

AN ANALYSIS OF IMPLICATURE FOUND IN THE LYRICS OF “THE FATE OF OPHELIA” “OPALITE” & “ELDEST DAUGHTER” BY TAYLOR SWIFT

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ABSTRAK

Tujuan utama dari penyelidikan ini adalah memahami dan meneliti jenis-jenis implikatur yang ditemukan dalam lirik lagu Taylor Swift seperti “The Fate of Ophelia”, “Opalite”, dan “Eldest Daughter”. Penelitian mengenai lagu-lagu Taylor Swift ini dimaksudkan untuk menentukan jenis-jenis implikatur, menguraikan bagaimana prinsip-prinsip percakapan yang digunakan dalam pembentukan arti melalui penelitian linguistik dan mengkaji secara mendalam fungsi dan makna dari keberadaan implikatur pada karya-karya lagu Taylor Swift. Seluruh penelitian ini berdasarkan teknik penelitian kualitatif deskriptif yang bertumpu teori implikatur beserta Prinsip Kooperatif Grice, dengan melibatkan pembagian jenis-jenis implikatur berdasarkan pemahaman dari pihak Levinson (1983). Pengamatan dan hasil analisis mengembarkan fakta bahwa implikatur yang berupa konvensional dan percakapan ditemukan dalam lirik lagu-lagu yang dianalisis dan ternyata implikatur percakapan paling banyak ditemukan. Penetapi studi ini juga mempertunjukkan bahwa pelanggaran atau ketidakpedulian untuk prinsip-prinsip percakapan Grice berperan penting dalam mengandung arti tersirat melalui implikatur tersebut. Di samping itu, hasil studi ini juga mengungkap bahwa implikatur yang terkandung dalam lagu-lagu dapat memperluas pandangan mengenai penghayatan lagu dengan tema seperti emosi lemah, pembentukan identitas, dan peran keluarga yang diharapkan.

Kata kunci: *Pragmatik, Implikatur, Implikatur Percakapan, Prinsip Kooperatif, Taylor Swift.*

Abstract

The main objective of this study is to understand and examine the types of implicatures found in the lyrics of Taylor Swift’s songs, such as “The Fate of Ophelia,” “Opalite” and “Eldest Daughter.” This study of Taylor Swift’s songs aims to identify the types of implicature, elucidate how the principles of conversation are used in the construction of meaning through linguistic analysis, and examine in depth the function and significance of implicature in Taylor Swift’s songs. The entire study is based on descriptive qualitative research techniques grounded in implicature theory and

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Grice's Cooperative Principles, involving the categorisation of implicature types based on Levinson's (1983) framework. Observations and the results of the analysis reveal that both conventional and conversational implicatures are found in the lyrics of the songs analysed, with conversational implicatures proving to be the most prevalent. The findings of this study also demonstrate that violations of, or disregard for, Grice's conversational principles play a significant role in conveying implied meaning through these implicatures. Furthermore, the findings of this study also reveal that the implicatures contained in songs can broaden our understanding of the interpretation of songs with themes such as vulnerability, identity formation, and expected family roles.

Keywords: *Pragmatics, Implicature, Conversational Implicature, Cooperative Principle, Taylor Swift.*

Introduction

Language is one of the foremost tools people use to express thoughts, emotions, intentions, and experiences. However, what is communicated is not always stated explicitly; speakers often convey meaning indirectly, requiring listeners to infer the intended message. The study of language in relation to context, speakers, and hearers is known as pragmatics (Levinson, 1983). Yule (1996) defines pragmatics as the study of speaker meaning, while Thomas (1995) views it as the study of meaning in interaction, negotiated between speaker and hearer. According to Huang (2007), the main topics of pragmatics include deixis, presupposition, speech acts, and implicature.

Among these topics, implicature is central to explaining how meaning goes beyond literal interpretation. The concept was introduced by Grice (1975), who argued that communication is guided by the Cooperative Principle, realized through four maxims: Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner. When speakers deliberately flout these maxims, hearers do not assume communication has failed but infer an additional implied meaning (Grice, 1975; Levinson, 1983). Grice (1975) classifies implicature into conventional and conversational implicature, and Levinson (1983) further divides conversational implicature into generalized (GCI) and particularized (PCI) types. Implicature is widely found in creative discourse such as films, literature, and song lyrics (Dynel, 2018).

