

## Implications and Presuppositions in Michelle Obama's Speech: A Pragmatics Study

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### Abstract

*This study purposes to describe and observe the types of implicatures found in speech of Michelle Obama within the Democratic National Convention in 2020. Based on analytical methods and procedures the data, this study uses a qualitative method and descriptive approach, since the production of described data is in the form of written or spoken words by using the transcription. The data in this study are implicature utterances of Michelle Obama in 2020 aired in national media. The main theory of this research is Yule (2006) regarding to implicature categories and presupposition. The data were collected using the manual method of listening and note taking. This method is realized by using basic techniques and advanced techniques. The basic technique used is tapping technique as the video may be replayed several times. While the advanced technique used is the free-involvement listening technique, recording technique and note-taking technique. Based on the results of the analysis found 4 types of implicatures used in speech, yet the whole data analyzed shows only two categorizes; generalized and particularized conversational implicature. Based on the data analysis, there are 78% data show the generalized conversational implicature, while the rest 22% leads to particularized conversational implicature. It can be inferred that Michelle Obama speech in Democratic National Convention in 2020 applied generalized conversational implicature.*

### Keywords

implicature; presupposition;  
speech



## I. Introduction

Language refers to a system and an important tool used by every human being to communicate. Language has the meaning of an arbitrary articulation sound symbol system, which is used by a group of people to work together, interact and identify each other. Language has an important role in human life, this is because language is a key medium used by humans to convey information and express opinions and ideas. Language has a very important function for humans, especially the communicative function. Therefore, it is impossible for language to be separated from human life (Tarigan, 1986). Every individual human being is required to have the ability to speak words or skills in language. It is because humans are social creatures. Language has three main functions, as a tool for working together, communicating, and identifying oneself. The function of language as a communication tool will make it easier for humans to carry out social interactions or cooperation for both individual and group interests. In carrying out social interactions, good cooperation is very necessary, so there is no error in understanding the meaning of the speech conveyed by the interlocutor (Wijana, 2009). Communication is the main complement that cannot be separated from the life of every individual. This is because communication activities are used to create and build relationships with other individuals

or groups. Communication activities are carried out by two or more people, each of which acts as a speaker and a speech partner. Communication is not just an event, but communication is also designed to have an effect on the speaker and the speech partner. These effects can arise in the speech partner as a result of the speaker's goals, these effects can arise in question and answer events or simply conveying information. Communication can be done in two ways, namely directly and indirectly. Direct communication includes interviews, while indirect communication can take the form of newspapers, magazines, films, and broadcast information on television or radio (Brown, 2008).

Communication is the process of delivering messages by someone to other people to tell, change attitudes, opinions or behavior either directly orally or indirectly through the media (Hasbullah, et al: 2018). In a communication process, there is a combination of actions and a series of elements, each of which has its own purpose and purpose. In the communication process, not all messages or information are conveyed explicitly or explicitly, there are also intentions conveyed by the speaker implicitly or implicitly. Therefore, speech partners need to understand these implied meanings according to the context in which they are spoken there is. An understanding of the implicit meaning and presuppositions of this utterance can be studied in a pragmatic study. The implied meaning or contextual meaning that occurs in the communication process is studied in a linguistic science, namely pragmatics. Pragmatics is a field of linguistic study that studies the meaning conveyed by speakers which is then interpreted by the speech partners. The scope of pragmatics studies that study the meaning of speech in a deeper way is the study of implicatures; it has become an inseparable part of speech in daily communication activities (Yule, 2006).

The meaning of speech that is implied or implicit. Implicit itself has the meaning, namely, included or contained in it (even though it is not stated clearly).

The study of presuppositions is a study that discusses meaning through assumptions that are part of pragmatics. Presupposition is when the speaker can assume an event before expressing the utterance (Yule, 2006). Presupposition is a form of presupposition of the speaker that the speech partner can recognize or know for sure the individual or object being spoken (Rustono, 1999). There is a common understanding that occurs between the speaker and the speech partner about something that is the basis of communication. When the speech partner can understand or recognize the object communicated by the speaker, communication can run successfully and without obstacles. Presuppositions are obtained from statements conveyed by speakers, without the need to determine whether the presuppositions are true or false. Based on the research background that has been described above, the research focused on identifying the problems as follows:

1. What types of implicatures appeared in Michelle Obama's 2020 Democratic National Convention speech?
2. What presupposition factors emerged in Michelle Obama's 2020 Democratic National Convention speech?

