

Navigating Implicit and Explicit Meaning in Academic Discourse: A Pragmatic Analysis of Master 1 EFL Students' Discourse at the University of 08 Mai 1945, Guelma, Algeria.

استكشاف المعاني الضمنية والصريحة في الخطاب الأكاديمي: تحليل تداولي لخطاب طلبة السنة الأولى ماستر لغة إنجليزية كلغة أجنبية بجامعة 08 ماي 1945، قالمة، الجزائر

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• **Abstract:**

Pragmatic competence shapes how students convey and interpret meaning in academic discourse. This study examines implicit (implicature, presupposition) and explicit meaning in classroom discussions among Master 1 EFL students at the University of 08 Mai 1945, Guelma. Using Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle and Levinson's (2000) presupposition theory, it explores how communication shifts based on contextual factors. Data from 30 students (recorded discussions, presentations, questionnaires) reveal that students use implicit meaning with peers but prefer explicit meaning with professors. 30% struggled with implicit interpretation, leading to miscommunication. Findings highlight the need for pragmatic awareness in academic settings, especially for non-native English speakers. The study suggests pragmatic training in university curricula and further research on cross-cultural variations.

Keywords:

Pragmatics, Implicit Meaning, Explicit Meaning, Conversational Implicature, Academic Discourse.

المخلص:

تُعد الكفاءة التداولية عاملاً حاسماً في كيفية إنتاج الطلبة للمعنى وتأويله داخل الخطاب الأكاديمي. تستقصي هذه الدراسة تمثيلات المعنى الضمني (كالإيحاء والمسبقات التداولية) والمعنى الصريح في تفاعلات الفصل الدراسي لدى طلبة السنة الأولى ماستر لغة إنجليزية كلغة أجنبية بجامعة 08 ماي 1945، قالمة. بالاعتماد على مبدأ التعاون لغرايس (1975) ونظرية الافتراض المسبق لليفنسون (2000)، تحلل الدراسة كيفية تغير أنماط التواصل وفقاً للمعطيات السياقية. وقد تم جمع corpus لغوي من 30 طالباً عبر تسجيل مناقشاتهم الصفية، وعروضهم التقديمية، واستبيانات تداولية موجهة. كشفت النتائج أن الطلبة يميلون إلى استخدام المعنى الضمني في تفاعلهم مع الأقران، بينما يفضلون المعنى الصريح في التواصل مع الأساتذة. كما أظهر ما نسبته 30٪ منهم صعوبات في تأويل المعاني الضمنية، مما أدى إلى حالات من سوء الفهم التداولي. تؤكد هذه النتائج الحاجة إلى تعزيز الوعي التداولي في البيئات الأكاديمية، خصوصاً لدى متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية بوصفها لغة أجنبية. وتوصي الدراسة بإدماج مكونات تدريبية تداولية ضمن البرامج الجامعية، وتدعو إلى مزيد من البحث في التباينات التداولية بين الثقافات.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التداولية، المعنى الضمني، المعنى الصريح، الإيحاء الحواري، الخطاب الأكاديمي.

• Introduction

Understanding implicit meaning in communication is a crucial aspect of pragmatic competence, particularly in academic discourse. In university settings, students must navigate between explicit and implicit meaning depending on contextual factors such as interlocutor familiarity, topic complexity, and institutional power dynamics. However, non-native English-speaking students often face challenges in interpreting implicit meaning, leading to miscommunication and potential academic difficulties. This issue is particularly relevant in Algerian universities, where students rely heavily on direct, explicit expressions in formal settings but struggle with indirectness in peer interactions and academic discussions.

This study aims to examine how Master 1 EFL students at the University of 08 Mai 1945, Guelma, shift between implicit and explicit meaning in different communicative situations. It seeks to identify how students employ implicit and explicit meaning in academic discourse, analyze the factors influencing their choice of communication style, and evaluate the difficulties they face in interpreting implicit meaning and its impact on comprehension. The research builds on Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle and Levinson's (2000) presupposition theory, investigating how conversational implicatures and presuppositions shape student interactions.

