CHAPTER II

PRESUPPOSITION

2.0 PRELIMINARIES

The present chapter deals extensively with presupposition. The concept of presupposition has briefly been discussed in relation with philosophy, logic, syntax, Gricean theory, speech act theory as well as entailment. Further, the chapter provides a detailed analysis of semantic conception as well as pragmatic characterization of presupposition, with various definitions. Different types of presupposition-triggers have been enlisted with appropriate illustrations. Properties of presupposition such as defeasibility, detachability, behavior under negation and so on, have also been highlighted in the chapter. Moreover, projection problem has been discussed with reference to cumulative hypothesis as well as presuppositional grammar. Thus, major concern of the chapter is to provide a theoretical framework to be applied to Harold Pinter’s selected plays.

2.1 PRESUPPOSITION

2.1.0 Introduction

Presupposition has its roots in philosophy of language and linguistic semantics. Recent works in linguistics have given a central place to the notion of presupposition. It is studied as an essential aspect in providing semantic as well as pragmatic representations. Resultantly, presupposition has obtained a significant place in the spheres of interest of linguists, logicians and philosophers. It has been studied as a kind of unspoken information that accompanies an utterance. Moreover, presuppositions perform a significant role in our understanding of how context and background determine proper interpretation of any utterance. They are studied as conditions which must be fulfilled for an expression to be interpreted meaningfully.

2.1.1 Philosophical Background

Presupposition has its roots in philosophy. The notion of presupposition can be traced back to Aristotle. As Beaver states, Aristotle explains the similar concept in the following extract quoted from ‘Categories’:

For manifestly, if Socrates exists, one of the two propositions ‘Socrates is ill’, ‘Socrates is not ill’ is true, and the other false. This is likewise the
case if he does not exist; for if he does not exist, to say that he is ill is false, and to say that he is not ill is true

In other words, Aristotle treats propositions as having truth value in terms of truth and falsity which is not distinct from the theories either of Frege or Strawson. Beaver further refers to Horn’s view that it is the medieval philosopher Petrus Hispanus, who first introduced the notion of presupposition. In the final part of his work ‘Summulae Logicales,’ Hispanus uses the terms such as ‘presupponit’ for presupposition and ‘denotat’ for assertion. The following extract is taken from Hispanus, a translated version, as quoted in Beaver:

We now discuss reduplicative signs. Reduplicative signs are those which imply the reason according to which something is attributed to another, as ‘insofar as’, ‘according as’, ‘by reason of the fact that’ and so on … A reduplicative word presupposes [presupponit] a certain predicate to be in a certain subject and denotes [denotat] that to which it is immediately attached is the cause of that inheritance
(Petrus Hispanus, as cited in Beaver 2001:3n).

This is the first ever reference of presupposition in relation to discourse connectives. In addition, it deals with the primary distinction between presupposition and assertion. According to Lindberg, the notion of presupposition is borrowed from philosophy into linguistics and has been used to illustrate the importance of context for the generation of sentences. He states that presupposition consists of:

(a) Features from the speaker’s perception of the present situation
(b) Possible associations connecting (a) with features in his long term and short term memories
(1979:54).

In modern times, most significant among the philosophers who influenced the theories of presupposition are Frege, Russell and Strawson. However, Richard Garner (1971:34-35) mentions that the difference between philosopher’s talk about presupposition and that of linguist is of ‘the matter of what it is that is said to do the presupposing’. In fact, philosophers have their own abstract views, somewhat contrasting with those of linguists, who deal with presuppositions of words, utterances and sentences.
2.1.2 An Ordinary Usage of the Term ‘Presupposition’

In everyday sense, to presuppose something is to assume something or to take it for granted in advance without saying it. Levinson (1983) points out that there are significant distinctions between the ordinary usages of the term ‘presupposition’ and its technical usage in the field of linguistics. He provides some examples that distinguish these two usages of the term:

1. Effects presuppose causes
2. John wrote Harry a letter, presupposing he could read
3. John said “Harry is so competent,” presupposing that we know Harry had fouled things up – in fact we didn’t know and so failed to realize that he was being ironic
4. Harry asked Bill to close the door, presupposing that Bill had left it open as usual; he hadn’t so he threw a chair at Harry
5. Adolph addresses the butler as “Sir”, presupposing that he was the host Sir Ansel himself
6. The theory of evolution presupposes a vast time-scale
7. The article by Jackendoff presupposes Chomsky’s theory of nominalizations


In the above examples, ordinary notion of presupposition is used to narrate background assumptions which make the utterances meaningful. On the other hand, technical usage of presupposition refers to certain inferences built onto linguistic expressions.

2.1.3 Presupposition and Logic

Levinson (1983) is of the opinion that the characterization of semantic presupposition requires some fundamental changes in the kind of logic that can be used to model natural language semantics. He provides the following argument based on the classical logical assumptions:

1. A presupposes B
2. Therefore, by definition, A entails B and ~A entails B
3. (a) Every sentence A has a negation ~A
   (b) A is true or A is false (Bivalence)
   (c) A is true or ~A is true (Negation)
4. B must always be true


The major aim of such presuppositional theories is to cope up with presupposition failure. They also explain that the sentences are neither true nor false when their presuppositions
fail. According to Bickerton, logical definitions of presupposition have been framed in terms of the three-valued logic. Such theories suggest that:

A sentence S presupposes a proposition P if both S and \(-S\) logically imply P. If P is false, then S is generally held to lack a truth value


Keenan gives a well-defined presuppositional logic when he defines logical presupposition as:

\( \emptyset \) LOGICALLY PRESUPPOSES \( \psi \) iff \( \emptyset \) has the third value whenever \( \psi \)
is not true

(Keenan 1969 and 1972, as cited in Gazdar 1979:103).

Keenan defines logical presupposition as:

A sentence S logically presupposes a sentence \( \hat{S} \) just in case S logically implies \( \hat{S} \) and the negation of S, \( \sim S \), also logically implies \( \hat{S} \)


Keenan simplifies it as the truth of \( \hat{S} \) is a necessary condition on the truth or falsity of S, if S is not true then \( \hat{S} \) can be neither true nor false. Levinson makes use of logical devices such as ‘lambda-extraction’ and ‘group- or gamma-operator’ to explain presupposition relation. Levinson analyses the sentence ‘It was John that kissed Mary’ using such logical devices:

\( \lambda x(x = \text{John}) \gamma x \text{Kiss} (\text{Mary}, x) \)

(1983:221).

The above abstraction can be read as ‘A group kissed by Mary has the property of being identical to John’ (1983:221). Janet Fodor is of the opinion that logical presuppositions are relevant to the truth conditions on sentences. He characterizes logical presupposition as:

If a sentence S has the logical presupposition \( L \), and \( L \) is false, then S has no truth value


Logical presuppositions bear on the truth conditions of sentences, whereas, pragmatic presuppositions arise out of some extra-grammatical components. In contrast to logical notion of presupposition, pragmatic accounts have sought to define presupposition in terms of felicity conditions and context or common ground. In conclusion of his article, Strawson (1950) says:
Neither Aristotelian nor Russellian rules give the exact logic of any expression in ordinary language; for ordinary language has no exact logic (Strawson 1950, as cited in Levinson 1983:175n).

2.1.4 Presupposition and Third Truth Value

In truth conditional semantics, pragmatics as well as traditional logic, it is practical assumption that each sentence is either true or false. As Keith Allen points out:

In traditional systems of logic, truth is bivalent, i.e., there are only two values possible: any proposition \( P \) is either true or else it is false (2001:183).

However, according to Allwood et al., the negation of a sentence is true whenever the sentence is false. Consider the following example from Allwood et al.:

Have you stopped beating your wife? (1977:149).

The above question would have the following possible answers:

1. Yes, I have stopped beating my wife.
2. No, I have not stopped beating my wife.

The answer 2 appears to be the negation of answer 1. If 1 is not true, 2 ought to be true. But a person, who never beats his wife, cannot answer either. If he answers, it commits him to having beaten his wife. Statements 1 and 2 in such case are neither true nor false. In other words, these answers have no truth-value. To have a truth-value, these sentences should fulfill a condition that the speaker must have beaten his wife at some time or the other. In addition to true and false, a sentence may have a third truth value called ‘Zero’. Keenan (1971:46) calls it as ‘nonsense value’. Allwood et al define the Third Truth Value as follows:

If both a sentence \( p \) and its negation \( \sim p \) can only be true, when \( q \) is true, \( p \) presupposes \( q \) (1977:150).

A sentence with unfulfilled presuppositions would then have the truth value zero. In such an analysis, presupposition is treated as a condition for a sentence to have a truth value. It follows that a sentence and its negation always have the same presuppositions.
2.1.5 Presupposition and Inference

Pragmatics is concerned with study of meaning that involves making of inferences. Presupposition is such a kind of pragmatic inference. Inferences are rule governed steps from certain premises or propositions, to another proposition, called conclusion. There are two kinds of inference: deductive and inductive. Encyclopedia Britannica defines these two inferences as follows. A deductive inference is:

A type of inference or argument that purports to be valid, where a valid argument is one whose conclusion must be true if its premises are true

(2009).

An inductive inference is:

A type of nonvalid inference or argument in which the premises provide some reason for believing that the conclusion is true

(2009).

Out of these two, inductive inference is defeasible. It shares certain qualities with presupposition. It can be illustrated with the following example:

Martha avoided quarrelling with Sam.

One can draw the following inferences from the above utterance:

a. Martha did not quarrel with Sam.
   b. Martha tried to avoid quarrelling with Sam.

Now consider the negation of the same utterance:

Martha did not avoid quarrelling with Sam.

The above negation survives the inference (b); however, inference (a) is cancelled.

2.1.6 Presupposition and Assertion

Relationship between presupposition and assertion can be shown as it is new information that is asserted and it is old information that is presupposed. In other words, what is asserted in an utterance is new to the addressee and what is presupposed is familiar or part of the common ground to addressee. In short, presupposition is a proposition that follows from a statement. Fundamental difference between presupposition and assertion is that of status. As Frege (1979) mentions, a sentence has a truth-value only if its presuppositions are satisfied. Frege is of the opinion that
presupposition and assertion differ in status. Regarding the distinction between presupposition and assertion, Lambrecht has given an explicit statement:

> Let us refer to the ‘old information’ contained in, or evoked by, a sentence as the PRAGMATIC PRESUPPOSITION (or simply the PRESUPPOSITION) and let us refer to the ‘new information’ expressed or conveyed by the sentence as the PRAGMATIC ASSERTION (or simply the ASSERTION)


Any assertion does not come about if the presuppositions are not fulfilled, because only sentences with a truth-value can be the objects of an assertion. The distinction between assertion and presupposition is clarified by Heim and Kratzer with the following examples:

A. John is absent again today.
B. Today is not the first time that John is absent.
C. John is absent today, and that has happened before.


