

Presuppositions in Three Selected Opinion Essays of *The Global New Light of Myanmar* Newspaper

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Abstract

The present research focuses on presuppositions in three selected opinion essays of *The Global New Light of Myanmar* newspaper. Six types of presupposition which are existential, lexical, structural, factual, non-factive and counterfactual presuppositions are studied in the selected essays. The aim of the research is to analyze and classify presuppositions in three selected opinion essays. The objectives are to investigate which type of presupposition is mostly used in the selected essays and to examine the effects of using presuppositions in the essays. In the present research, the data are collected and analyzed by using the checklist of presuppositions proposed by Yule (1996). It is found that existential and lexical presuppositions are mostly used in the selected essays. It can be said that the use of presupposition improves the comprehensive skill and writing skill of the readers and makes the readers get the contextualized meanings of the essays. Moreover, it can be expected that the present research will be effective for ESL learners in learning writing essays and linguistics, especially pragmatics.

Key Terms: presupposition, linguistics, pragmatics

1. Introduction

Language is a system of communication used by a group of people in a particular country or area. Language plays an important role in people's lives and it helps them to communicate with each other and to create a better atmosphere in their daily activities. To get a better communication between two speakers, it is important for a speaker to understand the utterances the other speaker says completely and to get the contextualized meaning of the utterances. The study of speaker meaning is called pragmatics. Yule (Pg; 5, 1996) stated that pragmatics is the study of the relationships between linguistic forms and the users of those forms.

Pragmatics is concerned with four areas: entailment, deixis, implicature and presupposition. The present research is conducted to study presuppositions in the three opinion essays of *The Global New Light of Myanmar* newspaper. Presupposition is something the speaker assumes to be the case prior to making an utterance (Yule, 1996).

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There are six kinds of presupposition; existential, factive, lexical, structural, non-factive and counter-factual. In the present research, the data are analyzed and classified according to the theoretical framework of presupposition proposed by Yule (1996).

2. Literature Review

In the present research, presuppositions in three selected opinion essays of *The Global New Light of Myanmar* newspaper. *The Global New Light of Myanmar* newspaper is a government-owned newspaper. It is a daily English newspaper founded in 1914 and the longest-running circulated newspaper in Myanmar.

2.1. Theoretical Background

In the present study, the data is analyzed and classified into key terms such as existential, factive, lexical, structural, non-factive and counter-factual according to the theory of presupposition stated by Yule (1996). According to Yule (1996), the definitions of key terms are as follows;

1. Existential presupposition

Existential presupposition is not only assumed to be present in possessive construction, but more generally in any definite noun phrase.

For example:

"Dewi's motorcycle is new."

It can be presupposed that Dewi exists and she has a motorcycle. Her motorcycle is new.

2. Factive presupposition

This presupposition is derived from some verbs that can conclude a fact follows such as *know* and *realize* and of phrase involving *glad*. The verbs have an exact meaning that can be treated as a fact.

For example:

"She didn't realize he was ill."

It can be presupposed that he was ill.

3. Lexical presupposition

Lexical presupposition is the use of one form with its asserted meaning is conventionally interpreted with the presupposition that another meaning is understood.

For example:

"He stopped smoking."

It can be presupposed that he used to smoke.

4. Structural presupposition

Structural presupposition is associated with the use of certain words and phrases. In structural presupposition, certain sentence structures have been analyzed as conventionally and regularly presupposing that part of the structural already assumed to be true. The Wh-question construction in English is conventionally interpreted with the presupposition that the information after the wh-form.

For example:

"When did he leave?"

It can be presupposed that he left.

5. Non-factive presupposition

Non-factive presupposition is one that assumed not to be true. Verbs like dream, imagine and pretend are used with the presupposition that what follow is not true.

For example:

"I dreamed that I was rich.'

It can be presupposed that I was not rich.

6. Counterfactual presupposition

A counterfactual presupposition has a meaning that what is presupposed is not only not true, but is the opposite of what is true, or contrary to facts. A conditional structure, generally called a counterfactual conditional, presupposes that the information in the if-clause is not true at the time of utterance.

