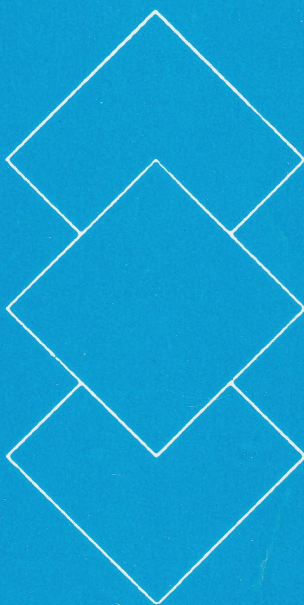


VOLUME 13, NOMOR 1, APRIL 2011

ISSN 1410-9883

CAKRAWALA PENDIDIKAN

FORUM KOMUNIKASI ILMIAH
DAN EKSPRESI KREATIF ILMU PENDIDIKAN



ISSN 1410-9883

CAKRAWALA PENDIDIKAN

Forum Komunikasi Ilmiah dan Ekspresi Kreatif Ilmu Pendidikan

Terbit dua kali setahun pada bulan April dan Oktober

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CAKRAWALA PENDIDIKAN**Forum Komunikasi Ilmiah dan Ekspresi Kreatif Ilmu Pendidikan****Volume 13, Nomor 1, April 2011****Daftar Isi**

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THE SIGNIFICANCE OF PRAGMATIC AWARENESS IN THE TEACHING OF EXCHANGES

Saptaria Laksanawati

Abstract: This article deals with the pragmatic aspect in the teaching of exchanges to college students. The pragmatic aspect here refers to presupposition. Presupposition contains implicit meaning. Presupposition is embedded in an exchange as the context. Understanding it is the purpose of teaching exchanges. Prior to that, relevant grammar and vocabulary are introduced in a simple language and way. In this article I analyzed seven exchanges taken from Readers' Digest from June to August 2010. It is a fact that setting determines the implicit meaning or presupposition. Knowing the preposition is not enough. As a teacher of EFL I also include a sample lesson which consists of grade level, teaching objectives (purpose), (sample) materials and teaching procedures. At the end of this paper I give some concluding remarks.

Keywords: significance, pragmatics, exchanges

In the area of English teaching most teachers of English as a Foreign Language pay more attention to teaching materials, teaching methods, and assessment. It is a fact that they teach the text structure, the grammar and vocabulary contained in the text as it is in the line of the text-based curriculum. There is another aspect which most teachers of English forget when teaching their students any English texts. The aspect meant is the pragmatic value underlying the text. The pragmatic value covers such things as deixis, presupposition, and pragmatic principles. In this article I limit my discussion to presupposition in a certain type of text, namely, exchanges. An exchange is a turn-taking conver-

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sation between two participants in a certain setting or context. This context determines the quality of preposition. The teaching of presupposition is of great significance as preposition holds in itself some implicit or implied meaning which is often forgotten by teachers of EFL. Theoretically, meaning, learning and pleasure are the ultimate goals of learning to read. Teaching exchanges means teaching meaning and arousing pleasure on the part of the students in reading class. Teaching meaning constitutes one of the ultimate teaching goals or objectives. Students are taught to read with understanding. Thus, this article discusses how pragmatic theory, that is, presupposition, is applied in exchanges in reading class.

THEORETICAL BASIS

Before going further on the application of pragmatic theory I list several definitions of pragmatics given by experts. According to Mey (2001) pragmatics is a way of investigating how sense or meaning can be made of certain texts even when from a semantic point of view the text seems to either incomplete or to have a different meaning to what is really intended. Wijana (1996) thinks of pragmatics as a branch of linguistics which studies the external structure of language, that is, how language is used in communication. This definition implicitly includes certain context under which meaning is relied on. Similarly, Jannedy et al. (1994) states that to fully understand the meaning of a sentence, we must understand the context in which it is uttered. More definitely Crystal (1991) defines pragmatics as the study of the factors that govern the choice of language in social interaction and the effects of the choice on others.

Yule (2006) believes that in many ways, pragmatics is the study of 'invisible' meaning, or how we recognize what is meant even when it isn't actually said or written. In order to recognize the meaning of the utterances, speakers of writers must be able to rely a lot on assumption and expectations when they try to communicate their ideas. The search for those assumptions and expectations leads us to some opinion on how the things are always being communicated more than being said.

