

Presupposition as a Pragmatic Phenomenon

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Section One:

1.1 Introduction:

The concept of presupposition has a long history in pragmatics. This concept originated in the philosophy of logic, where it is used to denote a special type of implicit information. In order to clarify the concept of presupposition, some authors have compared speech with a Gestalt's picture in which it is possible to distinguish a ground and a figure. Presuppositions are the ground; what is actually said is the figure. As in Gestalt picture, ground and figure are simultaneous in speech; unlike the two possible representations in the Gestalt picture, speech ground and figure have a different status, for instance with respect to possible refutation. What is said, i.e., the figure, is open to objection; what is assumed, i.e., the ground, is "shielded from challenge". What crucially restricts the analogy is the fact that discourse is a dynamic process, whereas a picture is not. (Mey, 2009: 759). Yule (1996: 133) defines presupposition "*something the speaker assumes to be the case*". Al-Sulaimaan (2010: 185) mentions that the notion of presupposition first appears in Frege's work on the nature of reference and referring expressions. His main claims can be summarized as follows:

- (1) Referring expressions (names, definite descriptions) carry the presupposition that they do in fact refer.
- (2) For a sentence to have a truth value, its presupposition must hold.
- (3) A presupposition of a sentence is also a presupposition of its negation.

Davis (1991: 397) states that presupposition is an important element in the distribution of **GIVEN** and **NEW INFORMATION** in discourse. Communication would be impossible if everything had to be defined or explained every time we spoke; but the degree of necessary explicitness will vary from situation to situation, and depend on the knowledge that speakers and hearers will assume of each other. The presupposed knowledge is then taken together with the propositions asserted in the utterance and the addressee's knowledge of the world as the basis on which an inference is drawn as to the implied meaning that he conveys. Fariclough (1995: 107) shows that any text is a combination of explicit meanings - what is actually 'said' - and implicit meanings - what is left 'unsaid' but taken as given, as presupposed. Presuppositions anchor (connect) the new in the old, the unknown in the known. Thus the following example:

(1) "*The king of France is bald.*"

which expresses the proposition that a particular entity – namely the one described as the king of France is bald. The proposition is true just in case it corresponds to the outside world, i.e., if and only if it correctly describes a state of affairs in the outside world in which an entity, the one who corresponds uniquely to the title the king of France, is bald. Regardless of whether the sentence in (1) is true or false, it assumes that there is a unique king of France in the outside world.

Consider the next example:

(2) *I enjoyed working with Anne when she was setting assignments.*

(2) presupposes that there is such person as Anne and that she set assignments, and asserts that it was at that time that I enjoyed working with her. In fact, the term presupposition has been used to cover a very broad category of semantic and then of pragmatic phenomena that have an essential bearing on the understanding of utterances.

1.2 Traditional Approaches to Presupposition

Levinson (1983, 169) states that the analysis of presupposition phenomena goes back to the philosophers of language and philosophical debates about reference and referring expressions. Frege (1892) argued that both the following sentences (3) and (4):

(3) *Kepler died in misery.*

(4) *Kepler did not die in misery.*

presuppose the existence of a presumably unique referent for the singular subject 'Kepler', but this presupposition is not provided by the sentence, that is, it is not part of its semantic content otherwise it

would undergo all the logical processes that logical forms do, and the results would be absurd: if the affirmative sentence had the logical form "Kepler died in misery and the name Kepler has a referent", its negation would be "Kepler did not die in misery or Kepler has reference", which is absurd. Moreover, it is cited in Levinson (1983: 169) that Frege (1892) made a similar observation concerning temporal clauses as in (6)-(8) below.

(6) *After the separation of Schleswig –Holstein from Denmark, Prussia and Austria quarreled .*

(7) *After the separation of Schleswig –Holstein from Denmark, Prussia and Austria did not quarrel*

(8) *Schleswig –Holstein was once separated from Denmark.*

Both (6) and (7) presuppose the truth (8) on the basis of these examples, Frege concluded that (a) referring expressions and temporal clauses have a reference by virtue of the fact that they carry presupposition, (b) a sentence and its negation share the same set of presupposition, and (c) in order for an assertion or a sentence to be true or false, its presupposition must be true or satisfied. Mey (2009: 743) adds that Freges analysis of singular terms was criticized by Russell on account of its incapability of explaining meaningfulness of sentences including terms that have no reference such as:

(9) *The present king of France is bald.* The solution offered by Russell in his *On Denoting* (1905) - a new **theory of descriptions** which banished (excluded) descriptions like 'the present king of France' from logical form while replacing them with a conjunction of three assertions:

(10) *There is a king of France.*

(11) *There is only one king of France.*

(12) *There is nothing which is king of France and is not bald.*

Given that one of the above conjuncts is false, namely (10), the conjunction of all three them, is false according to the logical rule of conjunction. Hence (9) has a truth value, in terms of which it is meaningful. Levinson (1983: 172) illustrates that Russell was able to account for scope ambiguities as exhibited in negative sentences, such as the one in (13) below:

