



## Presupposition analysis of Anton Chekhov ' the Cherry Orchard

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### ABSTRACT

A linguistic presupposition is something that is overtly expressed in the body of the statement itself, which must be presupposed or accepted in order for the sentence or utterance to make sense. It is an inference that can be made from the structure of language that provides a path from the words expressed by someone (often called the surface structure) to what is actually going on inside the person (inner feelings, thoughts, memories, beliefs, values -- the deep structure). Linguistic presuppositions allow for the internal universe of the speaker to be revealed; and thus presumed by the listener from the words that the person is using. The information that a person reveals through speech is not necessarily accurate or correct and will nonetheless reveal what they hold to be true in their model of the world. As the listener gains an understanding of the internal representations of the speaker, she can use different sentence structures or a change in words to offer the original speaker alternative internal representations for consideration - thus potentially assisting the original speaker to expand/loosen his model of the world.

**KEY WORDS:** Existential presupposition , Factive presupposition, Lexical presupposition, Structural presupposition , non- factive presupposition, Counter-factual presupposition.

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### INTRODUCTION

Presupposition is one of the most important notions in pragmatics, but it originated from the debates in philosophy. Frege is the first philosopher who brought the notion of presupposition and arise the attention of many scholars about it. In his article "*on the sense and reference*", the relation between presupposition and sentence meaning are discussed. In 1892, Frege pointed out that if anything is asserted, there is always an obvious presupposition that the simple or compound proper names used have a reference. If someone declares *Kepler* died in misery, a presupposition that the name '*Kepler*' means somebody. So Frege forms the theory of presupposition with the following explanations, those are as follows: (1) presuppositions are embedded in referring phrases and temporal clauses which really indicate the fact in the clauses; (2) presupposition stay the same in both a sentence and its corresponding negative sentence; and (3) an assumption of a sentence would be either true or not true on the condition that the presupposition of this sentences must be true or not true.

However, the British philosopher Bertrand Russell did not agree with Frege's views[1]. He got some different conclusions when he studied the same problems in the theory of reference. Accordingly, he put forward his famous theory of descriptions. He asserted that a definite description of a sentence declares the appearance of the described person. The sentence will be false on the condition that the demanding of presence is not fulfilled. He insisted that these conclusions can deal with the problems appeared in Frege's conclusions.

For fifty years, no one disputed Russell's thoughts until Strawson [5] when the tendency of language studies moved from philosophy into the language use itself. Strawson thought that it was not sentences but statements really are not true or false. In Strawson's book *introduction to logical theory*[6] published in 1952, the term "presupposition" was used. Following are his notion of presupposition:

- A proposition X presupposes another proposition Y;
- (1) If proposition X is true, then proposition Y is true
  - (2) If proposition X is false, then proposition Y is true.

In Stalnaker's *pragmatics* 1972, he pointed out that in pragmatic sense, presupposing a proposition is taking its truth for granted, and presuming that others involved in the context have the same preposition. These mean that presupposition is a series of assertions, which are intended expressed by the speaker and

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the hearer in the communication. For Stalnaker[4], presupposition refers to the background knowledge of a conversation and fresh information which is asserted by the utterance comes out.

Latterly, Karttunen[3] and some other linguistic scholars thought Stalnaker's concept of presupposition is a felicity condition when the speaker utters a sentence in a context. Compared with Frege's concept, Stalnaker's concept of presupposition is pragmatic presupposition and demands that the presupposition and demands that the presuppositions that asserted by the speaker should be accepted by his hearers as well. Stalnaker's presuppositions are those that the speaker takes as common background for the participants in the conversation. Grice [2], Schiffer and Lewis had used similar concepts. In 1972, Stalnaker employs a Gricean formulation to illustrate the relationship between a proposition and the utterance, that is, a proposition  $p$  is a pragmatic presupposition of an interlocutor in a certain context just on the condition that the interlocutor assumes or believes that  $p$ , and assumes or believes that his hearer recognizes that he is making these assumptions, or has these beliefs.