Having a look at some stand in a supermarket or a mall, we may see an advertisement hanging on the wall reading SALE BABY & TODDLER. In normal situation, it must be impossible to assume that the store is running a business of selling young children and babies over the counter. Instead, we recognize that it is an advertisement for a sale of clothes and kits for those babies and toddlers. The words clothes and kits do not appear at all, but we can bring the idea to our interpretation of the message as we see that the advertiser

intended us to understand. In this case, we are actively involved in creating an interpretation of what we read or hear in order to make the message meaningful.

In oral communication or written scripts, we usually assume that our listener or readers can recognize which referent is intended by some expressions like *baby*, *parking*, *this*, *he*, or *John*. More generally, we create our linguistic messages based on the assumptions that our listeners or readers already know. Some of these assumptions maybe mistaken but mostly they are appropriate. What a speaker or a writer assumes is true or known by a listener or reader can be described as a presupposition.

At the start of the discussion of presupposition, I would like to provide its definitions by some experts. First, Yule (1996) holds an opinion that a presupposition is something the speaker assumes to be the case prior to making an utterance. Speakers, not sentences, have certain presupposition. The second definition is presented by Huang (2007) saying that presupposition is another pragmatic topic that originates within the tradition of the philosophy of language. The following quotation clarifies what Huang means by presupposition.

"Presupposition can be informally defined as an inference or proposition whose truth is taken for granted in the utterance of a sentence. Its main function is to act as a precondition of some sort for the appropriate use of that sentence. This background assumption will remain in force when the sentence that contains it is negated. Presupposition is usually generated by the use of particular lexical items and/or linguistic construction. Lexical items and linguistic constructions that engender presuppositions are called presupposition triggers." (2007:65)

In a different formulation but with the same meaning Nadar (2009) adds that pragmatic presupposition is pragmatic inference sensitive to context factors. According to him presupposition is based on the context. Context plays a very important role in understanding presupposition.

Grundy (2000) defines context as factors that consider presupposition as shared assumption, for example when someone speaks to us we typically make all sorts of assumptions about the background to their utterance which we presume to be mutually known before the utterance ever occurred. He exemplifies by noticing a title of a book *Tell Madonna I'm at lunch*. Here, the sentence would be meaningless unless the speaker was expecting a visit from Madonna, he knew that the addressee was going to be in when she arrived and expected Madonna to come to her soon, and also assumed that the addressee recognized what Madonna looked like and was willing to pass the message to her.

Additionally, presupposition as part of pragmatics deals with the invisible or hidden meaning. Renkema (1993) holds an opinion that meaning of utterance or sentence is more than what is explicitly stated. To have a clear understanding of presupposition, Renkema says further that:

"The term 'presupposition' originated in the philosophy of logic, where it is used to denote a special type of implicit information. Information which is explicitly stated is referred to as a 'claim' or an 'assertion'. The example above (It took John seven years to complete his studies) makes it clear that 'all kinds of information can be derived from a sentence. The term 'presupposition' is reserved for a proposition which must be true for the sentence in question to have a truth value, that is to say, for the sentence to be true or false." A sentence such as "I have stopped smoking" can only be true or false if the person saying it in fact used to smoke. The presupposition of this sentence is thus "I used to smoke." Put another way: a presupposition is the only type of information that is unaffected by denying the original sentence." (1993:154).

Another source from the internet states:

"that in the branch of linguistics known as pragmatics, a presupposition is an implicit assumption about the world or background belief relating to an utterance whose truth is taken for granted in discourse. The presupposition of a sentence *Do you want to do it again?* Is that you have done it already, at least once. Then, in a sentence *Jane no longer writes fiction* there is a presupposition that Jane once wrote fiction." (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Presupposition>)

To make the concept of presupposition and implicit meaning clearer, Yule (2006:117) gives another series of examples, such as if someone says *Your brother is waiting outside*, there is an obvious presupposition that you have a brother. If you are asked *Why did you arrive late?*, there is a presupposition that you did arrive late. Next, Yule believes that a single utterance possibly has more than one presupposition like if you are asked the question *When did you stop smoking?* there are at least two presuppositions involved. In asking this question, first the speaker presupposes that you used to smoke and then that you no longer do so.

Questions which contain the built-in presupposition as stated above are very useful device for interrogators or trial lawyers to elicit some information from the defendant. If the defendant is asked by the prosecutor, *Okay Mr. Smith, how fast were you going when you ran the red light?*, there lies a presupposition that Mr. Smith in fact did run the red light. If he simply answers

the *How fast* part of the question, by giving a speed, he is behaving if the presupposition is correct. On the other hand, if he answers *No, I didn't run the red light* it means that the presupposition is inappropriate.