Song lyrics are a suitable object of pragmatic analysis because they function as a medium of communication that frequently relies on indirect and figurative language (Yule, 1996; Murphey, 1992). Simpson (2004) regards lyrics as a form of poetic discourse, and Li (2023) notes that contemporary lyrics increasingly employ narrative techniques, symbolism, and intertextual references. Figurative expressions such as metaphor and hyperbole commonly emerge from the flouting of the Maxim of Quality (Grice, 1975; Huang, 2007), so listeners must interpret meaning through contextual inference rather than literal wording.

Taylor Swift is widely recognized for the narrative richness and linguistic depth of her songwriting. Three of her songs, "The Fate of Ophelia", "Opalite", and "Eldest Daughter", are selected because they contain ambiguous and symbolic expressions that require inference. "The Fate of Ophelia" alludes to Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and implies emotional fragility and self-rescue; "Opalite" uses the image of a man-made gem to imply

constructed identity and manufactured happiness; and “Eldest Daughter” implies duty, sacrifice, and emotional repression tied to family roles.

Previous studies have applied Gricean theory to song lyrics. Jariyah et al. (2025) found that conversational implicature dominated in Taylor Swift's “You Belong with Me”, with Quantity and Quality as the most flouted maxims. Rahmat et al. (2025) and Emor and Ismail (2025) reported similar dominance of conversational implicature in Radiohead's and Ed Sheeran's lyrics, while Malau et al. (2025) found that particularized implicatures outnumbered generalized ones in Billie Eilish's “Wildflower”. Yunus and Francis (2025) showed that figurative language, particularly metaphor, contributes to implicature in Swift's *Folklore*, and Hanif and Adila (2025) linked implicature to insecurity in *Midnights*. Mustakim and Wibowo (2026) found that implicature communicates loneliness in Justin Bieber's “Lonely”. However, few studies integrate conventional and conversational implicature, the Cooperative Principle, and the communicative functions of implicature within one framework, and none examine these three songs. This gap constitutes the novelty of the present study.

Based on this background, the study aims to (1) identify the types of implicature, (2) analyze the Gricean maxims flouted to generate them, (3) examine how the implicatures shape the overall meaning of the songs, and (4) interpret the pragmatic themes they convey within their cultural and contextual setting. Theoretically, the study enriches pragmatic research on artistic discourse; practically, it can serve as a reference for students, lecturers, and researchers in pragmatics and discourse analysis.

Method

Research Method and Design

This study employs a descriptive qualitative research design. Qualitative research is appropriate because the main objective is to explore, interpret, and describe implied meanings embedded in linguistic expressions rather than to measure numerical data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) add that qualitative research enables researchers to examine phenomena in depth by studying documents or texts in their natural contexts. The descriptive method is used because it describes and interprets linguistic phenomena systematically without manipulating the research object (Lambert & Lambert, 2012). The design is intended to provide an in-depth explanation of how implicatures are constructed and interpreted in the selected song lyrics, not to generalize findings statistically.

Data Sources and Research Data

The data source is the lyrics of three songs by Taylor Swift, “The Fate of Ophelia”, “Opalite”, and “Eldest Daughter”, which were selected because they contain figurative expressions, symbolic language, and contextual meanings that potentially generate implicatures (Perrine, 1977; Abrams & Harpham, 2015). The research data are words, phrases, clauses, and lyric lines that contain implied meanings relevant to the research objectives. The lyrics were taken from official and reliable sources to ensure authenticity and accuracy. Secondary sources, including books and peer-reviewed journal articles on pragmatics, implicature, and the Cooperative Principle, were used to support the theoretical framework and interpretation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Data Collection Techniques and Instruments

Data were collected using the documentation technique, since the research focuses on written texts. Document analysis is a systematic procedure for reviewing printed and electronic documents to obtain meaningful data (Bowen, 2009), and documents allow researchers to examine naturally occurring texts without manipulating the research setting (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Data collection was carried out in four stages: (1) obtaining the official lyrics of the three songs from reliable sources; (2) reading the lyrics repeatedly to understand their overall context and narrative; (3) identifying and highlighting utterances that potentially contain implicatures; and (4) coding the selected lyric lines and compiling them into a data sheet.

(Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The researcher acts as the main instrument, assisted by a laptop and the data sheet, which records the song title, lyric line, type of implicature, maxim involved, and communicative function so that the data are structured and systematic.

Data Analysis Techniques

Data were analyzed using the interactive model of qualitative analysis by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2020), consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification, guided by Grice's (1975) theory of implicature and the Cooperative Principle. The analysis steps are: (1) identifying lyric lines that contain potential implicatures; (2) classifying the data into analytical tables according to the research questions; (3) determining the type of implicature, namely conventional or conversational, with conversational implicature further divided into generalized and particularized types (Levinson, 1983); (4) analyzing the conversational maxims (Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner) and identifying instances of maxim flouting; (5) interpreting the communicative functions of the implicatures; and (6) interpreting the pragmatic themes within the cultural and contextual setting of each song. Conclusions were continuously verified against the theoretical framework and the contextual meaning of the lyrics. Trustworthiness was maintained through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Results and Discussion

The analysis identified 48 lyric excerpts containing implicatures, 16 from each song. Each excerpt was classified by type of implicature, the Gricean maxim flouted (Grice, 1975), and its communicative function.

Implicatures in *The Fate of Ophelia*

Table 1. Findings of Implicatures in *The Fate of Ophelia*

No.	Lyric Excerpt	Type of Implicature	Maxim Flouted	Function of Implicature
1	"I heard you calling on the megaphone."	Particularized Conversational Implicature	Maxim of Manner	Introducing the presence of someone who persistently seeks the speaker's attention.
2	"You light the match to watch it blow."	Particularized Conversational Implicature	Maxim of Quality	Expressing the addressee's destructive or risk-taking nature through metaphor.
3	"I might've drowned in the melancholy."	Particularized Conversational Implicature	Maxim of Quality	Conveying deep emotional suffering rather than physical drowning.
4	"Right before you lit my sky up."	Particularized Conversational Implicature	Maxim of Quality	Expressing emotional transformation and hope through metaphorical imagery.
5	"I sat alone in my tower."	Particularized Conversational Implicature	Maxim of Quality	Illustrating emotional isolation and loneliness.
6	"You were just honing your powers."	Generalized Conversational Implicature	Maxim of Manner	Suggesting that the addressee was preparing for a future role or relationship.
7	"You dug me out of my grave."	Particularized Conversational Implicature	Maxim of Quality	Symbolizing emotional rescue and personal recovery.
8	"Saved my heart from the	Particularized Conversational Implicature	Maxim of Relation	Comparing the speaker's previous emotional condition with Ophelia's tragic destiny.

	fate of Ophelia.”			
9	“Pledge allegiance to your hands, your team, your vibes.”	Conventional Implicature	-	Expressing complete loyalty and commitment toward the addressee.
10	“Love was a cold bed full of scorpions.”	Particularized Conversational Implicature	Maxim of Quality	Describing love as painful, dangerous, and emotionally destructive through metaphor.
11	“The venom stole her sanity.”	Particularized Conversational Implicature	Maxim of Quality	Representing psychological destruction caused by emotional pain.
12	“You wrap around me like a chain, a crown, a vine.”	Particularized Conversational Implicature	Maxim of Manner	Expressing intimacy, dependence, and emotional attachment simultaneously.
13	“Pulling me into the fire.”	Particularized Conversational Implicature	Maxim of Quality	Indicating willingness to enter emotional risks because of love.
14	“‘Tis locked inside my memory.”	Generalized Conversational Implicature	Maxim of Quantity	Suggesting hidden emotional experiences without explicit explanation.
15	“Only you possess the key.”	Particularized Conversational Implicature	Maxim of Quality	Symbolizing that only the addressee can heal or access the speaker’s deepest emotions.
16	“No longer drowning and deceived.”	Particularized Conversational Implicature	Maxim of Quality	Expressing emotional recovery from previous suffering and confusion.