(13) *The king of France is not bald.* This sentence can have two interpretations: **a wide scope one**, where by it allows one to deny that the king of France exists, or **a narrow scope one**, where by it only denies that the predicate applies to him. Mey (2009: 746) shows that Russell's analysis remained largely unchallenged until Strawson (1950) proposed a quite different approach. He claimed that most puzzles can be got rid of if we distinguish between sentences and the use of sentences to make statements, holding that it is not sentences which can be true or false, but only statements, which can be judged for truth or falsity depending on the parameters of their use. A sentence like (1) can be used to make a true or false statement whenever there is in fact a king of France. If there is no such person, the question of truth or falsity dose not even rise (Mey, 2009: 746).

(1) *The king of France is bald.* Hence, the statement of (1) may well have been true in A.D. 1670 and false in A.D. 1770, but in 1970 the statement cannot sensibly be said to be either true or false: due to the non-existence of a king of France in 1970, so the question of its truth or falsity does not even arise. Strawson was therefore led to claim that there is a special kind of relationship between (1) and (9):

(1) *The king of France is bald.*

(9) *The present king of France is bald.*

namely, that (9) is a precondition for (1) being judgable as either true or false. He called this relation "**Presupposition**", and he held that "**a statement A presupposes statement B if B is a precondition of truth or falsity of A**". Moreover, Strawson's view (as Frege's) that a negative sentence, when uttered, will preserve its presupposition. These views contrast with Russell's which held that a negative sentence has two scopes of negation (Levinson, 1983: 172).

1.3 Presupposition Triggers

Verschueren and Ostman (1995: 144-5) state that semantic presuppositions are assumed to be explicitly anchored to some linguistic form or material appearing in the surface form of the utterance. These forms are called '**presupposition triggers**'. Presupposition triggers fall into two main categories: lexical and syntactic. In what follows we shall review the most important ones:

(a) **Definite Description**: Inherited from the philosophical debate briefly reported above, is the generalization that all definite descriptions, including proper names, carry with them existential presupposition. For instance:

(14) *Sue is dancing a Macarena.*

presupposes that in some possible world, there is a person called Sue and that there in some dance called Macarena.

(b) Factive predicates: These are a special class of predicates whose syntactic behaviour has been shown by Kiparsky & Kiparsky (1970) to depend on the semantic presupposition associated with the that-clause they govern. **Factive predicates** include epistemic verbs like: *know, realize, ignore* and **Emotive predicates** like: *be surprised, be glad, regret, forget, deplore, resent, care about*.

(15) *I regret that he is completely drunk.*

(=) He is completely drunk.

(16) *I suppose he is completely drunk.*

(*) He is completely drunk. [I am not sure]

(c) Implicative verbs: In addition to factive verbs which presuppose the truth of their complement sentence, Karttunen (1971) has identified another class of verbs which also involve presuppositions, but in a different way. These verbs which Karttunen called "**implicative verbs**" include: *manage, remember, bother, get, dare, happen*.

(17) *George managed to kiss Naomi.*

(=) George tried to kiss Naomi.

(18) *George did not manage to kiss Naomi.*

(=) George tried to kiss Naomi.

(d) Change of state, inchoative and iterative verbs also presuppose their complements:

(19) *George has stopped smoking.*

(=) George used to smoke.

(20) *When he met Sue, George started to stammer.*

(=) George did not stammer before meeting Sue.

(21) *Sue re-read his thesis.*

(=) Sue had read his thesis before.

(e) Verbs of judging:

Fillmore (1971) and McCawley (1975) discussed the implications of such verbs as *accuse, blame, criticize*, and labelled them '**lexical presuppositions**':

The sentences below:

(22) Sue is *accused of / blamed / criticized* for slamming her husband.

involve the propositions "**Sue slammed her husband**" and slamming one's husband is bad, but Fillmore remarked, *accuse* asserts that Sue did it and presupposes that it was bad, while *criticize* asserts that the deed was bad and presupposes that Sue was responsible for it.

Presuppositions may be triggered by the syntactic form of the sentence: **(f) Clefting and pseudoclefting:**

For example:

(23) *It is George who kissed Naomi.*

(24) *The one who kissed Naomi is George.*

While the conceptual meanings underlying (23) and (24) are identical and coincide with the conceptual meaning underlying the unmarked construction (25) (Verschueren and Ostman, 1995: 144-5)

(=) (25) *George kissed Naomi.*

that is there is an individual called George and there is an individual called Naomi and they were involved in an act of kissing: the actual meanings conveyed by each of the sentences vary as a function of the different distribution of information that is asserted and information that is presupposed.

(g) Temporal clauses presuppose the truth of the content they convey:

(26) *Before leaving, George shut the windows.*

(=) George left.

