users can openly share their thoughts and feelings with friends and contacts (Al-Khawaldeh et al., 2016). This paper explores the use of WhatsApp for the daily conversation from the perspective of pragmatic studies (Assagaf, 2019).

In the eye of pragmatics, WhatsApp can produce the *locutionary act* as meaningful linguistic expression. This expression has a goal, or the *illocutionary act*. This kind of expression has an effect on the reader or hearer or *perlocutionary act* (Yule, 1996; Assagaf, 2019). This way, WhatsApp has the pragmatic functions and share elements from both written and spoken

varieties of the language (Sanchez-Moya & Cruz-Moya, 2015). This application allows its users to use real-time texting or communication to exchange information and media content (Ahad & Lim, 2014). These include emoticons, images, pictures, voice notes, videos, weblinks and so on.

One specific contextual conversation that became the focus of this research is the conversation between the lecturer and the student that communicated the academic topics. The conversation is observed based on the cooperative principle that regulate the rules of communication. This means the information being delivered by the lecturer or the student should conform the maxim of conversation as a way to be cooperative in the conversation. However, being cooperative does not always presume the maxims, for example, sometimes people can be very creative in their conversation by using implicature. This implicature can create a unique characteristics in communication style.

According to Yule (1996) implicature is an additional conveyed meaning. It means that not only words means, but also the inside meaning of the words. Grice (1975) divided implicatures into two basic sorts those are conventional implicatures and conversational implicatures. This study focuses on conversational implicature. Grice distinguish types of conversational implicatures into two, first generalized conversational implicature (the intended meaning does not need particular information) and second, particularized conversational implicature (the intended meaning need particular information).

Generalized conversational implicatures occur without reference to any particular features of the context (Levinson 1983). In other words, special background knowledge or inferences are not required in calculating the additional conveyed meaning. In contrast to generalized conversational implicature, particularized conversational implicature is strongly tied to the particular features of the context. In this specific context, locally recognized inferences are assumed (Yule, 1996). Conversational implicature is quite different from conventional implicature; conversational implicatures are primary examples of more being communicated than is said, but in order for them to be interpreted, some basic cooperative principle must first be assumed to be in operation.

Within these two types of conversational implicature, there are four maxim of conversation that should be obeyed in order to make the speakers can cooperate each other (Grice, 1975); they are:

1. Quantity: Making the contribution as informative as is required and don't make the contribution more informative than is required.

2. **Quality:** Try to make the contribution one that is true. Don't allow to say what you believe to be false and which you are lack of adequate evidence.
3. **Relation :** Try to be relative
4. **Manner:** Try to be perspicuous with avoid obscurity of expression and ambiguity. Be brief and orderly.

Based on the rule of cooperative principle, in communication people have to follow the maxims but evidently there are many cases which happened in the talk exchange that do not follow them. When people flout the maxim in a talk they must have underlying meaning (implicature) based on their utterances. Then, the interlocutor has to understand the implied in order to be cooperative in the talk exchange. There are three ways of applying cooperative principles based on the implementation of these maxims:

1. **Obeying maxim:** If the speaker follows the maxims in a fairly direct way however he may rely on the addressee to amplify what he says by some straightforward inferences based on the assumption that the speaker is following the maxims (Levinson, 1983). The speaker will do the conversational maxims in every conversation.
2. **Flouting maxim:** When the speaker appears not to follow the maxim but expect hearer to appreciate the meaning implied, it can be said that the speaker flouting the conversational maxims. The speaker implies a function different from the literal meaning of form when flouting the maxims. The speaker assumes that the hearer knows that their words should not be taken in face value and they can infer the implicit meaning (Cutting, 2002). To flout the maxims is to go against the command of a certain maxims in order to achieve certain end, which understood by the listener

A : How do I look?

B: Your sweat shirt is nice.

B doesn't explain the whole appearance of A and only comments about the parts of it but he knows that A will understand the implication. This is flouting the maxim of quantity.