Source: research data (processed).

Table 2. Comparative Analysis of Implicature Types and Maxim Flouting in *The Fate of Ophelia*

Analysis Aspect	Category/Finding	Frequency	Percentage	Researcher's Analysis
Implicature Type	Particularized Conversational Implicature (PCI)	13	81.25%	PCI is strongly dominant, showing that most implied meanings depend on the contextual and symbolic interpretation of the lyrics.
Implicature Type	Generalized Conversational Implicature (GCI)	2	12.50%	GCI appears only in a small number of excerpts whose implied meanings can be inferred with less specific contextual information.
Implicature Type	Conventional Implicature	1	6.25%	Conventional implicature is the least frequent, indicating that the song relies more on contextual inference than

				lexically triggered implied meaning.
Maxim Flouted	Quality	10	62.50%	The Maxim of Quality is the dominant flouted maxim, reflecting the extensive use of metaphor, symbolism, personification, and other non-literal expressions.
Maxim Flouted	Manner	2	12.50%	Manner is flouted through expressions whose presentation requires the listener to interpret poetic or layered meanings.
Maxim Flouted	Relation	1	6.25%	Relation is flouted when the lyric connects an expression to a broader emotional or literary context rather than stating the connection directly.
Maxim Flouted	Quantity	1	6.25%	Quantity is flouted by leaving some emotional information unstated, encouraging the listener to infer the missing meaning.
Maxim Flouted	No maxim applicable	1	6.25%	The conventional implicature in the data does not depend on conversational maxim flouting.

Source: research data (processed).

The tables show that *The Fate of Ophelia* is built mainly on Particularized Conversational Implicature (13 of 16 excerpts, 81.25%), with Quality as the most flouted maxim (10 excerpts, 62.50%). Emotional suffering and recovery are never described directly. Instead, they are expressed through images of drowning, poison, graves, fire, and chains (Data 3, 7, 10, 11, and 13), which are literally untrue of the speaker yet pragmatically meaningful. Such non-literal expressions are typical outcomes of flouting the Maxim of Quality (Grice, 1975; Huang, 2007). The allusion to Ophelia in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (Datum 8) shows why PCI is so prominent. The line can only be interpreted by listeners who connect it to the tragic fate of Ophelia, which supports Levinson's (1983) view that PCI depends on specific contextual knowledge. The use of an intertextual symbol also shows that implicature here serves an artistic function beyond emotional expression. These findings are consistent with Hanif and Adila (2025), who found that psychological experiences in Taylor Swift's songs are conveyed through conversational implicatures generated by maxim flouting.

Implicatures in *Opalite*

Table 3. Findings of Implicatures in *Opalite*

No.	Lyric Excerpt	Type of Implicature	Maxim Flouted	Function of Implicature
1	"I had a bad habit of missing lovers past."	Generalized Conversational Implicature	Maxim of Quantity	Expressing regret over repeatedly longing for former relationships.

2	"Eating out of the trash."	Particularized Conversational Implicature	Maxim of Quality	Metaphorically describing the unhealthy habit of returning to toxic relationships.
3	"I thought my house was haunted."	Particularized Conversational Implicature	Maxim of Quality	Representing emotional trauma and painful memories that continue to affect the speaker.
4	"I used to live with ghosts."	Particularized Conversational Implicature	Maxim of Quality	Symbolizing unresolved memories and emotional burdens from the past.
5	"Life is a song, it ends when it ends."	Conventional Implicature	—	Conveying the philosophical idea that every stage of life naturally comes to an end.
6	"You were dancing through the lightning strikes."	Particularized Conversational Implicature	Maxim of Quality	Describing resilience and courage in facing difficult circumstances.
7	"Sleepless in the onyx night."	Particularized Conversational Implicature	Maxim of Quality	Representing emotional anxiety and insomnia during dark periods of life.
8	"Now the sky is opalite."	Particularized Conversational Implicature	Maxim of Quality	Symbolizing hope, healing, and positive transformation after hardship.
9	"You had to make your own sunshine."	Particularized Conversational Implicature	Maxim of Quality	Encouraging self-reliance and emotional strength in overcoming adversity.
10	"You were in it for real, she was in her phone."	Particularized Conversational Implicature	Maxim of Relation	Contrasting genuine emotional commitment with emotional neglect in a relationship.
11	"You're starving 'til you're not."	Generalized Conversational Implicature	Maxim of Quantity	Suggesting that emotional emptiness is temporary and will eventually pass.
12	"This is just a storm inside a teacup."	Particularized Conversational Implicature	Maxim of Quality	Minimizing a problem by portraying it as temporary and less serious than it appears.
13	"Shelter here with me, my love."	Conventional Implicature	—	Offering emotional comfort, safety, and reassurance to the addressee.
14	"Failure brings you freedom."	Generalized Conversational Implicature	Maxim of Relation	Communicating that failure can become an opportunity for personal growth.
15	"This life will beat you up."	Particularized Conversational Implicature	Maxim of Quality	Describing life's hardships through personification.
16	"I can bring you love."	Conventional Implicature	—	Expressing sincere affection, commitment, and emotional support.