The above statements A, B and C indicate that the speaker believes that (i) John is absent today and (ii) John has been absent before. However, they assume different knowledge on the part of the hearer. If the hearer knows that John has been absent before but doesn’t know that John is absent today then A is appropriate but B is not. Statement A presupposes that John has been absent before and it asserts that he is absent today. On the other hand, if the hearer knows that John is absent today but does not know that John has been absent before, then B is appropriate but A is not. Statement B presupposes that John is absent today and asserts that he has been absent before. After that, if the hearer does not know that John is absent today and also does not know that he has been absent before, then C is appropriate but not the other two. Statement C does not presuppose the knowledge of John’s absence today or previous absences and instead, asserts both that he is absent today and that he has been absent before.

2.1.7 Presupposition as Common Ground

Barbara Abbott (2000: 1419:1437) states that, Stalnaker and Karttunen initiated the view that the grammatical concept of presupposition can be assimilated to the pragmatic concept of background information, shared knowledge or the common ground. She argues that presuppositions are non-asserted propositions conveyed by an utterance,
propositions which are of necessity conveyed but which are not intended by the speaker to be part of the main point. Presuppositions arise by virtue of the facts that there is a preference for an utterance to have a single main point and that the expression of any thought involves expressions of many atomic presuppositions. Stalnaker (1978) states that presupposition is what are taken by the speaker to be the ‘common ground’ or ‘mutual knowledge’ between speaker and hearer. The recognition that the familiar or old information and parts that are new, gives birth to common ground view of presuppositions.

2.1.8 Presupposition and Syntax

Presupposition has been treated as pragmatic and logical concept. However, Bickerton (1979:235) suggests that presuppositions arise because of certain syntactic facts. Gazdar claims that the potential presuppositions of a sentence emphasize the role of syntactic features. He states:

In terms of their components and constructions as if potential presuppositions were something given to us by the lexicon and the syntax, but I do this without prejudice to the possibility of some future general explanation as to why these lexical and syntactic sources of presupposition are such

(1976:188).

Here Gazdar envisages a general kind of explanation of how presuppositions are indeed given by the nature of syntax. Levinson (1983:207) states that Karttunen and Peters (1975, 1979) devised a conventional theory in the framework of the ‘Montague Grammar.’ The theory advocates that the clauses are built up from their components from the bottom up rather than the top down as in transformational generative grammar. Semantic content of an expression is built up together with syntax in such theory. As a result, the meaning expressions are associated with words, clauses and constructions what we call them as presupposition triggers. Levinson states:

As for presupposition, since many kinds of presupposition triggers seem to be essentially syntactic (e.g. clefts) or to have syntactic consequences (e.g. factives) there seem to be intimate relations between syntactic processes and the inference we call presuppositions

In addition, George Lakoff is of the view that the study of ‘presupposition-free syntax’
would deviate from the traditional study of syntax because it would no longer involve the
study of the distinction of all the grammatical morphemes. He says:

It seems beyond doubt that the principles governing the distinction of
morphemes will involve presuppositional information. Where these
principles are given by transformational rules, there may be linkages
between presuppositions and the transformational rules

Such linkages, according to George Lakoff, between presupposition and syntactic feature
are called ‘global derivational constraints’ (1971:340).

2.1.9 Presupposition and Theory of Implicature

Most of the linguists and philosophers are of the view that Grice’s Theory of Implicature
can be used to explain presupposition. They are of the opinion, as Van Der Sandt
(1988:50) points out that most presuppositional phenomena are explicable in terms of
Gricean principles. The notion of presupposition can be eliminated entirely in favour of
the Gricean notion of implicature. It facilitates proper explanation of the existence and
behavior of presuppositions. Van Der Sandt (1988:70) refers to the view that treats most
of the paradigmatic cases of presuppositions as conventional implicature. Others view
presupposition as a special kind of conversational implicature that is associated with the
positive sentence as well as its negative counterpart. Karttunen and Peters are of the same
opinion:

A large set of cases that have been called presupposition are really
instances of conventional implicature. The most obvious are those
associated with particles like too, either, also, even, only and so on. This
class also includes the presuppositions of certain factive verbs, such as
forget, realize, take into account and fail. Presuppositions of cleft and
pseudo-cleft constructions also seem to be genuine examples of
conversational implicature. These are a just few examples; the list could
be made much longer
(1979:11

Thomason also follows the same line of impression while stating that presuppositions are
those conversational implicatures that are associated with positive sentences and its
negative counterparts. He defines presupposition as:

Sentence φ pragmatically presupposes χ relative to a context c and ¬χ
conversationally implicates $\chi$ relative to $c$


The Gricean account of presupposition is significantly represented in the works of Kempson (1975), Wilson (1975) and Atlas (1977). They are of the view that special mechanism is not needed to account for the additional presuppositional inferences. Such inferences could be derived as generalized conversational implicature by application of Grice’s theory. Sadock puts forward the same view:

Conversational implicatures include all non-truth-conditional aspects of what is conveyed by an utterance solely due to the words or forms the sentence contains. These include, then, most of what have been called by linguists the presuppositions of a sentence; they are closely allied to what is said in the strict sense, at least in that the same clause can determine either the truth conditions of a sentence or a set of conventional implicature

(1978:282).

However, Van Der Sandt (1988:71) objects to the idea of explicating the reasonably well-established notion of presupposition in terms of the totally unexplained notion of conversational implicature. He further states that the notion of presupposition has a long and respectable tradition, but the same cannot be said for conversational implicature.

2.1.10 Presupposition and Speech Act Theory

If the presuppositions of a sentence, which is used to make speech act, are not satisfied; such speech acts are turned into infelicitous. According to Van Der Sandt (1988:26), the semantic and pragmatic accounts of presupposition are based on two fundamentally different but not incompatible views. These two accounts can be related to each other by means of Gricean principles and speech act theory. For some reason, if a speech act is defective, as Van Der Sandt states, nothing follows about the truth-value of a sentence:

… assume that a speech act is in some way defective unless the speaker believes what he says, then the assertion of a sentence $\phi$ which semantically presupposes a sentence $\chi$, is defective in every context unless the speaker believes $\phi$, the obvious entailments of $\phi$, and thus $\chi$


In other words, a semantic presupposition of a sentence is a pragmatic presupposition of the users of the sentence but not vice-versa. Austin (1962) is of the view that speech acts
performed by means of uttering a sentence are invalid if the presuppositions with definite description in subject position are not satisfied. He says:

… some says that … if … someone asserts that the present king of France is bald, ‘the question whether he is bald does not arise’; but it is better to say that the putative statement is null and void, exactly as when I say I sell you something that is not mine … (1962:136).

Fillmore (1969) as well as Langendoen and Savin (1971) state that presuppositions are conditions that must be satisfied in order for a sentence to be used to perform a speech act. Particularly, Fillmore is of the view that presuppositions are conditions which must be satisfied to use a sentence felicitously. He says:

I shall deal with a distinction between the presuppositional aspect of the semantic structure of the predicate on the one hand and the ‘meaning’ proper of the predicate on the other hand. We may identify the presuppositions of a sentence as those conditions which must be satisfied before the sentences can be used in any of the function just mentioned (commanding, questioning, asserting) (1969:120).

According to Van Der Sandt (1988:30), presupposition in terms of felicity alone predicts that a presupposition of a sentence used to perform a speech act is the prime factor responsible for illocutionary success of that speech act. Searle and Vandervaken (1985) distinguish between linguistic phenomenon tied to particular linguistic expressions and the presuppositions derived from the illocutionary force of an utterance. They say:

Preparatory conditions determine a class of presuppositions peculiar to illocutionary force. But there is another class of presuppositions peculiar to propositional content … Regardless of which of the various philosophical accounts one accepts of these sorts of presuppositions (i.e. the presuppositions associated with definite descriptions and aspeuctual verbs), one needs to distinguish them from those that derive from illocutionary forces. The same propositional presuppositions can occur with different illocutionary forces, as, for example, one can both ask whether and one can assert that Jones has stopped beating his wife (1985:17).

Thus, presuppositions are seen as conditions for bringing about a speech act. As Van Der Sandt (1988:32) states, the defining characteristics of a speech act are presuppositions of the sentences that can be used to perform speech acts. Moreover, Karttunen’s (1974) view
is that a speech act is defective if any presupposition of the sentence used to perform it, is not satisfied.

2.1.11 Presupposition and Entailment

Introduction

It is obvious that speakers have presuppositions and sentences have entailments. Hence, entailment is a kind of relation between sentences based on the fact that the truth of the second sentence necessarily follows from the truth of the first. George Yule states that:

An entailment is something that logically follows from what is asserted in the utterance


Levinson defines semantic entailment as:

A semantically entails B (written A ⊨ B) if every situation that makes A true, makes B true (or: in all words in which A is true)


According to Kempson (1975:48), any statement S₁ will entail a statement S₂, if when S₁ is true, S₂ must also be true. It is, therefore, not possible to assert the truth of S₁ and thereby deny the truth of S₂. The difference between entailment and presupposition is summarized by Kempson in the following manner:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entailment</th>
<th>Presupposition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S₁</td>
<td>S₁</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S₂</td>
<td>S₂</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T ⇨ T</td>
<td>T ← T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F ← F</td>
<td>- (T ∨ F) ← F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F ⇨ T ∨ F</td>
<td>F ← T</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: From Kempson (1975:49).*

Entailment is the central notion in truth-conditional semantics. Entailments of a sentence are parts of its semantic contents. Entailment captures logical truth as well as other essential semantic relations like equivalence and contradiction. Gazdar (1977) claims that simple affirmative factive sentences entail their complements and the definite descriptions used in simple sentences entails the existence of their referent. For example:

   \(\vdash\) George Bush attacked Afghanistan.
2. He killed Saddam.
   \(\vdash\) There was a person called Saddam.
Gazdar further claims that all semantic definitions of presupposition required the entailments in affirmative sentences. As a result, the relation between the above pairs of statements is one of entailments. Van Der Sandt states that:

> Entailment is a relation between the formulas of the well defined logical language. One cannot talk about entailments of sentences of natural language but only about entailments of formulas that are supposed to be the logical representations of these sentences


Above all, sentences have a number of entailments, i.e., other sentences which are automatically true if the original sentence is true. According to Peccei (1999:14), entailments are inferences that can be drawn solely from our knowledge about the semantic relationships in a language. This knowledge allows us to communicate much more than what we actually say. Entailment is generally divided in two types:

**Background Entailment**

The information that is potentially assumed can be identified with a proper analysis. Such information that is associated with the utterance can be explained with examples like the one that follows:

Mr. Mehra’s wife bought four diamonds.

