



SEÇÃO: ARTIGOS

Exploring Conversational Implicatures in the American Sitcom *Seinfeld*

Explorando Implicaturas Conversacionais na Sitcom Americana Seinfeld

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ABSTRACT: Since learners must know how to use language in different contexts, sitcoms could help with pragmatic competence development because they display contextualized lifelike language. Could identifying conversational implicatures in a sitcom help develop metalinguistic awareness of implicatures? In addition, are there conversational implicatures in the sitcom *Seinfeld* that present the potential to help develop pragmatic competence? This article illustrates conversational implicatures through *Seinfeld* episodes and discusses how identifying implicatures could develop metapragmatic awareness. The method was a descriptive research of the qualitative type. Ten segments from the American sitcom *Seinfeld* were analyzed based on their conversational implicature occurrence. The implicatures present in the segments are discernible and may help develop pragmatic competence if explicitly taught to learners. Further studies could focus on quantitative research in EFL classrooms on the potential benefits of using sitcoms to develop metalinguistic awareness.

KEYWORDS: pragmatics, conversational implicature, metalinguistic awareness, sitcom, *Seinfeld*

RESUMO: Devido à importância de se aprender a usar a língua em diversas situações, sitcoms podem ajudar no desenvolvimento da competência pragmática, por sua linguagem contextualizada e semelhante à vida real. Identificar implicaturas em uma sitcom poderia ajudar no desenvolvimento da consciência linguística? Existem implicaturas conversacionais na sitcom *Seinfeld* que apresentam o potencial para desenvolver competência pragmática? Este artigo ilustra implicaturas conversacionais através de episódios de *Seinfeld* e discute como identificá-las pode desenvolver consciência linguística. A pesquisa realizada foi descritiva, do tipo qualitativo. Dez trechos da sitcom americana foram analisados a partir de sua ocorrência de implicaturas, que são discerníveis e podem oferecer o potencial de desenvolver competência pragmática, se ensinados explicitamente. Novos estudos poderiam focar-se em uma pesquisa quantitativa em salas de aula de inglês como língua estrangeira sobre os potenciais benefícios de se usar sitcoms para o desenvolvimento da consciência metalinguística.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: pragmática, implicatura conversacional, consciência metalinguística, sitcom, *Seinfeld*

Introduction

The present article is about the use of sitcoms in learning contexts to raise metalinguistic awareness. This topic will be analyzed and discussed through segments from *Seinfeld* episodes based on the occurrence of implicatures and their potential for the development of pragmatic awareness in American English. The use of sitcoms for language learning purposes, such as in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms or self-education



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contexts, has become popular and it is meaningful to investigate its benefits for additional language acquisition. Since pragmatic goals may not be in the spotlight in EFL contexts, it is paramount that teachers are aware of the benefits of explicit teaching pragmatic goals. For that, they should make use of the available tools, such as the use of video segments to illustrate pragmatic aspects and to help learners recognize and use them. Also, since sitcoms are a common media among teens and young adults, it is helpful to discuss and understand how to use them for educational purposes and, more specifically, for second language acquisition and pragmatic competence development.

Considering that the pragmatic aspects of a language are more effectively grasped through explicit teaching, how identifying conversational implicatures in a sitcom can help develop metalinguistic awareness? Moreover, are there conversational implicatures observable in the sitcom *Seinfeld* that present the potential to help develop pragmatic competence? To answer these questions, it is necessary to identify and analyze the types of conversational implicatures present in segments from the American sitcom *Seinfeld*, to illustrate the phenomenon through segments from *Seinfeld* episodes. Those steps will serve to demonstrate how identifying implicatures in sitcoms could help develop pragmatic competence in American English.

In language learning contexts, it is important to not only focus on grammar and vocabulary but also on how to use the language in different situations. To develop pragmatic competence, English learners must be exposed to pragmatic aspects of the language and, ideally, be taught how to recognize them. That way, watching sitcoms could be helpful to advanced learners and teachers in achieving pragmatic goals since this type of media presents the contextualized language, lifelike conversation, and paralinguistic features of video materials.