Source: research data (processed).

Table 4. Comparative Analysis of Implicature Types and Maxim Flouting in *Opalite*

Analysis Aspect	Category/Finding	Frequency	Percentage	Researcher's Analysis
Implicature Type	Particularized Conversational Implicature (PCI)	10	62.50%	PCI is dominant, indicating that the meanings of many expressions depend on the emotional and symbolic context of the song.
Implicature Type	Generalized Conversational Implicature (GCI)	3	18.75%	GCI occurs in several excerpts whose implied meanings can be understood without highly specific contextual information.
Implicature Type	Conventional Implicature	3	18.75%	Conventional implicature appears more frequently than in <i>The Fate of Ophelia</i> , showing a somewhat stronger contribution of conventionally associated meanings.
Maxim Flouted	Quality	9	56.25%	Quality is the most frequently flouted maxim, mainly through metaphors, personification, and symbolic descriptions of emotional experiences.
Maxim Flouted	Quantity	2	12.50%	Quantity is flouted when the lyrics provide limited information and leave emotional details for listeners to infer.
Maxim Flouted	Relation	2	12.50%	Relation is flouted where the apparent connection between an expression and the emotional message must be established contextually.
Maxim Flouted	No maxim applicable	3	18.75%	The conventional implicatures do not require conversational maxim flouting because their additional meanings are associated with linguistic convention.

Source: research data (processed).

Opalite shows a more distributed pattern than the first song. PCI remains dominant (10 of 16 excerpts, 62.50%) and Quality is again the most flouted maxim (9 excerpts, 56.25%), but GCI and Conventional Implicature each account for 3 excerpts (18.75%). Images of ghosts, haunted houses, lightning, and night (Data 3, 4, 6, and 7) represent trauma and endurance, while the image of the sky turning opalite (Datum 8) marks hope and transformation. The recurring gemstone symbol allows the song to convey a journey from emotional pain to healing without narrating it explicitly (Mey, 2001).

The higher share of GCI and Conventional Implicature reflects a movement between highly contextual experiences and more widely recognizable reflections on life, such as the idea that failure can bring growth (Datum 14) or that emotional emptiness is temporary (Datum 11). The song therefore presents vulnerability and strength at the same time, and this duality

is communicated indirectly rather than stated (Yule, 1996). This finding is in line with Mustakim and Wibowo (2026), who concluded that implicatures effectively communicate emotional struggle by requiring contextual interpretation.