3. **Violating maxim:** Violating conversational maxims means to go against the maxim, causing the communication failed. Violation is common in the standard conversation, written and spoken. Speakers recognize when a sequence of a sentence 'hangs together' or when it is disjointed (Fromkin, 1999). A speaker is indicated to violate maxim when they know that the hearer will not know the truth and will only understand the literal surface meaning of the sentence. The speaker deliberately produces insufficient information, say

something that is insincere, irrelevant or ambiguous and the hearer wrongly assumes that they are cooperating (Cutting, 2002)

A: How much did that new dress cost, darling?

B: Less than the last one.

(Cutting 2002)

B's information looks like not being sincere toward the A's question. This answer might give the wrong information. B intentionally doesn't provide enough information. This is violating the maxim of Quality, and manner.

To understand the intended message, it does not only depend on the words that the speaker uses but also the interlocutor's ability to construct inferences. Sobhani and Saghebi (2013) states that 'it was clear that the message people intend to convey is not wholly contained within the words they use, but it is also dependent on how hearers interpreting the message taking into account context and implicated meaning. This inferring counter ability from the interlocutor is expected by the speaker because the speaker always has a supposition of what he implicates is related to the interlocutor's context. Grice (1989) described five conditions of how the implicatures could work in a conversation; one of those conditions says 'the speaker thinks (and would expect the hearer to think that the speaker thinks) that it is within the competence of the hearer to work out, or grasp intuitively, that the supposition mentioned is required' From those three ways of applying cooperative principle, this paper has chosen flouting the maxims as the focus of this analysis since the conversation being analyzed are in the form of flouting expression which are uttered by the lecturers to make the students understand the implied meaning without hiding information. As an academic individual, the lecturer cannot use violation because if he/she uses violation, the truth message delivered cannot be understood.

The research questions in this paper are:

1. What types of conversational implicature do Indonesian lecturers use?
2. To what extent do Indonesian lecturers flout the four maxim of conversation while interacting with their students via WhatsApp?
3. To what extent do implicatures characterize the conversation between the lecturer and the student via WhatsApp?

## **Methods**

The research method in this study was a qualitative case study since it investigates a group of people that have distinctive phenomena with a bounded space and time (Hancock, 2006:23-26). This is a case study research since it explores the context, the participants, the background of knowledge, the social status that contribute the flouting of maxim of conversation. Through this case study, it is hoped to gain in-depth understanding of situations and meaning for those involved

This research consisted of six participants for the sample. These six participants were taken because of four reasons. Firstly, they start the conversation by obeying the rule of being polite in providing greetings in WhatsApp conversation. Secondly, they have experienced getting flouting maxim responds upon their questions. Thirdly, since those conversations occurred in two languages: Indonesian and English, the data selected for the analysis was in English. An interruption of other language was not clarified because it can involve other specific linguistics issue. The fourth reason is because each participants represent each results on implicature category. Those participants came from one English Department in East Java that focused on the academic conversation between the lecturer and the student. The academic area is one of the formal place that based on the maxim rule it should obey the maxim. However, when this false condition happens, either the lecturer or the student still needs to manage their communication in order to achieve their goal.

The focuses of this research are the type of conversational implicature conducted by the lecturers in the context of generalized and particularized implicature, and the flouted maxim of the lecturers in responding the students' questions via whatsapp. The data consist of whatsapp conversations screenshot which have been conducted by the lecturers and the students of English Literature 2017. The conversations were produced by the six people as the sample participants. The contents of these conversations are the flouting maxims that are used by the lecturers in responding the students' question. The data collection and data analysis were performed by the researcher.

The instrument of this research were the students who also became the participants . The conversation between the lecturer and the student being analyzed were in the area of academic business. The data were written text, which were then being analyzed, categorized, interpreted, and explained. The data reduction was done through some process like, selecting the academic topic discussion, identifying the implicature, and analyzing the context of the flouting maxim.

