PRESUPPOSITION IN THE 2024 UNITED STATES PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE

Najla Nazhifah Salma[1] Heri Heryono[2]
Institusi:Universitas Widyatama: [1]najla.nazhifah@widyatama.ac.id

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis jenis-jenis presuposisi dan pemicu presuposisi dalam Debat Presiden Amerika Serikat 2024. Penelitian ini berfokus pada identifikasi jenis-jenis praanggapan dan pemicu praanggapan yang digunakan oleh para kandidat selama debat berlangsung. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif, data dikumpulkan dari transkrip debat resmi dan dianalisis berdasarkan teori dari Yule (1996) dan Levinson (1983). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa praanggapan eksistensial, faktual, leksikal, dan struktural sering muncul dalam ujaran para kandidat. Hal ini terutama dipicu oleh deskripsi yang pasti, kata kerja faktual, kata kerja perubahan keadaan, dan struktur interogatif. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa para kandidat secara strategis menggunakan praanggapan untuk menyajikan opini sebagai fakta yang sudah mapan, membingkai narasi secara persuasif, dan secara halus mempengaruhi persepsi publik. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada pemahaman wacana politik dengan mengungkap bagaimana bahasa digunakan secara implisit untuk membangun makna dan membujuk khalayak dalam lingkungan politik.

Abstract

This study aims to analyze the types of presupposition and presupposition triggers in The United States Presidential Debate 2024. It focuses on identifying the types of presuppositions and the presupposition triggers used by the candidates during the debate. Utilizing a qualitative descriptive approach, data were collected from official debate transcripts and analyzed based on theories by Yule (1996) and Levinson (1983). The results show that existential, factive, lexical, and structural presuppositions frequently appear in the candidates' utterances. These are primarily triggered by definite descriptions, factive verbs,

change-of-state verbs, and interrogative structures. The findings indicate that candidates strategically employ presuppositions to present opinions as established facts, frame narratives persuasively, and subtly influence public perception. This study contributes to the understanding of political discourse by uncovering how language is used implicitly to construct meaning and persuade audiences in political settings.

Keyword: *Pragmatics; Presupposition; US; Triggers; Presidential Debate*

A. INTRODUCTION

The Industrial Revolution and the advent of globalization shaped the glocalization perspectives put forward Rahardi (2023). In turn, they led to remarkable developments in information technology. In the contemporary political dynamic, presupposition has a critical role in shaping public perception and understanding of the narratives delivered by presidential candidates. On the YouTube platform, particularly on The Wall Street Journal channel, there is a segment that presents presidential candidates sharing their statements for the future of The United States.

By analyzing the presuppositions in their debate, we can discover deeper layers of meaning and implications that may not be immediately apparent to the audience. In the linguistic context of pragmatics, presuppositions are assumptions that are implicitly accepted as true in a particular context. Levinson classified types of presuppositions, including existential, factive, lexical, non-factive, structural, and counterfactual (Dewi & Susanto, 2023). In the context of the 2024 US Presidential Debate, we can analyze how these presuppositions affect viewers' interpretation and reception of the message.

Previous studies, such as "A Pragmatic Analysis of George Yule's Presupposition in the News Article of The Jakarta Post" by Achwan Sapara et al. have explored presuppositions in political news articles, showing how journalists use them to influence readers' interpretation of events. However, while that study focused on written political discourse in the news media, this study examines presuppositions in spoken discourse, specifically in live presidential debates. This study examines supposition in spoken discourse, specifically in live presidential debates. Unlike news articles, where information undergoes editorial filtering, political debates are delivered live, which allows candidates to use supposition dynamically to build persuasive arguments.

Comprehending these presuppositions allows us to more deeply evaluate and critique the presidential candidates' statements, providing richer insights into their communication strategies and their impact on people's political thinking. According to (Hendar & Anshari, 2021) communication is successful when participants understand each other during the process. One needs to learn about pragmatics to comprehend the context and meaning of a speech act.

The candidates can use assumptions strategically to organize issues and

communicate with the audience. It means, the speaker can convey their thoughts and the listener can understand the message. In this context, people should be aware of the research on this concept (Simatupang & Fathonah, 2020). It is important to recognize that understanding the core elements of a speaker's message is crucial in the context of language use (Prasatyo, B. A., Ali, H. V., & Hidayati, D., 2023).

By incorporating and analyzing certain assumptions, the candidates effectively persuade people to follow their statements. They provide insights into political communication and a deeper understanding of how the narratives are constructed. Their statements can discover meaning and implications that may not be immediately apparent to the audience. In the linguistics context of pragmatics, presuppositions are assumptions that are implicitly accepted as true in a particular context.