Implicatures in *Eldest Daughter*

Table 5. Findings of Implicatures in *Eldest Daughter*

No.	Lyric Excerpt	Type of Implicature	Maxim Flouted	Function of Implicature
1	“Everybody’s so punk on the internet.”	Particularized Conversational Implicature	Maxim of Quality	Criticizing performative behavior and exaggerated online personas.
2	“Everyone’s unbothered ‘til they’re not.”	Generalized Conversational Implicature	Maxim of Quantity	Suggesting that emotional indifference is often only superficial.
3	“Every joke’s just trolling and memes.”	Particularized Conversational Implicature	Maxim of Relation	Critiquing the normalization of insensitive online humor.
4	“Every single hot take is cold as ice.”	Particularized Conversational Implicature	Maxim of Quality	Using irony to criticize opinions that appear bold but lack originality.
5	“When you found me I said I was busy. That was a lie.”	Conventional Implicature	—	Revealing concealed feelings and acknowledging previous dishonesty.
6	“I have been afflicted by a terminal uniqueness.”	Particularized Conversational Implicature	Maxim of Quality	Describing an excessive desire to appear different through metaphorical language.
7	“I’ve been dying just from trying to seem cool.”	Particularized Conversational Implicature	Maxim of Quality	Expressing emotional exhaustion caused by maintaining a social image.
8	“I’m never gonna break that vow.”	Conventional Implicature	—	Emphasizing commitment, loyalty, and emotional consistency.
9	“The last time I laughed this hard was on the trampoline...”	Generalized Conversational Implicature	Maxim of Quantity	Referring to childhood as a symbol of genuine happiness and innocence.
10	“When I said I don’t believe in marriage, that was a lie.”	Conventional Implicature	—	Admitting that previous statements concealed true emotional desires.
11	“Every eldest daughter was the first lamb to the slaughter.”	Particularized Conversational Implicature	Maxim of Quality	Symbolizing the emotional burdens and responsibilities placed upon eldest daughters.

12	“So we all dressed up as wolves.”	Particularized Conversational Implicature	Maxim of Quality	Representing emotional self-protection and resilience through symbolic imagery.
13	“A beautiful, beautiful time lapse.”	Generalized Conversational Implicature	Maxim of Manner	Reflecting on the passage of time and personal growth.
14	“Shimmers that innocent light back.”	Particularized Conversational Implicature	Maxim of Quality	Symbolizing the rediscovery of innocence, hope, and emotional healing.
15	“Every youngest child felt they were raised up in the wild.”	Particularized Conversational Implicature	Maxim of Quality	Expressing different family experiences through metaphorical representation.
16	“Now you're home.”	Conventional Implicature	—	Conveying emotional security, acceptance, and a sense of belonging rather than a literal location.

Source: research data (processed).

Table 6. Comparative Analysis of Implicature Types and Maxim Flouting in *Eldest Daughter*

Analysis Aspect	Category/Finding	Frequency	Percentage	Researcher's Analysis
Implicature Type	Particularized Conversational Implicature (PCI)	9	56.25%	PCI remains dominant, showing that the song communicates many meanings through contextual, metaphorical, and socially situated expressions.
Implicature Type	Generalized Conversational Implicature (GCI)	3	18.75%	GCI appears in several excerpts where the implied meaning can be inferred without relying on a highly specific context.
Implicature Type	Conventional Implicature	4	25.00%	Conventional implicature is more frequent here than in the other two songs, particularly in expressions of honesty, commitment, and belonging.
Maxim Flouted	Quality	8	50.00%	Quality is the dominant flouted maxim, reflecting the use of irony, metaphor, and symbolic imagery to express social criticism and emotional experiences.
Maxim Flouted	Quantity	2	12.50%	Quantity is flouted by withholding emotional details, which encourages listeners to infer the speaker's underlying burden.
Maxim Flouted	Relation	1	6.25%	Relation is flouted when social or emotional meanings are communicated through

				indirectly connected situations or symbolic expressions.
Maxim Flouted	Manner	1	6.25%	Manner is flouted through poetic wording that requires interpretation beyond a straightforward reading.

Eldest Daughter has the lowest PCI share (9 of 16 excerpts, 56.25%) and the highest Conventional share (4 excerpts, 25.00%) of the three songs, while Quality remains the most flouted maxim (8 excerpts, 50.00%). Unlike the first two songs, a number of excerpts (Data 1 to 4) target social behavior, using irony and metaphor to criticize performative online personas. Other excerpts (Data 11, 12, and 15) turn to family roles, symbolizing the burden placed on eldest daughters and the different experiences of siblings.