To address these objectives, a qualitative approach was adopted, using recorded discussions, student presentations, and questionnaire responses from 30 Master 1 students. These methods provided insights into both spontaneous and structured communication, allowing for a comprehensive analysis of how students alternate between implicit and explicit meaning. The study hypothesizes that students predominantly use implicit meaning in peer discussions but shift toward explicit communication in professor-student interactions due to power dynamics and the need for clarity.

A mixed-method approach was used to analyze the collected data. Thematic analysis was applied to examine patterns in recorded discussions and student presentations, identifying recurring pragmatic strategies and difficulties. Questionnaire responses were subjected to descriptive statistical analysis, measuring students' awareness, frequency of implicit meaning use, and challenges in interpretation. The findings highlight key areas where students struggle and suggest that while implicit meaning is more common in peer discussions, explicit meaning dominates in professor-student interactions. These results reinforce the need for targeted pragmatic training to enhance students' communicative competence and reduce instances of miscommunication in academic discourse.

This research contributes to the understanding of pragmatic competence in an academic context, emphasizing the importance of integrating pragmatic awareness into university curricula to improve students' ability to navigate implicit and explicit communication effectively.

1. Literature Review

Pragmatic competence is a crucial aspect of second language acquisition (SLA), particularly in academic discourse, where meaning must be interpreted beyond the literal level (Bardovi-Harlig, 2013). This section provides a theoretical framework for understanding implicit and explicit meaning, drawing on seminal theories such as Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle, Levinson's (2000) presupposition theory, and Sperber and Wilson's (1995) Relevance Theory. Additionally, it reviews empirical studies on pragmatics in academic discourse, highlighting key findings on how students navigate meaning construction in educational settings.

1.1 Grice's Cooperative Principle and Conversational Implicature

One of the foundational theories in pragmatics is Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle, which suggests that effective communication relies on adherence to four conversational maxims:

1. **Maxim of Quantity** – Provide the right amount of information.
2. **Maxim of Quality** – Be truthful and provide evidence for claims.
3. **Maxim of Relation** – Be relevant to the topic.
4. **Maxim of Manner** – Be clear, avoiding ambiguity and obscurity.

Speakers may deliberately flout these maxims, leading to conversational implicature, where meaning is implied rather than explicitly stated (Thomas, 1995). For example, if a professor asks a student, "Did you complete the assignment?" and the student responds, "I tried," the professor must infer the underlying implicature that the student did not fully complete the task (Yule, 1996).

In academic settings, implicature is frequently used in classroom discussions, peer interactions, and feedback sessions (Taguchi, 2015). However, non-native English speakers often struggle to recognize and interpret implicature, leading to miscommunication and misunderstandings (Roever, 2012). This study examines whether Master 1 students effectively use conversational implicature and how context (peer discussions vs. professor interactions) influences its usage.

1.2 Levinson's Presupposition Theory

Presupposition refers to assumptions that speakers take for granted when communicating (Levinson, 2000). For example, the statement "Even John passed the exam" presupposes that passing was unexpected for John (Yule, 1996).

Levinson (2000) distinguishes between:

- **Conventional Presuppositions** – Linguistic structures that carry fixed assumptions (e.g., "again" implies repetition).
- **Conversational Presuppositions** – Context-dependent inferences based on discourse (e.g., "Since you asked..." implies a relevant connection).

In academic discourse, presupposition is vital for argumentation and persuasion. Research suggests that students who fail to recognize presuppositions struggle with academic reading comprehension and effective classroom participation (Ishihara & Cohen, 2014). This study investigates whether Master 1 students employ presuppositions effectively in academic discussions and whether difficulties in interpreting presuppositions hinder their comprehension of classroom interactions.

1.3 Sperber and Wilson's Relevance Theory

Relevance Theory (Sperber & Wilson, 1995) proposes that communication is governed by the principle of relevance speakers provide information that is worth the listener's cognitive effort. According to this theory, implicit meaning arises because listeners assume that every utterance has an intended relevance (Carston, 2002).