While uttering such a sentence, the speaker is normally expected to have the presupposition such as:

\[ \rightarrow \text{A person called Mr. Mehra exists.} \]
\[ \rightarrow \text{Mr. Mehra has a wife.} \]

To be more specific, the speaker may presuppose that Mr. Mehra has only one wife and that he is very rich. Moreover, the same sentence has entailments such as:

\[ \neg \neg \text{Mr. Mehra’s wife bought something} \]
\[ \neg \neg \text{Mr. Mehra’s wife bought three valuable stones.} \]
\[ \neg \neg \text{Mr. Mehra’s wife bought two diamonds.} \]

These logical consequences follow from the sentence without taking into consideration the truth or falsity of the speaker’s belief. Such types of entailments are called Background Entailments.
**Foreground Entailment**

In Foreground Entailments, as Yule states (1996:33), the speaker will indicate how these entailments are to be ordered. In other words, with the help of paralinguistic features such as stress, tones, intonation etc; speaker conveys which entailment is assumed to be in the foreground or significant for proper interpretation of intended meaning. The example cited in 2.1.11.1 may have the following foreground entailments:

–‖ Mr. Mehra’s wife bought FOUR diamonds.
–‖ MR. MEHRA’S WIFE bought four diamonds.

In the former one, the main assumption is that Mr. Mehra’s wife bought certain number of diamonds, and in the later one, someone bought four diamonds is the main assumption. According to Yule:

One of the functions of stress in English, in this approach, is clearly tied to making the main assumption of the speaker in producing an utterance (1996:33).

Thus, Entailment is logical in nature whereas presupposition is more speaker oriented notion.

**Properties of Entailment**

According to Barbara Partee there are some properties of and tests for entailment. They are enlisted and highlighted as follows:

1. Non-Cancellability: Entailments cannot be cancelled.
2. Entailments are properties of sentences: Entailments of utterances are derivatives from entailments of sentences.
3. Conventionality: Entailments are parts of the conventional meaning of linguistic expressions.
4. Behavior under Negation: The entailments of a sentence are not preserved under negation.
5. Anti-backgrounding: The point of asserting sentences is to add its entailments to the common ground.
6. Non-detachability: If one replaces some words or phrases by other with identical semantic content, the entailments will not change, since by definition, the entailments depend only on the truth conditional content of the sentence.

(2009:1).
2.1.12 Presupposition: Semantic Conception

Introduction

Apart from ordinary usage of the term, there are two kinds of presupposition in natural languages, that is, Semantic Presupposition and Pragmatic Presupposition. Gazdar (1979) states that modern discussion of the semantic theory of presupposition began essentially with Strawson, although the idea can be traced further back to Frege.

Fregean Theory

Gottlob Frege (1892, 1952 in Geach and Black ed.) introduced the notion of Presupposition. He treated it as special condition that must be fulfilled in order to attribute denotation to a linguistic expression. Frege in his article ‘Über Sinn und Bedeutung’ (1892) focused presupposition in accordance with problems that arise regarding the use of non-denoting terms. Frege states that:

If anything is asserted, there is always an obvious presupposition that the simple or compound proper names used have a reference. If one therefore asserts ‘Kepler died in misery’ there is a presupposition that the name ‘Kepler’ designates something

(Frege 1952, as cited in Levinson 1983:169).

Thus, according to Frege, the name ‘Kepler’ has a denotation that is a presupposition of both of the following:

1. Kepler died in misery.
2. Kepler did not die in misery.

Here, the main point of Frege’s analysis is that the name ‘Kepler’ has a referent, which is not a part of the assertion 1 and 2. The basic difference between the views of Frege and Russell (1905) is that the former studies it semantically, whereas, the later considers the issue purely syntactically. For any sentence to acquire a truth-value, its presuppositions must be satisfied. In this way, Frege draws a fundamental distinction between what is presupposed and what is asserted by an utterance of ‘Kepler died in misery’. Levinson points out that Frege has devised the following theory of presupposition:

(i) Referring phrases and temporal clauses (for example) carry presuppositions to the effect that they do in fact refer
(ii) A sentence and its negative counterpart share the same set of presuppositions
(iii) In order for an assertion or a sentence to be either true or false, its presuppositions must be true or satisfied

On the other hand, with Russell’s analysis of a sentence containing a referring expression, Frege’s distinction between presupposition and assertion here seems to be evaporated.

**Strawsonian Theory**

In 1952, Strawson fiercely attacked Russell’s theory and revived the concept of presupposition. Strawson’s theory is based on the distinction between the facts that an expression has unique reference and every individual is unique having certain properties. This attitude of Strawson is closely related to Frege, who believes that the truth of the presuppositions of a sentence is a condition for the possibility of making an assertion by means of that sentence. Van Der Sandt (1988:6) states that, if the presupposition of a sentence fails, that sentence can’t be treated as statement and consequently, it loses its truth-value. According to Strawson, a statement, and not a sentence, is the bearer of truth value. Thus, a given statement can’t be identified with the sentence used to make it, but with the utterance of that sentence. Strawson has given the following observation of presupposition:

\[
\text{A statement } S \text{ presupposes a statement } S', \text{ if and only if the truth of } S' \text{ is a necessary condition for the truth or falsity of } S \\
(\text{Strawson 1952, as cited in Sandt 1988:7}).
\]

The above observation makes it clear that the presupposition does not belong to what is asserted in an utterance of a sentence. It explains that any statement that must be true for another statement to have a truth value is a presupposition of that statement.

**Presupposition as Binary Relation**

In semantic theory, as Beaver (2001) states, presupposition is usually defined as a binary relation between parts of sentences of a language. Definition of presupposition in terms of semantic valuation might say that one sentence semantically presupposes another, subject to the condition if the second one is true for the semantic value of the first in terms of truth and falsity. Linguists like Hausser (1976), Keenan (1971), Horn (1972) and Katz (1972) argue that the semantic theory of presupposition should be constituted into linguistic theory. Gazdar (1979) points out that semantic presupposition has been defined traditionally as a relation between statements or between propositions; rather than between sentences, or sentences and propositions.
Defining Semantic Presupposition

Stephen Levinson

Levinson defines semantic presupposition as:

A sentence A semantically presupposes another sentence B iff:
(a) in all situations where A is true, B is true
(b) in all situations where A is false, B is true


Rob A. Van Der Sandt

Rob A. Van Der Sandt defines semantic presupposition as:

φ » χ iff
(a) in any interpretation where φ is true, χ is true
(b) in any interpretation where φ is false, χ is true


Semantic Accounts - Limitations

In semantics, presupposition is studied with reference to the truth-conditional aspects of meaning. Attempts to formulate the semantic theories of presupposition, as Levinson (1983:199) argues, are largely misplaced. Truth-conditional theories of presupposition treat it as a special species of entailment, namely one in which a logical consequence relation can be defined in such a way that it is affected by negation. As a result, semantic presupposition remains a kind of invariant relation. Levinson states:

Semantics on this view is concerned with the context independent, stable meaning of words and sentences, leaving to pragmatics those inferences that are special to certain contexts. Given this much, it is clear that presupposition belongs in pragmatics and not in semantics


Presupposition is a context dependent aspect of meaning and pragmatics studies meaning in context. Based on this fact, it can be reasonably concluded that presupposition is a pragmatic concept. Beaver poses a number of challenges for a ‘purely semantic multivalent/partial’ account of presupposition. He states that semantic account of presupposition:

… presents a number of challenges … and thus provides motivation for either considering pragmatic addition to the semantic theories, or for considering alternative accounts of presupposition

From 1970’s onwards, it became prevalent that the difference between presupposition and other semantic relations is that of context-sensitivity. It cannot be studied simply as a semantic relation. More precisely, presupposition should be studied with a pragmatic point of view. From pragmatic perspective, sentences are seen as utterances of individuals communicating through the language. Thus semantic theories of presupposition, concerning with the specification of invariant, stable meaning, are not capable of analyzing presupposition independently. Consequently, such semantic theories of presupposition have been deserted, paving ways to pragmatic presupposition.

2.1.13 Presupposition: Pragmatic Characterizations

Introduction

During the seventies, another way of thinking about presupposition became prevalent. As a result of the works of various scholars and attempts at a pragmatic characterization of the theoretical notion of presupposition, linguistic presupposition got a status of a pure pragmatic concept. Gazdar (1979) is of the opinion that the pragmatic conception of presupposition was originally proposed by Sellers (1954). For Sellers, presupposition is a condition for the correct use of sentence and his account of presupposition differs fundamentally from Strawson’s view. Most of the well developed pragmatic theories consider presuppositions neither of a sentence nor of a speaker but of an utterance. In some other theories presuppositions are seen as conditions that contexts must obey in order for an utterance of a sentence to be felicitous in that context.

According to Simons (2007), pragmatic presuppositions are beliefs about the context that must be attributed to a speaker. It is assumed that semantic presuppositions of a sentence become pragmatic presuppositions of speakers, as speakers should believe that contexts satisfy the conditions required to allow their utterances to be meaningful. Chomsky illustrates the term presupposition as a label for non-focus. He mentions that he is using the term presupposition ‘to cover a number of notions that should be distinguished’ (1972:100). Jackendoff’s (1972) notion is a type of pragmatic presupposition, in that; it is a presupposition about the discourse or the things that could be discussed in the discourse.

Roots in Frege and Strawson

The pragmatic view of presupposition seems to be originated from the theories of Frege and Strawson. Both these philosophers draw a fundamental distinction between what a speaker presupposes and what he asserts in uttering a sentence. The notion of speaker
presupposition or contextual presupposition is provided by the pragmatic approach. As per the pragmatic view, speakers, not sentences, presuppose propositions in uttering sentences or performing speech acts in specific linguistic or non-linguistic context.

**Two Groups of Scholars**

Rob A. Van Der Sandt (1988) divides proponents of the pragmatic view into two main groups. The first group looks at presupposition as condition for the appropriate, acceptable or correct use of sentences. This group associates presupposition essentially to the devices of speech act theory. The second group considers presupposition to be a special kind of implicature in the Gricean sense. Most of them regard presupposition as nothing but a misleading term covering a diverse set of Gricean and other phenomena.