Literature review

According to Washburn (2001), some difficulties in learning pragmatic language use in additional languages could be the lack of varied, naturally

occurring input and a lack of awareness about the forms, norms, and limits of the language. The use of video to introduce pragmatic issues in the classroom is supported by Rose (1994, p. 57), to "sensitize learners to context-based variation in language use and the variables that help determine that variation." Similarly, Derakhshan & Zangoei (2014, p. 376) state that "when the videotapes display naturalistic interactions, they allow learners to hear authentic language". They also defend the use of video as input to simulate authentic interactions and sensitize learners' sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic competence (Derakhshan & Zangoei, 2014). Derakhshan et al. (2014) support the use of authentic audiovisual material for the development of pragmatics and comprehension of implicatures. Regarding the authenticity of conversation present in videos, Grant & Starks (2001) affirm that scripted conversation is generally similar to naturally occurring conversation. They argue that the differences between scripted and natural conversation, such as performance errors, present an advantage for second language learners. This follows as conversations in audiovisual materials are introduced in a context and exchanges occur between a variety of participants and settings. For Washburn (2001, p. 22), "sitcoms offer models that are rich, varied and contextualized." He also states that sitcoms' models, with marked violations and commentary, may help learners recognize the limits of speech routines and provide feedback on how to react to them. Under that, Hložková (2013) argues that sitcoms are a better alternative to develop pragmatic competence than textbooks, because of their contextualized lifelike conversation and non-verbal communication.

Regarding the explicit teaching of pragmatic aspects, Bouton (1994b) defended that teaching learners to recognize, interpret and use implicatures should be an essential part of ESL programs. Bouton (1994a) contextualized that there is little attempt in EFL and ESL contexts "to make learners aware of implicature as a tool of communication or to give them practice at using it in English." In his study, Abdelhafez (2016) found that instruction

had an impact on the improvement of pragmatic competence. He stated that "the participants' ability improved in recognizing and interpreting conversational implicatures representing the four maxims in the Gricean model, especially those related to quantity and quality" (Abdelhafez, 2016, p. 458). Accordingly, Derakhshan & Eslami (2019) also found that a metapragmatic awareness approach translated into better performances between participants. They defend that implicatures should be taught to learners since their findings showed that "when conversational implicatures are not deliberately taught in a second or foreign language, they are learned slowly" (Derakhshan & Eslami, 2019, p. 653).

Pragmatics and the Cooperative Principle

Pragmatics is characterized by Levinson (1983) as the study of language usage. Moreover, he defended that it is the study of the relations between language and context. For Yule (1996), "pragmatics is concerned with the study of meaning as communicated by a speaker (or writer) and interpreted by a listener (or reader)." (Yule, 1996, p. 3) According to him, pragmatics will necessarily involve the interpretation of what people mean in a context and how the context influences what is uttered. Huang (2014), on the other hand, states that defining pragmatics simply as language in use is too general and treats it as "the systematic study of meaning by virtue of, or dependent on, the use of language" (Huang, 2014, p. 2). Also according to Huang (2014, p. 8-9), "certain linguistic phenomena can be handled naturally only by recourse to extralinguistic pragmatic factors such as context, real-world knowledge, and inference." The concept of pragmatic competence was defined by LoCastro (2003, p. 15) as "the study of speaker and hearer meaning created in their joint actions that include both linguistic and nonlinguistic signals in the context of socioculturally organized activities." Accordingly, Derakhshan & Eslami (2019, p. 638) stress that learners should be aware of those "linguistic and nonlinguistic signals, conventions, functions, and sociocultural contexts which may vary cross-culturally." This suggests that

learners need to master sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic knowledge to be pragmatically competent (Derakhshan & Eslami, 2019, p. 638).

