Deiksis: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa dan Sastra Indonesia
Volume 13, Nomor 2, 2026 pp. 85-102
P-ISSN: 2355-6633 E-ISSN : 2548-5490
Open Access: https://jurnal.ugj.ac.id/index.php/Deiksis/index

A Pragmatic Study of Conversational Implicature in Jimmy Fallon Talk Show: An Analysis of the Interview with Paul McCartney

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ARTIKEL INFO

Article history:
Received November, 2025
Accepted February, 2026
Published July, 2026

Keywords:
Comedy Talk Show, Conversational Implicature, Grice's Principle of Cooperation, MaximumViolation, Pragmatic Humor

DOI: 10.33603/deiksis.v9i2.6908

ABSTRACT

This study aims to assess the conversational implicature in the comedy talk show "The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon" episode "Paul McCartney Sings The Beatles' Harmony, Talks to John Lennon & Obama Performance, Fallon Flashback". The research employs a descriptive qualitative technique with pragmatic analysis based on Grice's Cooperative Principle (1975). The researcher identified 21 utterances with conversational implicature and classified them as Generalized Conversational Implicature (GCI) or Particularized Conversational Implicature (PCI), depending on whether their interpretation relied on general contextual knowledge shared by most listeners or on specific background knowledge related to the participants and situation. The study showed that PCI accounted for 52.4% (11/21 data) and required specific contextual knowledge, while GCI accounted for 47.6% (10/21 data) and was more universally accessible as humor. Maxim flouting (quality, manner, quantity, and relevance) was used as a communication strategy to create humorous effects, build intimacy with the audience, and shape emotional responses. These results add to understanding the pragmatic purpose of comedy in entertainment media.

1. INTRODUCTION

Language is a tool not only to convey information explicitly, but also as a complex medium to convey implicit meaning through a variety of grammatical and pragmatic procedures (Birner, 2012; Danesi, 2018; Yule, 2010). Language operates on various levels,

permitting the speaker to communicate intents, feelings, and social ties beyond the explicit grammatical and lexical structures (Holmes, 2013; Jaszczolt, 2016). In the era of globalization of communication, English has become the leading lingua franca, adding a distinctive pragmatic complexity to its use by speakers of different linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Huang, 2017; Taguchi & Roever, 2020). In this case, conversational implicature is very significant as a pragmatic technique in English communication to allow the speaker to transmit meanings that are far more complicated than the literal ones (Chapman, 2011; Scott, 2022; Weigand & Kecskes, 2018).

When people talk to each other, communication is not just about the actual meaning of what they say but also the inferred meanings of the utterances. This phenomenon is fundamental to pragmatics, a discipline of linguistics that investigates meaning in the context of language use. Pragmatics is the study of meaning in use, that is, the meaning given by speakers and interpreted by listeners, and this includes the interpretation of intended meanings in specific contexts and how those circumstances influence understanding (Yule, 2022).

Huang emphasizes that pragmatics concerns how humans use language to achieve specific communicative goals, especially when intended meanings are not explicitly stated (Huang, 2017). Chapman adds that pragmatics plays a crucial role in understanding how speakers and listeners negotiate meaning through inference processes, particularly in implicit communication (Chapman, 2011). In talk show contexts, pragmatics becomes highly relevant because these program formats rely on verbal interactions rich in implied meaning. According to Hutchby, talk shows create unique communication arenas by combining spontaneous conversation with planned program structures, thereby creating spaces for various pragmatic phenomena to emerge, particularly conversational implicatures (Hutchby, 2005).

The concept of implicature emerged from H.P. Grice's groundbreaking William James Lecture at Harvard University in 1967, later published as the influential work 'Logic and Conversation' (Grice, 1975). Through this work, Grice coined the term 'implicature' alongside related forms 'to implicate' and 'implicatum' to capture a fundamental aspect of human communication: speakers' ability to convey meanings extending far beyond their words' literal content. At its core, implicature represents meaning that emerges through inference rather than explicit statement, conceptualized as additional propositions listeners derive from utterances by applying rational communication principles.