For instance, if a professor states, "This argument is interesting," it could imply both approval and a request for further elaboration, depending on contextual cues (Wilson & Sperber, 2004). In academic discussions, students must infer relevance-based meaning, yet studies indicate that non-native speakers often misinterpret implicit feedback, leading to weaker academic performance (Taguchi, 2018). This study evaluates whether Master 1 students rely on Relevance Theory in decoding implicit meaning and identifies the challenges they face in academic settings.

1.4 Empirical Studies on Pragmatic Competence in Academic Discourse

1.4.1 Pragmatic Strategies in Student-Professor Interactions

Research on pragmatic competence in academic discourse has shown that students adjust their use of implicit and explicit meaning based on power dynamics and social distance (Bardovi-Harlig, 2013). A study by Kasper and Rose (2002) found that students employ more explicit formulations when addressing professors, prioritizing clarity over subtlety. Similarly, Roever (2012) observed that non-native English students tend to overuse directness when speaking to authority figures, often leading to perceived rudeness or misinterpretation.

1.4.2 Implicature and Peer Discussions

In contrast to student-professor interactions, peer discussions provide students with more freedom to use implicit meaning, particularly in collaborative tasks and debates (Taguchi, 2015). Studies show that students frequently use implicature to express disagreement, politeness, or humor (Roever, 2012). For example, Alcón-Soler (2008) found that students in group discussions often hint at disagreement indirectly rather than stating it explicitly, demonstrating an awareness of face-saving strategies (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

1.4.3 Challenges in Interpreting Implicit Meaning

Multiple studies have found that non-native English speakers struggle with decoding implicature, presuppositions, and indirect speech acts, leading to misunderstandings in academic settings (Taguchi, 2018). A study by Riley (2016) found that 30% of EFL university students failed to recognize conversational implicature in lectures, affecting their ability to engage in academic discussions effectively.

Given that Algerian students are primarily exposed to explicit textbook-based instruction (Al-Issa, 2003), this study explores whether Master 1 students at the University of 08 Mai 1945 face similar difficulties in understanding implicit meaning in lectures and discussions.

2. Results and Discussion

This section presents the results of the study on Master 1 students’ use and interpretation of implicit and explicit meaning in academic discourse. The findings are categorized into key themes:

- 1. Use of Conversational Implicature
- 2. Interpretation of Presupposition
- 3. Role of Context (Student-Professor vs. Peer Interactions)
- 4. Challenges in Understanding Implicit Meaning

2.1 Use of Conversational Implicature

2.1.1 Frequency of Implicature Use in Student Speech

Table 1 summarizes the frequency of **conversational implicatures** observed in **classroom discussions and presentations**.

Table 1: Frequency of Implicature in Student Interactions

Implicature Type	Peer Discussions (n=150 instances)	Professor Interactions (n=120 instances)
Indirect Disagreement	35 (23.3%)	12 (10%)
Humor-Based Implicature	40 (26.6%)	5 (4.2%)
Hedging (Mitigating Face Threats)	30 (20%)	25 (20.8%)
Request Indirectness	25 (16.6%)	50 (41.6%)
Sarcastic Implicature	20 (13.3%)	8 (6.6%)

Comment: the analysis shows that students use implicature more frequently in peer discussions (150 instances) than in professor interactions (120 instances). Humor-based implicature accounts for 26.6% of peer interactions but is significantly less common in professor interactions (4.2%), suggesting that students feel more comfortable using indirect humor with their peers. Conversely, request indirectness is more prevalent in student-professor interactions (41.6%), indicating that students tend to avoid direct requests when addressing authority figures. Additionally, indirect disagreement occurs more often in peer discussions (23.3%), demonstrating a preference for subtle disagreement strategies rather than direct confrontations. These findings align with Brown and

Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, which posits that power dynamics influence pragmatic choices, leading students to adjust their communication strategies based on social hierarchies and relational contexts.

2.2 Interpretation of Presupposition

2.2.1 Student Performance on Presupposition Interpretation Tasks

A presupposition comprehension test was conducted with 30 students. The test included 10 statements, each requiring students to identify the underlying presupposition.

