

Uncovering Presuppositions in The Guardian News: A Pragmatic Perspective

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to explore different kinds of presuppositions, with a particular focus on determining the most frequently used type. The study gathers data from statements in the Guardian News. The researcher uses Sudaryanto's non-participatory observation approach to collect data and both distributional and pragmatic methods for data analysis. In this study, the researcher applies Yule's theory of presupposition which classifies presupposition into six types: existential, lexical, factive, non-factive, counterfactual, and structural. The findings of the study reveal the identification of five types of presuppositions in the Guardian News data through 20 utterances. The most used type of presupposition is found to be existential presupposition.

Index terms: *pragmatics, presupposition, types of presupposition, utterance, and Guardian News.*

I. Introduction:

Language serves as a means of communication, allowing individuals to connect with one another and establish

relationships. Pragmatics is a field of study that investigates how linguistic elements are used in speech to convey meaning. The presupposition is a key concept within the realm of pragmatics and refers to a linguistic utterance that assumes the truth of a particular hypothesis or statement. Such assumptions can take the form of assertions, denials, or questions, and are often associated with grammatical or physical features of speech (Yule, 1996).

Presupposition can often be observed in news articles, which are typically geared toward a wide audience. The article chosen for this study is titled "Media regulator's chief seeks action to prevent online harm." The focus of this research is on identifying the various types of presupposition present in the article and determining which type is the most used. Yule's theory of presupposition (1996) serves as the theoretical framework for this study.

1.1 Pragmatic

Pragmatics is the study of meaning in specific contexts as used by the speaker and

understood by the listener or reader. It is concerned with the other person's intended meaning rather than solely focusing on the words or phrases used in the utterance. Pragmatics examines how a speaker shapes their communication based on what is said, how it is said, when, where, with whom, and under what circumstances. It is one of the two leading fields of linguistics that study meaning, the other being semantics, which focuses on the literal meaning of words, sentences, and phrases.

Pragmatics aims to explain the factors outside of language that influences both literal and non-literal meaning in communication. It is interested in the process of producing language and its producers, not just the final product. Pragmatics considers the participant, timing, location, and intention of the utterance, as well as the relationship between what is said and what is understood in both written and spoken communication.

Pragmatics is the study of language in context and relies on context to properly understand language and expression. It is essential to understand the "invisible" meaning behind utterances, including assumptions, purposes, goals, and activities. Pragmatics is concerned with the communication process and how the sender and addressees rely on context to define accurate meaning.

Pragmatics is subdivided into presupposition, discourse, illocutionary acts, implicature, deixis, and speech acts. It examines features of meaning and language use that are reliant on speakers, listeners, and other aspects of the context of utterance. It is concerned not only with the words or phrases used in an

utterance but also with the timing, location, and intention of the utterance.

In summary, pragmatics is the study of meaning in a specific context, examining how language is used by the speaker and understood by the listener. It is concerned with the process of communication and how the context influences the meaning of the utterance. Understanding pragmatics is essential to understanding the meaning of something in context and interpreting the intended meaning behind the speaker's utterances.

1.2 Context

To understand the intended meaning of a speaker's utterances, it is essential to consider the context in which they are spoken. Leech (1983) defines context as shared background knowledge between the speaker and listener that contributes to the listener's interpretation of the speaker's meaning. The context includes the setting in which the statements are made and plays a crucial role in assisting the listener in interpreting the speech.

Yule and Brown (1983) have identified nine elements that are important for understanding the meaning of words or sentences in a particular context. These elements include code, topic, channel, participant, setting, event, message form, key, and purpose. Both the speaker and listener must focus on these elements to comprehend the intended meaning of the speaker's utterances.

In conclusion, understanding the context of the speaker's utterances is crucial for determining the intended meaning. By considering the elements identified by Yule

and Brown, the speaker and listener can ensure that they have a comprehensive understanding of the message being conveyed.

1.3 Presupposition

A presupposition is a linguistic phenomenon where the speaker assumes certain information or details to be already known by the listener, and this assumption is treated as a shared ground for the conversation. It is a part of pragmatics, and the meaning of an utterance is accepted by the listener based on the presuppositions attached to it. The six types of presupposition are factive, counterfactual, existential, lexical, structural, and non-factive presupposition. Presupposition triggers are specific words or structures that bring out these assumptions.

In semantics, the presupposition is seen as an expression that conveys both the true and false meaning to the listener. It is a coded meaning of particular words and productions, and the interpretation of semantics is well-matched with pragmatics.

Presuppositions can vary depending on the speaker, situation, and audience. They may also be used as an instrument of dodging, where the speaker avoids giving all the information and details associated with certain topics or things.