Building on Grice's foundational work, implicature can be classified into two main types: conventional and conversational implicature. Conventional implicature represents meaning arising conventionally from certain words or phrases without contributing to the main proposition's truth conditions (Zufferey et al., 2019). This type is stable and inherent in specific linguistic items' lexical meaning, identifiable through connectives such as 'but,' 'even,' and 'still'. For instance, in "John is rich but honest," the word 'but' introduces contrast between wealth and honesty without altering the truth conditions of either proposition.

Conversational implicature, in contrast, emerges from pragmatic inference processes carried out by message recipients based on assumptions that speakers follow rational communication principles (Wearing, 2015). Unlike conventional implicature, conversational implicature is not codified in lexical meanings but arises from contextual interpretation. This type depends heavily on communication contexts, both linguistic and extralinguistic, making it highly sensitive to situational changes, participant relationships, shared knowledge, and communicative goals.

The theoretical foundation of conversational implicature rests on Grice's Cooperative Principle, which assumes communication participants naturally strive to work together achieving common communicative goals (Grice, 1975). Horn and Ward emphasize that this principle not only regulates communication but provides frameworks for understanding successful communication even when conveyed information is not explicit (Horn & Ward, 2006). The principle operates through four maxims: Quantity (providing appropriate information amounts), Quality (truthfulness), Relation (relevance), and Manner (clarity and orderliness).

Conversational implicature possesses five fundamental characteristics distinguishing it from other meaning forms: calculability, cancelability, nondetachability, non-conventionality, and context-dependency (Huang, 2014). Among these, cancelability stands out as the most important feature, allowing implied meanings to be negated without creating logical contradictions. This flexibility demonstrates implicature's dynamic nature, as seen when someone says, "Some students passed the exam," naturally suggesting "not all students passed," yet this suggestion can be removed by adding "in fact, all of them passed" without logical problems.

The generation mechanism of conversational implicature involves complex interactions between the Cooperative Principle, Grice's maxims, and communication contexts. This process begins when interlocutors detect maxim violations or deviations, triggering

inference processes to find speakers' intended meanings. Interlocutors assume speakers still follow the Cooperative Principle despite apparent maxim violations, understanding these violations as communicative strategies for conveying implicit meaning.

Conversational implicature can be further classified into Generalized Conversational Implicature (GCI) and Particularized Conversational Implicature (PCI) based on their dependence on specific communication contexts. GCI refers to default inferences emerging in various contexts without requiring highly specific contextual information, while PCI depends heavily on specific communication contexts requiring detailed background knowledge for accurate interpretation (Zufferey et al., 2019).

Furthermore, comedy, as a communicative and artistic phenomenon, involves cognitive processing, social dynamics, and linguistic creativity aimed at entertaining and facilitating social bonding through situations or expressions that elicit laughter (Attardo, 2020). Unlike spontaneous conversational humor, comedy deliberately creates content to generate audience laughter using techniques such as timing, character development, and linguistic manipulation. Modern understandings recognize comedy as a multifaceted phenomenon that operates through the systematic violation and resolution of expectations.

Various theories explain comedy's mechanisms, including Superiority Theory (comedy arising from feelings of superiority over others), Incongruity Theory (comedy occurring through mismatches between expectations and reality), Relief Theory (humor functioning as psychological and social tension release), and the General Theory of Verbal Humor (GTVH), which provides comprehensive frameworks for analyzing verbal humor through six knowledge resources (Dynel, 2011).

Within comedy, humor emerges as a complex communication phenomenon defined as an expression eliciting laughter or amusement through harmless violations. According to Attardo, humor represents a linguistic and cognitive construct involving multi-level interpretation processes where literal and implied meanings interact, creating comic effects (Attardo, 2014). Humor's main characteristics include incongruity between expectations and reality, resolution that allows understanding of hidden meaning, and sociocultural contexts that influence interpretation.