For example:

"If you were my friend, you would have helped me."

It can be presupposed that you are not my friend.

3. Research Methodology

The present research investigates presuppositions in three selected opinion essays of *The Global New Light of Myanmar* newspaper. The data is analyzed and classified into six types of presuppositions; existential, factive, lexical, structural, non-factive and counter-factual based on the theory proposed by Yule (1996).

3.1.Data Collection and Data Analysis

The data are collected from three selected opinion essays of *The Global New Light of Myanmar* newspaper. Presuppositions in the essays are analyzed and classified into six types but only four types of presupposition are found in the present research. The following tables show the sample data analysis of presuppositions found in three selected opinion essays. All the data are described in Appendix.

Table 1: Presupposition in the article *Finding political solution through peaceful means*

No.	Sentences	Types	Presupposition	Explanations
1.	Our country is home to different ethnic races and people professing different faiths and speaking different languages, and is thus, a perfect model for a Union.	Existential	-Our country has different ethnic races. -There are people who have different faiths and speak different languages in our country.	This data is triggered by possessive adjective "our". So, it is categorized into existential presupposition.
2.	Diversity is the beauty of our country and our strength, too.	Existential	-There is diversity in our country.	This data is triggered by possessive adjective "our". So, it is categorized into existential presupposition.
4.	Our leaders managed to turn our diversity into united strength, and we regained our independence and sovereignty on 4 January, 1948.	Lexical	-Our country had not united before. -We have lost our independence and sovereignty.	This data is categorized into lexical presupposition because the triggers are "managed to turn" and "regained". It is supposed that the reader gets another meaning of this sentence when it is read out.
9.	We can achieve this by promoting mutual respect and value.	Lexical	-We did not build a Democratic Federal Union.	This sentence is classified into lexical presuppositions because the trigger is "can achieve".
10.	The unity of the ethnic people is connected with the peace and development of the country.	Existential	-Our country has the ethnic people.	The data is identified into existential, the trigger is the definite noun phrase "the ethnic people".
11.	Just lip service cannot unite all diverse ethnic people.	Lexical	-The diverse ethnic people was not united.	This data is identified into lexical, the trigger is "cannot unite". The reader gets another meaning when this sentence is read.
14.	For our objectives to be realized we need to build understanding among	Lexical	-Understanding and trust are also important to build a Federal	This is a lexical presupposition, it is triggered by word "need to".

	ourselves. And, trust.		Democratic Union.	
16.	Armed conflicts are still happening in some areas.	Lexical	-Armed conflicts are left in some areas.	This is a lexical presupposition, it is triggered by word "still".
17.	Ceasing armed conflicts and signing the NCA are urgent requirements.	Existential	-Building a Federal Democratic Union has many requirements.	This data is existential, it is triggered by noun phrase "armed conflicts".
18.	We are marching on the path to democracy and that requires the fulfillment of democratic duties.	Lexical	-We are trying to get democracy.	This data is lexical, it is triggered by word "on the path". When this sentence is read, the reader gets another meaning.
19.	At the top of those duties is finding a political solution through peaceful means, which is most important.	Lexical	-Finding a political solution through peaceful means is more important than other duties.	This data is lexical, it is triggered by word "at the top". When this sentence is read, the reader gets another meaning.
20.	If someone fails to get the answer through peaceful and electoral methods, then it means their skills are inadequate.	Counter-factual	-Someone got the answer through peaceful and electoral methods.	This is a counterfactual, because it is triggered by counterfactual conditional. This sentence is not only true but contrary to facts.

