A Pragmatic Analysis of Clickbait Headlines in the Celebrity Rubric of Indozone

*1Regina Pasya Salsabila, 1Otong Setiawan Djauhari
1Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, Indonesia
Co. Author Email: reginasalsabila200200@gmail

Article Info	Abstract
	This study examines implicature in celebrity clickbait headlines of the Indonesian online media platform Indozone. Framed by Grice's Cooperative Principle (1975), which consists of the maxims of Quantity, Quality, Relevance, and Manner, the research identifies strategic violations of these maxims that generate reader inference. Using a qualitative-descriptive method, the study analyzes how such violations construct conversational implicatures that provoke curiosity and emotional engagement. The findings reveal that most headlines intentionally flout the maxims of Quantity, Manner, and Relevance by omitting key information, using vague or suggestive language, and emphasizing sensational or emotionally charged content. These pragmatic strategies manipulate attention and increase click-through rates. The study also highlights how implicature functions not only as a tool for communication but as a persuasive device in digital journalism. By situating the analysis within the Indonesian context, this research contributes to the field of pragmatics and media studies. It further calls for enhanced media literacy, suggesting that understanding implicature in headlines equips readers to interpret online content more critically and ethically.

INTRODUCTION

In the digital age, the way information is packaged and consumed has dramatically shifted, particularly within online media. The fierce competition among digital news outlets has fostered the widespread use of clickbait, headlines that rely on ambiguity, sensationalism, or exaggeration to attract clicks and increase user engagement (Chakraborty et al., 2016). Clickbait not only appeals to curiosity but also functions as a rhetorical tool to capture attention in a saturated media environment.

In Indonesia, entertainment-focused platforms such as Indozone are prominent examples of this trend. These platforms frequently use provocative headlines, especially in the celebrity news rubric, to engage youth audiences seeking fast and emotionally charged content (Fakhruzzaman et al., 2021). Despite the entertainment value, the linguistic mechanisms behind these headlines remain largely unexplored from a pragmatic perspective.

From a theoretical standpoint, clickbait presents an intriguing site for analysis using the lens of implicature. Philosopher H. P. Grice (1975), in his influential work Logic and Conversation, introduced the Cooperative Principle and its four maxims: Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner, as the foundation of effective communication. When these maxims are deliberately violated, by being vague, incomplete, overly informative, or misleading implicature arises, enabling the listener or reader to infer unstated meanings (Yule, 1996).

Clickbait headlines routinely flout these maxims to generate curiosity and provoke inferential processing. For example, a headline like "Lisa BLACKPINK Refuses to Perform at Miss Universe 2025, Here's Why!" strategically withholds the reason, thereby encouraging the reader to click and fill the informational gap (Maghfiroh & Prayitno, 2025). This aligns with what Blom and Hansen (2015) call forward-reference, where essential information is intentionally delayed to ensure continued attention.

Beyond simply teasing content, clickbait headlines manipulate inferential competence by embedding implicatures, unstated assumptions or meanings, into their structure. Dewi (2021) found that platforms like LINE TODAY use listicles and question-based headlines that rely on reader inference, while Jodłowiec (2022) likens this to the mechanics of a punchline in humor: the audience is invited to interpret the gap between expectation and actual content.

While numerous studies have examined clickbait from psychological, structural, or journalistic standpoints, research that explicitly applies Gricean pragmatics to Indonesian media contexts remains limited. This study, therefore, aims to investigate how implicature operates in the celebrity headlines of Indozone by (1) Identifying which of Grice's maxims are violated, (2) Classifying the types of implicature used, and (3) Analyzing the communicative and persuasive functions of these violations.

Ultimately, this research contributes to the field of pragmatics by demonstrating how digital media strategically exploits implicature to influence reader behavior. It also underscores the need for enhanced media literacy, especially in understanding how language can be used not just to inform, but to persuade, direct, and manipulate public attention in the digital era.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach to examine the types of maxims violated in the use of clickbait headlines and the implicatures contained within those headlines in the celebrity section of the online media Indozone. A qualitative method is deemed appropriate as the research aims to interpret and describe the implied meanings in media discourse rather than measure them statistically. The focus is on uncovering pragmatic strategies and communicative intentions embedded within headline structures.

The research object consists of celebrity news headlines published on the official website of Indozone (www.indozone.id) from January to April 2025. The headlines selected are those that exhibit common characteristics of clickbait, such as withholding crucial information, using hyperbolic expressions, or constructing ambiguous phrases designed to arouse curiosity. Indozone is chosen due to its popularity among Indonesian readers, particularly youth audiences, and its frequent use of clickbait strategies in online journalism.

