

# THE USE OF LINGUISTIC UNITS AND THEIR IMPLICATURES IN THE LISTENING SECTION OF TOEFL iBT TEST

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## ABSTRACT

Implicature is a means of conveying what speakers mean linguistically, and it is most commonly used in spoken language. Identifying the possible interpretations and discovering the implied meanings of the information, nevertheless, are really challenging for non-native English speakers, especially for ESL/EFL test-takers who are under testing pressure. This descriptive study, therefore, aimed to quantitatively and qualitatively explore the language units and their implicatures used in the listening section of TOEFL iBT (Test of English as a Foreign Language versioned Internet-based test). A corpus consisting of 87 lectures, 97 long conversations, and 31 short conversations/adjacency pairs that were sourced from TOEFL iBT materials was developed. The framework employed to analyze data was based on the initial lists of triggers proposed by Gazdar (1979), Grice (1978), Levinson (1993), and Yule (1996). The findings reveal that *linking words* are the most common linguistic units while *set phrases* are the least common ones that are used to trigger implicatures in the listening section of TOEFL iBT materials. Additionally, diverse implicatures of linguistic units used in the listening section of TOEFL iBT are uncovered.

**Keywords:** Implicature; Language unit; Listening; TOEFL iBT.

## 1. Introduction

Since the English language has been long adopted as the medium of instruction throughout the world, ESL/EFL learners have to take different types of English language test in order to gain the admission requirements to study at universities or colleges in terms of English language proficiency. The standardized Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) versioned Internet-based test (iBT), emphasizing integrated communicative skills and communicative competence, is of those designed to assess English language skills of non-native speakers and to be taken on the Internet, (ETS, 2015). It is not meant to test academic knowledge or computer ability, and as such, questions are always based on materials found in the test. It is, however, agreed that the TOEFL iBT test is challenging, especially the listening task.

Listening, according to ETS (2007), is one of the most important skills necessary for success on TOEFL iBT and in academics in general. The listening section measures test-takers' ability to understand spoken English from North America and other English-speaking parts of the world. Test-takers have to listen to a wide range of lectures and conversations in academic environments, in which the speech sounds very natural. Moreover, there are nine types of questions in the listening section, namely, Gist-Content, Gist-Purpose, Detail, Understanding the Function of What is Said, Understanding the Speaker's Attitude, Understanding Organization, Connecting Content and Making Inferences (ETS, 2007). One of the most challenging types of question in the listening section of TOEFL test is inference since test-takers may have to infer an opinion, attitude,

organization, connection among statements, but the purposes are not always explicitly stated. Rather, they are implied.

Not many ESL/EFL learners, in reality, may not find it easy to realize the implicature triggers in the English language because there are two ways for speakers to transmit information: the first way is using explicit language use (literal meaning); the other way is by making interpretive inferences through which the information is left implicit. A written or spoken piece of information can be interpreted based on what can be inferred from the utterance, but it is not a condition for its truth. Let us consider the utterance: *Even John came to the party* (To, 2007). It is noticed that the word *even* enables the listener to infer that the speaker means not to expect John's coming. The right judgment, however, sometimes cannot be made if the listener only interprets the literal meaning of what is said as seen in the following example:

(1) Annie: Was the dessert any good?

Mike: Annie, cherry pie is cherry pie.

Mike's response seems quite irrelevant in the surface structure level as far as the question-answer content is concerned. This way that speaker conveys what he/she means is linguistically defined as implicature.

Albeit the area of implication has been intensively and extensively researched by scholars (e.g., Horn, 2004; Kate, 2000; Levinson, 1983; Nguyen, 2000; Nguyen, 2007), in order to examine the phenomena of implication in particular and communication in general, there is, to the best knowledge of the researchers, no research on linguistic units that triggers implications in the conversation extracts in the listening section of TOEFL iBT. This paper, hence, purports to identify the linguistic units to signal implications and their implicatures used in the listening tasks of TOEFL iBT in order to assist ESL/EFL test-takers with the procedural functions of words/expressions used in the listening section

of TOEFL iBT. The research questions are formed as follows:

1. What are the common linguistic units to signal implications used in the listening section of TOEFL iBT?
2. What are their implicatures used in the listening section of TOEFL iBT?