**Three Approaches**

Generally, pragmatic study of presuppositions is based on three kinds of approaches. First approach refers to the assumptions made by speaker about the context in which communication takes place. Second approach treats pragmatic presupposition as a felicity condition for implementing some speech acts and the third approach regards pragmatic presupposition as a mutual knowledge or common ground between the speaker and the listener. However, as the three approaches are inter-related and should be studied in connection with each other, one can find out that presupposition is a knowledge shared by the interlocutors engaged in conversational activities. This shared knowledge is the basis for the speaker to express himself/herself to the listener because the speaker believes that the listener can understand what he or she says.

**Four-place Relation**

Rob A. Van Der Sandt (1988:24-25) studies presupposition as four place relation between persons (the speakers), sentences (or utterances), propositions and context or set of belief. As per this view, he defines a scheme for presupposition as:

\[
\text{A speaker } S \text{ presupposes the proposition } p \text{ in an utterance of a sentence } A \text{ in a context } c \iff \ldots
\]


**Presupposition and Context**

Karttunen and Peters’ theory treats presupposition as a side product arising out of the process of the context change. In other words, the nature of pragmatic presupposition is
context dependent. The main concern is that the interpretation of sentences is always restricted to the class of context in which their utterances are acceptable. Presuppositions associated with a sentence are supposed to be part of those contexts. Karttunen points out that:

Ordinary conversation does not always proceed in the ideal, orderly fashion … People do make leaps and short cuts by using sentences whose presuppositions are not satisfied in the conversational context … But … I think, we can maintain that a sentence is always taken to be an increment to a context that satisfies its presuppositions. If the current conversational context does not suffice, the listener is entitled and expected to extend it as required


Karttunen, here, describes significance of context and the process, that the persons engaged in conversation are supposed to follow, for interpretation of the massage with comprehension of proper presuppositions. The theories of presupposition that have dominated discussion since 1979 are the compositional account proposed by Karttunen and Peters. Their theory is on par with the logical approaches towards presupposition. Lewis (1979) and Stalnaker (1972) have expressed the similar views.

**Soames’ Typology**

Soames (1982:85-86) attempts to describe the linguistic notion of sentential presupposition with reference to the notion of utterance presupposition, which in turn is directly related to the pragmatic notion of speaker’s presupposition.

**Speaker Presupposition**

A member S of a conversation presupposes a proposition P at the time t iff, at t, S believes or assumes

a. P;

b. that the other members of the conversation also believe or assume P; and

c. that the other members of the conversation recognize that S believes or assumes (a) and (b).

**Utterance Presupposition**

An utterance U presupposes P (at t) iff one can reasonably infer from U that the speaker S accepts P and regards it as uncontroversial, either because
a. S thinks that it is already part of the conversational context at t, or because
b. S thinks that the audience is prepared to add it, without objection, to the context against which U is evaluated.

**Sentential Presupposition**

A sentence presupposes P iff normal utterances of S presuppose P.

**Defining Pragmatic Presupposition**

**Introduction**

Presupposition is one of the central concepts in pragmatics. However, it is surprising that there is a lack of agreement among the scholars on a suitable definition of the term. In pragmatic theory, presupposition is analyzed involving attitudes and knowledge of language users.

**Stephen Levinson**

Levinson defines pragmatic presupposition as:

> An utterance A *pragmatically presupposes* a proposition P iff A is *appropriate* only if B is *mutually known* by participants


**George Yule**

Focusing on speaker’s assumption, Yule defines pragmatic presupposition as:

> A presupposition is something the speaker assumes to be the case prior to making an utterance


**Chierchia and McConnell-Ginet**

Chierchia and McConnell-Ginet give the following formal definition of presupposition:

> (An utterance of) a sentence S presupposes the proposition P if (the utterance of) S implies P and further implies that P is somehow already part of the background against which S is considered

(1990:349).

This definition indicates that presupposition contrasts with what is asserted by an utterance; as presupposition is a proposition that is part of the common ground or shared assumptions of speaker and hearer.
**Jef Verschueren**

Pertained to implicit meaning, Jef Verschueren defines presupposition as:

Presuppositions are relations between a form of expression and an implicit meaning which can be arrived at by a process of (pragmatic) inference. It is implicit meaning that must be presupposed, understood, taken for granted for an utterance to make sense  

(1999:30).

**Knud Lambrecht**

Lambrecht regards presuppositions as lexicogrammatical phenomenon that belongs to the information mutually known on the part of interlocutors in conversational exchange. Hence, he defines presupposition as:

The set of propositions lexicogrammatically evoked in a sentence which the speaker assumes the hearers already know or is ready to take for granted at the time of speech  


**Edward Keenan**

Keenan’s following definition emphasizes on the role of context in analysis of pragmatic presupposition. As a result, presupposition doesn’t remain binary relation, rather, as he points out, becomes a ternary relation between a pair of sentences and a context:

An utterance of a sentence pragmatically presupposes that its context is appropriate  


**Matthew Dryer**

Dryer notes that there are propositions which the speakers, while uttering sentences will normally not only believe but believe that the hearer believes as well. He defines pragmatic presupposition as:

A proposition that is considered part of the *common ground*, the set of propositions that the speaker of an utterance believes and assumes the hearer to believe as well  


**Langendoen and Savin**

Langendoen and Savin follow the same line of thinking when they refer to Frege while stating:
By ‘presupposition’ we mean, following Frege . . . the expression of the conditions which must be satisfied (be true) for the sentence as a whole to be a statement, question, command and so forth


Jerold Katz
Katz defines presupposition in a sense close to Frege’s as:

The presupposition of an assertion will be taken to be a condition found in the meaning of the sentence expressing the proposition. It expresses a referential requirement whose satisfaction is the condition under which the presupposition can make a statement, that is, the condition under which the proposition is either true or has a true negation

(1972:130).

Robert Stalnaker
Stalnaker’s conception of presupposition opens up the possibility that a speaker presupposes certain sentences regardless of the belief whether they are true or known to be false. He defines speaker’s presupposition without reference to sentences or utterances as:

A proposition P is a pragmatic presupposition of a speaker in a given context just in case the speaker assumes or believes that P, assumes or believers that his addressee recognizes that he is making these assumptions or has these beliefs


Karttunen
Karttunen defines presupposition in terms of felicity conditions as follows:

Surface sentence A pragmatically presupposes a logical form L, if and only if it is the case that A can felicitously be uttered only in contexts which entail L


Janet D. Fodor
Fodor comments that pragmatic presuppositions are relevant to the appropriateness of an utterance in a context. Therefore, he defines pragmatic presupposition as:

If S has the pragmatic presupposition P, and P is not among the beliefs shared by the speaker and the hearer, then the utterance of S is inappropriate in that conversational context

Adrian Akmajian et al.

Akmajian et al. state that presupposing something is best viewed as a state and not an act. They define pragmatic presupposition as:

The presupposition of a sentence is the set of conditions that have to be satisfied in order for the intended speech act to be appropriate in the circumstances, or to be felicitous


Horton and Hirst

Following is the definition of presupposition given by Horton and Hirst:

Sentence $S$ potentially presupposes proposition $P$ iff for any speaker $Sp$, listener $L$, and state $s$,

(a) The utterance of $S^+$ by $Sp$ to $L$ in state $s$ would allow $L$ to infer $B sp P$

(b) The utterance of $S^-$ by $Sp$ to $L$ in state $s$ would allow $L$ to infer $B sp P$

unless $L$ already believed $B sp \neg P$, i.e., unless $S |= B_L B sp \neg P$


The above definition can be simplified as follows: Clause (a) denotes that if the affirmative forms of the sentence were spoken, any listener could infer that the speaker believed $P$. Clause (b) states that even if the negative forms of the sentence were spoken, any listener could still infer that the speaker believed $P$.

In short, the concept of pragmatic presupposition has been defined by the scholars, philosophers and linguists focusing on various aspects such as proposition, assumption, context, implicit meaning, shared knowledge, assertion and so on.

2.2 PRESUPPOSITION TRIGGERS

2.2.0 Introduction

Presuppositions are usually tied to particular words which are called as ‘Presupposition-triggers’. These triggers are the markers of presuppositions whose main function is to bring them in. Weischedel (1979) proposes that presupposition seems to be associated with particular lexical items and certain grammatical constructions. Gazdar (1977) calls such linguistic items those give rise to presuppositions as ‘pre-supposition types’. For instance:

1. Smith, who is a good player, regrets that he could not make two goals before the game was over.
2. Smith, who is a good player, doesn’t regret that he could not make two goals before the game was over.

A number of inferences can be drawn from the above utterance and its negation:

i. There exists a unique person called Smith.
ii. Smith is a good player.
iii. Smith could not make two goals before the game was over.
iv. The game was over.

It can be noticed that inference (i) seems to arise from the use of ‘proper noun’ ‘Smith’. Inference (ii) arises from ‘non-restrictive relative clause’; inference (iii) arises from the complement of the verb ‘regret’ and inference (iv) arises from ‘temporal clause’ beginning with ‘before’. Such presupposition bearing linguistic structures are known as presupposition-triggers. The sources of presupposition are fairly large in number. According to Yule, while analyzing how speaker’s assumptions are typically expressed, it is found that presupposition has been associated with the use of a large number of lexical items. Yule calls such linguistic forms as ‘indicators’ (1996:27) of potential presuppositions. Levinson (1983:181-185) has prepared a comprehensive list of presupposition triggers which are taken, along with the triggers suggested by other linguists.

2.2.1 Soft Triggers

Presuppositions carried by certain triggers can be easily neutralized. Barbara Abbott (2006:10) rightly points out that Dorit Abusch (2002) calls such presupposition-triggers as ‘soft triggers’. Most prominent instances of soft triggers are factive and change of state verbs.

Factive Verbs

Factive verbs generally presuppose the part of the utterance that follows them. Predicates such as regret, aware, realize, odd, know, be sorry that, be proud that, be indifferent that, be glad that, be sad that are called as factive verbs giving rise to presuppositions. For example:

Bill knows that the student is not guilty.
→ The student is not guilty.
Sania regrets that she lost the game.
→ Sania lost the game.
We are proud that India successfully launched Chandrayan.
→ India successfully launched Chandrayan.

