

What is Pragmatics, Implicature, and Conversational Inference?

Worksheet

Pragmatics is the branch of linguistics examining meaning in context and speaker intent; implicature is what a speaker implies without stating directly, and conversational inference is the listener's process of deriving that implied meaning.

Questions

1. What is pragmatics?

- A) The study of word origins
- B) The study of meaning in context and speaker intent
- C) The study of sentence grammar
- D) The study of pronunciation

2. In 'Can you pass the salt?' what is the implicature?

- A) Questioning ability
- B) Polite request to pass salt
- C) Asking about salt composition
- D) Checking if listener is strong enough

3. Sarcasm is an example of...

- A) Literal language
- B) Implicature—saying the opposite of intended meaning
- C) Grammar error
- D) Pronunciation issue

4. Which requires pragmatic knowledge?

- A) Understanding word definitions
- B) Recognizing what's implied, not stated
- C) Learning grammar rules
- D) Practicing pronunciation

5. Analyze the implicature: 'This coffee is great.' (said sarcastically at a bad café)

6. What does the speaker imply? 'You're always late. It's 7 PM.'

7. Indirect request: 'Would you mind passing the salt?'

8. Define: What is pragmatics?

9. Define: What is implicature?

10. Define: What is conversational inference?

Answer Key

1. B) The study of meaning in context and speaker intent — Pragmatics examines how context, intent, and social factors shape meaning—beyond literal word definitions.
2. B) Polite request to pass salt — Though phrased as a question, the speaker implicates a request; context makes the intent clear.
3. B) Implicature—saying the opposite of intended meaning — Sarcasm uses implicature: speaker says one thing but implies its opposite.
4. B) Recognizing what's implied, not stated — Pragmatics concerns unstated implications and context-dependent meaning—not dictionary definitions.
5. Literal meaning: coffee is excellent Context: bad café, poor coffee reputation Implicature: The coffee is actually terrible Inference: The listener deduces sarcasm from context
6. Surface meaning: factual statements Context: appointment was at 6 PM Implicature: You've broken a promise; I'm disappointed Inference: The listener recognizes blame and social disapproval
7. Literal meaning: question about willingness Context: dinner table, salt nearby Implicature: Polite request to pass the salt Inference: Listener passes salt, interpreting politeness
8. The study of how context, speaker intent, and social norms shape the meaning of utterances.
9. What a speaker implies or suggests without directly stating it—the implied meaning beyond literal words.
10. The listener's process of deducing a speaker's implied meaning using context and linguistic cues.

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