

Culture and its Relation to the Interpretation of Conversational Implicatures

Nicole Guido Suárez¹

nicole.guido0439@uhispano.ac.cr

<https://orcid.org/0009-0001-0260-5906>

Universidad Hispanoamericana
Costa Rica

Roy Alfaro Alfaro

alfbaker5@gmail.com

<https://orcid.org/0009-0004-4278-9836>

Universidad Hispanoamericana
Costa Rica

ABSTRACT

Language and culture are two components that cannot be separated when learning a language; therefore, the purpose of this research is to determine the impact of Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica (UNA) and Universidad Hispanoamericana (UH)'s English teaching major's cultural courses in 2022 senior students' interpretation of conversational implicatures. The methodology involves a qualitative study in which a survey, a questionnaire, and an interview were applied. Findings showed that media is participants' primary source of cultural knowledge, certain implicatures are harder to interpret due to the nature of their corresponding maxims, and that lack of cultural knowledge is a factor that influences implicature interpretation. Few participants was the most relevant limitation of the study. It is recommended to carry similar research with a bigger sample of participants and implementing different methodologies.

Keywords: *culture; implicature; Pragmatics.*

¹ Autor principal

Correspondencia: nicole.guido0439@uhispano.ac.cr

La Cultura y su Relación con la Interpretación de Implicaturas Conversacionales

RESUMEN

Durante el aprendizaje de un idioma, la lengua y la cultura son componentes que no pueden ser separados. El propósito de esta investigación es determinar el impacto de los cursos culturales de la carrera de enseñanza de la UNA y la UH en la habilidad de los estudiantes de último año del 2022 para interpretar implicaturas conversacionales. La metodología consiste en un estudio cualitativo y la aplicación de una encuesta, un cuestionario, y una entrevista. Los resultados muestran los medios de comunicación como la fuente principal de conocimiento cultural, algunas implicaturas son más difíciles de interpretar debido a su naturaleza, y que la falta de conocimiento cultural influye en la interpretación de implicaturas. La escasez de participantes representa la principal limitante. Se recomienda realizar investigaciones de esta naturaleza aplicando distintas metodologías y con mayor participación.

Palabras clave: cultura; implicatura; pragmática

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INTRODUCTION

The subject of this research is the impact of cultural courses' contents on the ability to interpret conversational implicatures of 2022 senior students from the English teaching major at Universidad Nacional and Universidad Hispanoamericana en Costa Rica.

According to Ho (2009) today's society has evolved into a multicultural world in which language learners must develop both their linguistic and their intercultural communication so they can overcome linguistic and cultural barriers that might interfere their interaction with people from different cultures (p.72); Bennett, Bennett & Allen (2003) highlight the importance of this issue by stating that "the person who learns language without learning culture risks becoming a fluent fool" (p. 237). The discussion of culture in the EFL classroom is of highly relevance since being proficient in the grammatical aspects of the language is not enough to communicate properly, it is necessary to know the context of the situation in order to transmit and understand messages clearly. Such context is related to conversational implicatures as well; Bouton (1988) found that "cultural background is a predictor of nonnative speaker (NNS) ability to interpret implicatures the way native speakers (NSs) do " (p. 183); Jankovic-Paus (2017) follows the same line of thinking and argues that cultural knowledge is crucial to understand conversational implicatures because if the participant of a conversation does not share the same cultural background, and fails to comprehend an implication, it would be correct to assume that his inferences are invalid (p. 32). As a result, culture in the EFL classroom is important since it provides learners with the ability to comprehend implicatures properly and avoid misunderstandings when communicating with people from different cultural backgrounds.

Lafayette (as cited in Hoang-Thu 2010, p.19) highlights that out of the three main components of language curriculum, which are language, literature, and culture, most of the time and resources available are dedicated to the grammatical and lexical aspects of language, being culture the weakest component since it is poorly addressed in class material, and the unfamiliar relationship between teachers, cultures, and techniques to teach those cultures. Nevertheless, this does not mean that learners are not learning culture at all; Mohamed Ali and Mohideen (2016) mention that "culture may be gained through multiple sources such as the internet, TV programs, literature and music" (p. 47), while Tang (as cited in Hoyos, 2012) highlights that "person learning a given language is not just getting knowledge

of the linguistic aspects of the target language but also getting knowledge of both all what is related to the country or countries that is implicit in the target culture” (p.63).

Still, compared to other courses that address linguistic components, cultural courses are fewer, and this might have an impact on learners’ cultural awareness. Koester and Lusting (as cited in Ali, Kazemian and Mahar, 2015) mention that the lack of cultural awareness is a setback for learners to communicate interculturally in foreign settings (pp. 5-6).

Based on 2021 UNA’s English teaching major syllabus, a total of 16 hours per week correspond to the only two courses taught during the whole major distributed in two out of the eight semesters, while other areas specifically devoted to grammar and morphology goes around 32 hours per week distributed in four out of the eight semesters of the whole major. In the case of UH’s syllabus, the only cultural course, History and Culture of USA, devotes 12 hours per week distributed in only one quarter of the major.

Culture is an important core of human beings and their social nature. Humans seek to create connections by sharing aspects like beliefs, values, and experiences. Such aspects are related to the cultural background of each individual, and one of the ways in which each cultural background is shared among them is through oral communication, and therefore, through language. This line of thinking is supported by authors like Sun (2013) who points out that language is the main means by which culture is transmitted and, at the same time, culture is the primarily agent that shapes language (p. 371). Based on these asseverations, culture and language are dependently related and influence each other’s process of development within the society.