From pragmatic perspectives, humor can be understood as communication systematically utilizing and violating conversational principles to create comic effects (Gurillo & Ortega, 2013). Grice's conversational implicature theory provides theoretical foundations for understanding how humor works through conversational maxim violations (Grice, 1975).

In humorous contexts, maxim violations are not communication failures but deliberate strategies creating additional interpretive spaces for audiences.

Humor manifests in various forms, including verbal humor (relying on linguistic element manipulation), situational humor (arising from specific communication contexts creating expectation-reality mismatches), and cultural humor (highly dependent on shared knowledge of norms, values, and cultural references within linguistic or social communities) (Boukhelif et al., 2023). In talk show contexts, humor functions strategically beyond mere entertainment, serving as a multidimensional communicative tool facilitating various discursive goals.

The relationship between humor and conversational implicature becomes particularly evident in talk shows, where hosts and guests engage in complex inferential processes reflecting conversational implicature mechanisms (Attardo, 2020). This connection suggests that comedy and pragmatic communication share common cognitive foundations, particularly regarding their reliance on implicit meaning construction and contextual interpretation. Understanding these mechanisms proves essential for analyzing how meaning is created and negotiated in contemporary media discourse, where entertainment and information transmission intersect through sophisticated pragmatic strategies.

Previous research on conversational implicature in comedic and entertainment discourse, such as the studies by Astrid et al. on the talk show SuperSoul Sunday, Yulianti et al. on the sketch comedy program Saturday Night Live, and Sutrisno et al. on song lyrics, have provided a solid theoretical foundation. However, a research gap remains because no one has specifically analysed late-night comedy talk shows such as The Tonight Show, which combine comedy and interviews. Furthermore, previous research has focused more on quantitative classification without exploring how the comedy context influences the strategic use of implicature to create humour (Astrid et al., 2021; Sutrisno et al., 2025; Yulianti et al., 2022).

Nevertheless, comedy talk shows, such as “The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon,” rely heavily on implicit meaning to create a humorous effect and engage audiences. In seemingly spontaneous interactions, hosts and guests must navigate conversations with skills to entertain the audience while maintaining a good relationship with the guests (Hutchby, 2005). This study aims to analyze the types of conversational implicature that emerge in Paul McCartney's interview segments on “The Tonight Show” and how maxim flouting strategies contribute to the formation of implicature in the context of talk shows.

This study is expected to contribute to the pragmatic literature on conversational implicature in that it applies Grice's Cooperative Principle to a relatively new context, the late-night comedy-interview hybrid format, and provides a more complex account based on strategies that complement the mostly frequency-based findings of previous research. In practical terms, the findings are expected to provide insight to content creators, comedians and media practitioners on how conversational implicature and maxim flouting can be deployed as deliberate communicative strategies to build rapport with guests, sustain audience engagement and produce humor in real time, insight that may also be useful in related fields such as public speaking, media communication training and script-writing for unscripted entertainment formats.

2. METHODS

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach to analyze conversation al implicature in the comedy talk show "The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon". The source of the data for this study was the verbal interaction that occurred in an episode featuring Paul McCartney, which aired on February 7, 2025. The video was accessed from the official YouTube channel of The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon, with a total duration of approximately 12 minutes. This episode was selected purposively because it contains an extensive interactive dialogue between the host and a globally recognized guest, which increases the likelihood of humor-driven exchanges rich in implied meaning, sarcasm, and shared cultural references, features central to the study of conversational implicature. From this episode, the researcher identified a total of 21 utterances containing conversational implicature, which became the entire dataset analyzed in this study. In this study, the unit of analysis consists of segments of conversation that contain potential implicature, taken from the transcripts of the dialogue between the host and the guest.

The research instrument used is a structured observation sheet designed to record and classify examples of conversational implications. This observation sheet includes time markers, dialogue transcriptions, and analysis of the maximum violations that identify the Grice maxims that are violated in each example. In addition, the observation sheet also noted the humor strategies used by comedians and audience responses to evaluate the effectiveness of implicature-based humor.