**Change of State Verbs**

Verbs denoting change of state or ‘aspectual verbs’ as called by Van Der Sandt (1988:09) function as triggers. Such verbs include *stopped, began, continued, start, finish, carry on, cease, take, leave, enter, come, go* and *arrive*. For instance:

Robert continued to tease Mary.
→ Robert had been teasing Mary.
British rulers left India.
→ British rulers had been in India.
Taliban started to threaten America.
→ Taliban hadn’t been threatening America.

2.2.2 Hard Triggers

The category ‘hard triggers’ is so called by Dorit Abusch (2002) because presuppositions triggered by such linguistic items cannot be neutralized easily. This category includes the following triggers:

**Definite Descriptions**

*Definite descriptions* presuppose the existence of a unique entity that could be a person, thing and so on. Consider the following:

My son is an astronaut.
→ I have a son.
Chandrayan discovered the lake of ice on Moon.
→ There exists a lake of ice on Moon.

**Implicative Verbs**

Implicative verbs which give rise to presupposition include *managed, forgot, happened to, avoided* *V-ing, was expected to, usually did, ought to* and so on. For example:

Martin managed to reach in time.
→ Martin tried to reach in time.
Mr. Khan happened to meet the President.
→ Mr. Khan didn’t plan to meet the President.

**Interactives**

Interactives such as *again, any more, before, another time, to come back, return, restore, repeat* give rise to presuppositions. For instance:
Monty repeated the same mistake.
→ Monty committed mistake before.
Taslima returned to India.
→ Taslima was in India before.

**Verbs of Judging**

Verbs such as accused, criticized, blame, praise, glorify are used to judge the behavior of the individuals. These verbs give rise to the presuppositions. But Levinson (1983:182) points out that implications carried by such verbs are not attributed to the speaker. However, most of the scholars treat them as triggers. Consider the following instances:

Prof. Paul accuses John of malpractice in exam.
→ Malpractice in exam is an offence.
India criticized Pakistan for helping the terrorists.
→ Pakistan helped the terrorists.

**Temporal Clauses**

Clauses beginning with before, while, since, after, during, whenever refer to particular period or point of time. Such clauses carry presuppositions about the truth of their content. For example:

Since Indira Gandhi died, our nation lacked a real leader.
→ Indira Gandhi died.
As Sachin scored 200 runs in ODI, the stadium blasted with joy.
→ Sachin scored 200 runs in ODI.

**Cleft Sentences**

Cleft as well as pseudo-cleft sentences seem to share approximately the same presuppositions. Levinson (1983:182) states that such clefts share a further presupposition that the predicate applies only to the element that is focused. For instance:

It was a laptop that Rogers bought.
→ Rogers bought a laptop.
What Rogers bought was a laptop.
→ Rogers bought a laptop.

**Implicit Cleft with Stressed Constituent**

Certain presuppositions that arise from cleft sentences can be triggered by a heavy stress on a constituent. The sentences with stress on a constituent are called implicit clefts because they have the same meaning as cleft sentences. Consider the following examples:
Sachin doesn’t play HOCKEY.
→ Sachin plays some other game.

The above utterance can be converted into cleft as:

It is not hockey that Sachin plays.

John doesn’t like PIZZA.
→ John likes some other dish.

The above utterance can be converted into cleft as:

It is not pizza that John likes.

**Comparison and Contrast**

In comparison and contrast, presuppositions may be triggered by some paralinguistic features like *stress* and linguistic items like *too, back, in return*, as well as by the *comparative clauses*. For example:

Michel called his wife a spendthrift and then HE apologized to HER.
→ For Michael to call his wife a spendthrift would be to insult her.

Genet isn’t a better playwright than Pinter.
→ Pinter is a playwright.

Money is not as valuable as life.
→ Life is valuable.

**Non-restrictive Relative Clauses**

These clauses give additional information about the preceding noun phrase. These clauses are not affected by negation of the main verb and trigger presuppositions. For instance:

Columbus, who was a sailor, discovered America.
→ Columbus was a sailor.

Columbus, who was a sailor, did not discover America.
→ Columbus was a sailor.

Shivaji, who was a great warrior, established Maratha Empire.
→ Shivaji was a great warrior.

**Counterfactual Conditionals**

Counterfactual conditionals carry presuppositions that are contrasting to the facts. As Yule (1996:29) points out, such linguistic structures imply meaning that is opposite of what is true. Consider the following:

If British had ruled twenty more years, our country would have suffered a lot.
→ British didn’t rule twenty more years.
If Shivendrasing had played in the match, India would have won the Hockey World Cup.
⇒ Shivendrasing did not play in the match.

**Interrogative structures**

Levinson states that assertive counterparts of questions are presupposed. Yes/No type questions have a peculiar kind of presupposition that Levinson calls ‘vacuous presuppositions’ (1983:184). This type of presupposition remains constant under negation. For instance:

Has anybody probed the concept of presupposition?
⇒ Either somebody has probed the concept of presupposition or nobody.
Hasn’t anybody probed the concept of presupposition?
⇒ Either somebody has probed the concept of presupposition or nobody.
Is presupposition a pragmatic or philosophic concept?
⇒ Presupposition is a pragmatic concept or presupposition is a philosophic concept.

In *WH*-questions, WH-words substitute presuppositions. According to Levinson (1983:184) such presuppositions are ‘not invariant’ to negation.

- What is the topic of Bill’s research?
  ⇒ Something is the topic of Bill’s research.
- Who won the Golden Boot Award?
  ⇒ Ronaldo won the Golden Boot Award.

**Presuppositional Adverbs**

If the constancy under negation as the test of presupposition is neglected, as Levinson (1983:185) states, propositional adverbs (Horn, 1969) like only, even, just in ‘if-then’ clauses trigger presuppositions. For example:

If only Stephen reached on time, then it must have been very far.
⇒ Stephen reached on time.
If even Stephen reached on time, it must have been very near.
⇒ Stephen is most likely person to be late.
If Stephen just reached on time, it was because he got a car.
⇒ Stephen almost did not reach on time.

**Quantifiers**

Lexical items such as all, some, at least one and so on are called ‘quantifiers’ by Van Der Sandt (1988:8-9). These linguistic items carry presuppositions. For instance:

All his friends deceived him.
The main concern regarding the above instance is, as Verschueren (1999:29) states, that the specified presuppositions do not bother whether the sentences are true or false. Therefore, the negation of the main proposition does not affect presuppositions.

All his friends did not deceive him.

Manner Adverbials

Barbara Abbott (2006:1-20) states that manner adverbials like *slowly, with a knife* … etc. presuppose whatever is expressed by rest of the sentence. Consider the following:

Mike stabbed Tony with a knife.

→ Mike stabbed Tony.

Tortoise slowly reached the finishing line.

→ Tortoise reached the finishing line.

Aspectual ‘Still’

Yael Greenberg (2008:49) states that in present tense constructions, *still* triggers presupposition. Greenberg has given the following example:

John is still asleep


The above utterance is taken to assert that John is asleep now and to presuppose that:

→ John was also asleep for some time before and up to now.

Aspectual ‘still’ is infelicitous, as Yael Greenberg states, when it appears in past tense sentences whose reference time is not specified by temporal adverbial or the context of the utterance.

Permissions

Permissions, according to Verstraete (2005:1415) trigger presuppositions about the agent’s attitude towards the proposition. Verstraete further states that external as well as internal negation of the modal expression in permission does not affect the agent’s attitude of willingness. For example:

Bill is allowed to dance.

→ Bill wants to dance.

Negation of the above utterance carries the same presupposition:
Bill is not allowed to dance.
\[ \rightarrow \text{Bill wants to dance.} \]

**Obligations**

Verstraete (2005:1415) is of the opinion that permissions and obligations have opposite presuppositions with respect to agent’s willingness. For example:

- Bill is obliged to dance
  - \[ \rightarrow \text{Bill does not want to dance.} \]

Negative obligation maintains the presupposition. Consider the following:

- Bill is not obliged to dance.
  - \[ \rightarrow \text{Bill does not want to dance.} \]

**2.3 TYPES OF PRESUPPOSITION**

**Introduction**

Types of presupposition are based mostly on the functions of linguistic items which trigger presuppositions. For instance, factive presuppositions arise because of the use of factive verbs, whereas, structural presuppositions are associated with peculiar sentence constructions. Following are the types of presupposition:

**Existential Presupposition**

Presuppositions are the aspects of meaning that must be known previously. They are taken for granted by the interlocutors and necessary to be understood properly by them in order to interpret an utterance. Referring expressions such as ‘Mumbai’ in the utterance ‘We visited Mumbai’ and ‘Sachin’ in the utterance ‘Sachin scored century’ presuppose the existence of a given place and the entities of a real world. Such type of presupposition is called as existential presupposition. It has to be satisfied in order for the sentence in which it occurs, to be meaningful.

Yule (1996:27) states that the possessive constructions in English are associated with a presupposition of existence. It is assumed to be present in any definite noun phrase as well. For instance:

- Mary’s cat.
  - \[ \rightarrow \text{Mary has a cat.} \]
- Bermuda Triangle is a mysterious place in the Pacific Ocean.
  - \[ \rightarrow \text{There exists a place called Bermuda Triangle.} \]
Actual Presupposition

An actual presupposition is any potential presupposition that is not cancelled by its context. As Levinson (1983:13) points out, cancelling mechanism separates certain presuppositions from those that survive and become actual presuppositions. He further states that potential presuppositions are associated with sentences, whereas, actual presuppositions are associated with utterances. For instance, an utterance like the following has two potential presuppositions. For example:

   Martin told that the Queen of England is tall.
   → There is someone called as Martin.
   → There is a Queen of England.

Out of these two presuppositions, only the first one is an actual presupposition and the second one carries information that is reported. Consider another example cited below.

   NASA declared that there is life on Mars.
   → There is something called NASA.
   → There is life on Mars.

Factive Presupposition

Yule (1996:27) argues that the information that follows verbs like know, realize, regret as well as phrases containing a form of ‘be’ with ‘aware’ and adjectives like odd and glad, is treated as a fact and such fact is labeled as factive presupposition. Consider the following:

   Fred didn’t realize that he insulted his boss.
   → Fred insulted his boss.
   I regret punishing him.
   → I punished him.
   He isn’t aware that he missed an opportunity.
   → He missed an opportunity.
   It isn’t odd that she came late.
   → She came late.
   I am glad that he achieved his goal.
   → He achieved his goal.

Here, the use of particular expression by the speaker is taken to presuppose the truth of the information that is stated after it.