## 2. Methodology

### *Linguistic Corpus*

This descriptive study involved the development of a corpus of transcripts including 87 lectures, 97 long conversations, and 31 short conversations/adjacency pairs (about 36,127 words) (see Table 1). They were sourced from TOEFL iBT materials, viz. Building Skills for the TOEFL iBT (Beginning), Developing Skills for the TOEFL iBT (Intermediate), Mastering Skills for the TOEFL iBT (Advanced), How to Master Skills for the TOEFL iBT (Intermediate Listening), Barron's TOEFL iBT (12<sup>th</sup> edition), iBT TOEFL Listening Breakthrough, which were chosen based on their availability in the researchers' context.

**Table 1**

The corpus of transcripts

Type	Number of word/each	Total of words	
Lecture	87	About 216	About 18,792
Long conversation	97	About 172	About 16,684
Short conversation	31	About 21	About 651
<b>Total</b>	<b>215</b>	<b>409</b>	<b>About 36,127</b>

### *Research procedure*

In order to achieve the set goals, the study was carried out by the combination of descriptive, quantitative and qualitative approaches, based on the analysis of frequencies of the linguistic units that signal implicature (quantitative analysis) and content analysis of the use of implicatures of those linguistic units (qualitative analysis). The study was done based on an initial list of

triggers (See Table 2) proposed by Gazdar (1979), Grice (1978), Levinson (1993), and Yule (1996).

**Table 2**

Categories of linguistic units proposed by Gazdar (1979), Grice (1978), Levinson (1993), and Yule (1996)

No.	Linguistic unit	Example
1	Determiner	<i>all, most, many, some, few, etc.</i>
2	Adverb	<i>always, often, sometimes, etc.</i>
3	Linking word	<i>but, and, or, etc.</i>
4	Adjective	<i>hot, warm, cool, cold, etc.</i>
5	Verb	<i>love, realize, recognize, forget, etc.</i>
6	Set phrase	<i>without doubt, no way, etc.</i>
7	Interjection	<i>hey, oh, well, etc.</i>

With respect to the reliability of the data analysis, double-check was employed. For the quantitative data, the researchers asked two experts as double-checkers to randomly check the occurrences of conventional implicature triggers. In respect of the qualitative data, two experts, likewise, were invited to work as double-checkers to randomly check three pieces of utterances. The two double-checkers and researchers had to reach to an agreement level of reliability (over 85%).

**3. Results and Discussion**

**3.1. Categories of Linguistic Units Used in the Listening Section of TOEFL iBT**

As seen from Table 3, *linking words*, among seven linguistic units that trigger implicatures account for the highest percentage per 1,000 words (42%) of individual items, signaling up to 1533 occurrences of implicature out of a total of

3626, followed by *determiners* with 542 occurrences (15%) and *verbs* with 506 occurrences (13.9 %). The next number of implicature triggered by *adverbs* and *interjections* was 481 occurrences (13.2%) and 412 occurrences (11.4%), respectively. The least used linguistic units of implicature are *adjectives* with 103 occurrences (2.8%) and *set phrase* with 50 occurrences (1.4%).

**Table 3**

Occurrences of conventional implicature triggers

No.	Linguistic units	Raw number	% Per 1,000 words
1	<i>Determiners</i>	542	15.0
2	<i>Adverbs</i>	481	13.2
3	<i>Linking words</i>	1533	42.3
4	<i>Adjectives</i>	103	2.8
5	<i>Verbs</i>	506	13.9
6	<i>Set phrases</i>	50	1.4
7	<i>Interjections</i>	412	11.4
<b>Total</b>		<b>3,626</b>	<b>100.0</b>

When it comes to the comparison of the distribution of linguistic units in lectures and conversations, it can be noticed from Table 4 that the total distribution per 1,000 words of linguistic units in lectures (51.8%) and conversations (48.2%) is relatively similar. Specifically, the frequency of *linking words* (25.4%) and *determiners* (9.4%) in lectures is much higher than that in conversations (*linking words*: 16.9%; *determiners*: 5.6%). Additionally, *adjectives* account for 1.6% in lectures, whereas those in conversations are 1.2%. Meanwhile, other linguistic units (*adverbs*: 6.8%; *verbs*: 8.0%; *set phrases*: 1.0%; *interjections*: 8.7%) appear more often in conversations than in lectures (*adverbs*: 6.4%; *verbs*: 5.9%; *set phrases*: .4%; *interjections*: 2.7%).