## Results

This part divides the explanation into two parts. They are results part and discussion part. In result part, it describes the answer of the three research questions. In this first part, it explains the types of conversational implicature that are used by Indonesian lecturers, which maxims that were flouted and the context that accounted in the conversation while interacting with their students, and conversation between the lecturer and the student via WhatsApp. In the discussion part, it explains the major results that have been formulated through analysis.

### Particularized Implicature

Figure 1. Flouting the maxim of relevance



This conversation occurred between a student and one of the lecturers of English Literature when the student had to submit a permit letter after being absent for EIP program. According to the context, lecturer 1 (see Figure 1) is conducting particularized conversational implicature in the ending by flouting relevance maxim. It needs a certain background knowledge to figure out what the lecturer was talking about and the utterance triggers an inference process in which the addressee looks for the likeliest that is relevant in the context that obtained. What the lecturer said through her utterance did not contain what she meant, but only what she implied. The action to “put” the letter in her folder ordinarily did not convey anything about the asked question; whether she was present in the office or not. Instead, the implicature in this case depends on the context as well as the utterance itself; that the student was asked to put the letter directly into her folder meaning that the student would not be able to meet her, thus

it implied she was not present in the office, or she was too busy to meet the student at that moment.

Figure 2. Flouting the maxim of manner

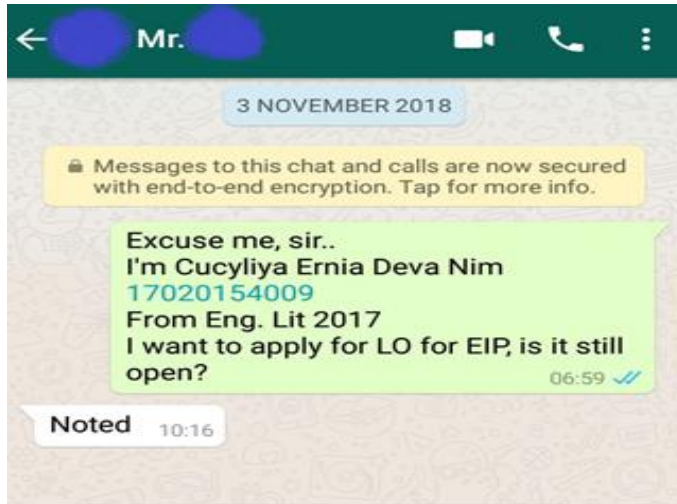
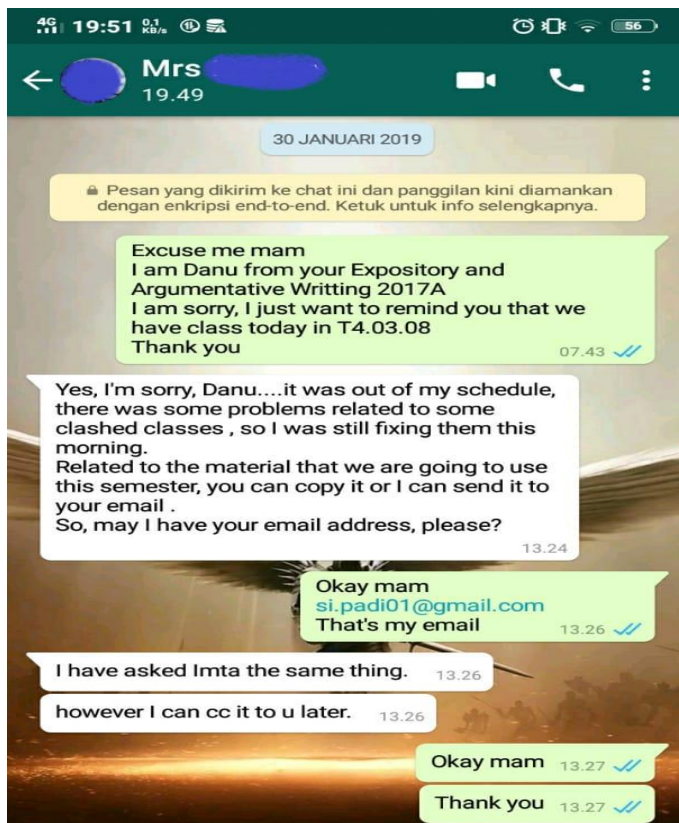