Renkema (1993) provides a sentence which reads "*It took John seven years to complete his studies*". This sentence has someone think of three related meanings in his presupposition. First, there is a person named John. Second, he was a student based upon the key word of his studies. Third, John was not a brilliant student as he had to spend his seven years finishing his studies.

Huang (2007) provides other examples regarding presupposition. When one hears the utterance like *The king of France is /isn't bald*, he must think that there is a king of France. When one reads such a sentence as *John knows/doesn't know that Baird invented television*, he thinks that Baird invented television. Next, the sentence like *Mary has/hasn't stopped beating his boyfriend* means that Mary has been beating his boyfriend, and the sentence *John returned/didn't return to Cambridge* implies the fact that John was in Cambridge before.

Thus, a presupposition must be mutually known or assumed by the speaker or writer and the addressee or readers for the utterance to be considered appropriate in context. It will generally remain a necessary assumption whether the utterance is placed in the form of an assertion, denial, or question, and can be associated with a specific lexical item or grammatical feature in the utterance.

One of the tests used to check for the presuppositions underlying sentences involves negating a sentence with a particular presupposition and checking if the presupposition remains true. Whether you say *My car is a wreck* or the negative version *My car is not a wreck*, the underlying presupposition (I have a car) remains true despite the fact that the two sentences have opposite meanings. This is called the 'constancy negation' (Yule, 118).

Similarly another source (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Presupposition>) states that negation of an expression does not change its presupposition as exemplified in the sentence *I want to do it again* and *I don't want to do it again*, both presuppose that the subject has done it already one or more times. Further, in a sentence *My wife is pregnant* and *My wife is not pregnant* both presuppose that the subject has a wife. In this case, presupposition should be distinguished from entailment, which the latter sentence has to entail/ describe the truth of the previous one, such as *The president was assassinated* must entails *The president is dead*, but if the sentence is negated resulted in *The president was not assassinated*, then the entailment above is no longer right.

Crystal (1991) explains that the term presupposition is a philosophical term which is found in semantic discussion. This means that presupposition cannot be separated from the treatment of meaning and implicature. The sentence *'Where is the salt?'* is said to presuppose that the salt is not present to the speaker, that there is someone whom the speaker thinks might know where the salt is, and so on. Jannedy (1994) exemplified such a sentence, which is considered as a story, as *"I went to pick up some groceries, and the car died, and I had to wait for the tow truck"*. This sentence denotes at least two implicit meanings. First, the speaker had picked up some groceries before he found out that the car was broken. The second implicature is that he had to wait for the tow truck to carry the groceries.

Based upon the discussion above, I learn that presupposition is part of pragmatics and it deals with logics, meaning that we have to get the implicit meaning out of the surface structure of a sentence or an utterance. Next, presupposition may occur at any sentence element, and so any sentence or utterance contains implicit meaning.

PRESUPPOSITION IN EXCHANGES

In the article I make the best use of exchanges taken from *Readers' Digest*, a monthly English magazine. The standard English in this magazine underlies the appropriate use of the sentences to be researched. The editions chosen as the sources are from June to August 2010. More specifically, out of the three editions, the writer took seven exchanges which can be found in humorous section. The short exchanges which are included in humorous article then have certain characteristics like the twist end. And as the exchanges are carried out in different settings with different participants of different gender and occupation, the language use is of different kinds, like formal, informal and colloquial. The content of the exchanges, which reflects real-life conversation and often yields misunderstanding between the speakers themselves, is then very appropriate and representative to be analyzed based on the pragmatic point of view.

In this article I analyze the implicit meaning and the presupposition that the sentences in the exchanges have. The presupposition analyses are made to elaborate the speaker intentions by saying those sentences and also to explain the occurring misunderstanding between the speakers. Below are all the seven exchanges which have different settings:

1) Setting: in a post office

Man Customer : Would you like to have my number?

Post Office Girl : Ok, my pleasure. Do you like to get mine too?

Man Customer : Um....I was talking about my purchase – order number.

The presupposition in this exchange can be elaborated this way. The customer had a certain number. He assumed that the post office girl would need the number. The girl officer also had a certain number and she presupposed the customer to exchange their cellular phone numbers. At last, the customer implied that the number was the order number, which would be needed to deliver the goods to his right place, instead of his cellular phone number. The implicit meaning of this conversation lies on the fact that the reference of the numbers is different).