**Table 4**

Distribution of conventional implicatures in lectures and conversations

No.	Linguistic units	Lectures (% per 1,000 words)	Conversations (% per 1,000 words)	Total (% per 1,000 words)
1	<i>Determiners</i>	9.4	5.6	15.0
2	<i>Adverbs</i>	6.4	6.8	13.2
3	<i>Linking words</i>	<b>25.4</b>	<b>16.9</b>	<b>42.3</b>
4	<i>Adjectives</i>	1.6	1.2	2.8
5	<i>Verbs</i>	5.9	8.0	13.9
6	<i>Set phrases</i>	.4	1.0	1.4
7	<i>Interjections</i>	2.7	8.7	11.4
	Total	51.8	48.2	100.0

### 3.2. Implicatures of the Linguistic Units Used in the Listening Section of TOEFL iBT

#### a. Determiners

When producing an utterance, a speaker chooses the word which is most informative and truthful in the circumstances, as in (2):

- (2) There are several theories. *Some* of these are superstitions - that is, things that *many* people believe but that aren't really true.

(Worchester, Lark, & Eric, p.254)

By choosing *some* in (2), the speaker creates an implicature (+> *not all*). In saying '*Some* of these are superstitions', the speaker also creates other implicatures, for example, (+> *not many / not most*) theories are superstitions. By using *sometimes* in (3), the speaker communicates, via implicature, the negative forms higher on the scale of frequency (+> *not always*, +> *not often*).

- (3) He was *sometimes* violent, but that was OK in the military.

(Edmun & Mackinnon, p.223)

- (4) Students *should* carry their ID card at all times. (Edmun & Mackinnon, p.233)

+> *not must* on a scale of 'obligation'

The utterance, as seen in the above example (4), implicates that 'students *must not* carry their ID card at *all* times' or 'they *sometimes* should carry their ID card with them'.

#### b. Adverbs

Adverbs also have conventional implicatures such as: *only, mainly, especially, actually, even, yet, soon, just, already, also, at first, at least, etc.*

Some adverbs can be used to emphasize that only one particular thing is involved in what we are saying. For instance:

- (5) Some people *once* thought that *only* four things made up the Earth: earth, water, air and fire.

(Edmun and Mackinnon, p.210)

With adverbs *once* and *only* in the above statement (5), the hearer can derive from that utterance some implicatures like these: 'In the past, some people thought that the four things: earth, water, air and fire but nothing else made up the Earth' and the effect of this is 'At present, they don't think so.'

Adverbs are not normally used at the beginning of a sentence. *Only*, however, is used to begin a sentence when it focuses on

the things that follow it as in (6):

- (6) In the next reading, you can start highlighting. *Only* underline one or two key words or phrases per page. (Worchester, Lark, and Eric, pp.248 – 249)

The conventional implicature of *only*, in this case, is that ‘when you highlight the key words/phrases each page, you do underline them except for any other ways.’

- (7) He was a very good general, but *unfortunately* he was not a very good politician. In politics, he was *not always* honest.

(Edmun and Mackinnon, p.223)

Adverb *unfortunately* in (7) can provoke a negative implicature that shows the politician’s disadvantage. The implicature from *unfortunately* can be a criticism. In fact the explanation of this is used by a scalar implicature. This utterance may implicate that ‘the very good general is criticized for not being a not very good politician because he was sometimes honest in politics.’

- (8) M: Yes. I *just* need to see proof that you are enrolled in a summer course.  
W: I haven't enrolled *yet*.

