

What is Pragmatics and Implicature?

Worksheet

Pragmatics is the language study of meaning in context; implicature is the suggested meaning beneath the literal words, inferred by listeners from context.

Questions

1. 'You must be tired' said at 10 AM after someone yawns implies...
 - A) observation only
 - B) suggestion to rest
 - C) criticism of weakness
 - D) question about sleep
2. Grice's maxim of 'quantity' is broken when...
 - A) you speak too loud
 - B) you give too much or too little info
 - C) you sound rude
 - D) you mispronounce words
3. What makes 'Did you lock the door?' sometimes a directive?
 - A) grammar
 - B) intonation
 - C) context and shared expectation
 - D) verb tense
4. Indirect requests are based on...
 - A) literal language rules
 - B) context and shared knowledge
 - C) speaker's mood
 - D) listener's education
5. What does 'You're always late!' imply?
6. 'Can you pass the salt?' is literally asking ability, but what's implied?
7. Flouting a maxim: 'You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make it drink.'
8. Define: What is pragmatics?
9. Define: What is implicature?
10. Define: Can implicature be false?

Answer Key

1. B) suggestion to rest — Context (yawn) triggers implicature of fatigue.
2. B) you give too much or too little info — Violating maxims creates implicature—hearers infer hidden meaning.
3. C) context and shared expectation — In context (leaving for trip), it implies 'Go lock the door.'
4. B) context and shared knowledge — Implicature relies on both speaker and hearer understanding the situation.
5. Literal: statement of fact (lateness) Context: frustration, repeated behavior Implicature: 'I'm annoyed and this affects me.'
6. Literal: question about capability Context: dinner table, salt is present Implicature: polite request to pass the salt (directive)
7. Literal: impossibility of forcing a horse Context: discussing someone who won't learn Implicature: 'You can provide opportunity, but can't force results'
8. The study of meaning in context—how speakers convey more than their literal words.
9. The implied meaning suggested by a speaker, inferred by listeners through context.
10. Yes—if the hearer misinterprets the speaker's intent or context.

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