Table 2: Student Accuracy in Identifying Presuppositions

Statement Example	Presupposition	Correct Responses (n=30)	Accuracy Rate
"Even Sarah passed the exam."	Passing was unexpected for Sarah.	20	66.6%
"John stopped smoking."	John used to smoke.	27	90%
"Maria is late again."	Maria was late before.	18	60%
"If only he had studied harder!"	He did not study hard enough.	22	73.3%

Comment: the analysis shows that students demonstrate the highest accuracy (90%) in recognizing presuppositions based on habitual actions, such as in the sentence "John stopped smoking." In contrast, their lowest accuracy (60%) is in identifying time-based presuppositions, as seen in "Maria is late again." Additionally, students struggle with counterfactual presuppositions, such as "If only he had studied harder!", indicating a gap in their understanding of conditional structures. This finding supports Levinson's (2000) presupposition theory, suggesting that students with weaker pragmatic awareness may misinterpret implied assumptions in academic discourse.

2.3 Role of Context (Student-Professor vs. Peer Interaction)

2.3.1 Comparative Analysis of Explicit and Implicit Strategies

Table 3 shows a comparison between explicit and implicit communication strategies based on the context of interaction.

Table 3: Pragmatic Strategies in Different Contexts

Strategy Type	Student-Professor (n=120)	Peer Interactions (n=150)
Explicit Statements	75 (62.5%)	50 (33.3%)
Indirect Speech	45 (37.5%)	100 (66.6%)
Ambiguity Use	20 (16.6%)	45 (30%)

Comment: the analysis shows that explicit statements are significantly more frequent in student-professor interactions (62.5%), indicating that students prioritize clarity when addressing authority figures. In contrast, indirect speech dominates peer interactions (66.6%), suggesting that students

rely more on implicature when communicating with classmates. Additionally, ambiguity is more tolerated in peer discussions (30%) but is avoided in professor interactions (16.6%), reflecting students' tendency to adjust their pragmatic choices based on formality. This pattern aligns with Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle, demonstrating that students tailor their discourse to context-specific expectations.

2.4 Challenges in Understanding Implicit Meaning

2.4.1 Student Self-Reported Challenges (Survey Results)

A student survey (n=30) asked participants to rate their difficulty in interpreting implicit meaning on a Likert scale (1 = Very Easy, 5 = Very Difficult).

Table 4: Student Difficulty Ratings in Understanding Implicit Meaning

Challenge	Mean Score (1–5)
Understanding indirect professor feedback	4.2
Identifying sarcasm in peer discussions	3.8
Recognizing presuppositions	3.5
Understanding humor-based implicature	3.2

The analysis shows that students report the greatest difficulty (4.2/5) in understanding indirect feedback from professors, which often involves implicature and presupposition. Sarcasm in peer discussions is rated as moderately difficult (3.8/5), indicating variability in students' pragmatic awareness of tone and irony. Additionally, presupposition presents a challenge (3.5/5), reinforcing earlier test findings on students' struggles with implied meaning. These results support Taguchi's (2018) research, which highlights the difficulties non-native English speakers face in pragmatic interpretation.

2.5 Summary of the Findings

- Conversational implicature is more frequent in peer discussions, while explicit language dominates student-professor interactions, reflecting a preference for clarity in formal settings.
- Presuppositions, particularly time-based and counterfactual structures, pose challenges for students, indicating gaps in their pragmatic awareness.
- Power dynamics influence communication strategies, with students favoring indirect speech in peer interactions but adopting more direct language when addressing professors.
- Interpreting implicit meaning - especially indirect feedback from professors- is a major challenge, highlighting the need for improved pragmatic competence in academic discourse.

• Conclusion

This study examines how Master 1 students at the University of 08 Mai 1945, Guelma, navigate between implicit and explicit meaning in academic discourse. The findings reveal that conversational implicature is more frequent in peer discussions, while explicit language is preferred in professor-student interactions due to power dynamics and the need for clarity. Students particularly struggle with presuppositions, especially in time-based and counterfactual structures, leading to potential misinterpretations. Additionally, indirect feedback from professors poses a significant challenge, reinforcing the difficulties non-native speakers face in pragmatic interpretation. These findings answer the research problem by confirming that students adjust their pragmatic strategies based on contextual factors, but gaps in their ability to interpret implicit meaning hinder effective communication.