Lexical Presupposition

Lexical presuppositions, Yule (1996:28) states, are carried by lexical items such as manage, stop, start, and again. These are the forms that are treated as sources of lexical
presupposition. In lexical presupposition, a particular expression used by the speaker is taken to presuppose another concept. For example:

- She stopped gossiping. → She used to gossip.
- He managed to reach in time. → He reached in time.
- It started raining. → It wasn’t raining before.
- Again you are wrong. → You were wrong before.

According to Kempson (1975:63), in case of lexical items, its presuppositions are said to be those elements of its meaning which are unaffected by negation. To simplify, these are the elements of meaning which are undeniable. For instance:

- She didn’t stop gossiping. → She used to gossip.

**Structural Presupposition**

There are certain presuppositions which are associated with sentence structure. As Yule (1996:28) analyses it, some structures have been traditionally analyzed as presupposing that part of the structure which is already assumed to be true. Such structures are used to treat message as presupposed and hence to be accepted as true by listeners. Such structures include *WH-constructions*. WH question is conventionally interpreted with the presupposition that information after *WH-word* is always a fact. For instance:

- Why did John kill the snake? → John killed the snake.
- When did you get Master’s Degree? → You got Master’s Degree.

When speaker asks such questions, it is presupposed that the listener has accepted the truth of the presupposition i.e. you got Master’s Degree. Such presuppositions deal with the ways of presenting information that the speaker believes what the listener should believe.

**Non-factive Presupposition**

Non-factive presuppositions are associated with a number of verbs in English. Yule (1996:29) states that in contrast with the presuppositions assumed to be true, non-factive
presuppositions are assumed not to be true. Verbs like *dream*, *imagine* and *pretend* are followed by such type of presuppositions. Consider the following:

Smith dreamed that he was dead.
→ Smith was not dead.
Mike imagined that he was in a space-ship.
→ Mike was not in a space-ship.
John pretends to be an expert.
→ John is not an expert.

**Counterfactual Presuppositions**

Counterfactual presuppositions imply the meaning that, what is presupposed is not only ‘not true’ but it is ‘opposite of what is true’ or contrasting the facts. Generally, counterfactual conditionals presuppose that the information in *if-clause* is not true at a specific time. For instance:

If Smith were Mary’s boss, he would have punished her.
→ Smith is not Mary’s boss.
If English were our mother tongue, we would have acquired it as the first language.
→ English is not our mother tongue.

Karttunen and Peters (1979:4) also state that the subjunctive conditionals, that are also known as counterfactual conditionals, presuppose the falsity of their antecedent clauses. In such conversational situations, the listener is supposed to assume that the speaker regards the antecedent clause as ‘not true’. Karttunen and Peters further argue that it is not necessary to take for granted a counterfactual presupposition for such sentences. It would be even incorrect to claim a general rule to the effect that the counterfactual conditionals presuppose that its antecedent clause is not true. The following example, quoted from Karttunen and Peters clarifies it:

If Mary were allergic to penicillin, she would have exactly the symptoms she is showing.

(1979:4).

In the above sentence, the presupposition that ‘Mary is allergic to Penicillin’ is true. Consider another example cited below.

If John were the gold medal winner, he would have reacted exactly as he is doing.
→ John is the gold medal winner.
Categorical Presupposition

Categorical or sortal presuppositions are related to the domain of predicates. Consider the following example from Allwood et al:

1. Fafnir is clever.
2. The Eiffel Tower is clever.

(1977:151).

The sentence 1 is true but sentence 2 is neither true nor false. The predicate *be clever* could be said to presuppose that its subject is a living being. Allwood et al., describe such cases to illustrate the concept of domain for predicates. The domain of a predicate is a set of all the things to which it can be meaningfully attributed. The subjects of such predicates exist as restriction on the domain of the predicate. The principle ‘F (a)’ presupposes that (a) is in the domain of F. In the analysis, where failure of presuppositions leads to ‘truth-valueless’ sentences, it would result in three cases as illustrated by Allwood et al. with the following figure:

**Domain of a predicate:**

![Diagram](image)

The sentence F (a):
- has no truth value when a is here.
- is false when a is here.
- is true when a is here.

*Note:* From Allwood et al. (1977:151).

2.4 PROPERTIES OF PRESUPPOSITION

2.4.0 Introduction

There are certain properties of presupposition such as defeasibility, behavior under negation and so on. These properties are important because they serve as tests for presuppositions to differentiate them from other inferences like conversational implicature and entailment. The properties explained below are basically related to peculiar survival or cancellation of presupposition in the specific contextual environment.
2.4.1 Defeasibility

Defeasibility refers to the cancellation of presupposition by addition of certain premises. It is one of the most significant properties of presupposition for which Levinson (1983:186) coins the term ‘touchstone’. He further observes that one of the peculiar things about presuppositions is that they are liable to evaporate in certain contexts. Such context may be immediate linguistic or less immediate discourse context. Presuppositions may evaporate in circumstances where contrary assumptions are made. It is crucial in the assessment of all theories of presupposition. It represents a peculiar quality of presuppositions that they have a tendency to evaporate in the specific context. Generally, presupposition cancellation depends on immediate linguistic as well as discourse context and instances in which contrary assumptions are made. To explain, Levinson cites examples having factive verb *know* as a trigger. The complement of *know* is presupposed to be true in sentences having second or third person subjects, as in the one that follows:

Susan doesn’t know that India won the T-20 World Cup.

→ India won the T-20 World Cup.

But in the negative sentence, containing first person subject, presupposition is not maintained:

We don’t know that India won the T-20 World Cup.

In the above utterance, presupposition is cancelled. Here, presupposition evaporates for the reason that the information carried by the complement is denied by rest of the sentence. The information in ‘That-clause’ is not shared by the speaker.

As it is stated earlier, the factive verb *regret* presupposes the information that it precedes. But most of the times, as Levinson (1983:187) points out, when the speaker and hearer know that certain facts do not stand, then the consequent presupposition do not arise. For instance, if the interlocutors are aware of the fact that Bill did not resign the job, one can say:

At least Bill won’t have to regret that he resigned the job.

Here, the presupposition ‘Bill resigned the job’ is cancelled by the facts shared by the interlocutors. Otherwise, in normal context, such sentences carry presuppositions. Moreover, temporal clause beginning with *before* usually triggers presuppositions. As a result, a sentence such as:
Peter meditated before he did his homework.
→ Peter did his homework.

However, the following utterance carries the meaning exactly opposed to the above presupposition:

Peter slept before he did his homework.

It is for the reason that assertion of the above statement is that the event of sleeping has taken place before the event of doing homework. It is generally assumed that living being could not perform such actions after they sleep. That’s why, presuppositions prove to be defeasible in such contexts. This peculiar property, that presuppositions are sensitive to background assumptions about the world, as Levinson (1987:87) states, is not only due to ‘before clauses’. Specific discourse contexts give rise to contextual defeasibility. As it is mentioned earlier, cleft constructions act as presupposition triggers. For example:

It isn’t Sam who will cheat you.
→ Someone will cheat you.

However, in utterances that follow ‘elimination process’, like the one given below, cleft constructions do not carry presuppositions.

You say that someone in the group will cheat you. Well may be so. But it won’t be Sam who will cheat you, it won’t be John, it won’t be Bill and it certainly won’t be Stephen. Therefore, no one in this group is actually going to cheat you.

(Levinson, 1983:189)

The presupposition ‘someone in the group will cheat you’ does not stand in the above utterance, for the reason that the speaker in the above utterance wants to assure the hearer that there is no one who will cheat him. Levinson sums up the major reason of presupposition cancellation in certain contexts as follows:

i. Where it is common knowledge that the presupposition is false, the speaker is not assured to be committed to the truth of the presupposition.

ii. Where what is said, taken together with background assumptions, is inconsistent with what is presupposed, the presuppositions are cancelled, and are not assumed to be held by the speaker.

iii. In certain kinds of discourse contexts, e.g. the construction of reductio arguments or the presentation of evidence against some possibility or assumption, presuppositions can systematically fail to survive.

Presuppositions are also defeated in intrasentential cancellation called as suspension of presupposition. Most of the times, use of ‘if clause’ suspends the presupposition. Consider the following:

Aston won’t make noise again, if indeed he ever did.

In the above utterance, if clause mentions that Aston never made noise. The action which never has taken place cannot be presupposed. Thus, presupposition triggered by ‘again’ is cancelled. Presuppositions are cancelled when they are explicitly denied. For instance, a sentence such as the following denies the presupposition triggered by the definite noun phrase because the existence of the king of bollywood is denied by the clause that follows:

The king of bollywood is not a famous person; there is no king of bollywood.

The entity that does not exist cannot be presupposed. As a result, the presupposition is lacking. Simons (2006) is of the view that defeasibility is a test that emphasizes the speaker oriented nature of presupposition. According to Peter Grundy (2000:135) ‘defeasible’ is the term used by pragmatists to mean that a proposition may be cancelled. If the discourse context does not allow, potential presuppositions fail to arise. Verschueren calls defeasibility as ‘just another term for context sensitivity’ (1999:29). He further states that presuppositions can be strongly sensitive to small changes in linguistic and non-linguistic context. Beaver (2001:15) states that many of the inferences, on which the identification of presupposition is based, disappear when thoroughly examined. Strawson’s (1950) position is that there is an identifiable presupposition component to the meaning of a sentence containing a definite description. Such component behaves quite differently from ordinary assertions. Speakers’ knowledge of the world plays a crucial role in the way they answer. Consider the following exchange, where presupposition is cancelled by the denial of the definite description:

A: The King of America is very shrewd.
B: Oh, come on; America is not a Monarchy. It’s a Democracy.
A: Ok, I was wrong then. May be it was the President I was thinking of.

The negation in above exchange is different from ordinary truth-conditional negation. Such type of presupposition cancellation is, according to various presupposition theorists, is exceptional. Such cancellation seems to be in contrast with the concept of presupposition as implication property of language. Consequently, it forces to be careful
in the process of presupposition identification. Wilson, while commenting on the hypothetical cancellation account of presupposition, says:

“It would be natural for a pragmatic presupposition analyst to respond that there are canceling mechanisms of either an implicit or explicit nature, and that when such cancellations take place, the presupposition must be regarded not as violated, with resulting infelicity, but simply removed, with no resulting defects at all” (1975:210).

Thus, it can be observed that presupposition is cancelled in various distinct environments. It is cancelled when information carried by a complement is denied by rest of the sentence. Moreover, presuppositions are canceled in illogical sequence of events. That’s why, defeasibility should not be regarded as a defect of presupposition; rather it is a significant quality of presupposition.