1.4 Existential presupposition

The existential presupposition is the assumption that the names or descriptions of entities used in an utterance exist. This can be conveyed through noun phrases and possessive constructions, as these structures refer to the existence of named or described entities. As Sudaryanto notes, the use of names or definite descriptions implies their existence, and this can be seen in commonly used noun phrases and possessive

constructions, which in English are related to the presupposition of reality. The existential presupposition is not limited to possession concepts but is more commonly found in certain noun expressions. For example, the statement "Someone stole Ali's motorcycle" presupposes the existence of Ali, a motorcycle, and thieves. Similarly, the statement "Ali is an intelligent person" assumes the existence of the named individual Ali. Another example is "We will pull over at the marina", which presupposes the existence of a place called "the marina."

However, as Sudaryanto points out, the existence of presuppositions poses a problem for truth-based concepts, known as the truth value gap. This refers to the fact that statements can be true or false based on the truth or falsity of their presuppositions, which may not be explicitly stated in the statement itself. Therefore, it may be more accurate to view all presuppositions as potential presuppositions, as their truth or falsity can impact the true value of a statement.

1.5 Non- Factive presupposition

Non-factive presupposition refers to assumptions made about something that is not true, often used to express imagination or wishes. It is the opposite of factive presupposition, as it is not necessarily true. Verbs such as "dream", "imagine", "wish", "think", "pretend", "hope", "assume", "suspect", "fear", "believe", "intend", and "expect" are commonly used in non-factive presuppositions.

For example:

a. Ali pretended to be ill.

Presupposition: Ali is not actually ill

b. I wish that I was in Hawaii.

Presupposition: I am not currently in Hawaii
 These sentences demonstrate non-factive presuppositions.

Another example is the sentence "I dreamed of becoming a singer." The use of the verb "dreamed" implies a wish that has not yet been fulfilled. This type of presupposition is considered informal and presupposes something that is not a certain representation of the truth.

Counterfactual presupposition, on the other hand, is the assumption made in a statement that contradicts reality or established facts. The use of an "if" clause is common in this type of presupposition. As Yule explains, it presupposes not only the opposite of what is true, but the opposite of established facts.

For example:

If Amna had come today, she would have met Ayesha.

Presupposition: Amna did not meet Ayesha, and she did not come today.

If she were my friend, she would have helped me.

Presupposition: She is not my friend and did not help me.

If I were rich, I would buy a villa.

Presupposition: I am not rich, and I cannot buy a villa.

In all these examples, the conditional "if" clause implies that the presupposition contradicts established facts.

Another example of counterfactual presupposition is the sentence "If she were a tutor, she could channel her knowledge to students." The use of "if" implies that the presupposition is contrary to reality, and in

this case, that she is not actually a tutor. The sentence presupposes a contrary statement to be delivered, and the speaker can hypothesize that the circumstances are different from reality.

Previous research

The first research on presupposition was conducted by Oktoma in 2013, titled "The Analysis of presupposition in short stories of Silvester Gordius Sukur". In this study, the author focused on the types of presupposition and the dominant type of presupposition using Yule's theory of presupposition, which divides presupposition into 6 categories: factive, non-factive, counterfactual, structural, existential, and lexical.

The second research paper on presupposition was written by Khalili in 2017, entitled "Analysis of presupposition used in the Heart of Darkness". The researcher analyzed the use of presupposition in pragmatics studies, using the descriptive method to analyze data from the novel and Yule's (1996) theory of presupposition to identify and analyze the types of presupposition and the most often used type in the conversation of characters in the novel.

Both previous research studies discussed presupposition, but with a focus on different circumstances of conversation that relate to the meaning of context. This present research study also uses Yule's (1996) theory of presupposition to identify and analyze the types of presupposition inferred in Guardian News.

II. Methodology

Research Design

According to Creswell (2014), the research design is a plan that guides the data collection

process and allows the investigator to systematically gather and analyze data in an organized and structured way. Research design can be categorized into two main types: quantitative research and qualitative research. Quantitative research focuses on collecting and analyzing numerical data, often through statistical methods, to identify patterns and explain specific occurrences. In contrast, qualitative research focuses on creating descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words and aims to understand the meaning and context behind human experiences.

For this research, the researcher chose to use a qualitative research design, which is suitable for examining complex phenomena in-depth and exploring the meanings behind people's experiences (Creswell, 2014). The goal of this study is to identify and analyze the types of presupposition used in Guardian News, and a qualitative approach will allow the researcher to examine and analyze the descriptive data in the form of written words and expressions used in news articles.