Grice had introduced the cooperative principle in the 1970s, which defines that talk exchanges are cooperative efforts between participants. Therefore, participants identify a common purpose to direct the conversation. Under that concept, Grice (1991) proposes four conversational maxims: (1) maxim of quantity, relating to the quantity of information shared; (2) maxim of quality, referring to the quality and truthfulness of the information provided; (3) maxim of relation, concerning the relevance of the information uttered; and (4) maxim of manner, regarding how something is said. The speaker can choose to observe the maxims, violate them, or even opt-out of maxims through hedges, for example. Even in the cases where the maxims are flouted, it is still possible to convey additional meanings, via implicatures. This will be further discussed later.

In the next section, I will present the concept of conversational implicature, which, to be interpreted, assumes that the cooperative principle and its maxims are being observed in talk exchanges between participants.

Implicatures

Grice (1991) presented the concept of conversational implicature as a situation in which a speaker saying that p has implicated that q, therefore conversationally implicating that q. In this case, it is assumed that the speaker has followed the conversational maxims and/or the cooperative principle; that the speaker is aware that q is required to make p consistent; and that the speaker believes the hearer is capable of comprehending that this supposition is required. According to Grice (1991), the implicature can be defined as conversational when it is discernible in conversation. For that, the hearer will make use of the meaning of the words, the cooperative principle and its maxims, the context, the background knowledge, and the fact that all previous relevant items are accessible to both participants. Summarizing, in the occasion of the

maxims being flouted by the speaker, generally, the addressee can either (1) assume that the cooperative principle was neglected or (2) that the speaker is still being cooperative and exploiting a maxim to convey an extra message.

Levinson (1983) defends that the concept of implicature "provides some explicit account of how it is possible to mean (in some general sense) more than what is actually 'said.'" (Levinson, 1983, p. 97) The author affirms that conversational implicatures are inferences that go beyond the semantic content and that they are based on the context of what is uttered and on the assumptions about the cooperative nature of verbal interaction. The cooperative principle provided by Grice also explains how utterances generate expectations and that the speaker expectations lead the audience to infer what is being conversationally implicated. This holds even in cases of disambiguation since, according to Huang (2014, p. 8), "contextual or real-world knowledge is needed to select the reading the speaker has intended." Following that, most hearers are able to follow this inferential process, even with ambiguous utterances, by choosing one of the possible meanings and ruling out the meanings that cannot be true or do not make sense.

Grice (1991) also differentiated generalized and particularized types of conversational implicatures. According to him, particularized conversational implicatures occur in cases in which the implicature follows that p on specific contexts as a result of the features of said context. It is agreed that an implicature of this type is not normally interpreted by saying that p without the specific context in which it is uttered. He divided the particularized implicatures into three groups: (1) examples in which no maxim seems to be violated, (2) examples in which the violation is explained by a clash with another maxim, and (3) examples of exploitation in which the maxim is violated on purpose. Some examples were provided by Grice (1991, p. 32-34):

- (1) A: I am out of petrol.
B: There is a garage round the corner.
- (2) A: Where does C live?
B: Somewhere in the South of France.

- (3) X has betrayed A and the audience knows this.
A: X is a fine friend.

On the other hand, the generalized conversational implicature is defined by Grice as one in which it is apparent that some specific form of words would normally bear an implicature, even without a specific context. One example provided by Grice (1991, p. 37) is that if the speaker utters that "X is meeting a woman this evening", it is normally accepted that the implication is that X is not meeting his wife, mother, or sister, for example. This type of implicature is contained in the sentence and it does not rely on a specific context.

The inferential process necessary to interpret implicatures is related to the concepts of metalinguistic and pragmatic awareness, i.e. the capability of reflecting on the language and its functions and use, which will be presented in the next section. As to successfully interpret different types of implicature, the audience must be capable of recognizing the phenomenon and the context or, in other words, reflecting on the language and its use.