Figure 2 shows a conversation of lecturer 2 and his student. The answer from lecturer 2 does not relate to the question which the student asked about. That means he flouts the maxim of manner. The purpose is to direct the meaning that the student could be accepted in that activity without any further to ask about. The way he broke the maxim is in a way of flouting the maxim of manner. It shows that instead of texting and explaining briefly he just mentioned 'noted' that did not give clear information whether the student's application is accepted or not in that student's activity program. The answer he gave also shows that it needed an inference to be understood that the meaning is 'yes, you are accepted', that is why it is considered as the particularized conversational implicature.

The maxim of quantity requires the speaker's contribution be as informative as one possibly can, and gives as much information as needed, and no more. The answer from lecturer 3 (see Figure 3) shows complete information that lecturer 3 could not attend the class because of some problems. It breaks the maxim of quantity since the answer is too informative. The way she broke the maxim is in a way of flouting the maxim of quantity. It shows that she wants to give the information that she could not attend the class. She also asked the student to send email to her.

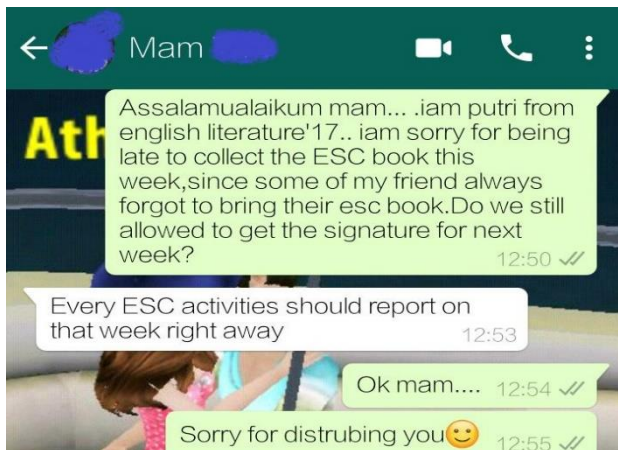
Figure 3. Flouting the maxim of quantity



The answer from the lecturer is in the form of flouting maxim of quantity because she added more information related to the subject being asked. The question is about a kind reminder that she would have a class at that time. However, instead of answering it with expected answer, she added the information of the reason why she could not attend the class. Moreover she informed that she has sent the material to the class-leader's email to be shared for their classmates by saying 'I have asked Imta the same things'. This flouting expression does not need any inferences from the reader (student) to understand the implied meaning, so generalized implicature is employed in this expression. When she says 'I have asked Imta the same things', it means she uses the term in general and she already has asked Imta for an email address.

## Generalized Implicature

Figure 4. Flouting the maxim of relation



In Figure 4, lecturer 4 shows that there is a student who is late in collecting ESC books, she apologizes for the delay in collecting the book by explaining the reasons for the delay. However, the lecturer answers as if indeed the book must be collected on time. In this case the lecturer flouted the maxim of relation or relevance because the relevance of the answer needs to be concluded based on information from the initial context. The way of breaking maxim uses flouting because in the chat the lecturer makes a word where her student need to understand the final intention from the lecturer. In the sentence 'Every Esc activity should report on a week right away' written by the lecturer is a generalized conversation implicature which is a sentence that is still general. General here is an expression that all people can understand the implications of that sentence.