Presupposition is considered as a relationship between two presuppositions in many argumentations of the definition. On the condition that we consider the sentence (1) was the proposition  $p$  containing and we consider the sentence (2) was the proposition  $q$  containing, sign "  $\gg$  " is employed to mean "presupposes", the relationship of those two propositions can be described as in sentence (3).

1. Lily's cat is very clever. (=  $p$ )
2. Lily has a cat. (=  $q$ )
3.  $p \gg q$

However, we find that when we make the opposite of the sentence (1) by negating it (= NOT  $p$ ), as sentence (1), we arrive a conclusion that the relationship between  $p$  and  $q$  remain the same.

1. Lily's cat isn't clever. (=NOT  $p$ )
2. Lily has a cat. (=  $q$ )
3. NOT  $p \gg q$

This special feature of presupposition is generally defined as constancy under negation. It means that the presupposition of a statement and the presupposition of its negative are the same. Following is another example, imagining a situation that you have different opinion a person who has already uttered the statement in (1).

1. Everyone thinks that Lily is lesbian. (=  $p$ )
2. Everyone doesn't know that Lily is lesbian. (= NOT  $p$ )
3. Lily is lesbian.
4.  $P \gg q$  & NOT  $p \gg q$

What is obvious that the two speakers have different opinion with the validity of  $p$ , when they make their statements; they both assume the truth of  $q$ . the proposition  $q$  which was showed in (4) remains constancy under negation, is presupposed by both  $p$  and NOT  $p$ .

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

This article is a glim to some parts *The Cherry Orchard* a famous play by Anton Chekhov using the different types of presupposition. All the explanation needed for each parts of this classification is presented in the following parts and analyses of the selected parts have been done according to it.

## RESULTS

### Types of presupposition in Anton Chekhov's the Cherry Orchard

#### (1) Existential Presupposition

This is a basic kind of presupposition, which typically presupposes the existence of something or ideas. It is usually triggered by definite descriptions which are formed by using proper names, definite article, demonstrative pronouns and possessives. According to the study of psychology and the relevance theory, people expect to find optimal relevance with the minimal effort. The possessive construction in English is associated with a presupposition of existence, like the following:

Mary's car  $\gg$  Marry has a car

Like the above examples I found possessive forms in *The Cherry Orchard's* Act I as follows:

VARYA.[TO YASHA] Your mother's come from the village; she is been sitting in the *servants' room* since yesterday, and wants to see you.... (Act I p. 17)

Servants 'room >> servants have room

GAEV. My darling! [kisses *ANYA'S face and hands*] My child... (Act I p. 18)

ANYA'S face and hands >> ANYA has face and hand

The existential presupposition is not only assumed to be present in possessive constructions, but more generally in any definite noun phrase e.g.:

a) This house was once owned by a rich man. >>

b) There once existed a house.

Consider the following example from Act I of the play under consideration:

G AEV. *The train was two hours late*. There now; how's that for punctuality?

(Act I p. 4)

a) *The train was two hours late*. >>

b) *There is a train*.

By using the expressions in a, the speaker is assumed to be the existence of the entities named, as he uses the definite noun phrase.

## (2) Factive presupposition (presuppose truth of what is stated)

This is another kind of presupposition, which can be triggered both lexically and syntactically. Just as the proverb goes, "facts speak louder than words". The presupposed information following a verb like "know" can be treated as a factive presupposition. A number of other verbs such as *realize, regret, decide, remember, believe, notice, acknowledge, claim*, as well as phrases involving "be" like *be certain, be disappointed, be aware that, be sorry that, be glad that, be odd that, etc.* have factive presupposition.

a) She didn't realize John was ill >> John was ill

b) I regretted telling him >> I told him

c) I'm glad it's over >> It's over

d) I wasn't aware that she was married >> she was married

Let's go to the play to see some instances that shows factive one:

TROFIMOV. ....We must help with all our strength those who seek to **know** what Fate will bring. (Act II p. 53) >> what the fail will bring

GAVE. I **remember** when I was six years,. (Act IV p.86) >>I was six years

## (3) Lexical presupposition (presuppose an unstated concept)

There are also a number of other forms which may best be treated as a source of lexical presuppositions. Generally speaking, in lexical presupposition, the use of one form with its asserted meaning is conventionally interpreted with the presupposition that another meaning is understood.