Metalinguistic and pragmatic awareness

The development of metalinguistic awareness is critical to interpret utterances and infer meanings. According to Pratt & Grieve (1984), metalinguistic awareness is "the ability to think about and reflect upon the nature and functions of language." (Pratt & Grieve, 1984, p. 2). A similar concept is found in Tunmer & Herriman (1984), who define it as "the ability to reflect upon and manipulate the structural features of spoken language, treating language itself as an object of thought." (Tunmer & Herriman, 1984, p. 12)

As for pragmatic awareness, Pratt & Nesdale (1984) defend that it concerns the awareness about the relationships between the linguistic system and the context. They also affirm that "pragmatic awareness incorporates aspects that extend beyond linguistic considerations." (Pratt & Nesdale, 1984, p. 105). Such aspects can be intonation, context, paralinguistic elements, participant relationship, etc. Gombert (1992) defines

metapragmatics as the awareness of the relations that exist between the linguistic system and the context. He argues that the focus of metapragmatic behavior is "the relationship between the signs and the context of the utterance (which encompasses both the intra- and extralinguistic contexts)" (Gombert, 1992, p. 94). According to the author, it follows that metapragmatic awareness is the combination of knowing the social and cultural norms that drive the production of an adequate message in a given context; monitoring the referential adequacy of the produced messages; and possessing the competence to understand the aspects of the connection between the language and the contexts in which it is used.

These concepts are useful in educational contexts such as EFL and ESL classrooms. Another concept of importance is pragmatic competence, which was defined by LoCastro (2003) as the study of speaker and hearer meaning and their collective actions, including linguistic and nonlinguistic cues in a context. Sensitizing and teaching learners to recognize and use pragmatic aspects in an additional language has been proven to aid in the development of pragmatic competence. In Derakhshan & Eslami (2019), the metapragmatic awareness approach used in the study proved to be more efficient in the explicit teaching of pragmatic aspects. Similarly, Abdelhafez (2016) also found that instruction helped learners recognize and interpret conversational implicatures. Consequently, media such as sitcoms could bring awareness towards the context, as it may illustrate the social and cultural norms necessary to relate the linguistic system and the context. The characteristics of a situation comedy will be presented in the next section.

Introducing Seinfeld

The term situation comedy, or sitcom for short, according to Neale & Krutnik (1990), is used to describe a "short narrative-series comedy, generally between twenty-four and thirty minutes long, with regular characters and setting." This genre possesses a serial nature, with recurring characters and situations. The American sitcom *Seinfeld* was created for NBC by Larry David and

Jerry Seinfeld in the late 1980s. It was envisioned to be a "show about nothing" and it ran for nine seasons, from 1989 to 1998. It is set in New York and the main characters are Jerry Seinfeld, a Jewish comedian in his thirties, George Costanza, Jerry's mercenary friend, Cosmo Kramer, Jerry's exotic neighbor, and Elaine Benes, Jerry's clever ex-girlfriend. The show follows their daily lives and mundane problems. There are no major story arcs through seasons and the episodes are stand-alone. The show was popular in the 1990s and it has inspired many sitcoms since then.

Seinfeld was the sitcom chosen for this investigation since its quick-witted humor is often based on implicit meanings, which seem to display inferential pragmatic elements, specifically conversational implicatures. The process of methodology will be described in the next section.

Methodology

This article presents a descriptive research of the qualitative type. It intends to investigate the potential to develop metalinguistic awareness towards implicatures in American English through the use of sitcoms. Ten segments from the American sitcom *Seinfeld* were selected based on their implicature occurrence. They will be analyzed by the type of implicatures discernible in the dialogues. Those dialogues are short and present inferential pragmatic elements. The literature used to back the analysis and discussion is the one mentioned in the previous section.

Analysis and discussion

In this section, I will present the ten chosen segments from *Seinfeld*, along with an analysis regarding the types of implicatures that are present in the dialogues. Following that, there will be a discussion on the implicature occurrence of the segments and their potential to help develop metalinguistic awareness and pragmatic competence for L2 learners.