Since the roots of English and culture are intertwined, several authors who have analyzed their connection in the field of teaching, and they have concluded that English teachers not only teach the language itself, but also teach culture. Politzer (as cited in Purba, 2011) points out that language teachers must teach culture as well; otherwise, only symbols, with the wrong meaning assigned by students, are being taught (p.47). Gao (as cited in Farnia, 2009) agrees with the interdependence between culture and language and states that it is natural to conclude that English language learning and culture learning are the same, as well as English and culture teaching (p. 243).

It is important to highlight the role of Pragmatics. Farnia (2009) refers to it as Pragmatic awareness and indicates that it plays a key role in social interaction; Dufva (1994) provides an interesting example of

such awareness by stating “knowledge about language use in the target culture” (p. 21). The field of Pragmatics englobes various aspects, but one of the most influential on the relationship of language and culture is conversational implicatures. Levinson (1992) points out that implicatures “provide some explicit account of how it is possible to mean (in some general sense) more than what is actually said” (p. 97). Therefore, if speakers do not understand the meaning behind a statement because they do not share the same context, the chances of being misunderstood are higher (Jankovic-Paus, 2017). Consequently, culture learning and language learning should not be perceived as separate subjects, but rather as a complete set of knowledge necessary to communicate with speakers of a distinct cultural setting and being able to transmit a clear message and understand the information received by those same speakers.

The theories explored in this research that discuss the usage of language through implicatures and the performance in sociocultural functions are the Cooperative Principle and the Interlanguage Pragmatics Theory.

Grice (1975) formulated the theory cooperative principle in which he explains how people involved in a conversation try to be as cooperative as possible to transmit clearly a message. Grice states that the general principle refers to “make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged” (p. 45). Levinson (1983) mentions that the concept of implicature was developed in this theory, and it deals with how language is used. (p.101). Grice established a set of guidelines that should be followed in order to communicate effectively; such guidelines are called maxims, and they are divided into four main categories: maxim of quality, which focuses on contributions being true when speaking; the maxim of quantity, which addresses how much information is appropriate to share in a conversation; the maxim of relevance, involving contributions being relevant; and the maxim of manner, which involves being perspicuous, and specifically: avoid obscurity, avoid ambiguity, be brief, and be orderly (Levinson,1983, p. 102).

Flouting maxims are a particular case in which speakers communicate indirectly, it seems as if a maxim were violated, but the listener seems to understand the meaning conveyed due to a common understanding of the maxim.

Schauer (as cited in Nemati, 2014) mentions that Interlanguage Pragmatics (ILP) “uses Pragmatic theories, principles, and frameworks to examine how foreign/second language learners encode and decode meaning in their L2” (p. 262). Taguchi (2017) adds that ILP analyses learners’ “knowledge, use, and development in performing sociocultural functions” (p.1). In short, ILP addresses how foreign and second language learners’ Pragmatic competence help them assign meaning in their second language. Kecskes (2017) defines Pragmatic competence as ‘the learner’s ability to produce and comprehend linguistic and non- verbal action at both the micro- level (speech acts) and macro- level (speech act sequences/ discourse)” (p. 419). Cenoz and Valencia (1996) remark the importance of Pragmatic competence since the lack of it can lead to Pragmatic failure which, at a sociopragmatic and cultural level, can lead to misunderstandings since speakers are not aware of the social and cultural rules that shape their speeches (p. 4). Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford (as cited in Cenoz and Valencia, 1996) add that this type of failure is also present in advanced learners with high command of grammatical and lexical components of the language (p.4). Therefore, the lack of cultural knowledge affects learners’ Pragmatic competence which might represent a factor that leads to misunderstanding in communication.

Kecskes (2017) explains that ILP is also influenced by other theoretical and methodological approaches related to production and comprehension of Pragmatic meaning, being conversational implicatures one of them (p. 419). Such implicatures require certain knowledge and linguistic skills on all levels, being Pragmatic competence one of them (Koike, as cited in Kecskes, 2017, p.422).

The lack of cultural background can lead learners to Pragmatic failure which might affect their performance on decoding meaning, as a result, misunderstandings related to conversational implicatures could arise since conversational implicatures provide the notion that for a speaker is possible to mean something more than what is being actually said (Levinson 1983, p.97). For instance, cultural aspects like history, assumptions, stereotypes, and values might be determining factors that influence how non-native speakers interpret implicatures produced by native speakers.

As a result, an appropriate interpretation of implicatures not only lies in the maxims proposed in Grice’s cooperative principle, but also on ILP’s Pragmatic competence related to cultural knowledge.

In the Costa Rican context, some studies have addressed the role and importance of the cultural component in the EFL classroom. Zamora and Chaves (2011) conducted a study related to the

knowledge and comprehension of culture as well as the development of techniques and activities that promoted culture learning. The results showed that participants expressed a high level of tolerance and respect towards other cultures, they expressed that teachers need to manage knowledge about the target culture and be multiculturally competent, they agreed on the need that teachers promote cultural encounters, they were aware of the connection between culture and language, and they reported students' positive reaction towards culture-oriented activities (pp. 288-239).

Espinoza and Rodriguez (2020) examined the perceptions and practices in culture teaching present in the English major at Universidad Nacional. The results showed that students have knowledge about mainstream English countries, Asian countries, and European countries; moreover, cultural knowledge comprised information about food, traditions, and language differences (pp. 7-8); 70% of the students stated that culture is needed to learn a language, while 51% agreed that professors should include more material addressing culture in class (p. 9).

Other studies have addressed the relation between culture and language through a specific Pragmatic component; conversational implicatures. Nasar (2021) conducted a study to analyze the reasons why conversational implicatures were misunderstood. The results showed that there is a variety of reasons why implicatures were misunderstood by the participants, such as context and indirectness, differences in English and Arabic cultures, differences in cultural background and insensitivity, and negative transfer of language features and cultures. The author added that due to traditional methods of teaching, learners "have difficulty to interpret socio-cultural aspects of conversational implicatures. Nevertheless, participants were able to interpret some of the implicatures that were similar to those used in their native language (Nasar, 2015, p. 53).