(27) *After their father's death, they sold large house.*

(=) Their father died.

(h) Non-restrictive relative clauses: These clauses are not negated when the main clause is negated: they are therefore able to carry presuppositions. For instances:

(28) *Hillary who is a famous lawyer, has four children*

(=) Hillary as a famous lawyer

(i) Counterfactuals presuppose that the contrary of what is stated was the case.

(29) *If you had listened to my warnings, you would not be in trouble now.*

(=) You had not listened to my warnings.

(30) *If she had not called him pig: he would not have felt so poor.*

(=) She called him pig. (Verschueren and Ostman, 1995: 144-5)

All the cases discussed so far as examples of semantic presuppositions are based on the negation test. It has been shown, however that semantic presuppositions also survive in another context, that is when the sentences which carry them are made into questions. So the semantic presupposition in (a) triggered by the proper name in "*Sue is dancing a Macarena*" survives if we ask "Is Sue dancing a Macarena?" and the same can be checked to hold for all our examples (b) through (i), (Verschueren and Ostman, 1995: 144-5).

1.4 Problematic Properties Verschueren and Ostman (1995: 144-5) mention that survival to negation and question is not however a guarantee that the identified inference is a semantic presupposition. In order to include presuppositions with in the class of logic semantic categories we must demonstrate that there are aspects of meaning associated with a linguistic expression in a stable and invariant manner. That is they do not vary when the context of utterance varies. Unfortunately, critical analyses of presuppositional phenomena have shown that this is not the case: some alleged presuppositions may disappear in some contexts, and this proves that they are neither stable nor invariant aspects of meaning (Verschueren and Ostman, 1995: 146).

1.4.1 Defeasibility: Levinson (1983:186) says that in certain contexts, presuppositions are liable to vanish - some linguists take this to be a defining property of presuppositions called *defeasibility*. We say that presuppositions are defeasible because in certain contexts that can be eliminated. For instance, when certain facts that are inconsistent with the presupposition are mutually known, then the presupposition does not arise thereby avoiding a contradiction. In other words, a presupposition only arises when it is consistent with the common knowledge of the participants; otherwise it vanishes. An example is provided in (31) which takes advantage of an asymmetry for the factive verb *regret*.

(31) *a. context: John got job out of graduate school at least John won't have to regret doing a Ph.D.*

(=) John did a Ph. D.

b. context: It is common knowledge that john didn't get into the doctoral program at least John won't have to regret doing a Ph. D. [Doesn't presupposed]

(*) John did a Ph. D.

In (31b), it is mutual knowledge that John didn't get into a doctoral programme, which is where you do a Ph. D. The presupposition that John did a Ph. D. is inconsistent with this knowledge and so does not arise.

(32) *a. Sue cried before she finished her Ph. D.*

(=) Sue finished her Ph. D.

b. Sue died before she finished her Ph. D.

(*) Sue finished her Ph. D.

c. Sue didn't die before she finished her Ph. D.

(=) Sue finished her Ph. D.

The utterance, in (32a), states that the event (Sue cried) precedes the event (Sue finished her Ph. D.) and, by virtue of the temporal clause, it presupposes Sue finished her Ph. D. The utterance in (32b) states the same temporal order but the presupposition dose go through because it conflicts with the background knowledge that person cannot finish something if s/he is dead. Skeptics says that (32) highlights an interesting peculiarity regarding before clauses rather than a sensitivity to background assumptions. Presuppositions may be defeated through contextual means or, more directly, using various sentential devices like overt denial. The latter are illustrated in (33)-(34). Note first the presupposition in (33).

(33) *John didn't manage to pass his exams.*

(=) John tried to pass his exams.

(34) *a. John didn't manage to pass his exams, in fact he didn't even try.*

b. John didn't manage to pass his exams, if indeed he even tried.

c. Either john never tried to pass his exams, or he even tried but he never managed to pass them.

d. John didn't manage to pass his exams: he got through without even trying.

(*) John tried to pass his exams

None of the utterances in (34) have the presupposition triggered by the word manage.

1.4.2. Projection Problem

Frege held that the meaning of sentences are compositional, i.e. that the meaning of the whole expression is a function of the meaning of the parts. It was originally suggested by Langendoen & Savin (1971) that this was true of presuppositions too, and moreover that the set of presuppositions of the complex whole is the simple sum of the presuppositions of the parts. But such a simple solution to the presuppositions of complex sentences is far from correct. This compositional problems is known as the projection problem for presuppositions (Levinson, 1983: 191). There are two sides to the projection problem. On the one hand, presuppositions survive in linguistic contexts where entailments cannot. Finch (2005: 154) defines entailment as a logical relationship between two sentences such that the truth of the second sentences necessarily follows the truth of the first. On the other hand, presuppositions disappear in other contexts where one might expect them survive, and entailments would. **The first** and obvious kind of context in which **presupposition survive where entailments do not** is (1) under negation as in the examples below:

(34) *The chief constable arrested three men.*

(35) *There is a chief constable. [Presupposes].*

(36) *The chief constable arrested at least two men. [Entailment]*

If the sentences (35) is negated, as in (37), the entailment (36) does not survive; but the presupposition dose.