The data collection technique was carried out through systematic viewing and transcription of selected episodes, focusing on segments of conversation that had the potential

to contain implications. This process is carried out in several sessions to ensure the accuracy and integrity of the data. After the initial transcription, the researcher re-watched the video segment by segment to cross-check each transcribed utterance against the original audio-visual source, ensuring that intonation, pauses, and non-verbal cues (such as laughter or gesture) relevant to the interpretation of implicature were accurately captured. Any discrepancies found between the transcript and the video were corrected through repeated playback until the transcription matched the original recording. The data generated is in the form of a verified dialogue transcript that includes examples of implicature, along with notes on context and audience response.

Data analysis is carried out by combining content analysis and pragmatic discourse analysis following several coding stages. First, each utterance in the transcript was read closely and compared against the four Gricean maxims (quantity, quality, relevance, and manner) to determine whether a maxim was flouted; an utterance was coded as containing implicature only when a clear mismatch was found between its literal meaning and its contextually intended meaning. Second, each identified implicature was classified as either Generalized Conversational Implicature (GCI) or Particularized Conversational Implicature (PCI) based on the following criterion: an utterance was coded as GCI when its implied meaning could be inferred using general world knowledge shared by most listeners without reference to specific background information, whereas an utterance was coded as PCI when its interpretation required specific contextual knowledge related to the participants, prior utterances, or the situational setting of the interview. To minimize subjectivity in this classification process, the coding results were reviewed twice by the researcher at different times, and any inconsistent classifications were re-examined against the video context before being finalized. Furthermore, contextual analysis was conducted to explore the mechanisms of humor creation, timing factors, and audience response patterns. This process concludes with the identification of recurring patterns in implicature strategies and a comparison of the findings with existing pragmatic theories, ensuring analytical consistency in the study.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study show two types of conversational implicature that are dominant in Paul McCartney's interview on "The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon", namely Generalized Conversational Implicature (GCI) and Particularized Conversational

Implicature (PCI) (Levinson, 1983; Zufferey et al., 2019). Table 1 below presents an analysis of the implications of the conversations found in the episode.

Table 1. Analysis of Conversational Implicatures

No.	Time stamp	Conversation	Flouting Maxim	Conversational Implicature Categorized	Respond to the Audiences
1.	0.02-0.08	JF: "Do you get standing ovations wherever you go? Starbucks. You walk into a Starbucks. Everybody's like... 'I'll finish my latte later.”	Quality	Generalized	Laughter
2.	0.32-0.36	JF: "Do you get an award a week now?" PM: "Yeah. I'm going for two a week."	Quality	Generalized	Laughter
3.	0.56-0.59	JF: "They don't know much about Jimmy Fallon over there. Yet!"	Quality	Generalized	Cheers
4.	1.42-1.52	PM: "I've never been to the White House. I've never met an incumbent President." JF: "You're kidding me! No one invited Paul McCartney to the White House? What is wrong with America?"	Quality	Generalized	Laughter
5.	1.58-2.00	PM: "He is such a dude. I mean..." (about Obama)	Manner	Particularized	Laughter
6.	2:11–2:13	PM: She goes,” Oh, my God! You’re so beautiful!"	Quality	Generalized	Laughter
7.	2.56-3.02	PM: "My daughter said, 'Can I get a play date with them?’” I mean, come on. -You never know. You never know. I mean, come on. Yeah.	Quality	Generalized	Laughter
8.	3.25-3.26	PM: "Everyone was doing the na-nas. He's doing -- ♪ Judy, Judy, Judy, Judy ♪"	Manner	Particularized	Laughter and Applause
9.	4.05-4.15	PM: "I was, on my own, gonna do 'Yesterday' with the string quartet, and the guy who's you know, holds the curtains. He says, 'Are you nervous?' I said, 'No.' He said, 'You should be.'”	Quality	Particularized	Laughter