(MacGillivray, Yancey and Malarcher, p.706)

As seen in (8), when the woman uses *yet*, she denotes the present situation is different as expected, or perhaps the opposite to the man’s expectation. Recently, she hasn’t enrolled in a summer course, so she cannot show the proof to the man.

Adverbs are also used to emphasize uniqueness from the point of view of the speaker in a given situation as in (9):

- (9) He was the *only* one who knew Batman and Robin’s real names. (Worchester et al., p.236)

Obviously, the speaker uses *only* to assert that he was the person who knew Batman and Robin’s real names. If he didn’t reveal, no one would know their real names.

Additionally, adverbs are used as conjunctions *but, yet, however, etc.* to express absoluteness as in (10) & (11):

- (10) Leave plenty of space, but try to make it *just* one page. (Worchester et al., p.286)

- (11) By the way, may I ask what *exactly* you wrote about me?

(Link, Kushwaha and Kato, p.321)

The above utterances show absolute requirements, in (10) the speaker wants the hearer to leave exactly one-page space, but no more. In (11) the speaker, nonetheless, wants to know correctly about what the addressee wrote about him/ her.

### c. Linking words

The three central coordinators (*and, but, or*) can function as sentence logical operators and other sentential connectives (Mitchell, 1998). Some linguists suggest many ways of interpretation showing a variety of meanings in accordance with each particular situation. Nevertheless, it is vital that the coordinators can make the regular semantic implication.

Semantically, *and* is usually regarded as a logical operator which can join two explicit contents of assertions or one implicit to another explicit meaning. In another aspect, the implications of the coordinator *and* are those which denote consequence- result, condition, concession, contrast, purpose, similarity, and explanation as follows:

- (12) Well, she covers all the same basic material, but you'll find the lectures won't be exactly the same. *And* you'll have some writing assignments.

(Worchester et al., p.320)

- (13) You'll find out how different governments were formed. *And* you'll learn how technology has changed us.

(Worchester et al., p.320)

Clearly, the meaning of *and* in (12) and (13) is simply *plus* or *in addition*. In the above

examples, the fact that ‘you’ll find the lectures won’t be exactly the same’ (= q) is plus, via coordinator *and*, the information that ‘you’ll have some writing assignments’ (= p). Thus, it can be clarified as: q & p (+> q plus p).

The coordinator *but* can mark the unexpected result. *But* also shows the direct opposition as in (14):

- (14) Earth, water and air are all forms of matter, *but* fire is really different.  
+> That fire isn’t matter.

(Worchester et al, p.210)

p & q (+> p is in contrast to q)

Another meaning of contrast is showing a correction. It can change the balance of an argument in favor of another viewpoint. Consider the following sentence:

- (15) To the nerve cells in your brain, caffeine looks just like adenosine, *but* caffeine acts differently.

(Worchester et al, p.267)

The above illustration (15) indicates that *but* (+> *however*). The utterer wants to explain some more about caffeine’s influence to the nerve cells in the brain.

The interpretation of any utterance of the type p *but* q will be based on the conjunction p & q plus an implicature of contrast between the information in p and the information in q.

- (16) W: I’ve got a secret that helps me in math class. Wanna know what it is?

M: OK. *But* it probably won’t help me.

(Worchester et al., p.255)

In this conversation (16), the speaker uses *but* to show that he is observing the maxim of relation and implies the importance of what is going to be uttered. The man wants to get a secret of studying math from the woman, but he is afraid that it will not help him in math class at all. Thus, we can establish the effective implicature of *but* as follows:

x *but* y → x in contrast to y and y is the thing that is interested in.

→ y is shown to terminate the inferred presuppositions from x.

#### d. Verbs

Verbs were found to make up one of the biggest group of conventional implicature triggers collected in the data. They involve the use of a wide range of factive verbs: *realize, recognize, forget, regret, know, remember, learn, find out, etc.*, non-factive verbs: *believe, claim, say, assert, think, is possible, is likely, etc.*, and verbs of feelings: *like, love, hate, dislike, fear, mind, etc.*

Semantically, factives and non- factives differ in whether or not the truth of their complement clauses is presupposed. In (59), the truth of the sentential complement user factive *know* is presupposed, while under non-factive *think* in (17), the same complement need not be evaluated as true.

