

## Conversational Implicature in "The Holdovers" Movie: Pragmatic Approach Directed by Alexander Payne

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### Abstract

The goals of this research to examine conversational implicature in "The Holdovers" movie. This study examines conversational implicatures in The Holdovers 2023 movie directed by Alexander Payne. This study employed using a descriptive qualitative method, and researchers used Grice's theory to analyze many types of conversational implicature and the maxim of violation, which entails some steps the first, the researcher viewing the film, second, the researcher identifying implicature-containing sentences, and finally, the researcher then deciphered the meanings that were implied in the conversation. The findings indicate that there were 21 data points violation maxim from The Holdovers movie, the most frequent infraction is the relation maxim (7 data points), which is followed by the quantity maxim (6 data points), the quality maxim (6 data points), and the way maxim (2 data points). These violations often carried hidden meanings such as sarcasm, humorous, soft criticism, or emotional messages. These hidden meanings helped show how the characters express feelings or avoid conflict without speaking directly. This study advances the subject of pragmatics by demonstrating how indirect language in educational encounters may expose power dynamics, personal views, and generational communication gaps. Future research expected into implicature in other educational media or actual classrooms. By comparing the two, we may gain a greater understanding of how individuals speak, express themselves, and deal with communication issues in education.

Keywords : Conversational implicature, cooperative principle, maxim violation, the holdovers movie.

### 1. Introduction

Yudi & Wan state communication is defined as the sending and receiving of messages, news, or conversations between two or more individuals in order for the message to be comprehended (Pratama & Anayati, 2022). According Natasya, Yuhendra, and Sari Successful communication requires both a grasp of the speaker intended meaning and the literal meaning of words. Sometimes the information we wish to communicate has more meanings than just the literal speech, and knowing pragmatics is necessary to comprehend these meanings (Immanuel & Ningsih, 2023). According to Fromkin, Rodman, & Hyams, Pragmatic is concerned with the

interpretation of linguistic meaning in context, pragmatics also overwhelms the implicit meaning called implicature (Khairunnas, Sidauruk, Pratama, & M.D.N, 2020).

According to Grice, conversational implicatures are pragmatic implications that arise as a result of violating the conversational principle and the cooperative principle of conversation, both of which are included in communication (Efizahane & Afriana, 2022). This study examines conversational implicatures in *The Holdovers* movie, concentrating on how teacher-student interactions use violations of Grice's Cooperative Principle to express concealed meanings such as sarcasm and humor, subtle criticism, or emotional responses. To comprehend the process of these implicatures, both the speaker and the listener must adhere to the cooperative principle, called by maxim. According to Grice's theory, in order to guarantee collaboration and clarity in conversation, speakers should adhere to four maxims: (1) quality, which guarantees honesty; (2) quantity, which provides the required amount of information; (3) relation, which maintains relevance; and (4) manner, which ensures intelligibility (Nafi', Yuliasril, & Pratama, 2025). However, when these maxims are intentionally violated, implied or indirect meanings may arise in conversation.

Several previous studies have discussed how conversational implicature is used in different contexts. (Wulandari & Dewanti, 2020) investigated conversational implicature in the BBC Learning English Podcast. They discovered that the speakers frequently conveyed humor, viewpoints, and critical thinking using indirect language. Similarly, (Hidayah, 2021) examined implicatures in an English song lyrics and listeners' responses. The study discovered that particularized and generalized implicatures were the most prevalent. Another research by (Khairunnas, Sidauruk, Pratama, & M.D.N, 2020) analyzed the movie *Beauty and the Beast* as the subject of. According to the results, generic implicature was more prevalent than particularized implicature. In a related field of research, (Rahma & Satria, 2025) examined the film *Uglies*, of the 47 implicatures they discovered, the majority were particularized. (Harsa, 2024) concentrated on the use of particularized implicature in written discourse within a short tale. (Putri & Ambalegin, 2022) examined the film *Suspicious Partner* and discovered 16 implicatures that arose from violating Grice's maxims. (Darmayani, Sosiowati, & Arya, 2022) In their analysis of *Turning Red* discovered 18 implicatures. Character emotions are conveyed through 10 generalized and 8 particularized. (Purba, Silalahi, & Lim, 2025) analyzed film *Despicable Me 4* and found 21 implicatures that convey comedy and irony. In his analysis of *Shang-Chi* movie, (Immanuel & Ningsih, 2023) discovered 26 implicatures, and the most which was violations of the maxim of manner. Lastly, (Sarsono, et al., 2025) analyzed *Bird Box* and found 15 implicatures, with particularized implicature being the most dominant.