According to Yule, pragmatics is the study of contextual meaning (Jucker, 2021). Levinson defines the study of language from a functional perspective that attempts to explain aspects of linguistic structures concerning non-linguistic pressure and causes (Jaszczolt, 2022). Hence, pragmatics studies how language is used in the relation between meaning and the situation in which the utterance occurs. Communication is necessary for human life. Through the exchange of ideas, humans can play a role in improving the quality of life. For instance, when someone states something, it could have a purpose they want to convey.

According to Yule, a presupposition is something that the speaker assumes to be the case before making an utterance. Based on Levinson, refers to assumptions that are implicitly contained in the language structure of a text. The presupposition contained in an utterance tends to influence and direct people's thinking. (Sapar, Junaidi, Wahidah, & Irmayanti, 2022) Therefore, these presuppositions relate the language structure to the context outside the language. Hence, there is an expectation for the reader or listener to make certain inferences regarding the context.

Based on Yule (1996) classifies six presupposition types: (Fabian & Heryono, 2024). a) Existential presupposition refers to the assumptions contained in the use of definite words to indicate the existence or identity of something. b) Factive presuppositions include information considered true and follow verbs that signify reality; contains verbs such as realize, regret, be, aware, odd, or glad which indicate acceptance of a fact. c) Lexical Presupposition is a presupposition that emerges from the interpretation implicit in an utterance. In lexical presupposition, words such as start, stop, again, and finish serve as clues that signal the existence of the presupposition. d.) Structural Presupposition concern pre-assumptions automatically and conventionally associated with certain sentence structures. Examples, use interrogative words such as 'when' and 'where', there is a known problem, as well as alternative questions and yes/no questions. e) Non-Factive Presupposition refer to assumptions that do not explicitly state something as fact. f) Counterfactual Presupposition are presuppositions that imply something that is not only untrue but is the opposite of reality. For example, in the sentence "If you were his friend, you would help him." (Fabian & Heryono, 2024).

This shows that presupposition triggers are an important indicator in presupposition analysis. According to Karttunen in (Hussien & Mohammed, 2022), a) Definite description

are found in the form of definite noun phrases, special names, possessive pronouns, clauses using 'this' and 'that', and 'wh-' interrogative phrases. These indicators signal the presence of existential presupposition in an utterance. b) Factive verbs are characterized by verbs that indicate acceptance of a fact. Examples of such verbs include regret, realize, aware, odd, know, be sorry that-, be proud that-, be glad that-, be indifferent that, and be sad that-. c) Implicative verbs are characterized by such verbs as manage, forget, happen, and avoid (Karttunen, 1971). d) Change of state verbs denotes a transition from one state or condition to another, such as stop, begin, continue, start, finish, carry on, cease, take, leave, enter, come, go, arrive, etc. e) Iterative Adverbs are characterized by adverbs that indicate events that have been repeated or occurred more than once. Words such as again, anymore, return, another time, restore, repeat, and the n-th time t the information in. f) Verbs of Judging, implications are not attributed to the speaker, so much as to the subject of the verb as judging. g) Temporal clauses are characterized by adverbs such as before, while, since, after, during, and whenever as the triggers of this temporal clause. h) Cleft sentence is argued to presuppose that something 'y-ed' (as in it was x that y-ed) It was Henty that kissed Rossie presupposes that someone kissed Rossie. i) Implicit cleft with tressed constituents seem to arise from two cleft sentences that also seem to be triggered simply by heavy stress on a constituent. j) Comparisons and Contrast may be marked by stress, particle-like too, back, in return, or comparative constructions. k) Non-restrictive relative clauses are two major kinds of relative clauses in English, those that restrict or delimit the noun phrase they modify (restrictive as in Only the tall boys can reach the cupboard) and those that provide additional parenthetical information. l) Counterfactual Conditions have the characteristic of expressing something contrary to reality in the context of the text. The use of 'if' clauses or clauses with perfect modal verbs indicates the presence of presuppositions, which imply hypothetical situations. m) Questions related to 'Wh-' questions that indicate an assumption about the existence of certain entities. In other words, when someone uses 'Wh-' questions, such as why, who, what, when, or where. Thus, this indicates the speaker assumes the entity being asked about does exist.