(37) *The chief constable did not arrest three men.*

Similarly, presuppositions survive in other kinds of context which entailment dose not. One such is in (2) modal context, i.e. embedding under modal operators [like: *possible, there is a chance that* and so on]. Thus (38) intuitively constitutes to presuppose (35):

(38) *It's possible that the chief constable arrested three men.*

But (38) certainly does not entail (36), because one cannot logically infer from the mere possibility of a state of affair that any part of it is actual. In other words, we infer two possibilities from (38) that the chief constable might arrest three men or he arrested none. In this case, we cannot definitely say that the chief constable arrested at least two men. The same behaviour occurs under **deontic modalities** like those expressed by *ought to, should, could*, and the like:

(39) *The chief constable ought to arrest three men.*

(40) *The chief constable could arrest three men.* (Levinson, 1983: 191-2). **The other side of the projection problem** where *presuppositions disappear and entailment dose not* by virtue of intra-sentential context. The most straightforward way in which such disappearances occur is where **(1) the presuppositions of a sentences are overtly denied in a co-ordinate sentences**, as in the example:

(41) *John did not manage to pass his exams, in fact he did not even try.* Verschueren and Ostman (2009: 146) add that presuppositions cannot only be cancelled: they can be suspended, as in (42).

(42) *Tom will regret kissing Sue, if he ever did it.*

Despite the factive verb, there is no way of assuming the truth of the fact that Tom kissed Sue from (42). Levinson (1983: 193) shows other kinds of contexts that block presuppositions: contexts which contain **(2) Plugs** which are represented by either **verbs of propositional attitude** [like: *want, believe, imagine, dream*] or **all verbs of saying** [like: *say, tell, mumble, report, etc.*]. They block presuppositions of lower sentences ascending to become presuppositions of the whole sentences as in the examples:

(43) *Loony Old Harry believes he is the king of France.*

(44) *Nixon announced his regret that he did not know what his subordinates were up to.*

Which do not seem to have respectively, the expectable presuppositions:

(45) *There is a present king of France.*

(46) *Nixon did not know what his subordinates up to.*

Heim (1990: 23), cited in Levinson, 1983: 193-6), draws the attention to the most troublesome aspect of the projection problem namely the behaviour of presupposition in complex sentences formed by using **(3) the connectives**: *and, or, if...then*, and the related expressions that include *but, alternatively, suppose that*, and many others as shown in the examples below:

(47) *If john dose linguistics, he will regret doing it.*

(48) *John will do linguistics.*

Here the consequent (second clause of the conditional) alone would presuppose (48), but the whole conditional does not clearly because the presupposition is mentioned in the first clause and is thus more hypothetical.

(49) Either John will not in the end do linguistics, or he will regret doing it.

In the example above (49), the second clause alone presupposes (48), but the whole does not. The presuppositions seem to be cancelled in this case because the alternative expressed in the first clause is the negation of the presupposition of the second clause (Levinson, 1983: 193-6). Then some scholars have tried to make up for the projection inconveniences by suggesting solutions for accommodating presuppositions in the problematic contexts (Kempson 1975; Wilson 1975; Wilson & Sperber 1979; Gazdar 1979), but the projection problem has laid bare the uncontroversial fact that presuppositions are sensitive to the context. Consequently, they cannot be dealt with in entirely semantic terms: rather, they have to be treated as pragmatic phenomenon (Verschueren and Ostman, 1995: 147).

Section Two: Kinds of Explanation

2.1 Entailment and Presupposition.

Verschueren and Ostman (2009: 141) state that the notion of 'entailment' is a relation between semantic units, that is propositions, and it drawn from classical logic. As such, it is defined in terms of valid inferences, or, alternatively, in terms of truth values:

(1) A entails B (A \Rightarrow B) if B is true whenever A is true (or, in all worlds where A is true, B is true). This is a fundamental category in logic, because it is the basis for all other logical relations, such as equivalence and contradiction. Thus, the proposition underlying the sentence "*Molly is a cat*" entails the proposition underlying the sentence "*Molly is an animal*":

(2) CAT (M) \Rightarrow ANIMAL (M)

As a consequence one cannot assert that Molly is a cat and deny that it is an animal: the result would be a contradiction. A presupposition is something the speaker assumes to be the case prior to making an utterance. Speakers, not sentences, have presuppositions. An entailment is something that logically follows from what is asserted in the utterance. Sentences, not speakers have entailment (Yule, 1996: 25).

Entailment is not a pragmatic concept, but instead is considered a purely logical concept, e.g.

