

# Pragmatic rhetorical effect

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From The Encyclopedia of Arabic Rhetoric

"**Pragmatic rhetorical effect**" refers to the practical impact that language has on a listener or reader — what it *does* in a real communicative situation, as opposed to just what it says literally.

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Breaking down the two key words:

### Pragmatic

Relates to **pragmatics**, the branch of linguistics concerned with how context, speaker intention, and use shape meaning, beyond the literal or "dictionary" meaning of words. It's about language *in action*.

### Rhetorical effect

The impression, response, or persuasive impact a piece of language produces in its audience (e.g., persuading, provoking emotion, creating emphasis, building rapport, signaling authority).

Put together, "pragmatic rhetorical effect" usually means: **the real-world persuasive or communicative impact a phrase, tone, or stylistic choice has on an audience, given the context in which it's used** — rather than its abstract or literal meaning.

## Example

If someone says, "Well, isn't that just great," in a sarcastic tone after something goes wrong:

- **Literal meaning:** they think something is great.
- **Pragmatic rhetorical effect:** the audience understands irony/frustration, and the phrase functions to express displeasure and perhaps invite sympathy or solidarity from the listener.

This phrase often shows up in linguistics, rhetoric, literary analysis, or writing/composition contexts — for instance, when analyzing why an author chose a particular word, sentence structure, or rhetorical device (like a rhetorical question, repetition, or hyperbole) and what effect that choice has on readers in practice.

Categories: [Glossary of Terms Related to Arabic Rhetoric](#) | [General terms](#)

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