2.4.2 Behavior under Negation
Presuppositions remain constant even if the original sentence is negated. This very behavior of presupposition is known as constancy under negation. For Levinson (1983:192), various theories of presupposition have sprouted out of such behavior of presupposition. It is a peculiar survival property of presupposition. It is pointed out by Frege (1892, 1952) and Strawson (1952) that presupposition survives under negation of an utterance. However, entailments do not survive under negation. For instance:

Bill Gates devised five advanced software.
→ There exists a person called Bill Gates.
¬|-- Bill Gates devised three advanced software.

If the above sentence is negated, as given below, the presupposition remains constant whereas entailment is cancelled.

Bill Gates didn’t devise five advanced software.
→ There exists a person called Bill Gates.
¬|-- *Bill Gates devised three advanced software.

It can be observed that presupposition ‘There exists a person called Bill Gates’ survives in negative sentence above, whereas an entailment ‘*Bill Gates devised three advanced software’ is cancelled by negation of the main verb. This kind of negation, in which the presupposition is not affected, is called ‘internal negation’ by Weischedel (1979:162). On the other hand, ‘external negation’, suggested by Weischedel, denies at least one of the presuppositions of the affirmative form of the sentence. For example:
HERMAN : Did Mary leave when John came?
FRANK : Mary did not leave when John came. Because John never came

(1979:165).

In the above exchange, Herman presupposes that John came and wants to know whether Mary left after John came. But the presupposition is denied with the external negation of the sentence by Frank informing that John never came. As Dinsmore (1981:77) states, presupposition, entailment and negation are in clear relation with each other. He assumes that ‘not-s’ is syntactically similar to ‘s’ except the presence of ‘not’ and presence or absence of ‘do’ to make ‘not-s’ grammatical. In other words, negative counterpart of a sentence is distinct from its affirmative form with respect to the presence of negative adverb ‘not’. When ‘not’ is attached to the subject instead of main verb, the sentence transforms into denial of negation. Thus, the ‘denial negation’ of the sentence (1) below would be the one that immediately follows and not the later one.

1. All of the Indians are patriotic.
2. Not all of the Indians are patriotic.
3. All of the Indians are not patriotic.

The sentence (1) cited above has the following presupposition:

→ Indians are patriotic.

The above presupposition is shared by the denial negation (2) of the original sentence. However, sentence (3) does not share the same presupposition. Denial negation of a sentence, as Dinsmore states, is a sentence sharing the presuppositions. Such sentences share the same presuppositions without getting affected by negation. Dinsmore defines denial negation as follows, that provides the significance of the nature of discourse in negation which is crucial in semantic as well as pragmatic environment:

X is the DENIAL NEGATION of Y if X and Y are semantically inconsistent and a discourse in which the utterance X is followed by an utterance ‘No Y’ by another speech participant is natural


Thus, besides defeasibility, constancy under negation is one of the significant properties of presupposition. It emphasizes the fact that presupposition survives even if the original sentence is negated. Like defeasibility, constancy under
negation proves that presupposition stands separate from other types of inferences.

2.4.3 Detachability

Presuppositions are detachable in the sense that it is possible to find another way to express an identical content that lacks the inference in question. According to Levinson, presuppositions are detachable in Grice’s sense. Levinson states:

Whereas in the case of implicatures it is generally impossible to find another way to say the same thing that lacks the same implicatures, in the case of presuppositions the inferences seem to be attached directly to certain aspects of the surface form of linguistic expressions (1983:223).

Presupposition is a kind of inference that is associated with the form, in contrast with implicatures which are associated with the meaning of what is said. Detachability results from the fact that presuppositions are triggered by specific linguistic structures. For instances, interrogative constructions give rise to structural presupposition, verbs of judging trigger presuppositions about the behavior of individuals, cleft constructions carry presuppositions that predicate applies only to the element that is focused, definite descriptions and proper names have presuppositions of existence and so on.

2.4.4 Speaker Commitment and Hearer Accommodation

Speakers are committed to acceptances of the presuppositions of their utterances. As Simons (2007:15) states, presuppositions are propositions which a cooperative speaker must accept. The production of an utterance, indeed counts a commitment to acceptance of the required presuppositions. Such acceptance facilitates the interpreter to make sense. Simons further states that interlocutors accept the presuppositions of utterances of others, even if they did not do so prior to the utterance. This is generally called as accommodation of presupposition. It is the result of the general tendency of the interlocutors to be cooperative and try to coordinate their acceptances. If the speaker accepts any presupposition, he intends that the hearer accepts the same. And if the speaker is aware that his utterance indicates this acceptance, then he assumes that the hearer will share it. In this way, the presuppositions of the speaker’s utterances may come to be mutually accepted. Stalnaker (2002) proposes a gradual account of how informative presuppositions result in a change in common ground. Consider the following example:

I want to take my uncle to the hospital.
In the above utterance, the hearer first observes that the speaker has said something which is appropriate only if he believes that it is common ground that the speaker has an uncle. From this, the hearer infers that the speaker himself believes that he has an uncle. As Stalnaker states, accommodation is a matter of discourse participants coordinating their first order beliefs.

2.4.5 Non-controversiality

Non-controversiality of presupposition arises out of an intention of the speakers to be cooperative in conversation. Simons (2007:16) states that there should be a tendency of the speakers to produce utterances having highly non-controversial presuppositions for communication to be successful. As mentioned earlier, the speakers are generally committed to acceptances of the presuppositions of their utterances. If the presuppositions are controversial, the speakers may be challenged for the presuppositions which are not part of their intention. To simplify, the conversational goals will be regarded unimportant if certain utterance carries controversial presuppositions. In normal circumstances, speakers always wish their utterances to be identified as cooperative and share presuppositions that are familiar propositions, not controversial ones.

2.4.6 Backgrounding

This property of presuppositions explains the immediate insight, as Simons (2007:16) states, that they are backgrounded or they are non-main-points. By definition, they are not parts of the speaker’s communicative intention. On the contrary, they are necessary prior acceptances of the speaker. Simons further states that sometimes presuppositions do have main-point status. In such circumstances, the speaker becomes deliberately indirect and exploits the presuppositional requirements of the utterance. When someone says:

I have to pick up my son from the school.

He may be aware that as a result of the utterance the hearer will presuppose that the speaker has a son. However, the speaker’s communicative intention here is simply to tell that he has to do something.

2.5 PROJECTION PROBLEM

2.5.0 What is Projection Problem?

Projection Problem is considered by various scholars as a problematic property of presupposition. It is related with the behaviors of presuppositions in complex sentences.
As Levinson (1983:191) points out, Frege held that the meanings of sentences are compositional. In other words, the meaning of the complete expression is a function of the meanings of its components. Van Der Sandt states the projection problem as follows:

Let \( \varphi_1, \varphi_2 \ldots \varphi_n \) be non-embedded sentences that carry presuppositions, and let \( \text{EP} (\varphi_1), \text{EP} (\varphi_2) \ldots \text{EP} (\varphi_n) \) be the set of elementary presuppositions that are associated \( \varphi_1 \) through \( \varphi_n \). Furthermore let us represent an arbitrary sentence that result from combining \( \varphi_1, \varphi_2 \ldots \varphi_n \) with logical operators, complement-taking verb or logical connectives like \( C (\varphi_1 \ldots \varphi_n) \). The question is then what is the set of presuppositions associated with \( C (\varphi_1 \ldots \varphi_n) \)? Is it the union of the sets of elementary presuppositions associated with \( \varphi_1 \) to \( \varphi_n \), or a subset thereof? Or is it perhaps a new set determined by the elementary presuppositions associated with \( \varphi_1 \) through \( \varphi_n \), the semantic properties of the embedding operators, complement taking verbs and logical connectives, and the mode of the sentence?

Here \( \text{EP} (\varphi) \) stands for elementary presuppositions associated with \( \varphi \). The following sentences with logical connectives and complement taking verbs throw light on this phenomenon:

1. Aston probably does not realize that his family has discovered that he spent money in pub again.
2. Either Davies regrets that Aston punished him again or he looks disturbed because he has lost his identity card.

In utterance 1, the clause ‘He spent money in pub again’ carries the elementary presupposition that Aston has spent money in pub before. The sentence as a whole carries the same presupposition. In the same way, utterance 2 also carries presuppositions that Aston has punished Davies before and Davies has lost his identity card. It is obvious that the truth value of the elementary presuppositions is maintained for the whole sentence. Langendoen and Savin (1971) add that the presuppositions of the components of a complex sentence are preserved without any change as presuppositions of the entire sentence. They state:

Presuppositions of a subordinate clause do not amalgamate either with presuppositions or assertions of higher clauses; rather they stand as presuppositions of the complex sentence in which they occur

Kempson, while commenting on projection problem, says:
This is the problem that a recursive characterization of such presupposition relations has to be sensitive at least to the linguistic context in which the presupposing sentence is contained; for although sometimes the presupposition is preserved when this is embedded, sometimes it is not (1988:145).

Weischedel characterizes projection problem as:

The search for a recursive rule that would give the presuppositions and entailments of a compound sentence from those of its embedded sentence has been called the PROJECTION PROBLEM (1979:168).

Levinson (1983:191) makes it clear that there are two facets of the projection problem. Firstly, presuppositions are preserved in linguistic context where entailments cannot be. On the other hand, in some contexts where entailments remain untouched, presuppositions vanish; though expected to be preserved. The concepts pertained to the projection problem have been briefly discussed below.

2.5.1 Denial

Most of the times, presuppositions of lower clauses fail to be inherited by the sentence as a whole. Such intrasentential cancellation of presuppositions results in denial. According to Levinson (1983:194), such disappearances occur where the presuppositions of a sentence are overtly denied in a coordinate sentence, as the one that follows:

Osama claims to be the Emperor of Gulf, but of course there isn’t any such Emperor any more.

In the above utterance, presupposition that ‘There is an Emperor of Gulf’ is overtly denied by the next clause. Levinson further states that this denial of presupposition is a property that has prime importance in presuppositional behavior. However, overt denial is not possible in many cases with positive sentences. As a result, the following sentence seems to be unacceptable:

*Osama claims to be the Emperor of Gulf, but in fact he never did.

This sentence is a kind of contradiction and consequently fails to be meaningful.