Data collection was conducted through documentation and note-taking techniques. The researcher systematically browsed the celebrity news section of Indozone, observed relevant headlines, and recorded those that fulfill clickbait criteria. From 30 collected headlines, 9 representative examples were selected for detailed analysis, based on the representativeness of clickbait features and the recurrence of linguistic patterns across different news articles.

The data analysis process involved three main stages. First, the researcher identified violations of Grice's Cooperative Principle, particularly the maxims of quantity, quality, relevance, and manner. Each headline was analyzed to determine which maxim(s) were deliberately flouted to achieve a particular communicative effect. Second, the types of implicatures resulting from these violations were examined, with a focus on distinguishing between conventional and conversational implicatures as defined by Grice (1975). Third, the communicative functions of those implicatures were interpreted in the context of media strategy, such as creating suspense, directing the reader's assumptions, or dramatizing otherwise mundane information. To enhance the credibility of the analysis, theoretical

triangulation was applied by comparing findings with relevant prior studies, both local and international, conducted within the past ten years.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION
Research Findings

This study analyzed nine celebrity clickbait headlines from Indozone media to identify the violation of Grice's conversational maxims, the types of implicature involved, and the communicative functions achieved. The analysis used Grice's (1975) theory of implicature as the main framework, following the qualitative-descriptive method described in the previous section. The data was categorized based on the violated maxim(s), the type of implicature (conventional or conversational), and its persuasive function as a clickbait strategy.

Table 1. Analysis of Clickbait Headlines Based on Grice's Maxims and Implicature

No.	News Headline	Violated Maxim(s)	Type of Implicature	Communicative Function
1.	Hasil Autopsi Resmi Aktor Gene Hackman Telah Keluar, Ini Hasilnya!	Quantity	Conversational	Triggers curiosity by withholding core information
2.	Lisa BLACKPINK Tolak Tampil di Miss Universe 2025, Ini Alasannya!	Quantity	Conversational	Increases reader curiosity by implying hidden reasons
3.	Ternyata Ini yang Jadi Mak Comblang Luna Maya dan Maxime Bouttier!	Relevance & Quantity	Conversational	Builds suspense by hiding key details
4.	Tajir Melintir! Ini Daftar 10 Aktor Paling Kaya di Dunia, Nomor Satu Siapa?	Quantity & Manner	Conversational	Creates tension and invites clicks through a rhetorical question
5.	Camille Razat Umumkan Hengkang dari 'Emily in Paris Season 5', Ini Alasannya!	Quantity	Conversational	Evokes curiosity by omitting main information
6.	Ariana Grande Pamer Tato di Wajah, Gaya Baru atau Sekadar Riasan?	Manner & Quantity	Conversational	Exploits ambiguity to stimulate curiosity
7.	Park Bo Young Ungkap Cara Atasi Stres ala-nya, Ngapain yah?	Manner & Quantity	Conversational	Promotes engagement by using an open-ended question
8.	10 Pasangan Artis Korea yang Cinlok di Drakor dan Jadi Nyata, Mana Favoritmu?	Manner & Relevance	Conversational	Encourages emotional interaction
9.	Update Terbaru Live Garosero, Benarkah Kim Soo Hyun Pernah Janji Nikahi Kim Sae Ron?	Manner & Relevance	Conversational	Provokes curiosity by referencing unconfirmed gossip

The first finding reveals that the maxim of quantity was the most frequently violated across the dataset. Headlines such as "Hasil Autopsi Resmi Aktor Gene Hackman Telah Keluar, Ini Hasilnya!" and "Camille Razat Umumkan Hengkang dari 'Emily in Paris Season 5', Ini Alasannya!" deliberately withheld critical information that the reader expects, thereby creating curiosity. This supports Grice's view that the violation of maxims can still facilitate communication by generating implicature—unstated meanings the reader is expected to infer.

The second finding shows the combined violation of the maxim of manner and maxim of relevance, such as in "Ternyata Ini yang Jadi Mak Comblang Luna Maya dan Maxime Bouttier!" and "Update Terbaru Live Garosero, Benarkah Kim Soo Hyun Pernah Janji Nikahi Kim Sae Ron?". These headlines employ ambiguity and lack of clarity, often hinting at surprising or unconfirmed information, triggering reader curiosity. This strategy aligns with Dewi's (2021) findings on how ambiguity and declarative implicature are commonly exploited in online clickbait for emotional engagement.