Several previous studies have examined presupposition as a pragmatics, Fabian and Heryono (2024) conducted a presupposition analysis of the film Oppenheimer, revealing how implicit assumptions in dialog affect character development, historical context, and audience perception. Their research emphasizes the filmmakers' use of pragmatic strategies to deepen narrative meaning. Similarly, Jawas, Ratih, and Taufik (2024) analyzed Joe Biden's speech during a press conference on the Russian invasion of Ukraine, identifying five types of presuppositions and highlighting how shared knowledge between speaker and audience shapes political communication. Lathar (2023) focused on Biden's victory speech, finding that lexical presupposition triggers-specifically noun clauses-were the most dominant, indicating a deliberate rhetorical strategy to influence public interpretation through implied meaning.

Widianingsih (2021) explored the 2016 US presidential debates, examining the use of presuppositions by Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump to convey personal and social beliefs. The study found that existential and factual presuppositions were often used to

establish credibility and assert ideological positions. Meanwhile, Kristy, Deliana, and Harefa (2020) investigated the film script of Beauty and the Beast and found that existential presuppositions were the most common, suggesting that the characters' dialog relied on assumed knowledge to enhance the storyline and audience understanding. Together, these studies demonstrate the importance of presuppositions in various contexts-from political rhetoric to cinematic storytelling-as a tool for implicit communication and meaning construction.

Based on background and literature review, this study aims to address the following 2 research questions; (1) What types of presuppositions are in the United States Presidential Debate 2024? (2) What presupposition triggers are in the United States Presidential Debate 2024 statement? .

B. METHOD

In this study, a qualitative research design to analyze the subject. Moleong (2017) states that qualitative research is a research procedure that produces descriptive data where existing data is obtained through written or spoken words from people and their behavior, then from the results of the data collected it will be studied, it can be concluded that qualitative research is research that aims to understand an event or phenomenon about what is experienced by the research subject such as behavior, perception, motivation, action, and others. The descriptive method used in this study is to describe the types and presupposition triggers in the statements of The United States presidential debate 2024. Sugiyono (2018) states that the object of research is a study of a person, object, or activity that has certain variations that the researcher has

determined to study and draw conclusions. Here, the object research is The US Presidential Debate 2024

In this research, the documentation method was used to collect data from Full Debate: Harris vs. Trump in 2024 ABC News Presidential Debate | WSJ with the link https://www.youtube.com/live/VgsC_aBquU E?si=ClQqHpulWBR9z1aJ. The documentation method is a record of events that have passed. According to Sugiyono (2018), There are three types of documentation methods written documents (including history, diaries, biographies, and others), image documents (including photos, moving images (and videos), sketches, and others), and artwork documents (including, sculptures, films, and others).

The researcher will use several steps to collect data: (1) Choosing a topic. The research topic chosen is presupposition from the data "The US Presidential Debate 2024" has some utterances that can be researched on presupposition. (2) Determining the preliminary study. Levinson (1983) and Yule (1996) are the appropriate theories for discussing presupposition. (3) Formulating the problem. The formulation of the problem is found according to Levinson's (1983) and Yule's (1996) theory by formulating the types of presupposition and presupposition triggers. (4) Collecting data, here are some steps for data collection (Watching the video "The US Presidential Debate" many times, Transcribing the utterances in the video, Identifying presupposition by reading the transcripts based on Levinson's Theory, and Classifying the data based on the types of presupposition and presupposition triggers). (5) Verifying the identified data to ensure the research data by Levinson (1983) and Yule's (1996) theory. The verification process involves carefully checking the transcribed

utterances from the 2024 US Presidential Debate video to ensure they are accurate and complete. Each identified presupposition is then reviewed to confirm that it aligns with the theoretical framework proposed by Levinson (1983) and Yule (1996). (6) Analyzing all the data that has been identified and classified. The analysis also connects these findings to the research objectives, particularly in understanding the types and triggers of presupposition used in the debate. This comprehensive approach helps ensure the reliability and depth of the research results. (7) Concluding the data that has been analyzed.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION
Result