Nassar's (2015) findings indicate that are several factors that affected participants' interpretation of implicatures. For instances, participants had difficulties with indirectness because the information was not provided straightforwardly. Still, Nassar mentions that this study has shown that socio-cultural differences between Arabic and English are the main source of failure in understanding English conversational implicatures (p. 52).

Kavetska (2020) conducted a cross-cultural study in implicature comprehension, similar to Boutons' (1988) research. The results were similar to Boutons' (1988) diagnosis revealing that speakers with

different cultural background have a tendency on interpreting conversational implicatures differently: moreover, language proficiency might also be a factor that affects such interpretation (Kavetska, 2020, pp. 61-62).

METHODOLOGY

Temporal dimension

This research follows a cross-sectional design since the sample corresponds to the same participants during a specific period of time: the second semester and third quarter of 2022.

Framework

The present research covers around 25 to 30 participants from both UNA's Omar Dengo campus and UH sede Llorente's English teaching major. Since participants only belong to senior students from the major, the research is developed at a micro level.

Universidad Nacional de Costa Rica (UNA) emerged on February 7th, 1973. It was preceded by *Escuela Normal de Costa Rica* and *Escuela normal Superior*, both directed to the formation of teachers. These two institutions not only provided UNA with infrastructure, but also with values and a humanistic approach. According to UNA's (2022) official description of the English teaching major, the integration of knowledge such as professional and pedagogical, is built progressive and explicitly throughout the formation of future teachers so that they can continue the process of development once they graduate (para. 2).

In the case of Universidad Hispanoamericana, it was created in 1982 under the name *Colegio Sapienta*, being the first private higher education institution in Costa Rica. Its mission it to train professionals that not only become leaders, but also that generate changes that contribute to the improvement of society. According to their official description of the English teaching major (2022), they are compromised with the quality of all their disciplines in the faculty of education, and the training of professionals in educational environments through different methodologies and strategies (par. 3-6).

Nature

The present research has a qualitative nature since it uses descriptive data in order to determine the relation with one phenomenon (culture) with another one (interpretation of conversational implicatures).

Character

The present study follows a case study character. As Stake (1995) and Yin (2009, 2012), (as cited in Creswell 2014) describe when the researcher develops an in-depth analysis of a case, often a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals. Cases are bounded by time and activity, and researchers collect detailed information using a variety of data collection procedures over a sustained period of time (p. 42).

Subject and sources of information

The participants involved corresponds to students from the English teaching major at UNA's Campus Omar Dengo and UH's Sede Llorente. The sample comprises from 26 participants whose ages range from 18 to 35 years old; 12 from UNA, and 14 from UH. The participants selected are current 2022 senior students from the major, this with the purpose of ensuring that all participants have already approved their respective cultural courses from the major. The researcher has approved access to the population and relevant information such as the cultural courses' programs.

Sampling

The present research uses a non-probabilistic sample for it focuses on a particular population from UNA and UH with certain characteristics: being senior students from the English teaching program who have already approved their respective cultural courses.

Techniques and Instruments

The researcher used one instrument to collect the data divide into three sections. The first section corresponds to a survey, the second section is a questionnaire, and the third section correspond to an interview. The instrument, applied through google forms, is explained as follows.

Survey

The first part corresponds to a survey. The survey asks participants to mention which, according to their opinions and experiences, is the primary, secondary and tertiary source of their cultural knowledge. The data collected through this first part provides insights on if participants consider that the main source of cultural knowledge is related to the contents of the cultural courses imparted on their majors, or if, as mentioned by Mohamed Ali and Mohideen (2016) and Tang (as cited in Hoyos, 2012),

Questionnaire

The second part corresponds to a questionnaire which, as defined by Brown (as cited in Mackey and Gass, 2005) The questionnaire consists of a set of 8 closed ended items test. Such test is designed based on Grice's Cooperative Principle theory. Each maxim has two items assigned: one is designed following the rules of the cooperative principle, and the other one is designed as a flouted maxim. Overall, the test contains four implicature items following the maxims of quality, quantity, manner, and relevance, and four implicature items based on the flouted maxims of quality, quantity, manner, and relevance. Each item it also designed considering common cultural aspects between UNA's and UH's cultural courses of the English teaching majors such as historical and socio-cultural aspects.