- (17) W: I’m looking at Woods College. They have lots of good courses in the catalog here.

M: Woods College? I *know* that is a very good school, but it is so far away! (Link et al., p.271)

+> (I *know* that is a very good school) has a factive implication that Woods College is a very good school, and a belief implication that I believe that Woods College is a very good school.

- (18) My secret is I *think* about numbers in math as if they were money.

(Worchester et al., p.255)

+> I *think* about numbers in math as if they were money has an uncertain implication that numbers in math as if they were money. I hope so.

An actual explanation of the fact that one utters < S *knows* p > typically implies that p is true, which provides further explanation of the appeal of factivity.

The difference between the two kinds of verb is that the factive ones also commit the speaker to the acceptance of their complement proposition, contrary to verbs like *think*; thus conveying the information that their complement proposition is part of

the context set (i.e. they trigger the presupposition that their complement is true). Apart from that, non-factive verbs like *think* and factive verbs like *know* express the information that their complement clause belongs to the set of propositions and the main clause's subject takes to be true.

Another interesting fact about verbs is verbs of feelings. Let us consider the following sentences:

- (19) M: OK. I just finished math class.  
Man, I *hate* math!

(Worchester et al., p.255)

- (20) The critics particularly *disliked* some of Verdi's operas because of their political messages. Verdi's real fans, though, were the common people. He was liked more by the public than the musical elite, the critics of his day.

(Edmun and Mackinnon, p.278)

- (21) Mmm. I *love* coffee. It wakes me up! You know why?

(Worchester et al., p.267)

- (22) This is why, after consuming a big cup of coffee, you *feel* excited.  
You can *feel* your heartbeat increasing.

(Worchester et al., p.267)

- (23) Economics has been really tough this semester, and frankly, I *feel* sick when I *think* about the exam.

(Edmun and Mackinnon, p.260)

The speaker in (19) uses the verb *hate* to express dislike of math strongly. He wants to reveal his hatred feeling towards math because he's just finished math class and math is not very easy to him. Similar to *hate* in (19), the verb *disliked* in (20) expresses the critics' emotion on some Verdi's operas because of their political messages. So the critics are not fond of them, only the common people are. In contrast to (19) and (20), the speaker in (21) uses the verb *love* to express his/her great affection or liking for coffee

because it has caffeine that can wake someone up. The speaker in (22) uses the verb *feel* in 'you *feel* excited' to express the specified emotional state after drinking coffee. He/ she wants to add information to the reason why he/she loves coffee as in (21). But 'You can *feel* your heartbeat increasing' expresses physical experience on the heartbeat. The speaker in (23) uses *feel* to give a sensation/ impression of the exam. Because the woman thinks that the exam is always difficult, she is afraid of it because of the unknown things of the exam. Nonetheless, after being supervised by the professor, the woman feels better because she has already known some necessary information about the exam.

#### e. Adjectives

One part of speech that is especially suited for demonstrating the phenomenon of implicature is the adjectives. It is well-known that gradable adjectives as large, short, quick, and the like appear to take a fixed denotation only with respect to a certain class of objects. However, not only gradable adjectives but also adjectives that are commonly considered as metaphorical show a dependence upon the objects class. One apparent problem is seen in the following cases:

- (24) M: All right. Saturday's the *big* day.  
Are you ready? Yes, Susan?

W: Tests make me nervous. What can I do?

(Worchester et al, p. 275)

- (25) W: Are you faculty staff, or student?

M: I'm a *full-time* faculty member. I teach biology.

(Edmun and Mackinnon, p.224)

- (26) Think of it this way: once you're finished composing, a friend of yours should be able to pick up the paper and read it. The essay is not organized yet, but it is *readable*. [27, p.268]

- (27) A *real* challenge can occur - I'm sure you'll know what I mean here too-

when you find yourself interacting with speakers from two or more of these speech communities of which you are a member.