Segment #1

("The Statue", *Seinfeld*, Season 2, Episode 6, April 11, 1991, 00:13:57)

A man named Ray cleaned Jerry's apartment and, after that, a statue went missing.

JERRY: Ray, I had a statue in my house. You were in my house. And then I saw it in your house.

RAY: What are you saying?

In segment #1, it seems that Jerry flouted the maxim of quantity, and possibly the maxim of manner. In the dialogue above, he provided more information than needed, while still not being clear in his message, in order to imply that Ray stole his statue while cleaning his apartment. Then the hearer, Ray, denies the implicature since he seems to recognize it, but wants Jerry to confirm it. The implicature discernible in this segment is a particularized conversational implicature because it needs a specific context to be interpreted. This segment presents the potential to raise awareness towards implicatures since it is clear that Jerry is trying to cooperate and relay his message without being rude. The fact that Ray denies the implicature confirms its existence. Teaching this segment and pointing out the implicature present could help develop pragmatic competence.

Segment #2

("The Nose Job", *Seinfeld*, Season 3, Episode 9, November 20, 1991, 00:01:43)

Jerry is talking to George on the street.

JERRY: You got something in your teeth there.

GEORGE: What?

JERRY: It's green.

GEORGE: Oh, man, spinach. I've been walking around like this all afternoon.

JERRY: Did you bump into anybody you knew?

GEORGE: I had a job interview.

JERRY: How did it go?

GEORGE: Take a guess.

In segment #2, George violates the maxim of manner, which states that the speaker must be clear and brief to avoid ambiguity. In the

dialogue, he is ambiguous when he answers Jerry's question to imply that the interview did not go well because he had spinach in his teeth. This is also a particularized conversational implicature, because of the context needed to make an inference. This segment could also help develop metapragmatic awareness since the audience will have to make use of the context and the linguistic and nonlinguistic features to comprehend George's implicature. Teaching this segment could help learners understand how the context and what goes beyond the utterance may help understand an implicature. That way, a metalinguistic awareness approach should be to help them develop their pragmatic competence.

Segment #3

("The Trip: Part 1", *Seinfeld*, Season 4, Episode 1, August 12, 1992, 00:00:53)

Jerry and George are talking about Kramer's appearance in a TV show with a discreet and classy actress.

GEORGE: Kramer was on Murphy Brown? That son of a gun!

JERRY: It's something, isn't it?

GEORGE: With Candice Bergen.

JERRY: I know!

GEORGE: I've always liked her. Remember her in that Carnal Knowledge?

JERRY: Sure.

GEORGE: Did she show her breasts in that?

JERRY: She's not really the naked type.

Segment #3 presents a conversational implicature of the particularized type. In the dialogue above, the context is specific and the audience must carry the background knowledge that the actress mentioned is a classy person in order to infer that it would be absurd to ask if she had shown her breasts in a movie. In this segment, the implicature can be interpreted almost to its full extent even without the specific context. This is an example in which a learner might be able to infer the core meaning of the implicature without the full context but will have a more complete understanding if they possess the background

knowledge. To point that out to learners may help them to reflect on the language and its use but also illustrate that sometimes it is possible to make inferences with the context that is available at the time.

Segment #4

("The Movie", *Seinfeld*, Season 4, Episode 1, January 6, 1993, 00:02:04)

Jerry is trying to get away from an annoying acquaintance.

JERRY: I gotta go.

BUCKLES: Where?

JERRY: The movies.

BUCKLES: Well, I thought you told Curtis you were going back to do the 11 o'clock.

JERRY: I am. I'm just gonna stop by the theater and tell my friends I can't make it.

BUCKLES: Well, that's cool. I'll split a cab with you.

JERRY: I could be a while over there.

In the dialogue present in segment #4 there is another particularized conversational implicature discernible. To interpret the implication that Jerry does not want Buckles to go to the movies with him, one must know his feelings about the acquaintance. The specific context needed to infer the implicature is that Jerry finds Buckles annoying. Taking this segment to point out to learners that, once you understand the context that he does not like Buckles, the implicature is that Jerry does not want his acquaintance to hang out with him may help in raising metalinguistic awareness and developing pragmatic competence.