10.	4:46–4:50	PM: "One day I'm gonna sing 'Michelle' for her. You know? So I did."	Relevant	Particularized	Laughter
11.	5:47–5:50	PM: "The original lyrics were 'Scrambled eggs.' Scrambled eggs. Oh, my baby, how I love your legs."	Quality	Particularized	Laughter
12.	7:01–7:02	JF: "Nobody else knew it was corny."	Quality	Generalized	Laughter
13.	7.03-7.23	A conversation with Jimmy, Paul, and Kirk about the "Yeah, yeah, yeah" chord at the end of the song.	Manner	Particularized	Laughter and Applause
14.	8.01-8.18	JF: "And I got to say, you have some of the coolest sweater vests I've ever seen. Look at this guy right here. This guy is magic… This other one is even better. I love this one. If you can find this around the house. It's a deer-head sweater here."	Quality	Generalized	Laughter
15.	8.27-8.41	JF: "Do you have all your old stuff?" PM: " You know what? I don't think so. But maybe in some box under the stairs somewhere. Is that right? I'll find it, you know, 20 years from now. 'There's that thing Jimmy talked about!'"	Quantity	Particularized	Laughter
16.	9.48-10.02	PM: "And I got a letter from the guy at the record label. He said, 'Dear Paul, under no circumstances go to Lagos. There's been an outbreak of cholera." JF: "You got the message in --" PM: "I got the message when I got back." JF: "Oh, when you get back. Hey, thanks a lot, buddy. Appreciate it. Yeah."	Quality	Generalized	Laughter
17.	10.06-10.11	PM: "I got mugged out there, you know." JF: "You got mugged?" PM: "Mugged at knifepoint, dude." JF: "What?!"	Manner	Particularized	Laughter
18.	10.15-10.26	PM: "When you're young, you can be a little stupid."	Relevant	Particularized	Laughter

		JF: "Yeah, sure." PM: "As you know, Jimmy." JF: "Thank you. I didn't take it that way. I did a little bit, but that's alright."			
19.	10.32-11.04	Paul's story about walking at night in Lagos despite being warned not to. PM: "Whatever you do, don't go out walking at night. It's kind of dangerous around here." Oh, we've been to Jamaica. It's just the same. It's Lagos. It's great. It's funky. So, Linda and I go out walking. Um, we'd been to a friend's house, and we walked back. We decided to walk back. So, a car pulls up, and we're just walking along. A car pulls up. [Imitates tires screech] And I'm crazy. I think the guy wants to give us a lift. You know? Oh, my gosh. So, it was crazy.	Quality	Particularized	Laughter
20.	12.37-12.45	JF: "This is like four songs in one song... You know, it must be pressure because you must put out the album and you go, like, 'I was already in The Beatles...'"	Quality	Generalized	Laughter
21.	13.46-13.54	PM on the murder of John Lennon: "It was just so senseless... The phrase kept coming in my head about the guy who killed him -- 'jerk of all jerks.'"	Manner	Particularized	Be Silent/Empathy

The analysis shows that PCI is slightly more frequent than GCI, accounting for 52.4% (11 out of 21 data) compared to GCI's 47.6% (10 out of 21 data). This near-balanced distribution suggests that Paul McCartney's interview relies almost equally on both universally accessible humor and context-specific humor requiring background knowledge of his career and relationships, rather than favoring one strategy overwhelmingly.

The maxim flouting that occurs in these interactions serves as an effective communication strategy (Cummings, 2005; Grice, 1975). Flouting of the quality maxim, as in the statement "I got the message when I got back," creates situational irony that generates

laughter. Meanwhile, flouting of the manner maxim, such as "jerk of all jerks," indicates the use of euphemistic language to handle sensitive topics in a respectful manner, which results in a reflective response from the audience (Grundy, 2019; Horn & Ward, 2006).

This finding offers an interesting point of comparison with (A'maliyah et al., 2025) whose analysis of implicature in the animated film Frozen 1 similarly found PCI to be more dominant, at 67%, than GCI. Although the two studies differ substantially in genre, since one examines a live celebrity talk show interview while the other examines a scripted animated narrative, both point toward a shared pattern. When communication is embedded within an ongoing personal or relational narrative, whether it is McCartney's recollection of his own career and relationships or the sibling relationship between Elsa and Anna, speakers tend to rely more heavily on implicature that requires listeners to track accumulated, situation-specific context, rather than implicature resolvable through general world knowledge alone.