In order to achieve a research result, it is important to limit the problem. In addition, the limitation of the problem is required; so, the author does not pass through the realm of his research, as well as to make it easier for the author to determine what data is needed for research. Based on the title of this thesis research proposal; in this study the research is limited to the problem by only analyzing the types of implicatures and the types of presuppositions or presuppositions contained in the transcript of the speech of the former First Lady of the United States of America Michelle Obama at the night of the *Democratic National Convention 2020*. Thus, the data that will be analyzed will be viewed from the

perspective of Pragmatics, specifically in the area of implicatures and presupposition which cover the utterance within the speech of Michelle Obama in that event.

## II. Review of Literature

### 2.1 Pragmatics

Pragmatics is a branch of linguistics, or linguistics, which studies the relationship that exists between the meaning of speech and the external context of speech. Pragmatics is concerned with the interpretation of linguistics in context or in other words, pragmatics is the science of using language which depends on the interpretation of the context of speech (Fromkin, 1998). Pragmatics is the study of the conditions of language use by humans which is actually determined by the context behind the language (Rahardi, 2005). Pragmatics is the study of meaning communicated by sender and interpreted by receiver or in other words, pragmatics is the science that studies the meaning and context of speech delivered by speakers and translated by speech partners (Yule, 1996).

Pragmatics refers to the study of the use of language in communication, the relationship between sentences, context, situation and time (Parera, 2004). The details parts of Pragmatics are as follow: (a) Pragmatics is how the interpretation and use of utterances depends on knowledge; (b) Pragmatics studies the speaker's understanding of the use and understanding of speech acts; (c) Pragmatics studies sentence structure which is influenced by the relationship between the speaker and the speech partner.

Pragmatics says that pragmatics is the study of the meaning conveyed by speakers which is then interpreted by the hearer. This study has a close relationship with the analysis of the intent that the speaker wants to convey through his speech with a meaning that is separate from the words used in his speech. In other words, pragmatics can be interpreted as the study of the speaker's intentions (Yule, 2006).

Pragmatics is the study of the relationship between language and context which is the basis of language understanding, or in other words pragmatics is the study of the ability of language users to connect sentences to be used to fit the context which exists. Pragmatics also involves the ability to interpret. The speaker must consider the use of words in his speech sentences to suit the speech partner concerned. Thus, the speech partner can make conclusions and understand the meaning expressed by the speaker (Tarigan, 1986). To conclude, pragmatics discusses the meaning of speech in depth from speakers and context, besides pragmatics also emphasizes the function of language in communication.

### 2.2 Context

Context leads to a word that is found before or after a sentence or statement and has a function to add clarity to meaning. Context is knowledge possessed by speakers and speech partners, so that speech partners are able to understand the intent of the speaker's utterances (Kridalaksana, 2005). Context is the basis or background of the formation of a communication process (Mulyana, 2005). Speech will have no meaning without context. Pragmatics is a science that gives meaning that is bound by context (Nadar, 2009). Context has an important role in understanding the meaning of speech, especially for speakers to arrange the words to be spoken. The speaker will carry out a process of consideration of what references to use, if the speech partner also has access to the references to be used. From the explanation above, it can be concluded that context is a conceptual framework regarding anything that is used as a reference in speaking or understanding the meaning of an utterance. Context is part of an utterance or sentence, its function is to support or clarify the meaning of a situation related to an event. Context is the main focus in pragmatic

analysis. It covers the speaker and speech partner, place, time and whatever is involved in an utterance (Purwo, 2001). Context is all the information contained around the user and the use of language. From this explanation, it can be concluded that things such as distance, place, or situation can be categorized as contexts of language use. It emphasizes of the importance of context in language, where context can determine the meaning of an utterance.