Segment #5

("The Handicap Spot", *Seinfeld*, Season 4, Episode 22, May 13, 1993, 00:00:53)

George is talking to Elaine.

GEORGE: Hey, is it my imagination, or do really good-looking women walk a lot faster than everybody else?

ELAINE: We don't walk that fast.

Segment #5 presents a conversational implicature of the generalized type, as the context is not necessary to infer the implied meaning. To interpret the implicature that Elaine is including herself in the group of good-looking women, there is no need for further context. This segment could be taught to point out that some implicatures do not need specific context and can be inferred on their own. Teaching this type of implicature and bringing awareness to it might help to further develop pragmatic competence.

Segment #6

("The Big Salad", *Seinfeld*, Season 6, Episode 2, September 29, 1994, 00:06:00)

Jerry is talking with Elaine about the stationery store guy who is calling after her on his phone number.

JERRY: He doesn't even care if a man answers.

ELAINE: Or you.

In the dialogue of segment #6, a particularized implicature is distinguishable, because it requires a specific context to infer the implication. Since Jerry was the one answering the stationery store guy's phone call and Jerry is a man, Elaine is probably implying that Jerry is not a man. This segment also presents the potential to help develop metapragmatic awareness since pointing out to learners that the context leads to a full understanding of the implicature might encourage them to reflect upon the language.

Segment #7

("The Soup", *Seinfeld*, Season 6, Episode 7, November 10, 1994, 00:07:49)

George is talking to Jerry about a committed woman who went out with him.

JERRY: Well, let me ask you this. What exactly did you say when you asked her out?

GEORGE: I said, "Would you like to go for a walk or something?"

JERRY: Oh, a walk... Well...

GEORGE: Or something! I said, "Or something."

JERRY: "Or something." Yeah, that's a date.

In segment #7, George breaks the maxim of manner. He was ambiguous when he asked the woman out and was not clear about his intentions. He left it to her to imply from his vague utterance that he was expecting a romantic date, rather than a friendly walk in the park. Jerry seems to recognize that George flouted the maxim at first, but ends up agreeing with the implicature intended by George. This is another example of particularized implicature. This segment recognizes and illustrates the train of thought involved in the inference process of an implicature. At first, Jerry has one interpretation for the sentence that is later changed when George stresses the context along with the linguistic and nonlinguistic aspects of the utterance. Teaching learners this segment might help them understand the steps involved in the inference process and help them develop pragmatic competence.

Segment #8

("The Label Maker", *Seinfeld*, Season 6, Episode 12, January 19, 1995, 00:04:40)

Jerry and Elaine are talking about a mutual friend that "regifted" her present to Jerry.

JERRY: Why did you get him a gift anyway?

ELAINE: He did some dental work for me and didn't charge me, so I thought I'd get him a Christmas present.

JERRY: Well, if you're getting him anything for his birthday, I'm a large.

Segment #8 presents a particularized conversational implicature, in which the maxim of relation is flouted. Jerry informs Elaine his clothing size, which seems irrelevant to the topic of conversation, as a way of implying that their friend is going to "regift" any present that she might

get him. This segment displays the potential for developing pragmatic competence. Since learners should resort to understanding the context to infer the implicature, teaching this segment could make learners reflect on the language use and bring awareness to the phenomenon.

Segment #9

("The Scofflaw", *Seinfeld*, Season 6, Episode 13, January 26, 1995, 00:01:35)

George has some sensitive information about a mutual friend to share with Jerry and Kramer is in the room.

GEORGE: Kramer, I, uh, need to talk to Jerry privately.

KRAMER: Oh. What about?