To address these challenges, integrating pragmatic awareness training into university curricula is essential. Activities focusing on implicit meaning interpretation, presupposition recognition, and indirect speech comprehension could help students develop more effective communication strategies in academic settings. Future research could explore cross-cultural differences in pragmatic competence and assess the effectiveness of instructional interventions designed to enhance students' understanding of implicit meaning.

• Limitations of the Study

While this study provides valuable insights, certain limitations must be acknowledged:

1. **Sample Size Constraint:** The study was limited to 30 Master 1 students in a single university. Future research should include larger, more diverse samples.
2. **Focus on Academic Discourse:** The study examined classroom interactions but did not analyze written academic discourse. Future studies should explore how students navigate implicit meaning in academic writing.
3. **Limited Longitudinal Perspective:** The research provides a snapshot of pragmatic competence but does not track development over time. A longitudinal study would better assess how students improve their pragmatic skills.

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Appendices

- ☐ **Appendix A: Classroom Observation Protocol**
- ☐ **Appendix B: Student Questionnaire**
- ☐ **Appendix C: Presupposition Interpretation Test**
- ☐ **Appendix D: Interview Guide for Students**

Appendix A: Classroom Observation Protocol

1. Aim of the Observation

This observation aims to analyze Master 1 students' use and interpretation of implicit and explicit meaning in academic discourse. The focus is on how students apply pragmatic strategies in different communicative contexts, including:

- Student-peer discussions
- Student-professor interactions
- Oral presentations

The study examines students' use of conversational implicature, presuppositions, indirect speech acts, and ambiguity, identifying patterns in their communication strategies.

2. Observation Setting

- **Institution:** University of 08 Mai 1945, Guelma
- **Course:** Master 1 Linguistics
- **Class Type:** Academic discourse and communication studies
- **Duration:** 6 weeks (two 90-minute sessions per week)
- **Observer Role:** Non-participatory (passive observer)

The observations are conducted without interference to ensure the natural use of language by students.

3. Observation Categories and Data Collection

Observer uses a structured checklist to record instances of students' pragmatic competence in real-time interactions. Notes are taken manually and digitally, ensuring accuracy and consistency.

Table 1: Classroom Observation Checklist

Pragmatic Feature	Definition	Example (if observed)	Frequency (Count per Session)
Conversational Implicature	When meaning is implied rather than explicitly stated	"That's an interesting point!" (to disagree politely)	—
Presupposition	Background assumption required for a statement to be meaningful	"She finally submitted the paper." (Implies delay)	—
Indirect Requests	A request made without direct wording	"Could you possibly review this later?"	—
Hedging	Softening statements to sound less direct	"I think it might be useful to consider this..."	—
Sarcasm/Irony	Saying the opposite of what is meant for emphasis	"Oh great, another deadline!"	—
Ambiguity	Intentional vagueness in language	"Maybe we should look into that."	—

Observation Methodology

Each session is observed, and instances of implicit meaning use is tallied and categorized. Observers record:

1. Direct transcriptions of notable exchanges
2. Frequency counts for each pragmatic feature
3. Contextual details (e.g., setting, participants involved, response outcomes)

Additionally, audio recordings is used (with students' consent) for more accurate transcription and analysis.

Appendix B: Student Questionnaire

Section 1: Demographic Information

1. **Age:** _____
2. **Gender:** ☐ Male ☐ Female ☐ Other
3. **How long have you studied English?**
 - ☐ 1-3 years
 - ☐ 4-6 years
 - ☐ 7+ years

Section 2: Pragmatic Awareness and Implicit Meaning

4. **How often do you use indirect language (e.g., hints, indirect requests) in academic discussions?**
 - ☐ Always
 - ☐ Often
 - ☐ Sometimes
 - ☐ Rarely
 - ☐ Never
5. **When professors give indirect feedback (e.g., “You might want to rethink this point”), how easy is it for you to understand the meaning?**
 - ☐ Very Easy
 - ☐ Somewhat Easy
 - ☐ Neutral
 - ☐ Difficult
 - ☐ Very Difficult
6. **How comfortable are you using sarcasm or irony in peer discussions?**
 - ☐ Very Comfortable
 - ☐ Somewhat Comfortable
 - ☐ Neutral
 - ☐ Uncomfortable
 - ☐ Very Uncomfortable
7. **How often do you use presuppositions (e.g., “Even John understood the lecture”) in academic discussions?**
 - ☐ Always
 - ☐ Often
 - ☐ Sometimes
 - ☐ Rarely
 - ☐ Never