(3) Rover chased three squirrels. (= p)

(4) a- Something chased three squirrels. (= q)

b- Rover did something to three squirrels. (= r)

c- Rover chased three of something. (= s)

d- Something happened. (= t)

In representing the relationship of entailment between (3) and (4a) as p \Rightarrow q, we have simply symbolized a logical consequence. In uttering (3), the speaker is committed to the truth of a very large number of background entailments [only some of which is presented in (4a-d)], and he will indicate how these entailments are to be ordered. The speaker will communicate, typically by stress, which entailment is supposed to be in the foreground, or more important for interpreting intended meaning than any others. For example, in (3):

(5) Rover chased **THREE** squirrels.

The speaker indicates that the foreground entailment is that Rover chased a certain number of squirrels (Yule, 1996: 33).

We can see that sentences (M) and (N) below have the same entailments as they are truth-conditionally identical.

(M) *I didn't see anyone there.*

(N) *I saw no one there* (Horn & Ward, 2006: 414).

Entailments are part of the content of what is said, and can neither be cancelled nor detached. Entailments became particularly attractive in linguistics when the notion of presupposition started to be debated. Semantic theories, in fact, saw the possibility of formally defining presuppositions as a special type of entailment (Verschueren and Ostman, 2009: 141).

2.2 Semantic Presupposition

Levinson (1983: 199) explains that there are two main classes of semantic theories concerning presupposition: the first is the truth conditional class of theories in which presupposition has been characterized as special species of entailment as in the following definition:

(6) A sentence A semantically presupposes another sentence B if:

a) In all situations where A is true, B is true.

b) In all situations where A is false, B is true (ibid:175).

Such theories require a drastic re-organization of the entire logic structure of a semantic theory.

In other words, Mey (2009: 761) states that its parentage is accredited: Frege, Russell, Strawson. There is substantial agreement as to its definition the presupposition of a sentence is what remains valid even if the sentence is denied; its truth is a necessary condition for a declarative sentence to have a truth value or to be used in order to make a statement. A respectable test has been devised to identify it- the negation test. There is a list of the linguistic facts, (Levinson, 1983: 181-185), that trigger the phenomenon of presupposition: thirty- one have been listed, from factive verbs (e.g., *know*, *regret*); to change- of- state verbs (e.g., *stop*, *arrive*) to cleft sentences.

What dooms such semantic theories of presupposition are the two cardinal properties of presuppositional behaviour: **defeasibility** and the peculiar of the **projection problem**. The point about defeasibility is that presuppositions do not always survive in certain discourse context (Levinson, 1983: 199). Verschueren and Ostman (2009: 146-7) explain that survival to negation and question is not, however, a guarantee that the identified inference is a semantic presupposition. In order to include presuppositions within the class of logico- semantic categories it is suggested to demonstrate that there are aspects of meaning associated with linguistic expression in a stable and invariant manner that is, they do not vary when the context of utterance varies, e.g.

(7) *Sue cried before discussing her Ph.D. thesis.*

In (7) the temporal clause triggers the presupposition that Sue discussed her Ph.D. thesis, but if we replace the verb "to cry" with "to die" the presupposition (i.e. Sue finished her thesis) disappears:

(8) *Sue died before discussing her Ph. D. thesis.*

This concludes the knowledge of the world: it is known that if someone dies he will no longer be able to do anything and this type of knowledge is stronger than the type of knowledge involved in drawing the inference from the temporal clause.

Presuppositions cannot only be cancelled: they can be suspended, as in (9).

(9) *Tom will regret kissing Sue, if he ever did it.*

Despite the factive verbs, there is no way of assuming the truth of the fact that Tom kissed Sue from (9). Now the definition of semantic presupposition in (6) is constructed using the notion of semantic entailment, and the definition of semantic entailment in (1) specifies that for a proposition **p** to semantically entail a proposition **q** it is necessary that in all worlds in which **p** is true **q** is true. The consequence is that semantic presupposition is a necessary **invariant** relation (See Levinson, 1983: 199-200) Other kinds of context can block presuppositions (i.e. the projection problem): if they are dependent on verbs of saying for example presupposition are not inherited by the complex sentence. Sentence (10) does not presuppose that he was not recommended, because the truth of the whole sentence depends on the sincerity of his saying

(10) *Tom said that he was glad he had not been recommended.*

Nor can presupposition survive within the scope of propositional attitude predicates:

(11) *Does not presuppose that there is only one heir as the definite description would imply.*

(12) *Tom believes he is the only heir.*

Propositional attitude predicates and verbs of saying therefore behave like plugs: in that they prevent presuppositions triggered by specific lexical items to become presupposition of the whole sentence. As such they are contrasted by Karttunen (1973) with holes: such as, *negations*, *modal verbs* and *question*, and with 'filters', the latter being represented by the connectives *and or, if... then* which sometimes do sometimes do not let presupposition pass (Kerschueren and Ostman, 2009: 147). The second class of theories is to accommodate presupposition within a semantic theory based on atomic (or tiny) concept or semantic primes or features [*semantic primes are conceptual but they are not abstract, they correspond to word meanings in ordinary language* (Mey, 2009:1116)]. The properties of such semantic theories are much less well defined than logical models, and to a certain extent this makes them more adaptable to

handle new kinds of supposed semantic relation. Thus, Katz & Langendoen maintain that semantic presupposition is a perfectly viable concept, indeed, the only viable one when modeled within a feature – style semantics, (though it simply cannot handle the projection problem) (Levinson, 1983: 203).