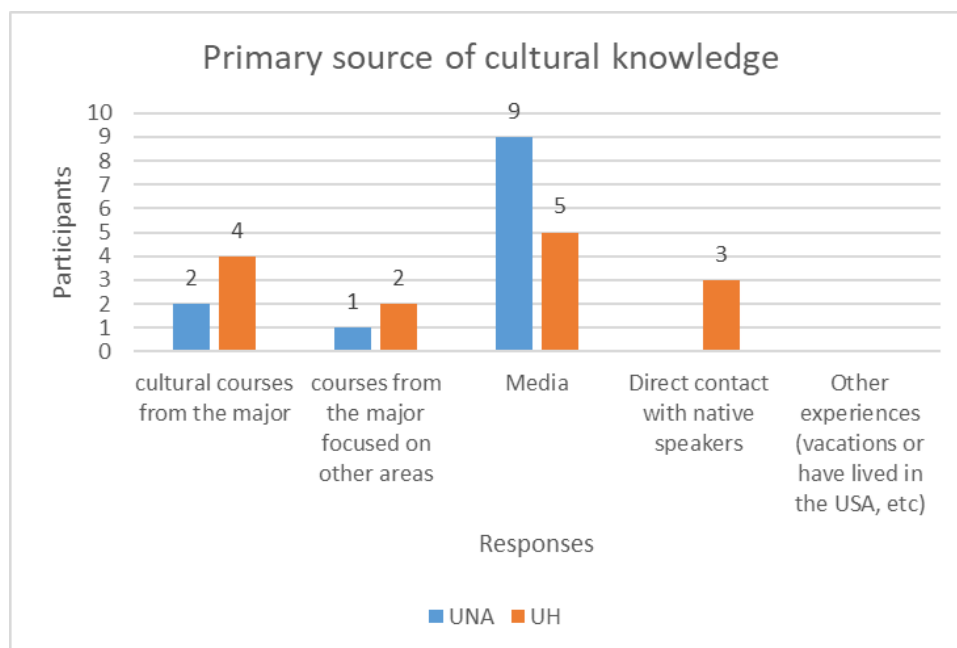
Interview

The interview consists of a set of questions directed to determine possible aspects that might have influence participants' interpretation of implicatures. Participants are expected to identify if linguistic or cultural barriers affect their understanding and interpretation of the implicatures provided.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Sources of cultural knowledge

Figure 1. Participants' *primary source of cultural knowledge*



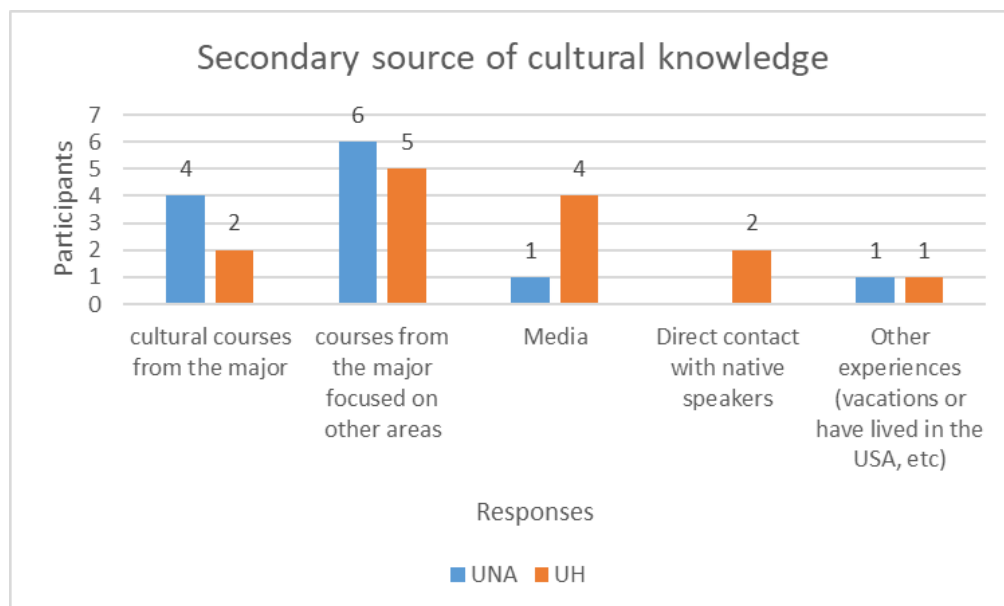
Note. Own elaboration based on participants' responses

As represented in figure 1, in regard to UNA participants, the majority of participants indicated that their primary source of cultural knowledge corresponds to media such as social media, tv shows, movies, among others, followed by cultural courses from the major, and finally, courses from the major focused on other areas as his primary source of information.

On the other hand, most participants from UH pointed out that media was their primary source of cultural knowledge, followed by cultural courses from the major, direct contact with native speakers and courses from the major focused on other areas.

In both populations, the majority of responses indicated that media represents the primary source of cultural knowledge, which as previously stated by Mohamed Ali and Mohideen (2016), it can be a means through which culture can be gained (p. 47). The reason why media tends to be the most voted option in both scenarios might vary; for instance, a possible answer could be that, in general, students spend a significant amount of time-consuming content from media in comparison to UNA's 16 hour per week and UH's 12 hour per week average of time dedicated to cultural courses.

Figure 2. *Participants' secondary source of cultural knowledge*



Note. Own elaboration based on participants' responses

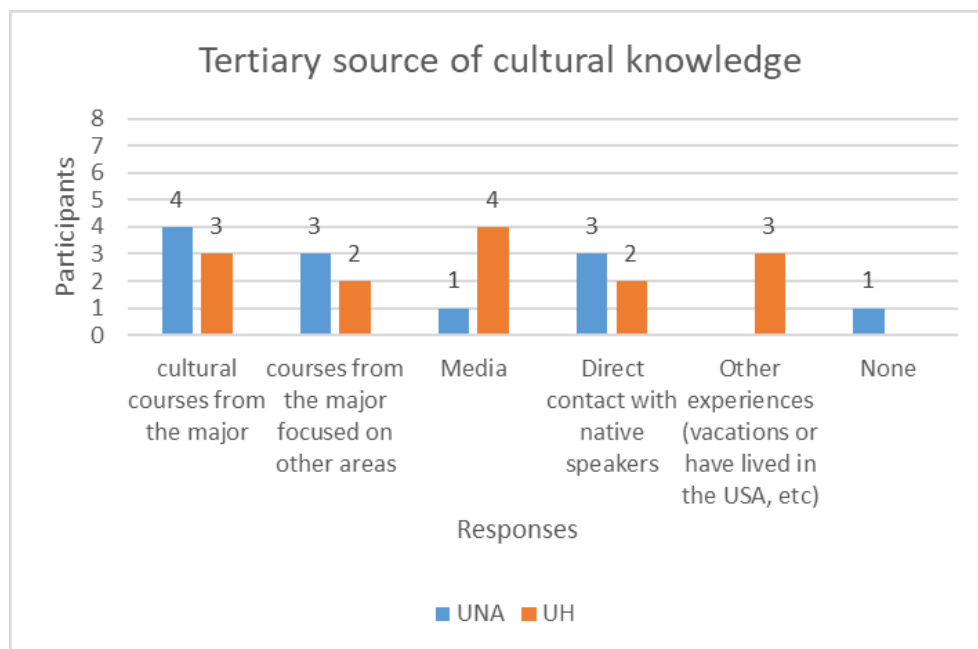
As shown in figure 2, UNA's participants identified courses from their major focused on other areas as their main secondary source of cultural knowledge. Such courses are directed to areas like grammar, oral expression, pronunciation, among others, while cultural courses from their major is the second most