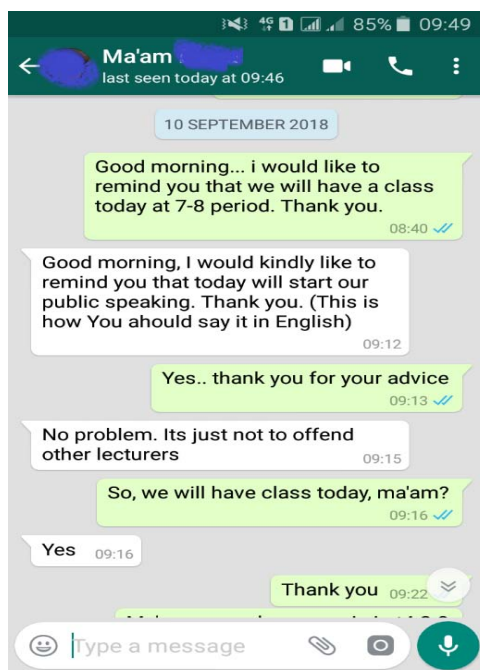
Figure 5. Flouting the maxim of quantity



According to the conversation above, the answer from lecturer 5 ‘I don't go to campus,’ and ‘next Thursday’ concluded that it floutes the maxim of quantity, because in that context, he simply added an information of ‘next Thursday’ which the student did not ask about. However, by giving this additional information to the student, it can make the conversation more effective. This is flouting the maxim, because he tells the student to understand his own reply, so the student concludes that the meaning of the reply are: he can't sign it because he didn't go to campus, and he can sign it next Thursday.

The answer from he ‘I don't go to campus’ and ‘next Thursday’ show generalized conversational implicature, because the phrase is enough to make the reader understand what is meant by the lecturer. So, to understand what the reply of he does not need special knowledge like an inference because it is quite clear.

Figure 6. Flouting the maxim of manner



The above picture is the condition from lecturer 6 (see Figure 6) with her student asking information about the class. The respond from the lecturer is considered as flouting the maxim of manner, because in this way, the lecturer did not give a clear and brief respond that she will attend the lecture or not in that day. She replied the student by giving an example of polite reminder toward a lecturer. It could also be seen that the student asked her again by saying ‘So, we will have class today, ma’am?’ to make sure that she would attend the class or not. This revision from the lecturer also means that this does not need an inference to be understood

because in that respond includes a note '(This is how you should say in English).

## **Discussion**

### **The Flouted Maxim of Conversation**

From the analysis from Figure 1 to Figure 6, the lecturers use 2 types of implicature, they are particularized and generalized implicature in their conversation via WhatsApp with their student.

From figure 1 to figure 3, the condition of particularized implicature shows that the lecturer implied the intended meaning by inviting the student to think that there is a particular information needed to understand the intended information from the lecturer. The intended information could arouse by flouting the maxim of quantity, relation, and manner. Lecturer 1 flouted the maxim by not answering whether she would be in the following day in the office or not, instead she answered it by telling the student to put the books in the folder on the shelf. This invite the student to think that she would not be in the office on the day the student asked about. In figure 2, lecturer 2 also answer the student's question by flouting the maxim of manner. The question which is about the application was still open or not, was answered by stating the word "noted". This answer does not provide a "yes/no" answer which causes ambiguity toward the student. In the conversation of lecturer 3, she flouted the maxim of quantity by giving more information which was not asked by the student, because she knows that this information is needed after answering the former uttered question. All of this flouting conditions happen in the context of particularized implicature; as Yule (1996:42) stated that 'particularized conversational implicature is strongly tied to the particular features of the context' and 'locally recognized inferences are assumed.' That is why in understanding the meaning of expression of lecture 1, lecturer 2, and lecturer 3; it needs a particular context to infer the implied meaning. If the students do not have the inference in their mind, they would fail to understand.