### 2.3 Implicatures

Implicature is a branch of pragmatics; as previously explained, an utterance does not only contain an explicit or explicit meaning, but also an implied or implicit meaning. This implicit meaning is studied and researched in the science of implicature. Implicature has the meaning of something that is implied, implicature comes from the verb to imply and the noun implication. The verb to imply comes from the Latin *plicare* which means "to fold" or to fold. To understand what is folded, of course, the fold must be opened first. Therefore, to understand what is meant by a speaker, the speech partner must interpret the meaning of each utterance conveyed (Nadar, 2009). Implicature is a unit in the study of pragmatics that discusses the implicit meaning contained in the words expressed, implicature is one of the units in pragmatic learning that discusses the implied meaning contained in the utterances spoken by speakers. . Impicature is a component in speech that contains the meaning of the speaker which is conveyed indirectly or implicitly. However, implicatures can help communication between speakers and speech partners effectively, even though speakers convey the meaning of the utterance is indirect (Legiansyah and Supri, 2020). Utterance that contains implicatures always involves an indirect interpretation. As in communication that occurs verbally, the implicatures used are usually understood by the speaker, therefore they do not need to be expressed explicitly. The use of implicatures is carried out implicitly, the goal is that the things implied do not appear conspicuous. Implicature is used to show the difference between what is said and implied (Mulyana, 2005).

### 2.4 Presupposition

Presuppositions are what the speaker uses as a basis together with the speech partner. Presuppositions are pragmatic interference that is affected by context factors. Furthermore, Levinson also states that presuppositions have the meaning of all possible background assumptions make an action, theory, expression and speech make sense. In short, presuppositions can also be referred to as assumptions. Thus, we can know that the things that form the background of an utterance are general things and the context of the utterance itself (Sari, 2017).

Sentence can be stated as assuming another sentence if the incorrectness of the sentence presented causes the sentence being considered cannot be declared true or false. This can be seen in the example of the utterance:

*"My friend said that senior is the prettiest and smartest student in her class".*

The presupposition in the speech shows that there is a student who has the prettiest face and also the smartest. If in fact she is actually the prettiest and smartest student in her class, the statement above can be declared true. On the other hand, if there are students in the class who are much prettier and smarter, then the above statement cannot be declared true or false (Rahardi, 2005). Presuppositions play an important role in determining the coherence of a discourse. Implicit and explicit or illocutionary levels of communication are used in every utterance. Speech can be judged irrelevant if not only the way the speaker is

wrong in expressing the description of an event, but also in making the wrong assumption (Retnosari, 2014).

### III. Research Method

To conduct the research, the author uses a qualitative descriptive research method. This research method uses data obtained from various empirical materials that illustrate the problems of each individual. Research method is more concerned with 'what' rather than 'how' or 'why' something has happened or 'why' something happened (Hosseini, 2015). Qualitative methods as research include important efforts such as collecting specific data and analyzing data inductively, as well as interpreting the meaning of the data. Qualitative descriptive research method was chosen because the data used for this study was in the form of descriptive transcripts and based on actual facts (Creswell, 2014).

The steps that the author takes to run the research are as follows:

- a. Determine the research topic
- b. Identify the problems
- c. Collect theories related to the research topic to be used as research references.
- d. Identify the research method to be used.
- e. Collect data by downloading a transcript of Michelle Obama's speech from The New York Times website.
- f. Analyze data and classify the types of implicatures and presuppositions contained in Michelle Obama's speech.
- g. Draw conclusions from the results of the overall analysis of the data that has been studied.

### IV. Results and Discussion

The data analysis is related to the types of implicatures, its functions and types of presuppositions contained in the text of Michelle Obama's speech. The transcript of Michelle Obama's speech was downloaded from The New York Times page at the website address (<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/17/us/politics/Michelle-Obama-speech-transcript-video.html>).

#### 4.1 Generalized Conversational Implicature

##### Data 1

Michelle Obama: *“Good evening, everyone. It's a hard time, and everyone's feeling it in different ways. And I know a lot of folks are reluctant to tune into a political convention right now or to politics in general”*(NYT)

In the utterance *I know a lot of folks are reluctant to tune into a political convention right now or to politics in general*; it refers to a form of generalized conversational implicature. This is because the above utterance does not require a special context; the speech partner can immediately understand the speaker's intent. The speech partners can assume that the speaker's speech means that many of the people of the United States of America do not really want to see the political conference that night, but they are forced to watch the political conference in order to know the political conditions of the country at that time.

The trigger type of presupposition or presupposition in the above utterance is *factive* verbs. This is because in the above utterance there is the word *"know"* which is one of the words that indicates the truth of the feelings felt by the majority of the people of the United



States. In addition, there is the word "*reluctant*" which is an adjective can be believed to be true. The presupposition trigger above shows that the presupposition used in the utterance is a factual presupposition.