voted option. Cultural courses from the major remain as the second most voted option, but it is still not considered as a secondary source of cultural knowledge by the majority of UNA participants.

Likewise, the majority of UH's participants, five out of 14 in this case, indicated that courses from the major focused on other areas are their main secondary source of cultural knowledge. In the case of UH, cultural courses from the major is the third most voted option, and it is still surpassed by media which remains as a strong source of cultural information for UH participants.

Courses from the major focused on other areas represents the second source of cultural knowledge for most participants of the study. Tang (as cited in Hoyos, 2012) mentions that when learning a language, a learner is also acquiring knowledge of aspects that are implicit in the culture of the target language (p. 63). Therefore, students might be learning culture indirectly through courses from the major that are not necessarily directed to culture but are transmitting culture implicitly. These results are similar to Espinoza and Rodriguez (2020) study in which participants mentioned that courses focused on integrated skills, oral expression, elocution, among others, helped them learn about culture (p. 8).

Figure 3. *Participants' tertiary source of cultural knowledge*



Note. Own elaboration based on participants' responses

As shown in figure 3, four out of 12 participants from UNA selected cultural courses from their major as their main tertiary source of cultural knowledge, followed by courses from the major focused on other areas and direct contact with native speakers. On the other hand, most UH participants identified media

as their main tertiary source of cultural knowledge, followed by cultural courses from the major and other experiences.

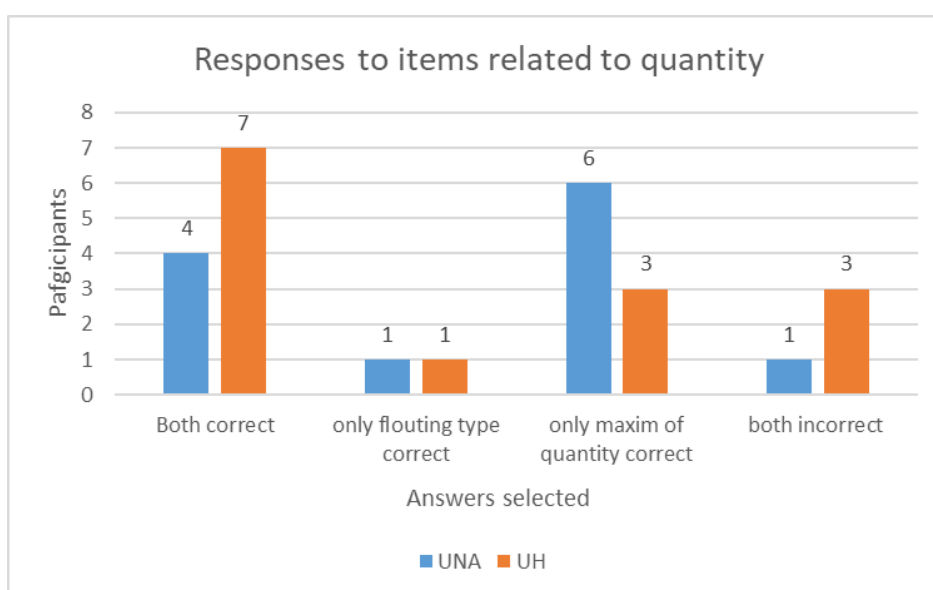
Altogether, according to participants' responses, media is an important source of cultural knowledge. For UNA participants, media represents their primary source of cultural knowledge, but courses from their major, either directed to culture or not, represented a strong secondary and tertiary source of cultural knowledge. However, for UH students, media represented a very strong primary, secondary, and even tertiary source of cultural knowledge.

Interpretation of conversational implicatures

The following section addresses participants' interpretation of conversational implicatures presented in the second instrument, the questionnaire.

Quantity Items

Figure 4. *Responses to items related to quantity.*



Note. Own elaboration based on participants' responses

Overall, as presented in table 4, from the total amount of participants, half of the subjects answered incorrectly the item related to the flouting maxim of quantity. This result is similar to Kavetska's (2020) study in which her results showed that "implicatures based on flouting the Quantity maxim caused most problems" (p. 57).