Headlines that use interrogative structures, such as "Tajir Melintir! Ini Daftar 10 Aktor Paling Kaya di Dunia, Nomor Satu Siapa?" or "Park Bo Young Ungkap Cara Atasi Stres ala-nya, Ngapain yah?", illustrate how rhetorical questions are used to break the maxim of manner and quantity. These questions suggest that the content contains surprising or intriguing details, prompting readers to click for more information. These forms of conversational implicature are deliberately constructed to manipulate user attention and drive engagement.
Additionally, the use of relevance violations in headlines like "10 Pasangan Artis Korea yang Cinlok di Drakor dan Jadi Nyata, Mana Favoritmu?" demonstrates a shift from informative to emotionally engaging content, aiming to create personal involvement and reader interaction

Discussion

The findings of this study confirm that clickbait headlines from Indozone frequently and strategically violate Grice's conversational maxims, particularly those of Quantity, Manner, and Relevance, in order to provoke reader curiosity and engagement. These violations, while technically breaches of cooperative principles, serve a deliberate communicative function by triggering implicature, wherein readers infer meanings that are not explicitly stated (Grice, 1975; Yule, 1996).

A dominant strategy observed in the data is the deliberate omission of critical information, a clear violation of the maxim of Quantity. Headlines such as "Lisa BLACKPINK Tolak Tampil di Miss Universe 2025, Ini Alasannya!" are constructed to withhold key details, compelling readers to click in search of the missing explanation. This aligns with findings by Maghfiroh and Prayitno (2025), who argue that such information gaps are used rhetorically to manipulate curiosity and guide user interaction. It also parallels the concept of forward-reference described by Blom and Hansen (2015), wherein the main content is deferred to create a suspenseful lead-in.

In addition, several headlines analyzed exhibit vague or ambiguous wording, violating the maxim of Manner. Phrases such as "Ariana Grande Pamer Tato di Wajah, Gaya Baru atau Sekadar Riasan?" leave room for multiple interpretations and blur the line between fact and speculation. Dewi (2021) notes that such ambiguity plays a crucial role in emotional engagement, as readers are prompted to interpret suggestive cues. Jodłowiec (2022) further strengthens this point by comparing clickbait to the structure of humor, in which a punchline invites the audience to make inferential leaps between what is said and what is implied.

Relevance violations are also observed, particularly in headlines that appear to sensationalize or emotionally exaggerate trivial news. For instance, "10 Pasangan Artis Korea yang Cinlok di Drakor dan Jadi Nyata, Mana Favoritmu?" shifts from conveying news to inviting personal engagement, effectively turning readers into participants rather than

observers. This strategy aligns with Apresjan and Orlov's (2022) assertion that digital headlines often blur information with emotional triggers to increase perceived relevance.

These patterns reflect a broader shift in digital media discourse, where pragmatic violations are not signs of communicative failure, but calculated moves to manipulate attention. According to Chakraborty et al. (2016), clickbait headlines diverge from traditional journalistic norms by employing exaggerated or emotionally charged language, which statistically correlates with higher user interaction. In the Indonesian context, Fakhruzzaman et al. (2021) provide empirical support that clickbait strategies, especially those involving vague or incomplete wording, are prevalent and systematically applied across major platforms.

Importantly, the implicatures generated are almost exclusively conversational rather than conventional. They depend heavily on the reader's cultural background, expectations, and interpretive skills, reinforcing the idea that clickbait headlines are not passively consumed but co-constructed through inference.

In summary, the manipulation of implicature through strategic maxim violations is not only common but central to the functioning of clickbait in online journalism. These findings reinforce the pragmatic understanding that what is left unsaid is often more influential than what is explicitly written, especially in the context of digital media designed to compete for fleeting attention spans.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that clickbait headlines in the celebrity news section of Indozone frequently employ conversational implicatures by intentionally violating Grice's conversational maxims, most notably Quantity, Manner, and Relevance. These violations are not random nor indicative of poor communication, but rather calculated rhetorical strategies used to provoke curiosity, evoke emotional reactions, and increase reader engagement.