The conversational implicature in segment #9 is of the generalized type since there is no need for a specific context, other than the general context "I need privacy," to interpret what George utters. Kramer failed to interpret the implicature in George's utterance. In this segment, the final understanding could be expanded to establish that Kramer is a nonsense person, which is a context present in the sitcom. Nevertheless, the mostly universal reading of "I need privacy" seems to be the most prominent in this example. Teaching this segment could make learners reflect on the language and illustrate that some implicatures are contained in the utterance. Further, the exercise of identifying what more could that exchange tell would also be beneficial in the development of pragmatic competence.

Segment #10

("The Little Kicks", *Seinfeld*, Season 8, Episode 4, October 10, 1996, 00:16:07)

Elaine questions Jerry about her dance skills.

ELAINE: I'm a good dancer, right?

JERRY: I forgot to make my bed.

Segment #10 presents negligence of the maxim of relation, in which the speaker must provide information that is relevant to the topic of

conversation. Jerry made a seemingly unrelated utterance to imply that he does not want to answer Elaine's question. This is a case of the particularized type of conversational implicature since the specific context that Elaine has poor dancing skills is needed to infer the implication. This segment presents the potential to develop metapragmatic awareness. Teaching this may illustrate how the meaning of the implicature is other than what was communicated in the utterance. Further exercise could be explored in terms of making learners reflect on this exchange and explain how one should react in this situation while remaining truthful and polite.

The chosen segments illustrate examples of implicatures that are similar to the ones that occur in real-life communication. They depict the subtleties of irony and discomfort that are frequently present in conversations and express implicit meanings that require to be inferred from utterances. As Figure 1 shows, it is possible to notice that most of the conversational implicatures found on the chosen *Seinfeld* segments were of the particularized type, meaning that they require a specific context to be inferred.

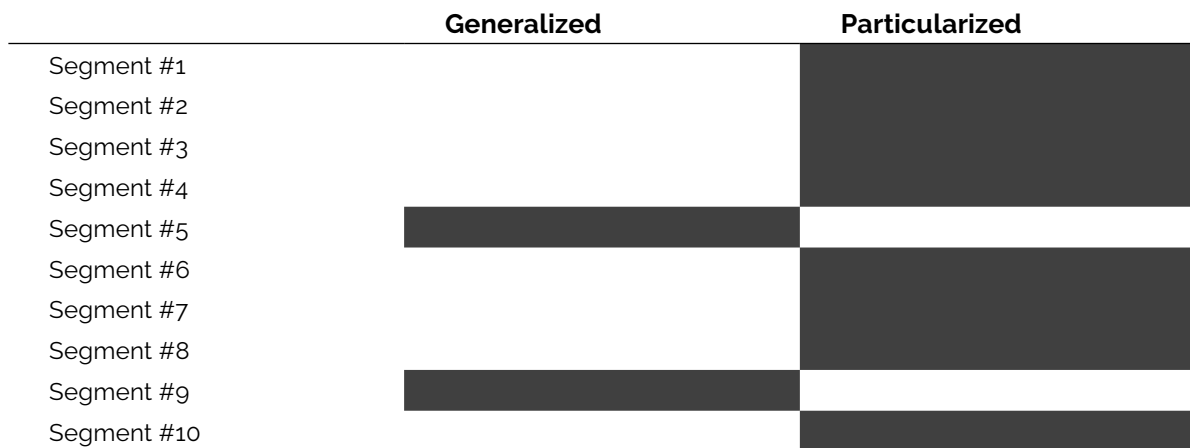


Figure 1 – Type of Implicatures observed in the Segments.

In several of the segments, the speaker also flouted one or more of the conversational maxims proposed by Grice. This type of implicature shows how it is possible to convey alternative meanings, even if the maxims are violated. In sitcoms, breaking maxims and failing to understand implicatures is often a comedic resource, since it

is expected that the hearer will be able to interpret them. From the particularized implicatures present in the selected segments, most of them presented a maxim being flouted, as per Figure 2. It is noticeable how the maxim of manner was the more frequently flouted in the chosen segments.