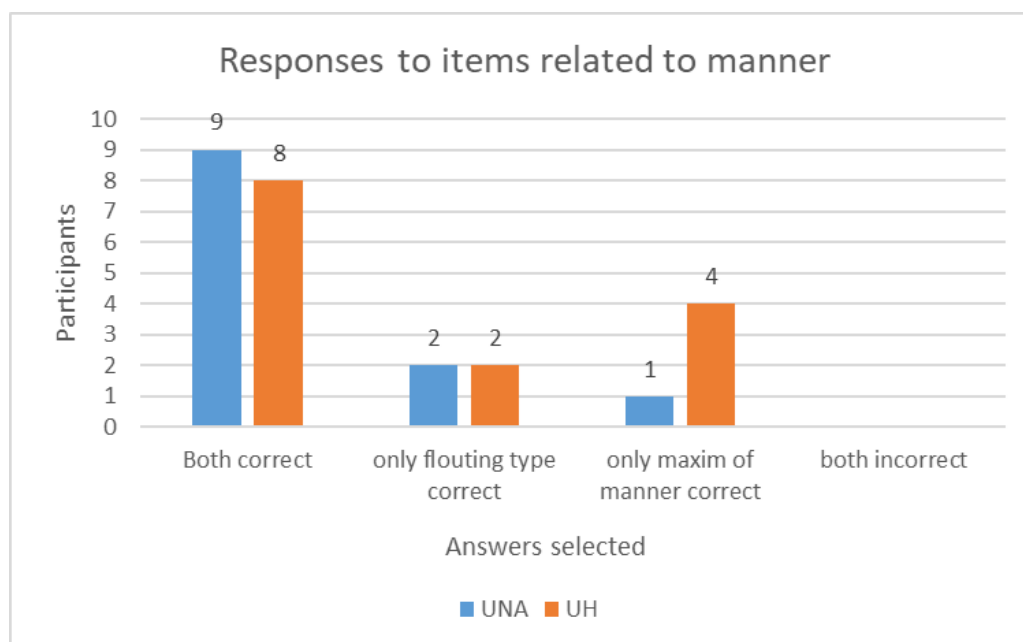
The majority of participants from UNA answered incorrectly at least one of the two items presented; participants selected answers related to stereotypes towards Americans such as rudeness, lacking cultural

awareness, and snobbish attitude. In the case of UH, half participants answer incorrectly at least one of the two items from the questionnaire, and these participants selected the same options that contained stereotypes as UNA's students did. Nevertheless, UH students performed better when interpreting both items related to quantity, while UNA students had more troubles to interpret the item based on the flouted maxim of quantity.

Considering all participants, the results suggest that implicatures based on the flouting maxim of quantity are difficult to interpret, and that stereotypes are a very common factor among participants' interpretation. Such stereotypes, as mentioned by Tomalin and Stempleski (1993), cause misunderstandings (p. 127), and they might have influenced participants' responses. The fact that more than half of the total population of the study answered at least one item incorrectly by selecting answers related to American stereotypes, would suggest that Pragmatic failure, as exposed in the ILP theory, might be the responsible for such results. Nevertheless, considering that the nature of the flouting maxim of quantity is difficult by itself, it would be appropriate to assume that such results are not only due to a Pragmatic failure related to lack of cultural knowledge, but also on the fact that it is difficult to interpret implicatures that lack the appropriate amount of information.

Manner items

Figure 5. *Responses to items related to manner.*

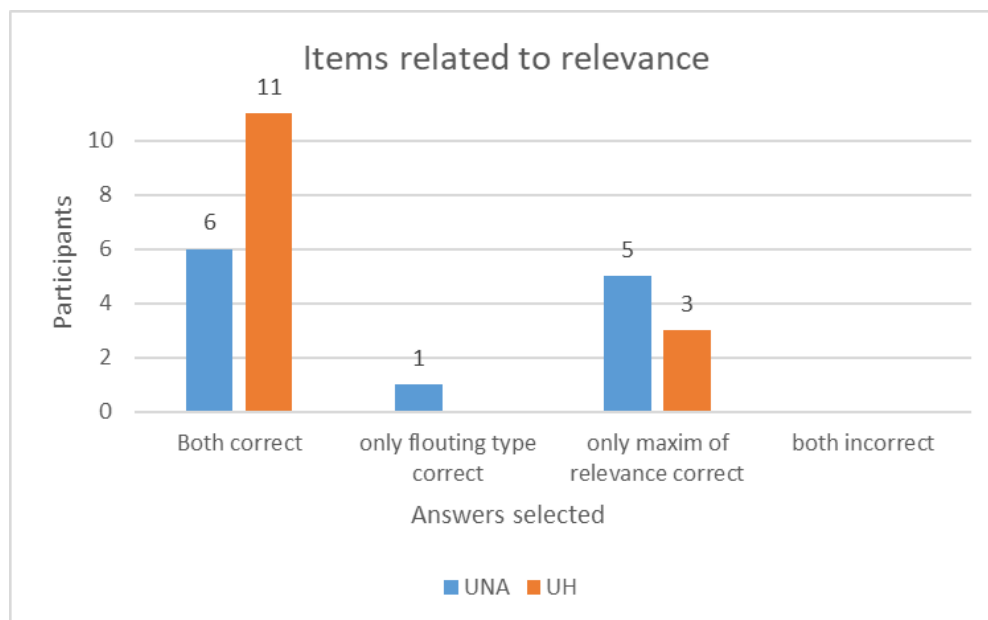


Note. Own elaboration based on participants' responses

Items related to manner presented promising results; as presented in figure 5, 17 participants from the total population answered correctly both items by choosing interpretations related to American assumptions such as assertiveness and sense of privacy. Only eight out of the 26 participants selected interpretations related to rudeness, and one a non-related answer. From the nine students that failed at least one of the two items presented, five had problems to interpret correctly the item based on the flouting maxim of manner; a possible reason for these results might be that the ambiguous nature of the flouting maxim of manner represents an obstacle to interpret an implicature of such nature. Nassar's (2021) findings point out that one of the reasons for misinterpreting conversational implicatures are differences in cultures, and that deliberate ambiguity was one of the factors that showed culture difficulty (p. 51). Therefore, the fact that 17 participants answered correctly to both items might suggest that ambiguity might not be a problem if certain ideas or assumptions, such as the sense of privacy and assertive communication, are shared within different cultures.