(Edmun & Mackinnon, p.269)

Instead of saying ‘Saturday is the busy/important day’, the man in (24) uses the adjective *big* to imply that ‘there will be a test on Saturday’ because he knows that Susan is always nervous in the tests. To her, a day of testing is not only busy but nervous as well. So the man uses *big day* to remind her to be ready for Saturday. Similarly, the woman in (25) says ‘Are you faculty staff, or student?’ because she needs to determine his payment options, but the man wants to emphasize he works not only as a faculty member but also as a teacher of biology during the whole week through the adjective *full-time*, which may imply he was qualified enough to be treated with the status of a genuine member who could use payroll deduction for payment. By using *readable*, the speaker in (26) wants to say that the essay should be understandable to others. The speaker in (27) uses ‘*real challenge*’ to imply that the situation he’s describing may be difficult to manage.

#### f. Set phrases

A set phrase is a well-known word or group of words that have a particular meaning for a circumstance, and it may be a phrasal verb, idiomatic phrases, or idioms that typically refer to expressions where the figurative meaning of the statement cannot be guessed from the individual words. Yet the speaker, habitually, uses it as a regime. Let us examine the following examples:

(28) W: Today, we’ll talk about the most important things in management. *In a nut shell*, that means how to make things run smoothly.

(Edmun and Mackinnon, p. 288)

(29) M: Is the lecture tonight worth attending?

W: *Without doubt*. (Jessop, p.206)

(30) M: Do you think Professor Simpson will cancel class on account of the special conference?

W: *Not likely*. (Jessop, p.213)

(31) M: Do you think Mary will get there on time?

W: *No way*. (Jessop, p.221)

The woman in (28) uses *In a nut shell* to summarize her point instead of using *briefly*, *in summary*, *lastly*, etc.. As far as the utterance (29) is concerned, by saying *Without doubt*, the woman, believes the talk will be valuable. In respect of (30), with set phrase *Not likely*, the woman in (30), means she doubts class will be canceled. Similarly, with *No way*, the woman means Mary will be late as in (31).

#### g. Interjections

Interjections do not encode *conceptual* but *procedural* meaning. Accordingly, the type of interjections that has labeled as *emotive* or *expressive* interjections lead the hearer to embed a proposition they accompany under a propositional-attitude description, which the hearer can exploit so as to grasp the attitude expressed by the speaker toward the proposition communicated. On the other hand, in those cases in which interjections appear alone constituting an independent utterance and do not accompany a proposition, these interjections provide the hearer with a vague idea of the speaker’s feelings or emotions. In fact, interjections behave like sentences: they correspond to communicative units (utterances) which can be syntactically autonomous, and intonationally and semantically complete. In addition, they are highly context dependent as, strictly speaking, they do not have so-called lexical meaning but express pragmatic meanings such as surprise, joy, pain, etc. For examples:

(32) *Hey*, Tony. Want to go play basketball? (Worchester et al, p. 228)

(33) *Hey, that’s awesome!* I’ll try it tomorrow. Thanks.

(Worchester et al., p. 255)

The speaker in (32) uses signal *hey* to call Tony's attention to playing basketball, but with *hey* as in (33) the speaker expresses his surprise by the way of doing math as easy as counting money of his/ her friend.

Interjections are known as *hesitation devices* (Wierzbicka, 1992). They are extremely common in English.

(34) M: *Hmm*. When is the review session?

(Worchester et al., p. 294)

(35) W: There are lots of reasons. They're small. They don't eat much, and they're colorful.

M: *Hmmm*.

(Edmun and Mackinnon, p.662)

The speaker in (34) says *hmm* before a question to imply that he hesitates about the review session, so he uses a question to ask about the time the review session takes place. What is more, signal *hmm* is expressed doubt or disagreement with the woman's opinion as in (35).

(36) M: Let's take a look together at this report you handed in yesterday. I can't accept it from you.

W: *Oh*, but why? I worked so hard on it. (Link et al., p. 298)

(37) *Oh*, that's great! What should I do now?