The meaning of the song is built from a combination of figurative language and selectively stated information. Emotional burden is rarely named; it is implied through images of sacrifice, protection, and endurance, and the Quantity-based excerpts (Data 2 and 9) leave emotional details for the listener to infer (Grice, 1975). The higher proportion of Conventional Implicature, found in lines of honesty, commitment, and belonging (Data 5, 8, 10, and 16), suggests that the song alternates between concealed feelings and moments of open admission. The implied themes of identity, family expectations, and emotional responsibility draw on shared social understanding of the eldest-daughter role, so listeners must rely on cultural knowledge to interpret them (Thomas, 1995).

Summary Across Songs

Across the three songs, PCI is the dominant type (32 of 48 data, 66.7%), followed by GCI (8 data, 16.7%) and Conventional Implicature (8 data, 16.7%). Quality is the most flouted maxim (27 of 48 data, 56.3%), followed by Quantity (5 data), Relation (4 data), and Manner (4 data), while the remaining 8 data (Conventional Implicature) involve no maxim flouting. This pattern confirms that the selected lyrics rely mainly on metaphor, symbolism, personification, and irony, which require listeners to infer meaning from context rather than from literal wording (Grice, 1975; Levinson, 1983; Huang, 2007). The low frequency of Conventional Implicature supports the theoretical expectation that song lyrics depend more on contextual inference than on lexically triggered meaning (Grice, 1975).

The three songs nevertheless differ in how they build meaning. *The Fate of Ophelia* is the most strongly context-dependent, relying on an intertextual allusion to express emotional vulnerability and recovery. *Opalite* uses a recurring symbol, the opalite gemstone, to convey constructed identity, healing, and resilience, with more general and conventional reflections on life. *Eldest Daughter* combines irony, metaphor, and openly stated admissions to express family role expectations, emotional burden, and social criticism. In each song, the themes are not stated outright but are gradually constructed through implicatures, so meaning is co-constructed between songwriter and listener (Mey, 2001; Thomas, 1995). Consistent with previous studies on conversational implicature in popular lyrics (Jariyah et al., 2025; Hanif & Adila, 2025; Mustakim & Wibowo, 2026), these findings show that maxim flouting is a central strategy for communicating emotion indirectly. They also extend those studies by showing that implicature in these songs serves literary and cultural functions: intertextual symbolism (Ophelia), symbolic representation of identity (opalite), and a subtle critique of family expectations placed on eldest daughters. The study thus demonstrates how Gricean theory can explain the emotional, literary, and cultural layers of meaning in contemporary song lyrics within one integrated framework.

Conclusion and Suggestions

Based on the results of the study, three conclusions can be drawn. First, the lyrics of “The Fate of Ophelia”, “Opalite”, and “Eldest Daughter” use implicature as a primary communicative strategy, with a total of 48 data (16 per song). Particularized Conversational Implicature (PCI) is the dominant type in all three songs (32 data, 66.7%), followed by Generalized Conversational Implicature (8 data, 16.7%) and Conventional Implicature (8 data, 16.7%). Second, these implicatures are generated mainly by flouting the Maxim of Quality (27 data, 56.3%) through metaphor, symbolism, and figurative language, followed by the Maxims of Quantity (5 data), Relation (4 data), and Manner (4 data). These flouts enrich the aesthetics of the lyrics and allow complex personal experiences and social critique to be conveyed without explicit statement. Third, the implicatures imply the themes of emotional vulnerability and recovery (“The Fate of Ophelia”), constructed identity and resilience (“Opalite”), and family role expectations (“Eldest Daughter”), which listeners can interpret only by drawing on contextual, literary, and cultural knowledge.

Students and researchers in pragmatics are recommended to examine a larger corpus of Taylor Swift's songs or other contemporary lyrics, to combine pragmatic analysis with other approaches such as discourse analysis, metaphor analysis, or stylistics, and to explore how implicature interacts with musical elements such as melody and vocal delivery. Lecturers can use this study as additional teaching material in Pragmatics, Literary Linguistics, and Discourse Analysis, particularly for applying Grice's theory to contemporary literary texts. Music listeners are encouraged to appreciate lyrics beyond their surface meaning by exploring the implicit messages and cultural values within them.

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