The Pragmatic Basis of GCI and PCI Distribution

Building upon the classification of implicature types presented in Table 1 and the frequency distribution outlined in the preceding paragraphs, this section offers a closer pragmatic analysis of selected utterances, illustrating the specific linguistic and contextual reasoning that distinguishes Generalized from Particularized Conversational Implicature in this episode. Table 2 presents representative examples alongside their pragmatic interpretation and communicative function.

Table 2. Categorisation of Conversational Implicature Based on Grice's Theory

Types of Implicature	Frequency	Examples from The Data (Table 1)	Pragmatic Interpretation	Communicative Function
Generalized Conversational Implicature (GCI)	10 (47.6%)	"They don't know much about Jimmy Fallon over there. Yet!" (data 3) "This is like four songs in one song..." (data 20)	The implied meaning can be inferred using general world knowledge alone, without requiring information specific to McCartney's personal history or relationships.	Creates humor that is immediately accessible to the broad studio and television audience, establishing quick rapport regardless of the listener's familiarity with the guest.

Particularized Conversational Implicature (PCI)	11 (52.4%)	"He is such a dude. I mean..." (about Obama, data 5); "The original lyrics were 'Scrambled eggs'..." (data 11) "jerk of all jerks" (about Lennon's killer, data 21)	The implied meaning can only be recovered by drawing on specific background knowledge of McCartney's biography, relationships, and career history, such as his friendship with Obama, his songwriting process with the Beatles, or the circumstances of Lennon's death.	Builds intimacy and emotional resonance with the segment of the audience who share this contextual knowledge, and deepens the narrative and personal dimension of the interview.

Table 2 illustrates that the near-even split between GCI and PCI reflects two distinct communicative functions operating side by side throughout the interview. The GCI examples, such as data 3 and data 20, rely on inferences that any listener can draw from general conventions of celebrity culture and language use, without needing to know anything specific about McCartney as an individual. In contrast, the PCI examples require the audience to actively retrieve or recall biographical information introduced earlier in the conversation or known independently from McCartney's public history. Data 9, for instance, in which McCartney recounts being told "You should be" nervous before performing "Yesterday" alone, only becomes humorous once the listener understands the broader context that McCartney is one of the most accomplished performers in music history, making the suggestion that he should feel nervous ironic rather than sincere. Similarly, data 15, where McCartney jokes about his old memorabilia possibly being "in some box under the stairs somewhere," depends on the audience recognizing the implicit contrast between the mundane image of forgotten household clutter and McCartney's status as a cultural icon whose belongings would ordinarily be treated as historically significant. These examples demonstrate that PCI in this

episode is not merely a matter of obscure trivia, but frequently hinges on the audience's shared awareness of McCartney's extraordinary public stature, which is then humorously undercut through ordinary, self-deprecating language.

Maxim Flouting as a Communicative Strategy

Building on this classification of implicature types, the discussion now turns to how each of Grice's four maxims is exploited as a distinct communicative strategy throughout the interview. Table 3 presents four representative instances of maxim flouting, each serving a different pragmatic function, ranging from generating laughter to softening an emotionally sensitive disclosure.

Table 3. Analysis of Flouting Maxims as a Communicative Strategy (Grice,1975)

Maxim Flouted	Data Number (Table 1)	Utterance	Audience Response
Quantity	No. 15	"You know what? I don't think so. But maybe in some box..."	Laughter: appreciation of over-elaboration
Quality	No. 16	"I got the message when I got back" (about the Lagos cholera warning).	Laughter: the audience picks up on situational irony
Relevance	No. 18	"As you know, Jimmy" (after commenting on stupidity).	Laughter: the audience appreciates spontaneity
Manner	No. 21	"Jerk of all jerks" (about John Lennon's killer).	Empathetic silence: reflective response