Theoretical framework

In this section of the research, the theoretical framework is presented which is based on pragmatics and presupposition. The primary theory used is Yule's theory of presupposition, which is categorized into six types: existential, factive, non-factive, counter-factual, structural, and lexical. The aim of the study is to determine the most dominant type of presupposition in the analyzed data. A visual representation of the theoretical framework is provided.

Source of the data

The data sources utilized in this study were secondary data sources, which can be found in various forms such as textbooks, journals, documentation, research institute data, and related agency data, among others (Hair, Wolfinbarger, Ortinau, & Bush, 2013). These secondary sources provided a basis for analyzing and interpreting the research findings.

Data Collection

The researcher in this study used the observational method, as outlined by Sudaryanto (2015), to collect data. The observational method involves collecting data by observing a particular phenomenon, and there are two procedures used: participatory and non-participatory. In the participatory procedure, the researcher involves a participant in collecting data, while in the non-participatory procedure, the researcher collects data by observing without interacting with the participants. The researcher in this study used the non-participatory procedure and observed every utterance containing presupposition in the Guardian news, which was transcribed from a website and organized for analysis.

Method of analyzing the data

The data analysis process involved several stages. The first stage was reading the selected news article from The Guardian. In the second stage, the data were categorized based on the types of presupposition. The third stage involved interpreting the types of presupposition from each line of the news article. In the fourth stage, the amount of each type of presupposition was calculated and transformed into a percentage using a formula based on Yule's theory as outlined by Subana. The formula was used to calculate the frequency of relative cumulative, which

is the percentage of the type, using the frequency of cumulative (total types of frequency of subcategory) divided by the frequency of total (total of all categories) and multiplying the result by 100%.

In shaping the result of the types of presupposition in the form of a percentage, the researcher used the formula centered on Yule's theory from Subana as followed:

$$FK \text{ rel} = \frac{FK}{\sum F} \times 100\%$$

FK rel: frequency of relative cumulative (percentage of the type)

FK: frequency of cumulative (total types frequency of subcategory)

$\sum F$: frequency of total (total of all categories)

100%: percentage

Data Analysis

After collecting the data, the data was acknowledged in the types of presupposition.

The illustrative data on the forms of presupposition were drawn in the following table.

Table 2.
Representative data on the types of presupposition

Nos.	Sentence	Possible Presupposition	Types of Presupposition					
			EP	FP	LP	SP	NP	CP
1.	Tech companies such as Facebook and Google could be regulated in the same way as the mobile phone and broadband industry, the head of media regulator Ofcom was expected to say on Tuesday.	Tech companies exist. There is the existence of the head of the OFCom office.			✓			
2.	Sharon White was due to outline a potential system regulating social media companies' in-house complaints processes.	A businesswoman Sharon white exists. Existence of complaints about the companies.			✓			
3.	The Target would be set for how quickly they removed offensive content	They have to remove the offensive content.			✓			
4.	Substantial fines are issued if they failed to meet these standards.	There are not able to Meet the standards.			✓			
5.	Such a system could be modeled on the existing British method of regulating telecoms companies	There is already a British method of regulating telecoms companies			✓			

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| 6. | Trust in them is already weakening, she was expected to say in comments first reported by the Telegraph. | Sharon white exists as she was expected to comment on the statement. A British newspaper telegraph exists which covers the whole interview. | ✓ |
| 7. | Our research shows that people see social media platforms as the single biggest source of online harm – and most people want the rules to be tighter. | Social media is previously used as a source of harm. And people want the rules to be tighter to stop that. | ✓ |
| 8. | An Ofcom spokesperson made it clear that the ultimate format of any regulatory system would be a matter of the government. | The spokesperson of Ofcom exists. There is a government for the regulatory system. | ✓ |
| 9. | White was expected to describe the current situation, where TV and radio broadcasts are strictly regulated but large swaths of the internet are not, as a “standards lottery” | White cannot explain the situation of social media. As TV and broadcasts are controlled but internet tracks can be seen as a raffle. | ✓ |
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| 10. | As a regulator, we are required to keep audiences safe and protected – irrespective of the screen they watch or the device they hold. | The Controller has to keep the audience safe and protected regardless of the screen or device they have. | ✓ |
| 11. | Without even knowing it, viewers are watching the same content governed by different regulations in different places or none at all.” | Audiences are watching the same content governed by different regulations which are unsafe. | ✓ |
| 12. | Ministers and media industry executives, especially those belonging to newspaper groups, which have felt threatened by the advertising dominance of Facebook and Google, have become increasingly bold in their calls for social media regulation. | Ministers and executives of newspaper groups exist. Their existence of Threats to the Advertising dominance of Facebook and google. | ✓ |
| 13. | Their case has been boosted by the Cambridge Analytica scandal and growing public concerns about the impact of harmful social media content on mental health and the quality of public debate. | Cambridge analytical scandals exist. Public concerns on mental health and the impact of harmful social media content exist. Public debate exists. | ✓ |
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| 16. | Tech firms have hired tens of thousands of staff in recent years to improve their moderation systems. | Tech firm exists. Ten thousand employees exist. | ✓ |
| 17. | White's decision to go public with her proposals reflects the growing willingness of Ofcom – which regulates television, radio and mobile networks – to play a role in shaping the future of internet regulation. | White exists. Her decision to go public with her proposal in growing the Ofcom which regulates tv, radio and mobile networks exists. Shaping the future of internet regulation exists. | ✓ |
| 18. | Less than a year ago , White expressed doubt over the direct regulation of tech companies because of the “fuzzy boundary with censorship”. | White and her doubt exist. The Fuzzy boundaries with censorship of tech companies exist. | ✓ |
| 19. | Over the past year, however, her language has toughened, culminating in this summer's more direct warning to the likes of Google and Facebook . | Over the past years, white language is hardened, in the closing of the summer she directly warned the likes of Google and Facebook. | ✓ |
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20.	The BBC director general, Tony Hall, was also due to give a speech on Tuesday where he will complain that video streaming firms such as Netflix and Amazon have substantially more financial firepower but are not regulated to the same extent as British public service broadcasters.	BBC director Tony Hall exists as he was due to give a speech. Netflix and Amazon also exist as they have more financial firepower but are controlled.	✓
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The above table shows the types of presupposition in the Guardian Newspaper. After this classification, the data are calculated into percentages to find out the most dominant type of presupposition in the Guardian Newspaper. The percentage of each type of presupposition can be seen in the table below