Table.1 *Data on Types of Presupposition and Presupposition Triggers*

No	Data	Types Presupposition	Presupposition Triggers
1	(07:51 – 07:59) Kamala Harris: "I love our small businesses. My plan is to give a $50,000 tax deduction to Startup small businesses, knowing they are part of the backbone of America's economy."	Existential Presupposition	Definite Description (Definite Noun Phrase)
2	(08:48 – 08:59) Donald Trump: "I have no sales tax that's an incorrect statement, she **_knows_** that we're doing tariffs on other countries. Other countries are going to finally after 75 years pay us back for all that we've done for the world."	Factive Presupposition	Factive Verb
3	(12:43 – 12:49) Donald Trump: "We handed them over a country where the economy and where the stock market was higher than it was **_before_** the pandemic, came in nobody's ever seen anything like it we made ventilators for the entire world."	Structural Presupposition	Temporal Clauses
4	(13:16 – 13:23) Kamala Harris: "Donald Trump has no plan for you, when you look at his economic plan, it's all about tax breaks for the richest people."	Existential Presupposition	Definite Description (Possessive Pronouns)
5	(14:23 – 14:30) Donald Trump: "My plan is a brilliant plan, it's a great plan, it's a plan that's going to bring up **_our worth, our value_** as a country"	Existential Presupposition	Definite Description (Definite Noun Phrase)
6	(23:31 – 23:44) Kamala Harris: "Pregnant woman who wants to carry a pregnancy to term suffering from a miscarriage being denied care in an emergency room because the health care providers are afraid, they might go to jail and she's bleeding out in a car."	Lexical Presupposition	Change of State Verbs
7	(27:47 – 27:49) Kamala Harris: "What is happening in our country?"	Structural Presupposition	Wh-Question
8	(27:52 – 27:58) Kamala Harris: "Who are working one or two jobs? Who can barely afford child care as it is?"	Structural Presupposition	Wh-Question

Discussion
Data 1: Existential Presupposition

Kamala Harris: "I love **_our small businesses_**. My plan is to give a $50,000 tax deduction to Startup small businesses, knowing they are part of the backbone of America's economy."

(07:51 – 07:59)

In this conversation, there is an existential presupposition. Existential presuppositions are assumptions that something exists or that certain conditions have been reached.

The data above is a conversation about the issue that voters repeatedly say is the economy and the cost of living in the United States. there is an existential presupposition. Existential presuppositions are assumptions that something exists or that certain conditions have been reached. A presupposition occurs when the use of a definite noun phrase (such as "our small businesses") implies the existence of the entities referred to. In this case, saying "our small businesses" presupposes that small businesses exist and are recognized as a shared part of the community.

The definite description appearing as a trigger for existential presupposition is definite noun phrase. The definite noun phrase that appears as the cause of the existential presupposition by Kamala Harris is 'Our'. The possessive pronoun appears in the speaker's speech (Kamala Harris) showing an emphasis on the existence of an entity, which is a state institution. This presupposition highlights the importance of providing a specific reference to identifiable, known entities. The possessive pronoun establishes a clear, shared reference point between the speaker and the audience.

Data 2: Factive Presupposition

Donald Trump: "I have no sales tax that's an incorrect statement, she knows that we're doing tariffs on other countries. Other countries are going to finally after 75 years pay us back for all that we've done for the world."

(08:48 – 08:59)

Factive presupposition is a type of presupposition that occurs with information, the speaker considers to be true followed by a specific verb that signifies the truth. A sentence containing must use factive verbs, such as regret, realize, aware, odd, know, be sorry that-, be proud that-, be glad that-, be indifferent that, and be sad that-.

The context of the utterance suggests that relates to the issue that voters repeatedly identify as their number one concern is the economy and the cost of living in the United States. The utterance 'knows' is considered a factive presupposition. The utterance contains a presupposition that someone has some knowledge or familiarity with the person, although not on an intimate or close level. The phrase 'know' presupposes that the proposition following it ("we're doing tariffs on other countries") is a fact. The speaker assumes the factual truth of this statement and implies that both he and his audience accept it as a known reality. The factive presupposition in pragmatics concerns information considered factual in the utterance's context, and the speaker assumes that the listener also accepts that information as known or accepted.

The trigger of presupposition that appears as a trigger for factive presupposition in this data is the use of a factive verb. The factive verb used by the speaker to make the factive presupposition appear is the verb 'knows.'

The verb 'know' functions to show the existence of a certain piece of information that the speaker believes to be true, presupposing that the proposition following it (that the U.S. is imposing tariffs) is true. The use of 'knows' removes any doubt about the truth of the statement, unlike non-factive verbs like thinks or believes. This means that even by denying extensive knowledge, the speaker acknowledges the existence and relevance of the entity or person in question.

Data 3: Lexical Presupposition

Kamala Harris: "Pregnant woman who wants to carry a pregnancy to term suffering from a miscarriage being denied care in an emergency room because the health care providers are afraid, they **_might go_** to jail and she's bleeding out in a car."