The conditions of flouted generalized implicature can be seen in figure 4 to figure 6. In those figures, every lecturers flouts the answer of the students' question in the form of quantity, manner, and relation. Lecturer 4 flouted the maxim of relevance by providing a general information which has been known by the student. The answer delivered by lecturer 4 is not basically the expected answer for the student, because the student asked if it is still allowed to get the signature for a test requirement next week, but the answer is a general information that every activities related to the test requirements were still accepted. The generalized implicature that happened in Figure 5 have the same condition that presenting the general information to

the student. Lecturer 5 flouted the maxim of quantity by giving more information as the answer from the initial question. Meanwhile, flouting the maxim of manner was expressed by lecturer 6, that she did not answer briefly if she could be met in the office or not, instead she was correcting the student's sentence which she considered as impolite questions. Through the lecturers' answer in Figure 4 to Figure 6, they generalize the information because their flouting expression does not need specific inference or background knowledge. As stated by Levinson (1983:126) 'generalized conversational implicatures occur without reference to any particular features of the context.' and 'In other words, special background knowledge or inferences are not required in calculating the additional conveyed meaning'.

From all of four maxim conversation, there is one type that was not expressed by the lecturers, that is maxim of quality. Maxim of quality is the maxim that is used to express a quality information which is true and has definite facts (evidence). When a lecturer flouts this maxim of quality, he/she may deliver wrong message. So, a lecturer must not flout a quality information since the academic information can lose its trust, worse it can become fully ruin the quality of the information.

### **The Form of Flouted Maxims Being Characterized in the Conversation**

Based on the rule of conversation, first of all, the students always follow the maxim by performing greeting expression when they start the conversation with their lecturer. In all of the figures above, the students maintain their cooperative principle by mentioning greeting expression like 'Good afternoon', 'Excuse me, ma'am/sir', 'Assalamualaikum', and 'Good morning'. After mentioning greeting expression, they always introduce themselves, then they deliver their purpose of texting their lecturer. From this point (mentioning the purpose), the lecturers respond their student by flouting the maxims which is considered as not obeying the maxims. However, although the lecturers do not obey the maxim, it does not mean that the lecturers are not being cooperative; instead in this way, the lecturers have been acted effective in their conversation. Besides, by conducting a communication like this, the lecturer has acted indirect in responding the student's question to make message easily accepted by the students. In conducting Communication Strategies, speakers can do three ways of communication perspective (Dörnyei & Scott, 1997; Willems, 1987 in Hardianti, 2018), they are direct, indirect and interactional strategies. In doing indirect communication, this strategy mainly does not provide meaning structure but it holds the message to be delivered easily and indirectly by creating the situation for receiving mutual understanding. It can be seen in figure 3, 5, and 6, that the students still follow the maxim to being cooperative by expressing gratitude like 'OK,

ma'am, thank you.' Without any further explanation and additional useless speech event, the students immediately understand the intended meaning of the lecturers' answer. For example in figure 6, the lecturer and the student may perform speech event as a courtesy like the following fragment taken from conversation in Figure 5:

Fragment 1:

- S: Morning, Sir. Could I ask your signature now? (1)
- L: I'm sorry I could not do that now. (2)
- S: May I ask why? (3)
- L: (Because) I don't go to campus. (4)
- S: So, when can I get it? (5)
- L: Next Thursday. (6)
- S: Could I ask your signature after IE class? (7)
- L: Yes. (8)
- S: All right, thank you, Sir. (9)

Sentences 2, 3, and 5 are the sentences that can make the conversation sound perfect following the rule of cooperative principle. However, those three sentences (2), (3), and (5) do not have to be uttered because without them, the intended message could be delivered well to the students. So, the form of the conversation which has been established as in table 1.

Table 1. The form of flouting maxim of conversation

Task	Student	Lecturer
Greetings	'Good afternoon', 'Excuse me, ma'am/sir', 'Assalamualaikum', 'Good morning'	-
Delivering Main Purpose	'Could I ask your signature now?'	-
Responding Main Purpose	-	'I don't go to campus.'

		Next Thursday.'
Closing	'All right, thank you, Sir.'	-

Table 1 suggests the position of flouting the maxim 'I don't go to campus. Next Thursday' belongs to the part of responding the main purpose . This expression contains an implicature that implicate he (the lecturer) could not do the signature at that time. When the lecturer answers or responds the student's question in this position, while omitting some speech event like sentence (2), (3), (5) in fragment 1, it means he (lecturer) is performing flouting maxim of conversation.