Table 3.

Percentage of each type of presupposition in Guardian New

Types of presupposition			
No		Frequency	Percentage %
1.	Existential presupposition	11	55%
2.	Lexical presupposition	5	25%
3.	Structural Presupposition	1	5%
4.	Factive presupposition	1	5%
5.	Counterfactual presupposition	2	10%
6.	Non-factive presupposition	-	-
Total		20	
Percentage			100%

III. Findings and Discussion

Based on the data, it appears that the types of presuppositions present in the sentences are categorized into six types: Existential Presupposition (EP), Factive Presupposition (FP), Lexical Presupposition (LP), Structural Presupposition (SP), Non-Factive Presupposition (NP), and Counterfactual Presupposition (CP).

EP - Existential presuppositions refer to presuppositions that assume the existence of certain entities, objects, or things. Example: "Tech companies exist."

FP - Factive presuppositions are presuppositions that assume the truth of a proposition, fact or statement. Example: "Sharon White was due to outline a potential system regulating social media companies' in-house complaints processes."

LP - Lexical presuppositions assume knowledge of the meaning of a particular word or phrase used in the sentence. Example: "Substantial fines are issued if they failed to meet these standards."

SP - Structural presuppositions assume knowledge of the structure or form of a particular sentence or phrase. Example: "The Target would be set for how quickly they removed offensive content."

NP - Non-factive presuppositions are presuppositions that assume the negation of a particular proposition or fact. Example:

"Such a system could be modeled on the existing British method of regulating telecoms companies."

CP - Counterfactual presuppositions are presuppositions that assume the falsity of a particular proposition or fact. Example: "Without even knowing it, viewers are watching the same content governed by different regulations in different places or none at all."

Overall, the provided data is a collection of sentences containing presuppositions of various types, which can provide useful information for analyzing the language used in the text and for identifying the assumptions and beliefs underlying the arguments presented in the text.

Thus, after analyzing the data, it was discovered that the selected article from the Guardian Newspaper contained 20 instances of presupposition, which could be classified into five types: Existential presupposition (11, 55%), Lexical presupposition (5, 25%), Factive presupposition (1, 5%), Structural presupposition (1, 5%), and Counterfactual presupposition (2, 10%). The most used type of presupposition in the Guardian Newspaper article was Existential presupposition, which was likely used to capture the audience's attention by presenting descriptive, genuine facts and real evidence. This finding suggests that presuppositions asserting the reality or existence of something, which can demonstrate ownership or the existence of

statements in speech, are prevalent in this data source.

IV. Conclusion

After conducting the analysis, the researcher found five types of presupposition: Existential presupposition (11, 55%), Lexical presupposition (5, 25%), Factive presupposition (1, 5%), Structural presupposition (1, 5%), and Counterfactual presupposition (2, 10%). The study

concluded that the most frequently used type of presupposition in the Guardian Newspaper is Existential presupposition. Non-factive presupposition was not found in the selected article. The frequent use of Existential presupposition in the news indicates the acceptance of reality and ownership of statements in the newspaper.

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