Relevance items

Figure 6. *Responses to items related to relevance.*



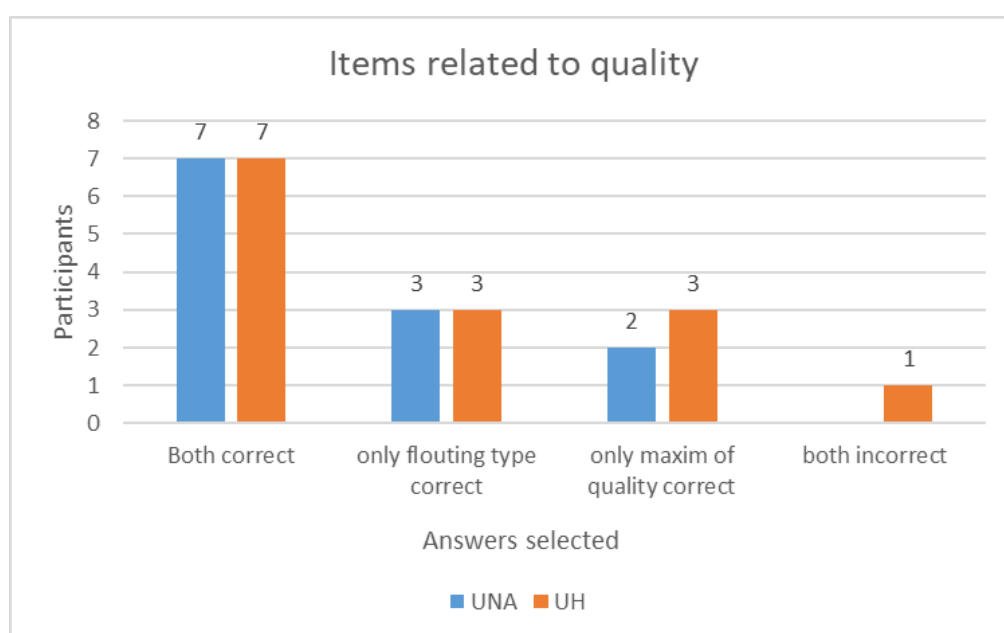
Note. *Own elaboration based on participants' responses*

Overall, as shown in figure 6, 17 out of 26 participants answered correctly both items. These results are similar to Kasper and Blum-Kulka's (as cited in Kavetzka, 2020) where it was established that it was easier to comprehend violations of relevance maxim, while violation of quantity maxims were more

difficult to comprehend (p. 46). Most participants from both UNA and UH had no difficulties to interpret both items as expected, but still, UH participants performed better at doing so. Half of UNA's participants interpreted both items correctly, and almost half of the same population interpreted correctly only the item following the maxim of relevance. All participants who answered incorrectly at least one of the items selected, interpreted them as speakers changing the topic or not caring about others' opinions and wishes. Nine out of 26 participants did not interpret the items as a reflection of the American values patriotism and protection of the family. Results might suggest that rather lack of cultural knowledge, flouting maxims of relevance might be harder for them to interpret whether they lack or not cultural knowledge, and this might be due to the nature of the flouting maxim itself.

Quality items

Figure 7. Responses to items related to quality.



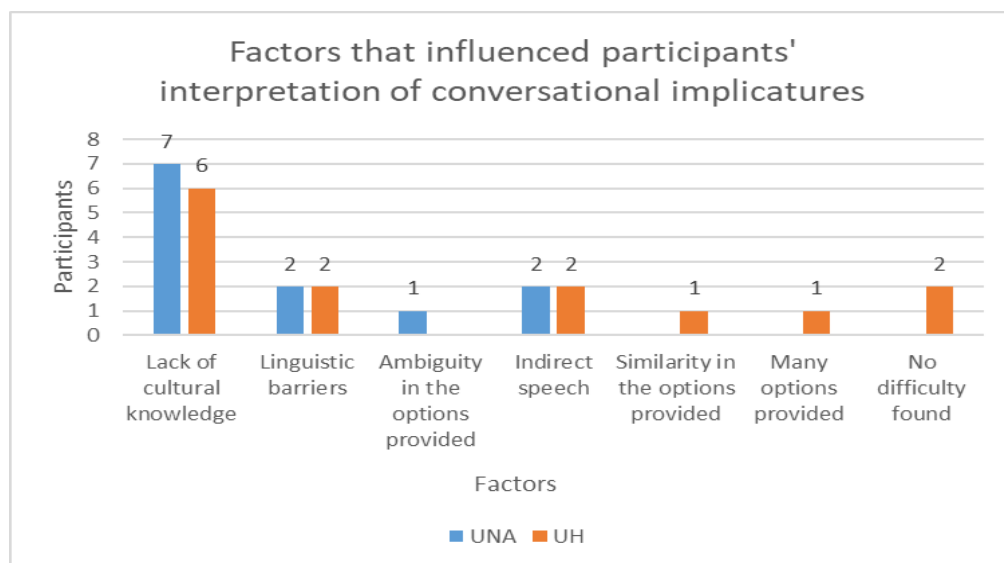
Note. Own elaboration based on participants' responses

Overall, as shown in figure 7, 12 participants did not answer as expected at least one item; six of them did not detect the usage of irony in the item that represented the flouting maxim of quality, which resulted in participants selecting the answer related to immigration stereotypes. Regarding the participants that did not answer as expected the item that followed the quality maxims, the selected options were focused on the veracity of the events, rather than the historical context that surrounded the situation presented.