(Worchester et al., p. 302)

(38) *Um*...what if I *uh*, have to go to the bathroom during the test?

(Worchester et al., p. 275)

(39) I see. *Um*, what if I buy the 15-meal plan and only eat 13 meals that week? Will I get 17 the next week?

(Worchester et al., p. 282)

(40) M: *Well*, let's look at what you need to do.

W: *Great*, I have been really worried these past few days.

M: *Well* first, I would suggest looking at some old exam papers. Becoming familiar with the format

and typical questions can really make a difference, you know.

W: That's a good idea. Where can I get hold of them?

M: *Well*, the library has approved exams given by professors at our university for all the undergraduate courses. It's called the Old Exam File or OEF.

W: Fantastic!

(Edmun and Mackinnon, p.260)

In (36) and (37), the speakers use *oh* to express pain, surprise and pleading about the unaccepted work's results, but with signals *uh*, *um*, *umm* as in (38) & (39), the speakers express hesitation about going to the bathroom during the test or not. As in (40), the speaker uses signal *well* to express surprise and introduce a remark on preparing for the exams.

Interjections usually are one to two words that come at the beginning of a sentence. They can express happiness, sadness, anger, surprise, or any other emotion. Conventions like *Hi*, *Bye* and *Goodbye* are interjections, so are exclamations like *Cheers!* and *Hurray!*. In fact, like a noun or a pronoun, they are very often characterized by exclamation marks depending on the stress of the attitude or the force of the emotion they are expressing. *Well* (a short form of *that is well*) can also be used as an interjection: *Well! That's great!* or *Well, don't worry*. Much profanity takes the form of interjections. Some linguists consider the pro-sentences *yes*, *no*, *amen* and *okay* as interjections, since they have no syntactical connection with other words and work as sentences themselves. Expressions *Excuse me!*, *Sorry!*, and similar ones often serve as interjections. Interjections can be phrases or even sentences, as well as words, such as *Oh!* or *Wow!*

The semantic functions of linguistic units used in the listening section of TOEFL iBT can be summarized in Table 5 as follows:

**Table 5**

The implicatures of linguistic units used in the listening section of TOEFL iBT

Types	Implicature Trigger	Semantic mechanism	Potential Implicature	E.g.
Determiners	<i>Some</i>	Negation of higher value	(+> not many/ not most)	<i>Some</i> of these are superstitions
	<i>Sometimes</i>	Negation of higher value	(+> not usually/ not always)	He was <i>sometimes</i> violent
	<i>Should</i>	Negation of higher value	(+> not must/ sometimes)	Students <i>should</i> carry <i>their ID card</i>
Adverbs	<i>once</i>	Emphasizing	At some time in the past/ formerly	Some people <i>once</i> thought that <i>only</i> four things made up the Earth: earth, water, air and fire.
	<i>only</i>	Emphasizing	No one or nothing else/ solely	He was the <i>only</i> one who knew Batman and Robin's real names.
	<i>exactly</i>	Confirmation	Quite/just/ correctly	By the way, may I ask what <i>exactly</i> you wrote about me?
	<i>Yet</i>	Expressing uncertainty	Until now/then	I haven't enrolled <i>yet</i> .
Linking words	<i>and</i>	Logical operator/connector	Plus/in addition to	You'll find out how different governments were formed. <i>And</i> you'll learn how technology has changed us.
	<i>or</i>	Introducing an alternative	If not/otherwise	Should I get the plaid shirt <i>or</i> the striped one?
	<i>but</i>	Logical operator/connector	In contrast to/ however	Earth, water and air are all forms of matter, <i>but</i> fire is really different.
Verbs	<i>know</i>	Factive implication	Feel certain/ recognize	I <i>know</i> that is a very good school.
	<i>think</i>	Non-factive implication	Imagine/ consider/expect something/ reflect	My secret is <i>I think that</i> about numbers in math as if they were money.
	<i>feel</i>	Expressing emotional state/sensation/ impression of something	Be aware of/ experience s.th physical or emotional/have the sensation/ sense	You know, I <i>feel</i> better already.
	<i>hate</i>	Expressing hatred feeling /expressing	Strongly dislike/ be reluctant/ regret	Man, I <i>hate</i> math!