In other words, the whole problem connected to the inheritance of presuppositions in complex sentences is known as the 'projection problem' and it has been reputed to be the fatal flaw (or failing) of semantic presupposition. Although some scholars have tried to make up for the projection inconveniences by suggesting solutions for accommodating presuppositions in the problematic contexts (Kempson 1975; Wilson 1975; Wilson & Sperber 1979; Gazdar 1979). The projection problem has laid bare the uncontroversial fact that presuppositions are sensitive to the context. Consequently, they cannot be dealt with in entirely semantic terms: rather, they have to be treated as pragmatic phenomenon (Verschuereen and Ostman, 2009: 147).

However, it is not difficult to show that many such attempt given the avowed goals of such semantic theory, is simply misplaced. For the aim of such theories to tease apart our knowledge of the semantic of our language from our knowledge of the world and to isolate the relatively small set of atomic concepts required for the description of semantics alone. Semantics in this view is concerned with the context – independent, stable meanings of words and clauses, leaving to pragmatics those inferences that are special to certain context. Semantic theories are not viable for the simple reason that semantics is concerned with the specification of invariant stable meanings that can be associated with the expressions. Presuppositions are not invariant and they are not stable, and they do not belong in any orderly to semantics (Levinson, 1983: 204).

2.3 Pragmatic Theories of Presupposition

There are two main concepts that define the presupposition as a pragmatic concept: **the first** is the mutual knowledge (or common ground) and **the second** is the appropriateness (or felicity).

- a- Mey (2009: 116) shows that the notion of '**common ground**' was introduced, in turn, by Robert Stalnaker (1978), based on Lewis's common knowledge, to account for the way in which information accumulates in conversation:

Roughly speaking the presuppositions of a speaker are the propositions whose truth he takes for ground as part of the background of the conversation. Presuppositions are what is taken by the speaker to be the common ground of the participants in the conversation, what is treated as their **common knowledge** or **mutual knowledge**.

In this view, people in conversation take certain propositions to be common ground and when they make assertions they add to this common ground.

When **A** tells **B**, *George arrived home yesterday*, **A** takes it as common ground with **B** who George is, what day it is and where George lives. **A** uses the assertion to add to their common ground the proposition that George arrived home the day before. Common ground therefore also includes common (or mutual) beliefs and common (or mutual) suppositions (ibid). Grice (1967, 1981), Schiffer (1972), and Lewis (1969) had employed similar notions Stalnaker (1974: 200) uses a Gricean formulation:

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 believes that his addressee assumes or believes that **P**, and assumes or believes that his addressee recognizes that he is making these assumptions or has these beliefs (Horn & Word, 2006: 33).

- b- The identification of presuppositions with felicity conditions is not a new idea "by the presuppositional aspect of a speech communication" argued Fillmore (1971:276) "*I mean those conditions which must be satisfied in order for a particular illocutionary act to be effectively performed in saying particular sentences it is assumed not to be concerned with the totality of such conditions but only with those that can be related to facts about the linguistic structure of sentences*". For a pragmaticists, this definition is attractive in that it underscores the need to research systematic relations between utterance function and form. However, it cannot be accepted to the extent that felicity conditions necessarily are of a heterogeneous nature (Pace Katz, 1977), in that they involve the extra linguistic world; in other words, they concern the place where language and world meet the communicative situation (Mey, 2009: 765). Levinson (1983: 206) says that presuppositions seem to be tied to the surface form of expressions plausibly the following sentences all share the same truth condition:

(13) *John didn't give Bill a book.*

(14) *It wasn't a book that John gave to Bill.*

(15) *It wasn't John who gave Bill a book.*

and differ only in that (14) has the additional presupposition (16), and (15) the additional presupposition (17):

(16) *John gave Bill something.*

(17) *Someone gave Bill a book.*

There seems to be a conventional association between the surface organization of constituents in a cleft construction and a particular presupposition. Levinson assumes two theories that presuppositions are therefore part of the conventional meaning of expressions, even though they are not semantic inferences. This should serve to distinguish presupposition from conversational implicature, which otherwise share many of the same properties of defeasibility, for conversational implicatures are non-detachable (Levinson, 1983: 206).