2.5.2 Suspension

Suspension is a special way in which presuppositions behave in conditionals. Lakoff (1970) as well as Horn (1972) focus on the existence of ‘qualifying phrases’. Such
phrases are claimed to eliminate the presuppositions of the clause which they follow. This is called as cancellation, neutralization or suspension. For instance:

Few women have stopped gossiping about neighbors, if any at all have.

In the above sentence, the first clause carries the elementary presupposition that some women have gossiped about their neighbors. However, the elementary presupposition is cancelled after the analysis of the sentence as a whole. According to Van Der Sandt (1988:43); Lakoff and Horn fail to illustrate the general stipulation, which any sentence must gratify, for the cancellation of its presupposition by a qualifying phrase.

2.5.3 World-creating Verbs:

According to Morgan (1969:171), the projection problem arises because of, what he calls ‘world-creating verbs’ like ‘dream.’ Such verbs raise a new set of presuppositions which is applicable to an imaginative or a created world only. For example:

I dreamed that I was British and that I regretted it.

Here, the second clause carries the elementary presupposition that the speaker is British. On the contrary, the sentence as a whole does not presuppose the same. In such a sentence, the elementary presuppositions are transformed into a different set of presuppositions. Related to this phenomenon, Morgan states:

The presuppositions of a sentence flow down the tree. But there are certain verbs which can block this flow by defining a new set of presuppositions which consists of the down flowing set plus changes overtly defined within the sphere of this lower world-creating verb. The new set of presuppositions holds in the sphere of this verb in the same manner unless changed again by a lower world-creating verb


2.5.4 Cumulative Hypothesis

Cumulative hypothesis depicts that any sentence, whatever its complexity and structure, as Heim (1990:15) states, simply carries all the presuppositions of its elementary constituent sentences. Moreover, Langendoen and Savin (1971:57) argue that a set of presuppositions of complex whole is the simple sum of presuppositions of its parts. A set of presuppositions of a complex sentence is logical sum of the presuppositions of component sentences which Morgan (1973:100) calls as ‘cumulative hypothesis.’ Levinson tries to formulate it in the following way:
If \( S_0 \) is a complex sentence containing sentence \( S_1, S_2 \ldots S_n \) as constituents, the presuppositions of \( S_0 = \) the presuppositions of \( S_1 \) the presuppositions of \( S_2 \ldots + \) the presuppositions of \( S_n \) 


Levinson comments that the above explanation is not appropriate in a sense that it has been proved difficult to devise a theory that will state correctly which presuppositions of the component clause are carried by a complex sentence. Such a compositional problem is known as the projection problem. In other words, it deals with the question: How are the presuppositions of a complex sentence related to presuppositions of its clauses?

2.5.5 Presuppositional Grammar

Introduction

In recent literature, most of the projection rules are based on the phenomenon of presupposition cancellation and preservation. Various linguistic items perform a major role in such cancellation or preservation. Such items, which have significant place in presuppositional behavior, are Filters, Holes, Plugs and Dyers.

Filters

Filters are the linguistic items that preserve the elementary presuppositions under certain circumstances, while under other circumstances they block presuppositions. Therefore, they are called filters. Sentential connectives like \( \text{if} \ldots \text{then}, \ldots, \text{and}, \ldots \text{or} \) are linguistic items which, under certain conditions, cancel some of the presuppositions of the complement. Such items are called as filters. These items preserve the elementary presuppositions of the connected clause under certain circumstances and under other circumstances, they block presuppositions. Karttunen says that filters are:

\[ \text{Predicates which, under certain conditions, cancel some of the presuppositions of the arguments} \]


Dinsmore explains that there arise certain conditions governing the behavior of presuppositions in sentences. These conditions are called as filters. He states:

Under certain circumstances, a presupposition is lost or radically altered when information related to that presupposition is presented elsewhere in the sentence. Structures which allegedly define these conditions are called FILTERS

The following instances, quoted from Karttunen, help to illustrate the function of filters in presuppositional behavior:

1. If baldness is hereditary, then all of Jack’s children are bald.
2. If all of Jack’s children are bald, then baldness is hereditary.
3. If Jack has children, then Jack’s children are bald.
4. If all of Jack’s children are bald, then Jack has children.

(1973:177).

Here, the utterances 1, 2 and 3 share the same elementary presupposition that ‘Jack has children’. It is preserved as a presupposition of sentences as a whole. On the contrary, the presupposition fails in case of utterance 4. Karttunen, as appears in Levinson, states the following filtering conditions:

1. “In a sentence of the form if $P$ then $q$, (and also, perhaps, in a sentence of the form $P \& q$) the presuppositions of the parts will be inherited by the whole unless $q$ presupposes $r$ and $p$ entails $r$.”
2. In the sentences of the form $P \lor q$, the presuppositions of the parts will be inherited by the whole unless $q$ presupposes $r$ and $\neg p$ entails $r$”.


These filtering conditions focus on the fact that a sentence cannot both presuppose and entail the same proposition. Consider the following examples.

1. Either Monty will not finally do Ph. D., or he will regret doing it.
2. Monty is going to do Ph. D., and he is going to regret it.

Here, sentence 2 does not presuppose sentence 1 for the reason that sentence 1 asserts what is presupposed by sentence 2. This filtering condition is similar to the condition referred earlier. Liberman (1973, in Van Der Sandt 1988:99) is of the opinion that the presupposition of the second clause is filtered even though the first clause does not entail the presupposition of the second. For instance:

It is possible that Thomas has cousins and it is possible that his cousins are out of station.

The second clause carries the presupposition that Thomas has cousins, but the first clause in the sentence doesn’t entail that Thomas has cousins.

Holes

Holes are the linguistic items that preserve presuppositions of component sentences in a complex one. Karttunen suggest that certain compliment taking verbs and sentential
operators function as holes. He provides a list of such linguistic items that contains factive verbs, aspectual verbs, and verbs like seem, be possible, be probable, be true … etc. According to Karttunen, holes are:

Predicates which let all the presuppositions of the compliment sentence become presuppositions of the matrix sentence


Van Der Sandt (1988:45) states that cumulative hypothesis makes right predictions for all such verbs and the elementary presuppositions related to the complements of these verbs are carried by the entire sentence. Consider the following example:

It is true that Corbett knows that Indian tigers are the best.

The above sentence presupposes both the following:

\[ \rightarrow \] Corbett knows that Indian tigers are the best.
\[ \rightarrow \] Indian tigers are the best.

According to Dinsmore:

Holes are verbs which take sentential complements for which the cumulative hypothesis works without exception


Levinson (1983:193) thinks that it is because of holes that it is possible to define presuppositions not as inferences merely surviving under negation. He further states that in many cases, it can be reasonably claimed that the positive sentences constructed with holes, in fact, entail their alleged presuppositions. It proves that presuppositions systematically survive in various distinct contexts where entailments fail.

**Dyers**

Certain linguistic items that convert presuppositions of the subordinate clauses into the presuppositions about the beliefs of the subject of the main clause are called dyers. Dyers include verbs like believe, hope and fear. For instance:

Stephen believes that Meg Knows that Smith scored century.
\[ \rightarrow \] Stephen believes that smith scored century.
\[ \rightarrow \] Smith scored century.

Most of the times, the groups of holes and dyers can overlap. The verb ‘believe’ is supposed to preserve as well as alter presuppositions but there are instances, like the one that follows, in which it fails to preserve presuppositions:
George even believes that the president of USA is visiting Iran.

In the above sentence, the verb ‘believe’ does not presuppose its complement. That’s why Dinsmore (1981) is of the opinion that ‘believe’ is not a hole but it is a dyer. On the contrary, ‘know’ is both a hole and a dyer as it preserves as well as alters presuppositions. Dinsmore suggests a way to distinguish dyers which are also holes from those which are not; by formulating a ‘filtering environment.’ He states:

If the presuppositions are filtered, then the verbal under consideration is not a hole. If the altered but not the pure, presupposition is filtered, then the verbal in question is a hole


It can be observed that dyers often carry the qualities of holes. In other words, they generally preserve presuppositions.

**Plugs**

There are certain linguistic items that are associated with the complete cancellation of presuppositions. Such items, called plugs, include verbs such as *say, mention, claim, tell, ask, promise* and the verbs that are used to convey message or to carry the illocutionary act performed. Karttunen characterizes plugs as:

Predicates which block off all the presuppositions of the compliment sentence


According to Van Der Sandt (1988:44), the plugs have the property of blocking all the presuppositions carried by their complements, unless they are used performatively. For example:

Bill promised Sue to introduce her to an alien.

The above utterance does not presuppose the existence of an alien. However, it is observed in most of the cases that some presuppositions of the complements of plugs survive. For instance:

The dealer did not tell me that my mobile is internet compatible.

→ My mobile is internet compatible.

In addition, presuppositions triggered by plugs always survive in the sentences having first person subjects. Consider the following example:

I claimed that the earth moves round the sun.
The earth moves round the sun.

Moreover, Morgan (1973:144) points out that, generic forms of plug generally act like dyers and presuppose their complements as follows:

Mary says that Julie regretted having insulted Paul.
⇒ Mary believes that Julie insulted Paul.

Levinson (1983:195) states that plugs are in contrast to holes, in that; they block the presuppositions of complement sentences to become presupposition of the entire sentence.

Finally, Levinson provides basic facts about these linguistic items, which any theory of how presuppositions are compositionally collected must be able to deal with:

(i) Presuppositions may be overtly denied without contradiction or anomaly; that they may also be suspended by the use of if clauses
(ii) Presuppositions may be filtered in specifiable contexts when they arise from sentences that are part of compounds formed by the use of the connectives or, if … then and others
(iii) Presuppositions survive in contexts where entailments cannot: in modal contexts, conditionals and disjunctions in particular.


Thus, the major concern of the projection of presupposition is that a presupposition of a part of an utterance is sometimes also a presupposition of the whole utterance, and sometimes not.

2.6 CONCLUSION

To sum up, it can be said that presupposition is one of the most noteworthy notions in pragmatics, which originated from philosophy and eventually got a significant status in non-conventional study of meaning. The chapter has devised the theoretical framework of presupposition to investigate the phenomenon with reference to the selected plays. The chapter consists of an extensive review of presupposition in relation to various other concepts such as speech act theory, Gricean theory and entailment to mention a few. Presupposition has been surveyed with orientation to semantic as well as pragmatic nature, with various types, triggers and definitions. The chapter ends with various properties of presupposition and projection problem consisting cumulative hypothesis and presuppositional grammar. The chapter that follows deals with the theoretical framework of another important notion in pragmatics, namely, Conversational Implicature.