Table 2: Presupposition in the article *Survey vital to tackle challenges in immunization programme*

No.	Sentences	Types	Presupposition	Explanations
1.	The nationwide initiative for inoculating children younger than 5 years against 12 diseases could serve as an important milestone in the history of immunization programmes in Myanmar.	Existential	-There are children younger than 5 years against 12 diseases in Myanmar.	This is an existential, it is triggered by noun phrase "an important milestone" and the name of a country.
2.	In addition, girls aged between 9 and 10 years will be administered the Human Papilloma Virus vaccine against cervical cancer in July and August.	Lexical	-Girls between 9 and 10 years old are facing cervical cancer and they did not get the medication against it before.	This data is lexical, it is triggered by word "will be administered". When this sentence is read, the reader gets another meaning.
3.	The HPV vaccine will be the 13 th vaccine on the	Existential	-There were vaccines on the immunization list.	This is an existential, it is triggered by noun phrases "the

	immunization list.			HPV vaccine" and "the immunization list"
4.	The cost of vaccinating a child against 12 diseases is the US \$ 40.	Lexical	-Some children are suffering diseases.	This data is lexical, it is triggered by word "against". When this sentence is read, the reader gets another meaning.
6.	The government will have to fund the entire immunization programme in 2025.	Lexical	-The entire immunization programme are not being funded now.	This data is lexical, it is triggered by word "will have to". When this sentence is read, the reader gets another meaning.
7.	Hence, it is important that the funds allocated for the programme are used effectively.	Factive	-The funds allocated for the programme need to be used effectively.	This is a factive presupposition, it is triggered by the clause "it is important that" that is treated as fact.
9.	In any such undertaking, the role of surveyors would be important for conducting a nationwide survey for the programme.	Existential	-The programme has surveyors to conduct a nationwide survey.	This is an existential, it is triggered by noun phrases "a nationwide survey" and "the programme".
11.	It has been learnt that the Ministry of Health and Sports will launch the three month survey in late February.	Factive	-The Ministry of Health and supports are going to launch the three month survey in late February.	This is a factive presupposition, it is triggered by the clause "learnt" that is treated as a fact.
13.	We need to care more about these connections if we want everyone to benefit from immunization.	Counter-factual	-We did not get benefits from immunization.	This is a counterfactual, because it is triggered by counterfactual conditional. This sentence is not only true but contrary to facts.
15.	It also has the power to change the landscape.	Lexical	-Refuting rumors and misinformation on social media can change the landscape.	This data is lexical, it is triggered by word "yet". When this sentence is read, the reader gets another meaning.
16.	We believe that the Ministry of Health and Sports and its health workers would leave no stone unturned to make the nationwide immunization programmes a success at a time when deadly diseases like	Factive	- The Ministry of Health and Sports and its health workers would leave no stone unturned to make the nationwide immunization programmes a success at a time when deadly diseases like diphtheria and measles,	This is a factive presupposition, it is triggered by the word "believe" that is treated as a fact.

diphtheria and measles, which can be prevented through vaccination, are surging in developing countries.		which can be prevented through vaccination, are surging in developing countries.	
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Table 3: Presupposition in the article *Cooperation, consensus key for IDP resettlement success*

No.	Sentences	Types	Presupposition	Explanations
1.	Armed conflicts uprooted scores of people from their homes in Myanmar and forced them to take shelter in camps for the displaced in Kachin, Shan, Kayin and Rakhine states.	Existential	-There are Kachin, Shan, Kayin and Rakhine states in Myanmar.	This is an existential, it is triggered by the name of the country and the races.
2.	Even after the armed conflicts ceased, the issue of internally displaced persons (IDPs) remained unresolved for years.	Lexical	-The issue of internally displaced persons are still happening.	This data is lexical, it is triggered by word "remained". When this sentence is read, the reader gets another meaning.
4.	The government will keep open some IDP camps where they are still needed, such as Kachin and Shan states.	Lexical	-Some IDP camps are still now.	This data is lexical, it is triggered by word "keep". When this sentence is read, the reader gets another meaning.
5.	It will come some camps which are no longer needed or deemed necessary.	Lexical	-Some camps are closed.	This data is lexical, it is triggered by word "no longer". When this sentence is read, the reader gets another meaning.
6.	The policy of the government would ensure the displaced people rebuild their lives with safety and dignity, without depending on others.	Existential	-There are displaced people in our country.	This is an existential, it is triggered by noun phrase "the displaced people".
7.	To achieve this, the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement is implementing	Lexical	-A strategy is being conducted by the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief	This data is lexical, it is triggered by word "is implementing". When this sentence is read, the