Although previous studies have looked at conversational implicatures in films and other media, the majority of them have focused only on defining the types of implicatures or describing their general meaning. They rarely looked into how maxim violations are employed to convey deeper or concealed meanings like humor, subtle criticism, or emotional reactions. Furthermore, there is a lack of research on teacher-student interactions in educational contexts, as depicted in the *Holdovers* movie. The *Holdovers* movie has yet to be explored as a source of conversational implicature, despite the fact that it contains rich and indirect interactions between professors and pupils. This study attempts to fill those gaps by analyzing both the types of maxim violations and the implied meanings behind them in a conversation between teacher and student in *The Holdovers*.

movie.

So that, the goal of examines conversational implicatures in The Holdovers movie, concentrating on how teacher-student interactions use violations of Grice's Cooperative Principle to express concealed meanings such as sarcasm and humor, subtle criticism, or emotional responses. The findings of the study add to a better understanding of how pragmatic methods function in educational discourse inside media and provide ideas for future research in language, communication, and film analysis.

This study is designed to further the discipline of pragmatics by examining the use of indirect language in educational contexts as depicted in movie. By concentrating on teacher and student interactions, it provides insights into how conversational implicature reflects emotional expression, communication styles, and generational differences in diverse educational settings.

## **2. Research Method**

The researcher employed the qualitative method to analyze conversational implicature in The Holdovers movie. According to Mc Millan (2010) in Retno & Ratna Journal, qualitative research is thought to be pertinent to the study's goal, which ultimately led to narratives rather than statistical reports. Additionally, as Mayring (2004) noted, the subject of content analysis may take the shape of transcripts, papers, discourses, and protocol observations (Wulandari & Dewanti, 2020). Given that this study used dialogue transcripts from a movie as its data source, this research strategy was selected.

The research data came from dialogue in the 2023 film The Holdovers, which was examined on March 6, 2025. Conversations between characters, particularly between teacher and student (Tn.Paul & Angus), serve as the main source of data. Books, journals, and earlier studies on conversational implicature and are support of secondary data sources.

In order to find discussions with conversational implicatures, first, the researcher viewed The Holdovers several times. To guarantee accuracy in data collection, the researcher transcribed the conversations. Second, researcher identifying implicature-containing sentence. In order to create the implicature, the researcher also looked at which of the four maxims (quantity, quality, relation, and manner) were broken in each discourse. Third, the researcher then deciphered the meanings that were implied in the conversation which include sarcasm, humor, subtle criticism, emotion, and other indirect messages seen in teacher and student interactions. All data were interpreted using Grice's Cooperative Principle as the main theoretical framework. A greater comprehension of conversational implicatures in language was provided by the analysis, which was backed by pertinent theories and earlier studies.

## **3. Results and Discussion**

### **3.1 Result**

The purpose of this study is to examine conversational implicatures based on maxim violations in the film The Holdovers, with a focus on interactions between teacher (Mr. Paul) and student (Angus) characters. The study aimed to find statements that violated maxims Grice's, while: quantity, quality, relation, and manner. and determine the inferred meanings behind them.

Based on the data, the researcher discovered 21 utterances with conversational implicatures. Each statement is characterized according to the type of maxim broken and the inferred message it conveys. The table below shows the frequency of maxim breaches detected in *The Holdovers* movie. The table below shows the frequency of each form of maxim violation shown in *The Holdovers* movie :

Table 1. Frequency of Maxim Violations in *The Holdovers* Movie

No	Type of Maxim Violated	Frequency
1.	Quantity	6
2.	Quality	6
3.	Relation	7
4.	Manner	2
<b>Total</b>		<b>21</b>

According to the table above, the maxim of relation was the most commonly broken, followed by quantity and quality, while the maxim of manner occurred the least frequently. These infractions were frequently committed at times of stress, conflict, or emotionally intense discussions between characters.