### **Pedagogical Implication**

This research produce two implications, first, flouting maxim of conversation in academic context via WhatsApp is appropriate to deliver the message faster, because through an indirect way of communication both speaker and hearer can get benefit in this effective context; second, using flouting maxim of conversation create a new idea in the world of communication pragmatically. It can be said that implicature and flouting maxims are the part of cooperative principle that commonly happen in the conversation in any kind of circumstances. It could happen in the written form in the social media like WhatsApp application. Moreover, through that social media, it does not only occur when two people interact in the context of informal situation but also in the formal situation like academic context that involve the lecturer and the student as the participants.

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this research was to find out the types of conversational implicature that Indonesian lecturers use and to explain what maxims that were flouted by Indonesian while interacting with their students via WhatsApp. After identifying those flouted maxim, this research explained implicatures characterize the conversation between the lecturer and the student via WhatsApp.

In summary, conversation between the lecturer and the student via whatsapp has conducted the cooperative principle. It could be said like that because although the conversation via whatsapp is a written conversation, it also has the same principles like the spoken

communication. These principles are related to the implicature which are divided into two types, they are particularized implicature and generalized implicature.

In particularized implicature, the lecturer responded the question from the student by offering an opportunity to create an inference so that it can be more effective because the lecturer does not have to type a question that follows the formality of maxim. Although it does not obey the maxim, the student who accepted the respond has really understood what information that the lecturer wanted to deliver. This flouting way could happen because the lecturer could predict what next question that will be asked by the students. For example, in the flouting maxim, instead of saying 'yes, I am', the lecturer answers 'put into my folder, thank you'. In this way, the lecturer can predict that the next question could be 'Where should I put the letter?', so she just directly answered it with 'put into my folder, thank you'. This kind of additional information 'Where should I put the letter?' is needed as the particularized information in this cooperative principle. Data 2 and data 3 also need this kind of additional information like 'yes, it is still open' or 'no, it is not open' for data 2, and 'Thank you for your information, but I don't go the class' for data 3. Shortly speaking, in the study of Pragmatics this additional information is called inference; so the speakers who uses particularized implicature in their communication, they have to make sure that their interlocutors may have inference in order to understand the utterance meaning from the speakers.

In using generalized conversational implicatures, the lecturers do not need to prepare an inference to make the interlocutors understand the meaning being implied. The information could be simply delivered to the interlocutors because the sentence does not need inference to convey the meanings. Although the lecturer expressed the flouting maxim, it does not require inference to make the response to be understood. In one particular finding from the analysis, one out of four maxims in the cooperative principle, it is only maxim of quality that is not flouted, because in the academic conversation the lecturer always obey the maxim of the quality. Moreover the flouting of maxim quantity, relation, and manner occur to achieve the quality information, and if the maxim of quality is flouted, it would not achieve quality information anymore.

In general, flouting is the way people share their purpose as they communicate. The functions are to make the conversation could run effectively, could make the message delivered faster, could give a new idea of doing conversation in an academic condition. It means, a lecturer does not always obey the maxim to achieve a cooperative principle. A lecturer can have their own way to communicate as long as it can create the conversation run effectively. To achieve communicative effectiveness in information-dense and knowledge-dissemination lecturers can

adopt a conversational style, using wh- questions, question tags and yes/no questions, but they rarely request confirmation/ clarification, solicit agreement, suggest action or use classroom management or rhetorical questions.

For future research, the analysis of flouting implicature could be expanded in the area of spoken text , so it would be more complete to see the result from both written and spoken data. However, the future research that wants to compare spoken and written text, it should select the same genre, for example both of them are the social media text. The ‘missing’ speech events that were omitted as the case making the delivered message could be accepted faster, yet, would be beneficial to be analyzed since speech events are also one of communication tools, moreover analyzing the speech event in the contrary like why in some cases it should be used can give new completing session within this related research.

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