	a strategy after listening to the voice of the displaced people.		and Resettlement now.	reader gets another meaning.
9.	The Union government has guaranteed that it would implement projects to provide IDPs sheltering at camps with a place to resettle and job opportunities.	Factive	-The Union government would implement projects to provide IDPs sheltering at camps with a place to resettle and job opportunities.	This is a factive presupposition, it is triggered by the word "has guaranteed" that is treated as a fact.
10.	There are many children living in IDP camps.	Existential	-There are many children living in IDP camps.	This is an existential, it is triggered by noun phrase "IDP camps".
11.	For the progress of the country, the future of our next generation is very important.	Lexical	-Children play an important role for the progress of the country.	This data is lexical, it is triggered by word "next generation". When this sentence is read, the reader gets another meaning.
12.	For the successful implementation of its strategy, details about the government's plans need to be provided at IDP camps in Kayin, Kachin, Rakhine and Shan states till inmates gain confidence to return to their place of origin or a place of their choice in future.	Existential	-There are IDP camps in Kayin, Kachin, Rakhine and Shan states.	This is an existential, it is triggered by the name of the races.
13.	At the meetings held so far between IDPs and the authorities, the IDPs have expressed their worries about jobs, dwellings and health services.	Existential	- The IDPs have worries about jobs, dwellings and health services.	This is an existential, it is triggered by noun phrases "IDPs", "health services".
14.	Hence, the government is obliged to address their worries by systematically implementing its strategy in cooperation with the people, donors and civil society organizations.	Lexical	-The government must address their worries by systematically implementing its strategy in cooperation with the people, donors and civil society organizations.	This data is lexical, it is triggered by word "obliged to". When this sentence is read, the reader gets another meaning.

15.	At the same time, the cooperation of IDPs is sine qua non for making the implementation a success.	Lexical	- The cooperation of IDPs is essential for success.	This data is lexical, it is triggered by word " sine qua non ". When this sentence is read, the reader gets another meaning.
16.	Since the government took office, it has been focusing on ethnic affairs and ending armed conflicts.	Lexical	-The government wants peace.	This data is lexical, it is triggered by word "has been focusing". When this sentence is read, the reader gets another meaning.
17.	Peace and development are intertwined.	Lexical	-Peace can ensure development of the country.	This data is lexical, it is triggered by word "intertwined". When this sentence is read, the reader gets another meaning.
18.	For the development of the people, ethnic armed groups are obliged to ensure long-lasting peace.	Lexical	-Ethnic armed groups must try to get peace.	This data is lexical, it is triggered by word "obliged to". When this sentence is read, the reader gets another meaning.
19.	In fact, the resettlement of IDPs can be considered as part of the efforts for building a Federal Democratic Union diversity by all ethnic people.	Lexical	- The resettlement of IDPs is essential for building a Federal Democratic Union.	This data is "part of". When this sentence is read, the reader gets another meaning.
20.	Hence, participation by the people with the Union Spirit is a must for all of us.	Existential	-People has the union spirit.	This is an existential, it is triggered by adjective noun phrase "the union spirit".

3.2. Data Interpretation

Table 4: Frequency and percentage of presuppositions in three selected essays

Types of presupposition	Essay I	Essay II	Essay III
Existential	9 (39.13%)	4 (25%)	6 (30%)
Factive	1 (4.35%)	4 (25%)	1 (5%)
Lexical	12 (52.17%)	7 (43.75%)	13 (65%)
Counterfactual	1 (4.35%)	1 (6.25%)	0 (0%)
Total	23 (100%)	16 (100%)	20 (100%)

Table 4 shows frequencies and percentages of presupposition in three selected essays. In essay I, it is found that the frequency of existential is 9 (39.13%), factive is 1 (4.35%), lexical is 12 (53.17%) and counterfactual is 1(4.35%). In essay II, existential is used with the frequency of 4 (25%), factive is 4 (25%), lexical is 7 (43.75%) and counterfactual is 1 (6.25%). The frequency of existential is 6 (30%), factive is 1 (5%), lexical is 13 (65%) in essay III. It is also shown that there is no frequency of using counterfactual in essay III. It is found that lexical presupposition is the most highly used and counterfactual is the least in three selected essays. Moreover, it is also found that the use of structural and nonfactive presuppositions is not found in three selected essays.