Fourteen participants, which is barely more than half of the total population, had no troubles to interpret the item that contained an irony expression and the item that was expecting them to focus on the historical context rather than the truthfulness of the situation. This result is similar to Kavestka's (2020) study in which she found that the ironic comments, usually related to the flouting maxim of quality, had a poor rate of success (p. 59). Noveck (as cited in Kavetska 2020, p. 59) argues that processing irony involves a cognitive challenge for speakers of a language and mainly depends on context, layers of inference, and theory of mind reconstruction. Therefore, it would be appropriate to conclude that, in the case of participants who did not interpret the flouting item as expected, irony represented a difficult challenge to deal with at a cognitive level. On the contrary, for participants that did not interpret as expected the item that followed the quality maxim, the veracity of the situation represented a more relevant factor than the historical context surrounding the situation presented. As mentioned before, Rusen (as cited in Suryana, Yulifar, and Syamsuddin, 2018, p. 237) mentions that "historical awareness is human ability to understand the relation of past events with the values of human life in the present." Therefore, the fact that for participants history might not be a relevant factor to consider when interpreting the item, might cause an interference in the comprehension of how history shaped current values of the society, and how it is reflected in conversations, as well as with their understanding of the whole context in which the situation is taking place (Brooks-Lewis, 2010, p. 140).

Factors that influenced participants' interpretation of conversational implicatures

Figure 8. *Factors that influenced participants' interpretation of conversational implicatures*



Note. Own elaboration based on participants' responses

As shown in figure 8, most of participants indicated that lack of cultural knowledge made difficult for them to interpret the implicatures provided. The second most common factors were linguistic barriers, related to differences in English and Spanish language as well as participants' level of proficiency in English language, and the usage of indirect speech as troublesome factors when interpreting the items. Only one participant mentioned that the options provided as possible interpretations were somehow ambiguous, which represented a difficulty. One participant pointed out the similarity of the options provided as a difficulty, another participant mentioned that there were many options provided, and finally, two participants did not identify any difficulty that might have influenced their interpretation of the items.

Some of the factors mentioned by participants are similar to the ones mentioned in Nassar's (2021) research in which indirectness and socio-cultural differences are some of the reasons why implicatures are misunderstood (p. 52). Additionally, results are similar to Kavetska's study (2020) in which she determined that not only cultural background affects conversational implicatures' interpretation, but also the level of proficiency in the target language (pp. 61-62).

CONCLUSIONS

The relationship between culture and language is certainly strong, and the awareness and understanding of its interdependence is of high importance not only to native speakers of a particular language, but also to second and foreign language learners who aspire to communicate through that same language. To be able to understand and communicate through a foreign language not only depends on being grammatically proficient and fluent, but also on pragmatic factors that might determine if speakers can communicate and understand each other appropriately through different speech acts. It would be appropriate to conclude that the Cooperative Principle and the Interlanguage Pragmatics Theory are crucial factors to understand certain speech acts such as conversational implicatures since their interpretation not only involves effective communication, but also Pragmatic abilities.

Culture in the EFL classroom plays an important role so that learners avoid misunderstandings in conversations with native speakers from their target language. Cultural differences and lack of cultural knowledge from the target language influence the process of decoding an utterance's meaning. As the data collected showed, certain cultural misconceptions such as stereotypes affect how EFL speakers

interpret conversational implicatures; the lack of historical awareness, provokes that EFL speakers find difficulties when relating the historical context to conversation or situations that are taking place around a conversation; lack of knowledge about values makes harder for EFL speakers to comprehend their relevance and presence when interacting with native speakers.

Misconceptions or ignorance about the target culture leads to misinterpretation of the meaning behind an utterance; nevertheless, it is important to highlight that lack of cultural knowledge is not the only reason to misinterpret conversational implicatures. The results also showed that certain maxims are harder to interpret than other due to their nature.

As a whole, lack of cultural knowledge influences how EFL speakers interpret conversational implicatures, and although this is not the only reason why speakers misinterpret them, lack of cultural knowledge increases the chances of misinterpret an utterance which leads to Pragmatic failure.

Participants' performance when interpreting conversational implicatures varied depending on the nature of the item presented on the instrument applied. Items related to the maxim of quantity were the most difficult type of implicatures for participants to interpret. Quality items represent the second most difficult type of conversational implicature for participants to interpret as expected. Participant's performance in items related to manner and relevance has similar results; participants selected answers related to rude behavior in and it was difficult for them to relate American values to the scenarios provided. When it comes to flouting items, items containing the flouting maxim of quantity presented a higher range of misinterpretation, followed by flouting maxim of relevance items, flouting maxim of quality items, and flouting maxim of manner items

Overall, participants performed better when interpreting items related to manner and relevance implicatures, while quality and quantity implicatures presented a higher rate of misinterpretation.

For UNA participants, it was harder to interpret as expected items related to quantity and relevance; On the other hand, UH participants performed better on these same items. Overall, UH participants performed better at interpreting the items, than UNA participants did. On the whole, taking into account that both UNA and UH participants selected media as their primary source of cultural knowledge, and courses from the major focused on other areas as their main secondary source, it would be appropriate to conclude that, in this research in particular, UNA and UH's English teaching major's cultural courses

might not have had a strong impact on participants' interpretation of conversation implicatures as media might have. Nevertheless, it is important to take some aspects into account: culture does play an important role when interpreting conversational implicatures; additionally, the source of cultural knowledge, either cultural courses, media, or other sources, is important as well. For instance, the cultural representations that are transmitted through media are not only to inform but also to entertain. As a result, some depictions, information, or representations might not be accurate reflections of the reality and might contribute to the spreading of misconceptions such as stereotypes. It is important that learners analyze critically the information provided through any cultural source they might encounter to avoid misconceptions and misinterpretations when interactive with native speakers, and courses taught during students' academic life, especially the ones that are intended to address culture as the main topic, might help students to develop a critical standpoint when dealing with such sources.

It would be appropriate to expand research by applying different methodologies in which the research can compare the performance between participants whose primary sources of cultural knowledge are different, as well as implementing language proficiency tests to find if differences in linguistic proficiency are also a determining factor.

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