2.3.1 Karttunen & Peters' Theory

The first theory developed by Karttunen & Peters (1975, 1979), as expressed in the Montague Grammar, says that the semantic content of an expression is built up in tandem (or cycle) with syntax. Every word, clause, or syntactic operation can have associated with its semantic representation (just like extension expressions), to be associated with presupposition-triggers. Karttunen & Peters call the meaning expressions that capture presuppositions "**conventional implicatures**", and the terminology identifies presuppositions with those pragmatic inferences that Grice (1975) isolated as being conventional, non-cancellable and yet not part of the truth condition.

But how can it be claimed that presuppositions are non-cancellable? The answer lies in the details of Karttunen & Peters' system. The idea is that, in addition to implicature expressions capturing the presuppositional content of each presupposition triggering item, there will be associated with each constituent a heritage expression whose sole function will be to govern the projection of the presuppositions expressed in the implicature expressions. They classified embedding construction into *plugs*, *filters* and *holes*. For example, (18) will not have the presupposition (19) because the word *claims* will have an associated heritage expression that will block it:

(18) *Nato claims that the nuclear deterrent is vital.*

(19) *There exist a nuclear deterrent.* Accordingly, cooperative participants have the obligation to "*organize their contribution in such a way that the conventional implicature of the sentence uttered are already part of the common ground at the time of the utterance*" (Karttunen & Peters, 1975: 269), cited in Levinson (1983: 209). This theory cannot handle the contextual defeasibility for the same reason that semantic theories of presupposition cannot. So, it is the use of an utterance in discourse for specific conversational purpose, rather than the logical properties of the particular connective, that seems to determine the appropriate filtering condition. Once again, presupposition proves contextually dependent (ibid: 211-2).

2.3.2 Gazdar's Theory (1979)

In this theory, presuppositions are assumed once again to be non-truth conditional aspects of the meaning of linguistic expressions. They have to be arbitrarily associated with linguistic expressions, principally in the lexicon. In contrast to the prior theory, in Gazdar's theory presuppositions are actually cancelled. For (complex) sentences, potential presuppositions will consist of all the presuppositions of its parts, while for utterances, a cancelling mechanism is brought into play which culls (or selects) out of this total set of potential presuppositions of a sentence uttered in a particular context. The cancelling mechanism works in this way. Context consists of a set of propositions that are mutually known by participants, or which at least be accepted as to be non-controversial. When they converse, participants augment the context by the addition of presuppositions they express. This augmentation should proceed in specific order: first the entailment of what are said are added to the context, then the conversational implicature and only finally the presuppositions. Such order in which an utterance's inferences are added is:

- 1- The entailments of the uttered sentence **S**
- 2- The clausal conversational implicatures of **S**
- 3- The scalar conversational implicatures of **S**
- 4- The presuppositions of **S** (Levinson, 1983: 213-4).

S – John and Mary have called their newly born baby Sara.

- 1- The newly born baby is called Sara.
- 2- The baby has been given a name.
- 3- All parents name their newly born babies.
- 4- John and Mary are a husband and a wife who have a newly born daughter.

For Levinson (1983: 216) a theory that would be preferable would predict the presuppositions from the semantic presupposition triggers, by means of general pragmatic principles.

2.4 Presupposition and Conversational Implicature

Mey (2009: 763-4) manifests the distinction between presupposition and conversational implicatures in the following: we can reasonably maintain that pragmatic presuppositions are oriented, retroactively, toward a background of beliefs assumed to be shared. Implicature, on the other hand, are oriented, proactively, toward knowledge yet to be built. Presuppositions concern belief consisting the background of communication. They become the object of communication (thus losing their status of presupposition) only if someone goes wrong, if the addressee does not accept them or question them, forcing the speaker to put his or her cards on the table. Implicature, on the contrary, concern a knowledge that is not yet shared and that will become such only if the addressee goes through the correct inferences while interpreting the speaker's communicative intention. The distinction is thus more a matter of degree than a true dichotomy, the latter, more than the former, requiring the addressee to abandon his or her laziness with addressee. Presuppositions can remain in the background of communication and even go unconsidered by the addressee without making the communication suffer. Implicature must be calculated for communication to proceed in the direction desired by the speaker (Mey, 2009: 763-4). The role of presuppositions and implicatures, seen against the backdrop of the speaker's expectations and the discourse design, are therefore different; the former are oriented toward the already constructed (or given as such), the latter toward the yet to be constructed or, even better, toward a 'construction in progress': the former concern a set of assumptions, the latter their updating. Presuppositions are more closely linked to what is actually said, to the surface structure of the utterance; implicatures are more closely linked to what is actually meant. Their respective degree of cancelability also seem to be different: presuppositions are less cancelable than implicatures. This difference between presuppositions and implicatures with respect to the criterion of cancelability could be reformulated in terms of utterance responsibilities and commitment (Mey, 2009: 763-4). With presuppositions and implicatures, the speaker is committed to different degree – more with the former, less with the latter – with respect to his or her own implicate. Thus, a definition of pragmatic presuppositions could be formulated as ***"that which our hearer is entitled to believe on the basis of our work"***.