## Data 2

Michelle Obama: "*I've met so many of you. I've heard your stories. And through you, I have seen this country's promise. And thanks to so many who came before me, thanks to their toil and sweat and blood, I've been able to live that promise myself.*"

In the speech *I've met so many of you. I've heard your stories. And through you, I have seen this country's promise* is a form of generalized conversational implicature, the speech partner does not need a special context to understand the meaning of the speaker's utterance. The implicit meaning expressed by the speaker is, the speaker has met and heard the complaint of public awareness through social activities during the speaker's tenure as the first lady of United States of America, and the speaker has also witnessed how the promises of the state, namely caring adults, safe places, a healthy start, effective education, opportunities to help others have been implemented in people's lives. The function of the utterance above is the function of claiming or claiming, this can be seen from the speaker's utterance which reads "I've met so many of you. I've heard your stories". In this utterance, the speaker makes a claim that he has met many Americans in the United States, and has heard people's complaints about the political conditions in the United States.

The utterance above shows the use of a definite pronoun, namely "*this country*" which states the assumption that the country spoken of by the speaker is true, besides that in the sentence above there is also the use of possessive adjectives, the word "*your stories*" which shows that in the above utterance there are words that identify that the utterance above uses the type of definite description presupposition trigger.

## 4.2 Particularized Conversational Implicature

### Data 3

Michelle Obama: "*All those folks who sacrificed and overcame so much in their own times because they wanted something more, something better for their kids.*"

In the utterances of all those folks who sacrificed and overcame so much in their own times because they wanted something more, something better for their kids the implicature used is particularized conversational implicature. The speech partner needs context to understand the meaning of the speech something more, something better above. The implicit meaning of the above speech is, American society consisting of various races and religions wants to get justice, protection, educational services and a safe and much more decent place for their descendants in the future, different from what they got in their time, besides Therefore, the sentence above also implies that to get protection from the government, fair treatment in social life, easy and equitable educational services for each individual, and safe housing facilities are difficult for them to obtain. The points regarding justice, protection, educational services and housing are the promises of the United States government to its entire people regardless of race, religion and color.

The type of presupposition trigger that appears in the above utterance is the type of definite description. This is indicated by the use of possessive constructions and in the above utterance there is the word "*their kids*" which is a form of possessive adjectives. From this word can arise the presupposition that these earlier people have descendants, and they are stated to exist. In addition, there are also words that read "*their own times*"; this meaning is also a form of possessive adjectives which can suggest that the period in which these people lived and struggled existed.

#### Data 4

Michelle Obama: "So let me be as honest and clear as I possibly can. Donald Trump is the wrong president for our country. He has had more than enough time to prove that he can do the job, but he is clearly in over his head."

The form of implicature in the above utterance "He has had more than enough time to prove that he can do the job, but he is clearly in over his head" is a form of particularized conversational implicature or special conversational implicature, where the speech partner needs context to interpret the meaning speaker. The meaning of the phrase "he is clearly in over his head" is that, even though Donald Trump has served as president for a relatively long time, he is still having difficulty dealing with the problems faced by the country.

The presuppositional trigger contained in the above utterance is a definite description type of presupposition trigger, in the above utterance there are the words "Donald trump is the wrong president" and "our country". Definite descriptions are words that show a clear meaning, and in the above utterance there is a proper name, namely "Donald Trump" besides that in the above utterance there is also the use of possessive constructions in the word "our country" this clearly shows that the type of presupposition trigger in above is a definite description.

### V. Conclusion

Conversational implicature may emerge in a conversation, especially in a certain social group. In a social group in which there are already various factors that raises certain closeness between its members, it is very possible once there is a conversation implicature in the communication process that occurs. It can be said, that certain factors including proximity, will affect a form of communication that occurs. Based on data analysis, it was found 2 types of implicatures in Michelle Obama's speech, namely generalized conversational implicatures; particularized conversational implicatures. The implicature is used by Michelle Obama or consumers to convey certain meanings that can be delivered directly. From several types of implicatures found then the type of implicature that often appears in the speech is a type of generalized conversational implicature. This is because in delivering his speech tends to use context general conversation in communication. As for the particularized conversational context is only used at a certain time. Based on the data analysis, there are 78% data show the generalized conversational implicature, while the rest 22% leads to particularized conversational implicature.

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