Each maxim violation maxim in a distinct implicit meaning (implicature). According to the research, sarcasm is the most common inferred meaning, followed by subtle criticism, humor, and emotional response. These implicatures are used to discreetly express feelings or attitudes indirectly, particularly in tight or unpleasant situations.

Further analysis of the data, including the type of maxim violation and the implied meaning that appears in each utterance, will be explained in detail in the Discussion section.

### 3.2 Discussion

The table below shows the different sorts of maxim breaches that occurred, as well as the inferred meanings established throughout the interaction between teacher and student:

Table 2. Types of Maxim Violations and Implied Meanings in "*The Holdovers*" Movie

No	Conversation	Maxim Violation	Implicature
1.	Paul : "And where exactly is your head, Mr. Tully?"  Angus : "I don't know. St. Kitts." (00:14:52-00:14:56)	Relation	"St. Kitts" is an irrelevant answer from Angus. This reply suggests that Angus isn't completely

			interested in the conversation. His irrelevant remark may be sarcastic or humorous in order to distract from the severity of the question.
2.	Paul : “Yes indeed, I see you have brought your valise.”  Angus : <b>“Spot-on, sir. It’s just that it’s been a really exhausting semester, and getting into new material now right before break? Honestly, it’s a little absurd, sir.”</b> (00:14:59:-00:15:27)	Relation	Angus shifts the focus from the bag to his annoyance studying. The implication is that he considers the lesson unneeded. Paul responds with sarcasm, expressing his annoyance the students.
3.	Paul : "Of course, I will still expect you to be familiar with chapter six upon your return, so pack those textbooks boys. And if displeased, take it up with your champion... Mr. Tully. Dismissed."  Angus : <b>"I got us out early, didn't I?"</b> (00:15:36 - 00:15:57).	Relation	Paul mocks Angus for stopping class early, but he still encourages students to study. His sarcasm renders the remark irrelevant. Paul is unhappy and chastises Angus, but Angus proudly ignores the sarcasm.
4.	Paul : “Mr. Tully, are you joining us as well? What happened to St. Kitts?”  Angus : <b>“Something came up.”</b> (00:20:35 – 00:20:42)	Quantity	Angus response is too brief and ambiguous, so that Paul and Kountze are puzzled as to why he did not visit St. Kitts. Actually, something essential or unexpected has stopped him, but he refuses to explain what it is.

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5.	<p>Paul : “The Peloponnesian war awaits, Mr. Kountze, you and Mr. Tully. The rest of you can get a jump on next semester, It’ll pay off. You’ll see.”</p> <p>Angus : <b>“We’re already holding over, and now we’re being punished for it?”</b>                  (00:21:14 - 00:21:16).</p>	Quality	<p>Angus makes an exaggerated and saarcatic, in fact that the extra labor is for learning, not punishment. It would be preferable if he stated plainly that he thought it was unjust without employing sarcasm.</p>
6.	<p>Angus : “It’s like fifteen degrees outside.”</p> <p>Paul : <b>“And the Romans bathed naked in the freezing Tiber, adversity builds character, Mr. Tully.”</b> (00:21:28 – 00:21:43)</p>	Relation	<p>Paul discusses irrelevant history rather than responding to Angus's grievance. Paul is trying to get Angus to quit whining and embrace the cold as a challenge.</p>
7.	<p>Paul : “I have surprise, these were a gift to me, and I would like to share them with both of you. Look at them. Look at the festive shapes, snowflakes, gingerbread men, a tree, a little mitten (chuckles)</p> <p>Angus : <b>“May I go to the bathroom, sir?”</b>                  (00:48:20 – 00: 48:46)</p>	Quality	<p>Angus go to baathroom only to avoid the conversation. He might be uncomfortable or not care about the cookies, but he won't express it. His statements seem sincere, but they are not true.</p>
8.	<p>Angus : <b>“Looking after me? Really? Like what, like my warden? Like my butler? There is nobody here, okay? Just us two losers and grieving mom. So let’s cut the shit.”</b></p> <p>Paul : “That’s a detention. (groans).”                  (00:49:25 00.49:39)</p>	Quality	<p>Paul are not entirely truthful. Angus is punished by him because he feels insulted, not because he disobeyed the rules. This indicates that Paul behaves</p>