2) Setting: in a hospital

Doctor : Would you please tell us the name and address of the patient?

Volunteer: Yes, she's Eliza, she lives in Kansas.

Doctor : Could you tell us the nearest relative?

Volunteer: Ehm..yea within walking distance.

This exchange occurs between a doctor and a volunteer patient. Based upon the context I can explain the presupposition contained this way. The patient must have personal identities. The doctor assumed that the volunteer knew the identity. The patient has close family members of the same genetic heredity. The doctor would need to see the family for further medical examination and help. The volunteer referred to the patient's family members, who lives nearby, not necessarily siblings or the nuclear members of the family. The implicit meaning lies on the fact that the doctor and the volunteer have different reference for the phrase 'nearest relative'.

3) Setting: in a clinic

Paramedical : Well, Sir please tell me why would you come to this clinic?

A man : My wife made me.

The implicit meaning or the presupposition underlying this exchange will read like this. The man was in the clinic. The paramedical presupposed that the man should have suffered from a certain illness or disease. The man was married to a woman. He felt nothing wrong with his health but his wife asked him to come to the clinic. This implies that the man's coming to the clinic is not due to illness but it is owing to his wife's will.

4) Setting: in a shop

A Lady : Would you please help me pick out a tie that would make my husband's blue eyes stand out?

Shopkeeper: Ma'am, any tie will make blue eyes stand out if you tie it tight enough.

The presupposition is this exchange can be elaborated this way. The lady was married to a certain man and she would buy him a fascinating tie. She presupposed that the shopkeeper knew the most appropriate one. But the shopkeeper could not understand the implicit meaning of the lady's remark. He assumed that any tie could suit to the lady's purpose. What implies in this conversation is the different inference about how to make blue eyes stand out.

5) Setting: at school

AC Repairman : Any little problems here?

A Teacher : No, all our little problems have gone home.

Within the school setting did an exchange occur between a repairman and a teacher. They misunderstood the message. They had different reference for the meaning of little problems and so the exchange ends with fun. The AC repairman was in the school. He assumed that the teacher should know about the problems regarding the AC. The teacher had little problems. But the little problems were no longer at school. The teacher thought that the students were the little problems whereas the repairman referred to the AC. In this case, the reference of little problems is different, namely, for the teacher the little problem is metaphorical but for the repairman the little problem refers to the mechanic one.

6) Setting: at home

Dad : It's all the same to me whether an individual becomes a university professor or a street sweeper, what's important is that the person attains happiness.

Son : Mom, how much is a broom?

In this exchange we see the conversation between a daddy and his son. The father was talking about the philosophical points of view. He assumed that happiness could be felt by anyone of any occupation. The mother was beside the son and father. The son turned to his mother, asking about the price of a new broom. The implicit meaning is the son is not mature enough to think like his father does or it refers to the ideal of the son.

7) Setting: in a church

Grandmother : Dear, we are waiting for the Mass to start.

Granddaughter : What time does Jesus get here?

The implicit meaning or the presupposition underlying this exchange will read like this. They were in a church waiting for the mass to begin. The grandmother asked the granddaughter to be patient, not making any noise. However, the granddaughter thought differently. She thought that the mass would be led by Jesus and so they would wait for His coming. The implicit meaning of this conversation is determined by different expectation between the grandma and granddaughter)

The result of the analysis of the seven exchanges above shows that different settings evoke different interpretations. Why is it so? There are several propositions. First, the participants are different in age, job, character, gender as well as status. They include post-office girl and customer, doctor and volunteer, paramedical and man, a lady and a shopkeeper, a repairman and a teacher, daddy and son, a grandma and a granddaughter. The second thing is that the topics being discussed range from order (or booking), personal identity, illness, something to buy, something to repair, idea for happiness, expectation. Third, the settings in these seven exchanges include Post Office, House, Hospital and Clinic, Shop, School, and Church. These three matters always occur in any speech events, one of which is short dialogues.

HOW TO TEACH EXCHANGES WITH PRESUPPOSITIONS

By implementing the concept of the pragmatic aspect, namely presupposition, the students will be able to understand the 'fun' aspect of the exchanges. The inclusion of presupposition in the teaching of exchanges can create fun learning environment among the students and elicit the learning spirit on the part of the students to learn more about humorous texts or anecdotes or spoofs perhaps. With this teachers of EFL can develop the text-based curriculum with this kind of teaching strategy.