The analysis reveals that such headlines rely on the reader's inferential competence to interpret meanings that are deliberately left unstated. In doing so, they create gaps in information, ambiguity, or relevance that prompt audiences to click in search of resolution. These findings are consistent with the theoretical framework of implicature (Grice, 1975; Yule, 1996) and supported by contemporary studies such as Blom and Hansen (2015), Dewi (2021), and Jodłowiec (2022), who have noted similar patterns of strategic vagueness and manipulation in digital media discourse.

By focusing on the Indonesian media context, specifically Indozone, this research offers a localized yet transferable understanding of how implicature operates in non-spoken, non-conversational settings like headlines. It affirms that digital journalism has moved beyond mere reporting toward audience manipulation through language structure, and that implicature is a key mechanism enabling this shift.

Furthermore, this study underscores the importance of media literacy in the digital era. As headlines increasingly adopt persuasive linguistic strategies, readers must develop a critical awareness of how language is used to shape perception and behavior. Recognizing implicature not only enhances comprehension but also empowers individuals to resist passive consumption and become more discerning media users.

In sum, the study contributes to pragmatic scholarship by demonstrating that implicature remains a powerful and flexible communicative tool in written, attention-driven media. It also provides practical implications for educators, journalists, and content creators regarding the ethical and functional dimensions of language use in online platforms.

RECOMMENDATION

Building on the findings of this study, future research is encouraged to broaden the scope by analyzing clickbait language across various genres beyond celebrity news, such as political, economic, or health-related headlines. Comparative studies between local and international media could also reveal cultural variations in the use and interpretation of implicature, particularly in how different societies tolerate or respond to maxim violations in journalistic language. Given the inherently subjective nature of implicature, which relies heavily on individual background knowledge and contextual inference, future researchers may benefit from adopting reader-response or experimental approaches. Combining qualitative linguistic analysis with quantitative tools such as eye-tracking, reading-time measurements, or online survey instruments could yield deeper insights into the cognitive and emotional impact of clickbait headlines. Such multimodal methods would also help validate whether the inferred meanings hypothesized by analysts are actually received and interpreted as intended by real readers. Moreover, this study identifies a need for increased awareness among media practitioners regarding the ethical implications of clickbait strategies. While maximizing engagement is a valid objective in the digital economy, there is a fine line between attracting attention and manipulating perception. Journalists and content creators should be encouraged to balance rhetorical appeal with accuracy and transparency, especially in light of growing concerns over media credibility. Lastly, educators and curriculum designers are advised to integrate pragmatic awareness, particularly the understanding of implicature and maxims, into media literacy programs. Teaching students how to decode subtle linguistic strategies used in digital headlines can empower them to navigate online content more critically and responsibly. As readers become more skilled at identifying manipulation, the media landscape may gradually shift toward more ethical and effective communicationes.

REFERENCES

Apresjan, M., & Orlov, A. (2022). Manipulative Strategies in Online Media: A Pragmatic Perspective. Journal of Language and Media Studies, 9(2), 134–150.

Blom, J. N., & Hansen, K. R. (2015). Click Bait: Forward-Reference as Lure in Online News Headlines. Journal of Pragmatics, 76, 87–100. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2014.11.010

Chakraborty, A., Paranjape, B., Kakarla, S., & Ganguly, N. (2016). Stop Clickbait: Detecting and Preventing Clickbaits in Online News Media. arXiv preprint. https://arxiv.org/abs/1610.09786

Dewi, R. (2021). The Use of Implicature in Indonesian Clickbait Headlines. Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics, 11(1), 89–97.

Fakhruzzaman, M. N., Jannah, S. Z., Ningrum, R. A., & Fahmiyah, I. (2021). Clickbait Headline Detection in Indonesian News Sites Using Multilingual BERT (M-BERT). arXiv preprint. https://arxiv.org/abs/2102.01497

Grice, H. P. (1975). Logic and Conversation. In P. Cole & J. L. Morgan (Eds.), Syntax and Semantics, Vol. 3: Speech Acts (pp. 41–58). Academic Press.

Jodłowiec, M. (2022). Deceptive Clickbaits in The Relevance-Theoretic Lens: What Makes Them Similar to Punchlines. In K. Mierzwicka-Torz & M. Szymanek (Eds.), Concepts and Context in Relevance-Theoretic Pragmatics (pp. 245–260). John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Maghfiroh, A., & Prayitno, H. J. (2025). Pragmatic Strategies in Indonesian Entertainment Clickbait. Journal Of Digital Discourse, 2(1), 15–27.

Yule, G. (1996). Pragmatics. Oxford University Press.