Table 3 above demonstrates that each of the four Gricean maxims identified in Table 1 is exploited for a distinct communicative purpose rather than functioning interchangeably. Quantity flouting, as in data 15, produces humor through deliberate over-elaboration, where McCartney provides far more narrative detail than the question required, comedically enacting the presumption that his old memorabilia might resurface unexpectedly. Quality flouting, as in data 16, generates humor through situational irony, where McCartney's literal answer conceals a more absurd underlying truth. Relevance flouting, as in data 18, allows McCartney to make a pointed, self-aware remark that appears tangential but is immediately understood by both Fallon and the audience as directly relevant to the preceding exchange. Manner flouting, as in data 21, is instead used not to provoke laughter but to soften a genuinely

painful topic, allowing McCartney to address Lennon's murder through an indirect, euphemistic phrase rather than stating it bluntly. Taken together, these patterns indicate that maxim flouting in this interview is not a uniform strategy but is calibrated to the emotional and comedic weight of each topic.

Furthermore, quality flouting is by far the most dominant overall, accounting for thirteen of the twenty-one data in Table 1. This dominance of quality flouting sits somewhat apart from prior accounts of talk show humor. (Astrid et al., 2021) found manner flouting most frequent in the Oprah Winfrey Network interviews, largely through vague or evasive responses, while (Yulianti et al., 2022) found quantity flouting most frequent in Saturday Night Live. Quality flouting was barely present in either study. This suggests the maxim exploited may track the guest's communicative role: where those guests often responded with ambiguity or excess detail, McCartney, as a performer accustomed to public wit, favors overt, self-aware exaggeration, flouting truthfulness directly rather than clarity.

Both studies also found PCI more frequent than GCI, at 79% and 58% respectively, which they attribute to humor depending on shared context between guest and audience. This resonates with the present study's own near-even GCI-PCI split, where PCI is marginally more frequent. Sutrisno et al., (2025), examining implicature in song lyrics rather than talk show flouting, similarly found that more introspective material favored conventional and generalized implicature while more assertive material favored particularized implicature, a pattern consistent with the view, raised earlier in relation to *Frozen 1*, that implicature type tracks emotional register and narrative depth more than medium.

Humor Mechanisms and Implicature Techniques

Following this identification of which maxims are flouted and for what communicative purpose, this section examines more closely how these flouted maxims manifest as specific humor techniques recognizable to the audience. Table 4 categorizes six representative utterances according to the type of humor they produce and the underlying implicature technique that generates it.

Table 4. Humor Mechanism Data Tabulation

Humour Category	Examples from Data	Implicature Technique	Audience Response
Verbal Humor (Wordplay)	"Scrambled eggs. Oh, my baby, how I love your legs."	Quality maxim flouting via absurd wordplay	Laughter
Verbal Humor (Ambiguity)	"Nobody else knew it was corny."	Quality maxim flouting via self-deprecating irony	Laughter

Situational Humor (Pop Culture)	The dialogue about chord "Yeah, yeah, yeah"	Manner maxim flouting via elliptical cultural allusion	Laughter and Applause
Situational Humor (Celebrity Context)	"No one invited Paul McCartney to the White House? What is wrong with America?"	Quality maxim flouting via mock indignation	Laughter
Ironic Humor (Hyperbole)	"Do you get standing ovations wherever you go? Starbucks..."	Quality maxim flouting via hyperbolic exaggeration	Laughter

Table 4 shows that although the six examples are organized according to distinct humor categories, ranging from wordplay to situational and hyperbolic irony, the underlying pragmatic mechanism in five of the six cases is quality maxim flouting, McCartney or Fallon asserting something that is literally false, absurd, or exaggerated to produce a comedic effect. Only data 13 ("Yeah, yeah, yeah) relies primarily on manner maxim flouting, through an elliptical reference that depends on the audience's shared cultural knowledge of the Beatles rather than on a false or exaggerated claim. This pattern suggests that while the surface-level humor techniques in this interview are varied, wordplay, hyperbole, sarcasm, and shared cultural allusion, they are frequently underpinned by the same core pragmatic strategy of quality maxim flouting, reinforcing the finding from Table 1 that quality flouting is the single most dominant maxim exploited throughout the interview as a whole.

