

PRAGMATICS

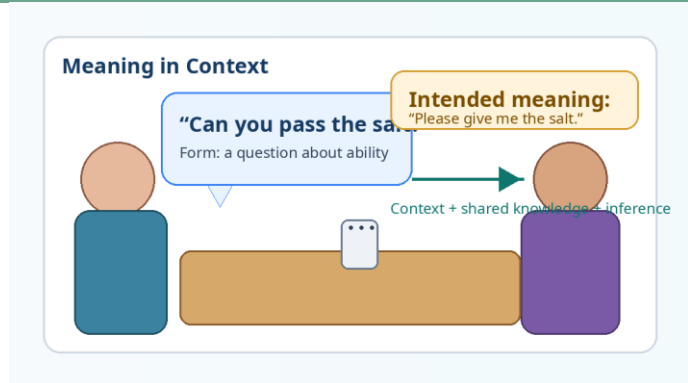
TGT-PGT Exam-Oriented Bilingual Notes by Examics

Abrams (Discourse Analysis, Speech-Act Theory, Pragmatic Criticism) + **Cuddon** (Deixis, Performative Utterance, Pragmatism)

1. Definition and Core Sense

Pragmatics is the branch of linguistics that studies **meaning in use**—how speakers convey and hearers infer meaning in a particular context.

सरल समझ Semantics tells us what a sentence conventionally means; Pragmatics tells us what the speaker means by using that sentence in a particular situation. यानी literal words से आगे speaker's intention, situation और listener's inference (अनुमान) को समझना।



Reality Link At a dining table, “Can you pass the salt?” is grammatically a question about ability, but pragmatically it functions as a polite request. Context converts sentence meaning into intended meaning.

2. Origin and Background

- Charles W. Morris established the term pragmatics in modern semiotics in *Foundations of the Theory of Signs* (1938).
- He divided semiotics into Syntax (sign–sign relations), Semantics (sign–object relations), and Pragmatics (signs in relation to their users/interpreters).
- The deeper background lies in C. S. Peirce's theory of signs and the pragmatic tradition of studying meaning through use, interpretation and practical consequences.
- Later, ordinary-language philosophers shifted attention from isolated sentences to utterances used in real situations.

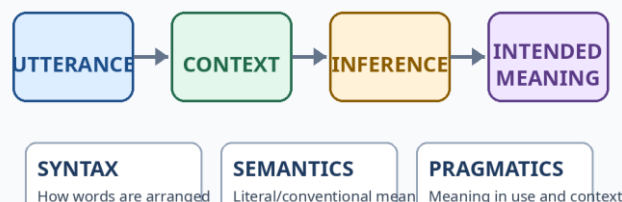
Exam Caution Pragmatics (linguistics) is not the same as Pragmatic Criticism (audience-effect theory in Abrams) or Pragmatism (American philosophy in Cuddon).

3. Main Features of Pragmatics

- **Context-dependence:** meaning changes with speaker, place, time and situation.
- **Speaker meaning:** what the speaker intends may differ from literal sentence meaning.
- **Hearer inference:** the listener reconstructs unstated meaning from clues and shared knowledge.
- **Deixis:** context-bound expressions such as I, you, here, there, now and tomorrow.
- **Presupposition:** background information treated as already accepted.
- **Implicature:** indirectly suggested meaning rather than directly stated meaning.
- **Speech acts:** utterances can perform actions—requesting, promising, warning, apologising, commanding.

- **Cooperation and relevance:** communication normally relies on shared conversational expectations.
- **Politeness and social relations:** wording reflects power, distance, respect and face-saving.
- **Non-literal communication:** irony, sarcasm, metaphor and indirect requests require contextual interpretation.

How Pragmatic Meaning Is Built



4. Key Concepts with Examples

Deixis: “I will meet you here tomorrow.” The references of I, you, here and tomorrow change with the situation.

Presupposition: “Rita stopped smoking” presupposes that Rita smoked earlier.

Implicature: “Some students passed” may conversationally suggest that not all students passed.

Speech Act: “I apologize” does not merely describe an apology; under suitable conditions it performs one.

Indirect Speech Act: “It is very cold here” may function as a request to close the window.

Politeness: “Could you open the door?” is formally a question but socially a polite request.

Memory Formula PRAGMATIC MEANING = Utterance + Context + Speaker's Intention + Hearer's Inference

5. Major Scholars and Important Works

Charles W. Morris — *Foundations of the Theory of Signs* (1938)

Established pragmatics as a branch of semiotics; sign–user relation.

J. L. Austin — *How to Do Things with Words* (1962)

Speech-act theory; constative/performative; locution, illocution and perlocution.

John R. Searle — *Speech Acts* (1969)

Systematically developed Austin's theory and classified illocutionary acts.

H. P. Grice — “*Logic and Conversation*” (1975)

Cooperative Principle, conversational maxims and implicature.

Geoffrey Leech — *Principles of Pragmatics* (1983)

Politeness, interpersonal meaning and pragmatic principles.

Stephen C. Levinson — *Pragmatics* (1983)

Influential synthesis of deixis, implicature, presupposition and speech acts.

6. Speech-Act Theory:

Locutionary Act: the act of producing a meaningful utterance.

Illocutionary Act: the communicative force performed—asserting, promising, ordering, warning, etc.

Perlocutionary Act: the effect produced on the hearer—persuading, frightening, inspiring, amusing, etc.

One Sentence, Different Forces “I will leave tomorrow” may be an assertion, a promise or a threat depending on the linguistic and situational context. Abrams uses this distinction to show why context is central.

7. Literary Relevance/ Importance

- Explains implied meanings in the dialogue of novels and dramas.
- Helps analyse **irony, silence, interruption, indirectness and conversational** conflict.
- Reveals character relationships: authority, intimacy, distance, politeness and manipulation.

8. Do Not Confuse These Terms

Pragmatics: Meaning produced by language use in context.

Semantics: Literal/conventional meaning encoded in words and sentences.

Pragmatic Criticism: Abrams: literature judged by its intended effects on the audience.

Pragmatism: Cuddon: American philosophy associated with Peirce, William James and John Dewey.

09. Quick Check

1. Who established pragmatics as a branch of semiotics?

Charles W. Morris.

2. Who developed Speech-Act Theory? J. L. Austin; later

expanded by John Searle.

3. Who is associated with implicature? H. P. Grice.

4. “Here, now, I, you” belong to which category? Deixis.

5. What is the pragmatic force of “Could you help me?” A polite request.

Final Revision Capsule Pragmatics asks: Who said it? To whom? Where? When? With what intention? What did the hearer infer? These contextual questions convert literal wording into communicated meaning.

Source of this Note

Abrams & Harpham: entries on Discourse Analysis, Speech-Act Theory, Pragmatic Criticism. **Cuddon & Habib:** entries on Deixis, Performative Utterance, Perlocutionary Act and Pragmatism. Supplemented by foundational works of Morris, Austin, Searle and Grice.