			out of emotion rather than justice.
9.	<p>Angus : <b>“You said you washed your hands of me.”</b></p> <p>Paul : “No, I meant it metaphorically.”</p> <p>Angus : “Of course you meant it. What were you going to do, actually go and wash your hands?!” (00:51:36-00:51:40)</p>	Manner	Angus doesn't talk clearly, although "washing his hands" is merely a figure of phrase, he makes fun of Paul by acting as though he takes it seriously. Paul is being sarcastically ridiculed and disrespected by Angus.
10.	<p>Nurse : “It’s just standard procedure.”</p> <p>Angus : “I understand, but look, <b>we were over at Squantz Pond playing hockey, and I slipped on the ice.</b>”</p> <p>Paul : “Angus, what are you doing?” (00:52:17 – 00:52:23)</p>	Quality	Angus statements appear to conceal the true cause of his injury. He conjures up a narrative to deceive the nurse. Paul's remark indicates that he knows Angus is lying and warns him to stop.
11.	<p>Paul : “Okay, then. This all remains <i>entre nous</i>. Got it? You know what <i>entre nous</i> means?”</p> <p>Angus : <b>“Oui, monsieur, now you owe me.”</b> (00:54:22 – 00:54:28)</p>	Relation	Paul's query is straightforward, but Angus doesn't respond immediately. He implies that Paul owes him something. He takes Paul's words too far.
12.	<p>Angus : “Were you ever in the military?”</p> <p>Paul : <b>“I tried to enlist in ‘41, but was rejected. I have get in over there. They made me an air raid warden, gave me a whistle and everything. (chuckles) helmet, armband.”</b> (01:00:26 - 01:00:40)</p>	Quantity	Paul doesn't just say, “No, I wasn't in the military,” but explains that his eyes were the reason he was rejected. He gives more information than needed. he might

			feel inadequate about serving.
13.	<p>Angus : “Like fish, and it’s really noticeable towards the end of the day, I can even smell it on your coat. Mind if I crack the window?”</p> <p>Paul : <b>“Trimethylaminuria.”</b></p> <p>Angus : “Hah?” (01:00:56 - 01:01:08)</p>	Manner	Paul doesn't explicitly respond to the criticism regarding the scent. Instead, he uses a medical phrase, as if the scent were not his fault. Angus becomes perplexed since his statements are difficult to understand.
14.	<p>Angus : “Woww, your entire life? (off Paul’s nod) No wonder you’re afraid of women.”</p> <p>Paul : “(stung) <b>I am not afraid of women. Jesus.</b>” (01:01:20 – 01:01:28)</p>	Quality	Angus believes Paul is terrified of women because of his history, despite a lack of evidence. Paul is insulted, even if he doesn't express it. His statements imply that Paul was shaped by his past, even if this is not the case.
15.	<p>Angus : “My father’s dead.”</p> <p>Paul : “But I thought your father –“</p> <p>Angus : <b>“That is just some rich guy my mom Married, give me your keys.”</b> (01:16:44-01:16.48)</p>	Relation	Paul requests an explanation, but Angus shifts the subject by asking for the keys. He avoids discussing his stepfather, indicating that he does not want to talk about it and does not regard him as his biological father. This shows that their relationship is distant or strained.
16.	<p>Paul : “Where the hell have you been?”</p>	Quantity	Angus ambiguous response implies he