Finally, the findings across Tables 1 through 4 point to a coherent picture of how conversational implicature functions strategically throughout this interview, with quality maxim flouting emerging as the single most pervasive strategy across both the maxim-based analysis in Table 3 and the humor-technique analysis in Table 4, operating alongside a near-even GCI-PCI split that allows jokes to work simultaneously on a universally accessible level and a more context-dependent, biographically grounded level, as shown in Table 2. In this respect, these findings directly address the research gap identified in the introduction, namely that prior studies of conversational implicature in talk shows have tended to offer quantitative classification of implicature types without closely examining how the comedic context of a given show shapes the strategic deployment of maxim flouting (Astrid et al., 2021; Sutrisno et al., 2025; Yulianti et al., 2022), by demonstrating that the specific maxim exploited, and the balance between GCI and PCI, tracks the interactional demands of a live, single-guest, late-night interview format, beginning with broadly accessible quality-based jokes to establish rapport and gradually shifting toward more context-dependent, narrative-driven implicature

as the conversation deepens into McCartney's personal history. More specifically, in relation to prior empirical findings, this study both confirms and complicates existing accounts of maxim flouting as a humor strategy: it confirms, in line with (Astrid et al., 2021) and (Ayuningrum et al., 2023), that flouting conversational maxims remains a consistently effective device for generating humor and audience engagement across markedly different formats, from an American celebrity interview to an Indonesian YouTube comedy program, yet it complicates the assumption that any single maxim functions as a default humor-generating device across contexts, since (Ayuningrum et al., 2023) found quantity maxim flouting dominant in the ensemble, sketch-style humor of "*Anak Sekolah,*" whereas the present study finds quality maxim flouting dominant instead, suggesting that the specific maxim exploited is shaped by structural features of the format itself, such as the number of speakers and the degree of spontaneity expected of the interaction. Similarly, the near-even GCI-PCI split found here, with PCI marginally more frequent, aligns with the stronger PCI dominance reported by (A'maliyah et al., 2025) in their analysis of *Frozen 1*, lending further support to the broader claim that narrative depth, rather than genre or medium per se, is the more decisive factor shaping the balance between generalized and particularized implicature in humorous and emotionally resonant discourse.

4. CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine the conversational implicature present in Paul McCartney's interview on "The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon" and the maxim-flouting strategies underlying it. In terms of implicature type, the analysis identified twenty-one instances of conversational implicature, with Particularized Conversational Implicature (52.4%) marginally more frequent than Generalized Conversational Implicature (47.6%). This near-even distribution indicates that the interview relies on humor that is simultaneously accessible to a broad audience and dependent on shared knowledge of McCartney's career and personal history, with the latter becoming more prominent as the conversation shifts toward extended, narrative-driven anecdotes such as the Lagos mugging and the origin of "Yesterday."

In relation to the maxims employed to yield this implicature, the most prevalent strategy was the flouting of quality maxims, accounting for the majority of instances and manifesting primarily through hyperbole and self-aware exaggeration. Manner, relevance, and quantity flouting served more targeted functions, including the softening of emotionally

sensitive disclosures and the production of humour through over-elaboration. These strategies function not merely as sources of amusement, but as deliberate devices for building rapport between host and guest and drawing the audience into a shared, intimate discursive space. Since the analysis is based on a single episode featuring one guest, it is important to note that these findings should be regarded as illustrative rather than generalizable across the comedy talk show genre. It is suggested that future research examining multiple episodes, guests, or hosting styles, ideally supported by audience response data such as studio laughter or social media reception, would help provide a more comprehensive understanding of whether the identified patterns reflect broader conventions of late-night comedic interviews or are particular to Jimmy Fallon's interactional style.

5. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author would like to express gratitude to the academic advisor and everyone who provided guidance and support during the preparation of this research, enabling its successful completion.

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