Types	Implicature Trigger	Semantic mechanism	Potential Implicature	E.g.
		the critics' emotion on something or someone		
Adjectives	<i>big</i>	Showing metaphor	Busy/important	All right. Saturday's the <i>big</i> day.
	<i>real</i>	Showing metaphor	Actual /true	A <i>real</i> challenge can occur.
	<i>readable</i>	Showing metaphor	Easily/enjoyably read/ understandable	The essay is not organized yet, but it is <i>readable</i> .
Set phrases	<i>In a nut shell</i>	Giving conclusion	Briefly/in summary/lastly	Today, we'll talk about the most important things in management. <i>In a nut shell</i> , that means how to make things run smoothly.
	<i>Without doubt</i>	Affirming/ asserting	Certainly	M: Is the lecture tonight worth attending? W: <i>Without doubt</i> .
	<i>Not likely</i>	Doubting	Certainly not	M: Do you think Professor Simpson will cancel class on account of the special conference? W: <i>Not likely</i> .
	<i>No way</i>		Under no circumstances or by no means (will something happen/be done)	M: Do you think Mary will get there on time? W: <i>No way</i> .
Interjections	<i>Hey</i>	calling attention/ expressing surprise, joy etc.	Used to call attention or express surprise or inquiry	<i>Hey</i> , Tony. Want to go play basketball?
	<i>Hmm</i>	expressing hesitation/ doubt or disagreement	Used to express hesitation	<i>Hmm</i> . When is the review session?
	<i>oh</i>	expressing surprise/expressing pain/ expressing pleading	Used for emphasis/to attract somebody's attention	<i>Oh</i> , that's great! What should I do now?
	<i>Well</i>	expressing surprise/introducing a remark	To express relief/ to resume a conversation or change the subject	<i>Well</i> , let's look at what you need to do.

#### 4. Conclusion

Although the use of linguistic units in the listening section of TOEFL iBT is various and abundant, this study reveals that seven categories of linguistic units (*determiners, adverbs, linking words, adjectives, verbs, set phrases, and interjections*) proposed by Gazdar (1979), Grice (1978), Levinson (1993), and Yule (1996) are commonly used in the listening section of TOEFL iBT. Noticeably, the most commonly used linguistic units are *linking words*, while the least commonly used ones are *set phrases*. Furthermore, since the use of linguistic units in utterances (lectures and conversations) in the listening section of TOEFL iBT is multifaceted, the implicatures of each category of linguistic units are accordingly diverse. This may possibly cause manifold difficulties for TOEFL iBT test-takers who are non-native speakers of English.

Such findings, therefore, put forwards implications for the teaching of linguistic units and their implicatures in general and that of TOEFL iBT preparation in particular. First, the common categories and usages of linguistic units or devices (i.e., *determiners, adverbs, linking words, adjectives, verbs, set phrases, and interjections*) should be emphasized in

helping to prepare EFL learners for TOEFL iBT test so that they are well aware of them. Specifically, examples of different types of linguistic units as well as sufficient practice should be given to learners in order that they are able to use them appropriately. Second, the teaching of implicatures should be explicitly taught in order to assist learners in understanding the underlying reasons of using implicature. In other words, TOEFL iBT test-takers should be offered with necessary guidance and theories of implicature interpretations so that they are fully aware of how implicature in different cases is interpreted. Apart from that, as the interpretation of implicature is deemed to evolve the knowledge of the target cultures, cultural knowledge should be embedded along with the teaching of implicature in order to enable learners to understand and interpret the implicatures appropriately and precisely. Thus, introducing background information in implicature interpretation to EFL learners is vital in assisting them to get familiar with cultural background knowledge. Finally, TOEFL iBT test-takers should be equipped with possible strategies and tips to understand and interpret the implicatures used in lectures and conversations of the listening section of TOEFL iBT ■

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