(23:31 – 23:44)

Lexical presuppositions allows affirmation to be obtained after the utterance is delivered. In lexical presupposition, words such as start, stop, again, and finish serve as clues that signal the existence of the presupposition.

The context of the utterance that candidates expressed opposing views on reproductive rights and abortion policy in the United States. The lexical choice of 'afraid' presupposes that healthcare providers have fears or concerns, and these fears are explicitly linked to a possible punishment of jail time. The verb 'might go' introduces a possibility, but it still presupposes that the risk of imprisonment is a real concern for healthcare providers. The implication is that healthcare providers feel compelled to prioritize their legal safety over providing care to the woman. This lexical presupposition frames the healthcare providers as actors who are caught between ethical obligations (providing care) and legal restrictions (avoiding jail).

The verb 'go' indicates movement or transition from one location or state to another. In this case, 'go to jail' presupposes that the healthcare providers are not currently in jail but fear the possibility of being jailed. The change of state is from 'not in jail' to 'in jail.' The presupposition is that jail is a future possibility, not the current state. The potential change of state triggers anxiety or fear, as healthcare providers must balance the risk of imprisonment with their ethical duty to provide care.

Data 4: Structural Presupposition

Donald Trump: "We handed them over a country where the economy and where the stock market was higher than it was before the pandemic, came in nobody's ever seen anything like it we made ventilators for the entire world."

(12:43 – 12:49)

Structural presuppositions are presuppositions expressed through utterances with a clear and immediately understood structure without looking at the words used. Wh-question is a structural presupposition trigger that assumes the existence of an entity.

The context of the utterance relates to the issue that voters repeatedly identify as their number one concern is the economy and the cost of living in the United States. A structural presupposition occurs when the grammatical structure of a sentence implies the truth of certain information. In this case, the clause "We handed them over a country where the economy and where the stock market was higher..." relies on a relative clause introduced by 'where.' The structure of this relative clause ("where the economy and

where the stock market was higher...") presupposes that the U.S. economy and stock market were, in fact, higher at a certain point. The phrase "handed them over a country where" introduces a condition that is taken as a given fact that the economic state being described existed. Since the relative clause provides descriptive information about the country, it assumes the truth of that information. The listener is not invited to question whether the economy and stock market were higher; instead, the statement is presented as an established reality. This is a classic example of structural presupposition, where the relative clause is used as a linguistic mechanism to frame a subjective claim as a factual premise.

A temporal clause introduces a time-based relationship between two events, and the presence of certain temporal markers (like 'before,' 'after,' 'when,' etc.) triggers presuppositions. In Trump's statement, the phrase "before the pandemic came in" functions as a temporal clause. Temporal clauses inherently assume the existence of the events or states being referenced. The use of 'before' establishes a specific chronological relationship between two events: (1) the state of the economy and the stock market being 'higher,' and (2) the arrival of the pandemic. This structure implies that the economic conditions described existed as a reality in the past, before the pandemic. The presence of the temporal trigger 'before' forces the listener to accept the claim that there was indeed a period during which the economy and stock market were stronger, regardless of whether this claim is accurate.

D. CONCLUSION

This research identifies existential, factual, lexical, and structural presuppositions in the 2024 United States

Presidential Debate, as demonstrated in the speeches of Kamala Harris and Donald Trump. Existential presuppositions, triggered by possessive pronouns such as "we", frame the entity as a shared national concern, fostering a sense of collective responsibility. Factual presuppositions arise from factual verbs such as "know," which present claims as unquestionable facts rather than subjective opinions. Lexical presuppositions arise through change-of-state verbs such as "go," which imply a shift in circumstances, affecting the audience's perception of potential consequences. Structural presuppositions, embedded in relative and temporal clauses, subtly shape the discourse by presenting certain conditions as factual rather than debatable. This type of presupposition allows candidates to position their narratives as objective truths, strengthening their arguments while minimizing potential space for refutation.

Furthermore, the debate suggests that presupposition triggers play an important role in shaping audience perceptions. Possessive pronouns, factual verbs, lexical verbs, and structural elements are linguistic tools to frame political discourse persuasively. Kamala Harris' use of possessive pronouns highlights small businesses as a collective national priority, while Trump's reliance on structural and factual suppositions portrays his economic policies as universally accepted realities. These rhetorical choices minimized opposition by embedding ideological stances in seemingly neutral statements. To summarize, presuppositions in political debates serve as a powerful strategy to shape public opinion, reinforce narratives, and subtly influence voters' perceptions without explicit argumentation.

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