	<p>Angus : <b>"I don't know. Just here."</b></p> <p>Paul : "Uhh now, this is for you." (01:19:14 – 01:19:37)</p>		<p>was daydreaming or dodging the question. The implication is that he does not wish to explain or considers it unimportant.</p>
17.	<p>Paul : "Meditations" by Marcus Aurelius, for my money, it's like the Bible, the Koran and the Bhagavad Gita all rolled up into one. And the best part is not one mention of God."</p> <p>Angus : <b>"Hmm, okay, thanks."</b> (01:19:51– 01:20:02)</p>	Quantity	<p>Angus responds briefly and uncertain. He doesn't seem as excited as Paul. Perhaps he dislikes the book or is unsure how to respond. His response is nice, but lacks curiosity.</p>
18.	<p>Angus : "Okay, I want to go to Boston." Paul : "Boston, why?" Angus : <b>"Why not? I want a real Christmas, I want to go ice-skating, I want to see a real Christmas tree with ornaments, not that stupid thing."</b> (01:22:12 – 01:22:25)</p>	Relation	<p>Angus doesn't answer paul questioning directly and instead questions it. This temporarily moves the topic before he explains. It demonstrates that Angus believes Paul's query is unimportant, as if his motivation for going to Boston should be evident.</p>
19.	<p>Angus : "You have never had sex, have you?" Paul : <b>"Believe it or not, Mr. Tully, there was a time when the fire in my loins burned white hot."</b> Angus : "You're full of shit." (01:28:51 – 01:28:59)</p>	Quantity	<p>Paul response it unclear. Instead of expressing "yes" or "no," he employs overblown language, making his message confusing. This suggests that he is either evading the question or making a joke.</p>

<p>20. Angus : “So, you got kicked out of Harvard for hitting a guy with a car?”</p> <p>Paul : <b>“By accident, but he broke three ribs. Which was technically his fault, because he should not have been in the road, pint of Jim Beam.”</b>                  (01:35:04 – 01:35:09)</p>	<p>Quality</p>	<p>Paul refuses to take responsibility and instead blames the victim. He believes the guy should not have been on the road. Paul also prefers not to discuss it further. When he says "Pint of Jim Beam," it indicates that he wants to change the topic conversation.</p>
<p>21. Angus : “Well, they already fired you, so I figured it was worth a shot.”</p> <p>Paul : <b>“Your logic is flawless, but, uh, no.”</b>                  (02:06:46 – 02:06:54)</p>	<p>Quantity</p>	<p>Angus providing excessive information. His counsel does not apply to Paul's predicament after being dismissed. Paul rejects the suggestion and believes it is not a good idea.</p>

Following data analysis, the researcher discovered 21 utterances in the film *The Holdovers* that had conversational implicatures, particularly in the interaction between teacher (Mr. Paul) and student (Angus). According to the research, the maxim of relevance is the most frequently violated, followed by the maxims of quantity and quality. Meanwhile, only a tiny number of violations of the maxim of manner occur.

The data indicate that the characters in the film frequently utilize language indirectly to express numerous inferred meanings. Sarcasm is the most common type of implicature, followed by subtle criticism, comedy, and emotional responses. The violation of these maxims helps illustrate how they deal with uncomfortable or complicated situations. In this situation, the use of indirect language suggests tension or a strong emotional bond between teachers and pupils.

When it comes to current concerns, particularly in education, communication between instructors and students frequently presents comparable obstacles. Classroom relationships are becoming more difficult due to generational disparities, mental stress, and changing communication styles. Many students and teacher express their emotions indirectly, particularly when they are uncomfortable, pushed, or disagree. The movie reflects this, making it useful for illustrating the dynamics of current communication in education.

In conclusion, the film's pragmatic tactics demonstrate how indirect language serves not just to transmit material but also to control emotions and power dynamics within educational interaction.

#### 4. Conclusion

In this research, researcher found 21 data points with conversational implicature from the film *The Holdovers* that include conversational implicatures owing to breaches of Grice's maxims. The maxim of relation is the most frequently violated, which was detected in 7 data points. Followed by the maxims of quantity 6 data and quality 6 data, maxim of manner coming last discovered in 2 data points. These infractions generate suggested meanings such as sarcasm (the most prevalent), subtle criticism, humor, and emotional reaction.

This study makes an academic addition by focusing on teacher and student interactions in educational situations, which are still infrequently explored in pragmatics studies. This study contributes to our understanding of the role of indirect language as a type of emotional and social communication in educational media.

Future studies expected into conversational implicature in other education-themed movies or in real-world classroom settings. A comparison of fictitious and real-world situations can reveal fresh insights into how language reflects social dynamics, relational disparities, and generation gaps in educational communication.

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