4. Findings and Discussion

The present research focuses on presuppositions in three selected opinion essays of *The Global New Light of Myanmar* newspaper. Six types of presupposition which are existential, lexical, structural, factual, non -factive and counterfactual presuppositions are studied in the selected essays. The aim of the research is to analyze and classify presuppositions in three selected opinion essays. The objectives are to investigate which type of presupposition is mostly used in the selected essays and to examine the effects of using presuppositions in the essays. In the present research, the data are collected and analyzed by using the checklist of presuppositions proposed by Yule (1996).

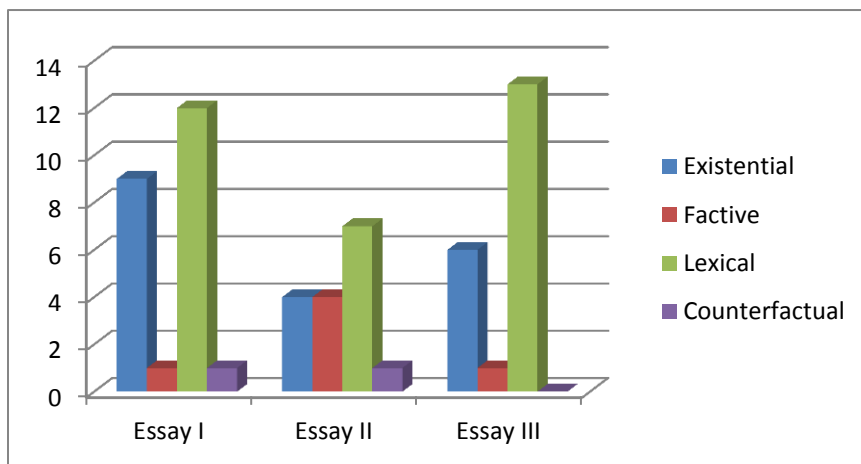


Figure 1: Presuppositions in three selected opinion essays

According to the result, it is found that the use of lexical presupposition is the highest percentage and counterfactual is the lowest in three selected opinion essays. It is also found that there is no use of nonfactive and structural presuppositions in the essays. It can be said that the use of lexical presupposition in the opinion essays makes the readers get not only the contextualized meanings but also the other meanings the writer wants to

present. Moreover, in the present research, three opinion essays from *The Global New Light of Myanmar* newspaper are used as a research material and it is assumed that the writer did not use nonfactive and structural presupposition not because he gets the opinions and ideas of the readers about the current affairs in the country but because he wants to give the readers his opinions about the affairs. It can be said that the use of presuppositions in the opinion essays makes the readers improve their thinking and translation skills.

5. Conclusion

The present research focuses on presuppositions in three selected opinion essays from *The Global New Light of Myanmar* newspaper. Six types of presupposition are analyzed and classified according to the theory proposed by Yule (1996). It is found that only four types of presupposition such as existential, factive, lexical and counterfactual are used and lexical is the most highly used presupposition in three selected opinion essays. It can be said that using presupposition in the opinion essays makes the readers get the contextualized and underlined meanings of the essays. Moreover, it can be concluded that opinion essays in the newspaper can be used as a teaching material for ESL learners in studying linguistics, especially pragmatics and they can improve the learners' writing and comprehensive skills of the essays. Finally, the research would like to suggest that the next researcher can use other literary works such as short stories, prose and drama, etc. to analyze presuppositions based on the theories of pragmatics proposed by other scholars.

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