Section 3: Challenges in Pragmatic Interpretation

8. Rate the difficulty of understanding the following types of indirect speech in academic settings.

Pragmatic Feature	Very Easy (1)	Easy (2)	Neutral (3)	Difficult (4)	Very Difficult (5)
Indirect Feedback ("You might want to check that again.")	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Conversational Implicature ("That was an interesting answer!")	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sarcasm/Irony ("Oh great, another deadline!")	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Presuppositions ("She finally finished the project.")	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Section 4: Pragmatic Strategies and Communication Preferences

9. What strategies do you use when you don't understand implicit meaning?

- ☐ Ask the speaker for clarification
- ☐ Guess based on context
- ☐ Ignore it and move on
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____

10. When talking to a professor, how do you usually express disagreement?

- ☐ Direct disagreement ("I completely disagree.")
- ☐ Softened disagreement ("I see your point, but I think...")
- ☐ Indirect disagreement ("That's an interesting perspective...")
- ☐ I avoid disagreeing with professors

11. How important do you think pragmatic competence is for academic success?

- ☐ Very Important
- ☐ Important
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Not Very Important
- ☐ Not Important at All

Section 5: Open-Ended Questions

12. Describe a situation where you struggled to understand indirect feedback from a professor. How did you handle it?

- _____

- _____
- 13. In what ways do you think pragmatic competence could be improved through classroom activities?
- _____
- _____

Appendix C: Presupposition Interpretation Test

1. Purpose of the Test

This test aims to evaluate **Master 1 students’ ability to recognize and interpret presuppositions** in academic and conversational contexts. The test:

- Measures **students' awareness of presuppositions** in different sentence structures.
- Identifies **common errors or misunderstandings** in interpreting implied meaning.
- Compares **students’ accuracy and response time** in recognizing presuppositions.

The results are used to determine **whether students struggle with implicit meaning in academic settings**.

2. Test Items

Section 1: Recognizing Presuppositions in Sentences

Instructions:

Each of the following sentences contains a presupposition. Identify the **implied assumption** behind each statement.

Sentence	What is the presupposed meaning?
1. "Even Sarah passed the exam."	_____
2. " John stopped smoking last year. "	_____
3. "The professor regrets postponing the lecture."	_____
4. "It is surprising that Lisa got the scholarship."	_____
5. "Mike’s brother is coming to visit next week."	_____

Section 2: Multiple-Choice Questions on Presupposition Triggers

Instructions:

For each sentence, choose the correct interpretation of its presupposition.

6. "The new policy will be implemented again next semester."
- ☐ a) The policy was implemented before.
 - ☐ b) The policy is completely new.

- ☐ c) The policy will never be implemented.
 - ☐ d) The policy is being implemented for the first time.
7. **"Maria has stopped attending linguistics seminars."**
- ☐ a) Maria never attended linguistics seminars.
 - ☐ b) Maria used to attend linguistics seminars but doesn't anymore.
 - ☐ c) Maria still attends linguistics seminars.
 - ☐ d) Maria will start attending linguistics seminars soon.
8. **"We need to fix the mistakes in the report."**
- ☐ a) The report contains mistakes.
 - ☐ b) The report is already perfect.
 - ☐ c) The report does not exist.
 - ☐ d) The mistakes in the report are intentional.
9. **"I didn't know that Tom was married."**
- ☐ a) Tom is married.
 - ☐ b) Tom is not married.
 - ☐ c) The speaker has always known about Tom's marriage.
 - ☐ d) Tom's marital status is unclear.
10. **"Her research findings were surprising."**
- ☐ a) Her research findings were predictable.
 - ☐ b) Her research findings were unexpected.
 - ☐ c) Her research was never conducted.
 - ☐ d) The research findings were ignored.