One thing to keep in mind is that when we teach exchanges we should have certain teaching objectives to be achieved. Exchanges as texts hold in themselves some explicit and implicit meaning. We should teach the latter as part of pragmatics. This awareness moves teachers of EFL to search proper teaching strategies. Explicit meaning can be understood based on the semantic aspect of the lexical items used in the texts but the implicit meaning is related to a set of assumptions, which I call presupposition. So the teaching objective deals with understanding of presupposition.

The following suggests how to teach exchanges full of presupposition in reading class. I try to outline a sample lesson plan which includes teaching

objective, focus, and the teaching procedures or activities. The teaching (and learning) procedures here are subject to revision in line with the class setting or environment such as the language level of the students. The procedures consist of three stages.

Stage 1 is called the introduction or explanation stage. In this stage teachers of EFL explain what presupposition means in a simple language. In the second stage, the exploration stage, students are invited to make small groups of three discussing the language aspects like vocabulary and grammar under the teacher's supervision found in the exchanges, and gradually they are led to find the implicit meaning or the presupposition contained in the exchanges. The last stage, the so-called development stage, concerns with the student's creation or innovation in understanding other exchanges that they may choose for their own home assignment, and present them in the next class meetings. With all these stages the teaching of English finds a new way or breakthrough.

The following scheme and table summarize the content of the lesson plan and the teaching (and learning) procedures, but the procedures are not fixed. They can still be evaluated and developed in line with the classroom setting and the students' language level. The table falls into three columns: Teaching stages, teaching and learning activities, and some notes about the time needed, and teacher-students' comments about the procedures and the teaching materials themselves.

Lesson Plan (Scheme)

Grade Level:

The Second Year of College

Purposes or Teaching Objectives:

1. Student can express the implicit meaning or presupposition contained in exchanges.
2. Prior to this, students can master grammar and vocabulary used in exchanges.

Materials:

Selected Exchanges from Readers' Digest

Sample Materials:

Text 1: Setting: in a jail

A Friend : How was it?

Cannibal Man : Great

A Friend : So, why have you got a leg missing?

Cannibal Man : It was self-catering.

Text 2: Setting: at home over a telephone

Son : I love you.

Dad : I love you too.

Son : Mummy, who was that?

Text 3: Setting: at home

Dad : It's all the same to me whether an individual becomes a university professor or a street sweeper, what's important is that the person attains happiness.

Son : Mom, how much is a broom?

Teaching Procedures:

Teaching Stages	Activities	Notes
First Stage: Introduction/ Explanation	Teacher explains and invites question and answer concerning the topic treated.	(Time allotted is flexible)
	Grammar and vocabulary are explained in a simple language.	
	The implicit meaning contained in the exchange is introduced. Discussion regarding the meaning occurs among the students and between teacher and the students.	
Second Stage: Exploration	The students make small groups of three.	
	They discuss the language aspects found in the exchanges distributed.	
	They discuss the underlying idea or thought (presupposition) contained in every sentence in the exchange.	
	They present what they have found in the exchange in class, and other groups may comment against their findings.	
Third Stage: Development	Every student is assigned to do a homework concerning an exchange of their own choice.	
	Every students report what he/she found in his/her study.	

CONCLUDING REMARKS

With reference to the results of the analysis, I draw some conclusions which read as follows.

1. Understanding a sentence or an utterance means finding out its meaning based on the context.
2. In order to fully get the meaning, one has to presuppose or assume. Presupposition in pragmatics means an implicit assumption about the world

or background belief relating to an utterance whose truth is taken for granted in discourse.

3. Exchanges, similar to sentences, also contain presupposition. The understanding of the presupposition is affected by three propositions stated above: participants, topics, and settings.
4. Presupposition can occur in every sentence element such as subject, predicate, object, complement, and even adverb. This means that every sentence element requires some presupposition. For example, in the first exchange above reads *Could you tell us the nearest relative?* creates misunderstanding due to different reference of the sentence element Direct Object, that is *the nearest relative*.

Seeing the fact that a sentence or an utterance contains in itself a possibly certain meaning, we have to pay close attention to the underlying intention. Therefore, the study of semantics, especially speaker meaning, is of great significance. Studying the grammar of an utterance is considered not enough as grammar deals with form. Any form in language holds in itself meaning. Here we have to be keen on relating or matching form and meaning. With this in mind, students of English are asked to study grammar, semantics and pragmatics as well altogether.

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