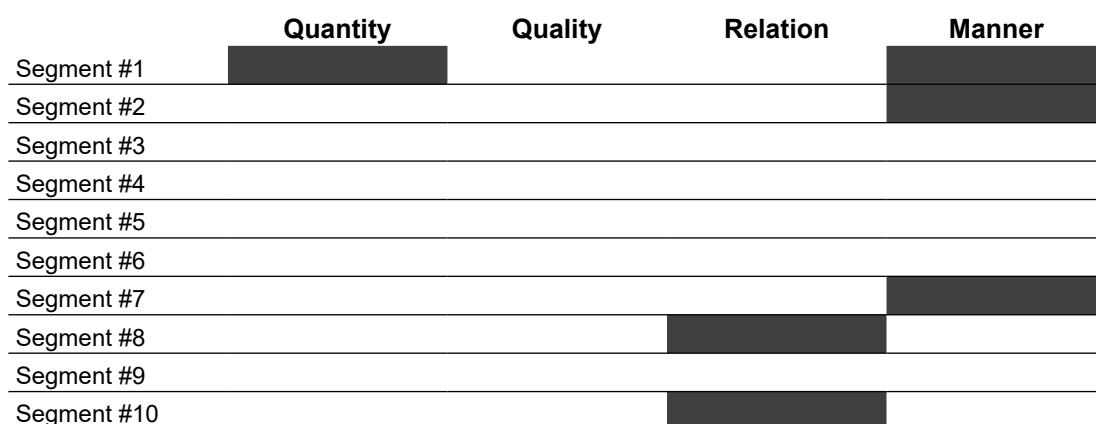


Figure 2 – Conversational Maxims flouted in the Segments.

The segments in this article present the potential of being used in learning contexts, such as EFL classrooms or in self-education environments, to raise metalinguistic awareness towards implicatures in American English. There is a variety of types of conversational implicatures present in the sitcom, so segments from it could be used to illustrate the phenomenon. Learners could be positively impacted by being exposed to this kind of sitcom segment since it exposes them to a contextualized language and even to the limits of speech routines. It follows the concepts of pragmatic awareness and metapragmatics introduced by Pratt & Nesdale (1984) and Gombert (1992), respectively. These concepts refer to the awareness of the relation between the linguistic system and the context. Pratt & Nesdale (1984) state that pragmatic awareness assimilates aspects that go beyond linguistic considerations, such as intonation, context, paralinguistic elements, participant relationship, etc. These paralinguistic elements appear along with the linguistic ones in sitcoms, as the viewers will make use of the language and the visual aspects to infer implicatures.

Final considerations

The aim of this article was twofold: to show how being able to identify conversational implicatures in a sitcom could help develop metalinguistic awareness and to identify if there were conversational implicatures observable in *Seinfeld* that presented the potential to help develop pragmatic competence. For that, it was necessary to select and analyze the types of conversational implicatures that were present in segments from the sitcom, in order to illustrate the phenomenon. This served to help demonstrate how identifying implicatures in a sitcom could help raise metalinguistic awareness and develop pragmatic competence. Based on the implicature occurrence in the chosen segments, *Seinfeld* episodes could be used as a pragmatic source for the metalinguistic awareness in American English. The use of sitcom segments, such as the ones analyzed, could be beneficial for the development of pragmatic competence because the implicatures are

discernible in conversation and present the possibility of increasing the language exposure necessary to achieve pragmatic goals. It also could lead to the development of metalinguistic awareness, if taught explicitly to make learners reflect on the language and the context.

Even with limited time and resources, I hope to have added to the discussion and to have shown that sitcom segments may present the potential to help in the development of pragmatic competence in advanced learners and to raise metalinguistic awareness. Further research can be developed on the topic, such as quantitative research in EFL classrooms on the potential benefits of using sitcoms to raise metalinguistic awareness towards implicatures via explicit teaching and a metalinguistic awareness approach. It would be interesting to investigate if learners are able to make inferences and interpret implicatures through the use of sitcom segments as an input source for pragmatic competence development.

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