Every time you say that someone "managed" to do something, the asserted meaning is that the person succeeded in some way and there is a presupposition that a person "tired" to do something, so "manage" is conventionally interpreted as asserting "succeeded" and presupposing "tired".

a) Sarah managed to ... >> She succeeded

b) Sarah didn't manage to... >> She failed

but a)+b) >>She tried to

c) She stopped smoking >> She used to smoke

d) She started smoking >> She didn't smoke before

I think the following selected part is the proper one:

LUBOV. The second is Varya. She **is used to** getting up early and to work, and now she's no work to do she's like a fish out of water. >> She always gets up early

(Act IV p. 50)

## (4) Structural presupposition (presupposes that part of structure is already assumed to be true)

In the structural presuppositions, certain sentence structures have been analyzed conventionally and regularly presupposing that part of the structure is already assumed to be true. We might say that speakers can use such structures to treat information as presupposed and hence to be accepted as true by the listener. For example, the wh- question construction in English is conventionally interpreted with the presupposition that the information after the wh- form is already known to be the case.

a) when did he leave? >>he left

b) Where did you buy the cake? >>you bought the cake

Now let us look at the following examples from the selected play:

ANYA. Why did you tie Charlotte on to me? >> Charlotte tied on to me.

(Act I p. 4)

VARYA. Why aren't you in bed, ANYA? >> You should be in bed.

(Act I p. 18)

The type of presupposition illustrated can lead listener to believe that the information presented is necessarily true, rather than just the presupposition of the person asking the question.

**(5) Non –factive presupposition** (presupposes what is stated not to be true)

Associated with a number of verbs in English. A non-factive presupposition is one that is assumed not to be true. Verbs like “dream” “imagine”, and “pretend” are used with the presuppositions that what follows is not true.

a) I dreamed that I was rich. >> I was not rich.

b) We imagined that we were in Hawaii. >> We were not in Hawaii.

c) He pretends to be ill. >> He is not ill.

Let us look at the following examples of the play that shows Non-Factive presupposition:

TROFIMOV. I suppose I shall always be a student. >> I am not always a student.

(Act I p. 16)

EPIKHODOV. I should prefer to be alone with you. [sighs]

>> I am not alone with you.

(Act II p. 29)

The above examples are the typical examples of non- factive presuppositions.

**(6) Counter- factual presupposition** (What is presupposed is not only not true but contra to what is true)

A counter- factual presupposition means that what is presupposed is not only not true, but is the opposite of what is true or “contrary to facts”. A conditional structure of the type, generally called a counter factual conditional, presupposes that the information is not true at the time of utterance.

a) If you were my friend... >> you are not my friend

b) If I had not burnt the cake, we would be having it for tea

>> I burnt the cake.

Let us consider the examples of the play:

GAEV. Yes.... [Pause] If there's any illness for which people offer many remedies, you may be sure that particular illness incurable, I think.

>> All illnesses are curable but that particular illness is not.

(Act I p. 17)

LOPAKHIN..... [TO LUBOV ANDEREYEVNA]. If you think about the villas and make up your mind then just let me know and I'll raise a loan of 50,000 rubles at once. Think about it seriously.

>> Get your decision about the villas.

(Act I p. 14)

**Conclusion**

Presuppositions are powerful tools for manipulating others. To defend yourself, know how they're used, know how to detect them, and know how to respond. Presuppositions are powerful, because we tend to focus on the outmost layer of meaning, and we overlook the presupposition deep inside. At the normal pace of conversation, slides past us, and we get confused.

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