Implicature is an actualized perlocution. From the utterance:

(20) *My car broke down.* we can draw a limited number of presuppositions, e.g.,

(21) *There is a car,*

(22) *The car is mine,*

(23) *The car was working before.*

But an indefinite number of implicatures, e.g.,

(24) *Where is the nearest garage?,*

(25) *I can't drive you to the gym,*

(26) *Can you lend me some money to have it repaired?,*

(27) *Bad luck haunts me.*

Finally, an interesting relationship is the symbiosis of pragmatic presuppositions and implicatures in indirect speech acts: the presuppositions of the act (preparatory conditions in particular) are stated or questioned so as to release a (generalized conversational) implicatures (ibid).

Conversational implicatures are pragmatic: they arise from the use of language in particular contexts. Grice outlined this approach to illustrate how hearers manage to work out the complete

message when speakers mean more than they say. Conversational implicatures are meanings which are produced by speakers with shared knowledge of both the situation and some background (Goody 1978: 218, Jeffries 1998: 193, Keith 1999, and Peccei 1999: 25). It is generally accepted at the main value of the notion of conversational implicature is that it captures the way in which speakers can convey more than what they actually say-or, in other words, the way in which utterances have implicit import as well as explicit content (Platts 1972: 72, Cole 1981: 190, Sweetser 1990:93, Davis 1991:365, and McCarthy et al. 1994:136). An example of conversational implicature is the sentence:-

(28) *Do you have any money on you?* Meaning:-

(29) *I don't have any money; can I borrow some from you?*

A conversational implicature is an inference, an additional message that the hearer is able to work out from what is said by appealing to the rules governing successful conversational interaction (Anderson et al. 2000: 91-2).

Section Three: Presupposition in Selected Literary Texts: Remarks on the Foundation of the Projection Problem

Writers on presupposition, and on the "projection problem" of determining the presuppositions of compound sentences from their component clauses, traditionally assign presuppositions to each clause in isolation. We argue that many presuppositional elements are anaphoric to previous discourse or contextual elements. In compound sentences, they can be other clauses of the sentence. We thus need a theory of presuppositional anaphora, analogous to the corresponding pronominal theory. From the following example: "*have you stopped beating your wife?*", we are all familiar with the intuitive concept of presupposition. Though there have been many conflicting attempts in the literature to capture what this concept means, to some degree Justice Stewart's comment about pornography holds here: we all recognize it when we see it, even if we can't say exactly what it is. In this research, we will be concerned with what is called in the linguistics literature "the projection problem of presuppositions." That problem is simply this: if we have a logically complex sentence whose clauses bear certain presuppositions, how do we compute the presuppositions of the whole? The main object of this paper is that the usual literature on the projection problem for presupposition ignores an anaphoric element that ought to have been taken into account. When this element is put in, there is a considerable change in the formulation of the problem. Since we do not consider ourselves experts in this area, we will begin by giving a brief review of the portion of the literature that we know. Somas (1982: 488) gives a fairly standard list of different kinds of presupposition.

- | | |
|---|-----------------------|
| (1) Bill regrets lying to his parents. | (Factive) |
| The analysis: Bill has lied to his parents. | |
| (2) Ivan has stopped beating his wife. | (Aspectual) |
| The analysis: Ivan has beaten his wife. | |
| (3) Andy met with the PLO again today. | (Iterative) |
| The analysis: Andy met with the PLO before. | |
| (4) It was in August that we left Connecticut. | (Cleft) |
| The analysis: we left Connecticut. | |
| (5) What John destroyed was his typewriter. | (Pseudo cleft) |
| The analysis: John destroyed something. | |
| (6) Billy is guilty, too. | (Too) |
| The analysis: someone other than Billy is guilty. | |
| (7) All of John's children are asleep. | (Certain quantifiers) |
| The analysis: John has children. | |
| (8) The king of France is in hiding. | (Referential) |
| The analysis: there is a king of France. | |

Conclusion

From this simple research it is concluded that presupposition is a pragmatic phenomenon. It is a significant element which can help in facilitating the communication between human beings. Without presupposition communication would be impossible because it is impossible to mention everything when we are speaking. This indicates that there must be share knowledge between interlocutors to make the communication between them possible. In addition, presupposition is neither entirely semantic nor

pragmatic. Contrary to pragmatic approach, presuppositions are part of the semantic content of sentences but the process by which speakers give an interpretation to their presuppositional sentences is pragmatically constrained. Finally, during this research we noticed that presupposition is different from entailment and from conversational implicature and in semantics the meaning is stable, not depending on the context, while in pragmatics the meaning is depending on the context when the context is changed the meaning is changed also.

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