Section 3: Analyzing Presupposition in Academic Contexts

Instructions:

Read the short academic conversation below and answer the following questions.

Professor: "Before we discuss the next topic, let's go over the issues in last week's assignments."

Student: "I didn't realize there were issues in our assignments."

11. What does the professor's statement presuppose?

• _____

12. What does the student's response suggest about their awareness of the presupposition?

• _____

Conversation 2:

Student A: "Our new classmate has finally arrived."

Student B: "Oh, I didn't know we were expecting a new classmate."

13. What is the presupposed meaning in Student A's statement?

• _____

14. What does Student B's response suggest about their knowledge of the situation?

• _____

4. Scoring and Data Analysis

The test will be **scored quantitatively and qualitatively**:

- **Section 1:** Students receive 1 point for each correctly identified presupposition.
- **Section 2:** Multiple-choice responses are scored out of 5 (1 point per correct answer).
- **Section 3:** Short-answer explanations are analyzed qualitatively to identify patterns in students' reasoning and difficulties.

Appendix D: Interview Guide for Students

1. Purpose of the Interview

This interview aims to explore Master 1 students' perceptions, challenges, and strategies regarding the use and interpretation of implicit meaning in academic discourse. Specifically, the interview:

- Examines how students interpret indirect professor feedback.
- Identifies challenges in recognizing pragmatic elements (e.g., presuppositions, conversational implicatures, irony, and hedging).
- Understands students' experiences with misunderstandings in academic settings.
- Gathers suggestions for improving pragmatic instruction in university classrooms.

2. Interview Format

- The interview is semi-structured (allowing flexibility for follow-up questions).
- Each interview lasts approximately 20–30 minutes.
- Interviews are conducted face-to-face or via Zoom, depending on student preferences.
- Responses are audio-recorded (with consent) and transcribed for thematic analysis.

3. Interview Questions

Section 1: Background Information

1. Can you introduce yourself? (Age, academic background, years of English study)
2. How would you describe your proficiency in English? (Fluent, intermediate, beginner)
3. Have you ever received any specific training on pragmatics or implicit meaning in communication?

Section 2: Experiences with Implicit Meaning in Academic Contexts

4. Can you recall a time when a professor gave indirect feedback on your work? How did you interpret it?
 - Example: "You might want to check your argument structure again."
 - Did you immediately understand the meaning, or did you need clarification?
5. How comfortable are you with understanding conversational implicatures?
 - For example, if a professor says, "That's an interesting perspective," do you interpret it as a compliment or indirect disagreement?
 - Have you ever misunderstood such statements?
6. Have you ever experienced confusion with sarcasm or irony in academic discussions?
 - If a classmate or professor used sarcasm, how did you react?
7. How do you usually handle uncertainty in conversations?
 - Do you ask for clarification, rely on context, or avoid responding?

Section 3: Challenges and Strategies

8. What do you find most difficult about interpreting implicit meaning in English?
 - ☐ Indirect professor feedback
 - ☐ Sarcasm and irony
 - ☐ Conversational implicatures
 - ☐ Presuppositions
 - ☐ Hedging (softening statements)
9. Have you ever had a miscommunication with a professor due to misunderstanding an indirect statement?
 - What happened? How did you resolve it?
10. Do you think implicit meaning is used differently in English than in your native language?
 - Can you provide an example?

Section 4: Perceived Importance of Pragmatic Competence

11. Do you believe that understanding implicit meaning is important for academic success? Why or why not?
12. In your opinion, should university courses focus more on teaching pragmatic competence?
 - What kind of activities would help students improve their ability to understand implicit meaning?

13. If you could suggest changes to how professors communicate feedback, what would they be?

4. Data Analysis Plan

- **Thematic Analysis:**
 - Transcripts will be analyzed using NVivo software to identify common themes and patterns.
 - Categories will include challenges, coping strategies, and misunderstandings.
- **Comparative Analysis:**
 - Responses will be compared based on students' proficiency levels and academic experiences.
 - Patterns in misinterpretation of feedback will be examined.
- **Frequency Counts:**
 - Common misunderstood pragmatic features (e.g., sarcasm, implicature) will be tallied.