
PRESUPPOSITIONS OF JOE BIDEN'S SPEECH ON RUSSIAN INVASION OF UKRAINE ON *THE NBC NEWS* YOUTUBE CHANNEL

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ABSTRACT

Fluency in communication cannot be separated from the influence of presuppositions. A presupposition is something the speaker assumes to be the case before making an utterance. This study aims to identify and describe the types of presuppositions and common ground in a question-and-answer session between journalists and President Joe Biden at a press conference of Joe Biden's speech denouncing Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The researchers applied George Yule's theory (1996) and the descriptive method to meet this purpose. Data collection involves a note-taking technique where the data source is in the form of a video. The results showed five types of presuppositions in 26 presuppositions data from 17 speeches data analyzed.

Keywords: *Presuppositions; Common Ground; Press Conference*

I. BACKGROUND

Lubis (2015) explains that a sentence's true meaning will only be known if the context is known, who said it, what the situation is, and so on. With context, speech can be easily analyzed because the context in a speech describes the situation between the speaker and the speech partner. Everything related to speech, whether related to meaning, intent, or information, depends on the context behind the event (Agus, 2016). All studies within the scope of pragmatics analyze language use in context, and one of the studies is in presupposition theory. Context plays a vital role in interpreting the presuppositions contained in a speech (Indrawati, 2009).

The presupposition is something that the speaker assumes to the interlocutor that the interlocutor already knows what the speaker is saying (Levinson, 1983). Furthermore, George Yule (2014: 43) states that a presupposition or presupposition is something the speaker assumes to be an event before producing an utterance. The

speaker has presuppositions, not the sentence, so the speaker believes the listener understands an event before producing an utterance.

Stalnaker (2002) describes shared knowledge as background information shared by participants in a conversation, what speakers receive, and what interlocutors assume when they use specific sentences. Shared knowledge is usually shared by people in the same scope, such as the work environment, community environment, school environment, business environment, political environment, etc. With shared knowledge, the meaning behind a presumption can be known clearly.

Implicit meanings often appear in political language spoken by politicians. One example of political language that politicians and ordinary people observe is speech (Farangiz, 2022). Speech is an expression of thoughts into words addressed to many people. Political speeches are usually held at a press conference to discuss a particular conflict. A press conference usually ends with a question-and-answer session between the speaker and journalists,

which can then give rise to several presuppositions, which are a person's initial assumptions before speaking that what is being conveyed is also understood by the speaker. It is in these presuppositions that we can see what shared knowledge the speaker and journalist have.

The presuppositions used in this research are presuppositions, according to Yule (1996). Yule divides presuppositions into six types, namely existential presuppositions, factive presuppositions, lexical presuppositions, non-factive presuppositions, structural presuppositions, and counterfactual presuppositions. The data in this research will also be divided into six types of presuppositions.

The data source for this research uses a transcript of Joe Biden's speech and a transcript of the question-and-answer session between Joe Biden and journalists at the press conference on February 25, 2022, at the White House, United States. The speech data was taken via the official NBC News YouTube channel and then converted into a text transcript via the anthiago.com site.

II. RESEARCH METHOD

According to Sugiyono (2019: 401) in qualitative research, the primary data collection techniques are participant observation, in-depth interviews, documentation studies, and a combination of the three or triangulation. This study involves collecting and analyzing non-numerical data to understand concepts, opinions, or experiences, it is considered qualitative research.

The data sources in this research were collected from various sources: research journals, articles, books, and theses, where the primary data source is a video of a speech by the President of the United States, Joe Biden,

during a press conference at the White House regarding Russia's invasion of Ukraine which was taken on the official NBC News YouTube channel with a duration of 39 minutes. 20 seconds. Thus, all of Joe Biden's and the journalists' statements in the video are part of the data that will be studied.

Other supporting data sources were obtained from Google Scholar, YouTube, and the anthiago.com site to create online video transcripts, which are available in various languages.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Data 1

| Speaker | Journalist 1 |
|-------------------------|--|
| Speech | <i>“Do you have any plans to speak with President Putin at this point, and what communications have you had with the criminal as far as the military offers Ukraine? Are you making sure this does not spiral into a larger conflict?”</i> |
| Presupposition | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There's someone named Putin. • Putin is President • There is a criminal. • There is a country called Ukraine. • There is a moderate conflict happening. |
| Types of Presupposition | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existential Presupposition • Lexical Presupposition |

The utterances above are both considered existential and lexical presuppositions. It presupposes **1) There is someone named Putin who is president**; this presumption arises based on the sentence spoken by Journalist 1; **2) There is a criminal**, and this presumption arises based on the facts contained in the speech that this

criminal is President Putin who ordered his military to attack Ukraine; 3) **There is a country called Ukraine**, this presumption arises based on the facts contained in the speech that Ukraine is a leadership region that Russia wants to regain control of. Apart from existential presuppositions, the utterance in data 1 also has lexical presuppositions where the sentence "...becomes a bigger conflict" has the implied meaning that **there is a conflict currently occurring**. Shared knowledge that President Joe Biden and Journalist 1 have when viewed in the context of the speech delivered by Joe Biden in session 1; in paragraph 3, Joe Biden says, "...*Putin declared his war,*" which explains the shared knowledge that **President Putin has attacked the country of Ukraine** thus causing an ongoing conflict.

Data 2

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Speaker | Joe Biden 1 |
| Speech | <i>"...providing all the forces needed in the eastern European nations that are members of NATO. NATO is more united than it's ever been, and I have no plans to talk with Putin."</i> |
| Presupposition | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are countries in Eastern Europe. • There is an institution called NATO • NATO has never been so united before. |
| Types of Presupposition | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existential Presupposition • Factive Presupposition |

In the utterance in data 2, what is presupposed are: 1) **There are countries in eastern Europe**; this is based on the statement in Joe Biden's speech that countries in Europe helped stop Russia's invasion of Ukraine; 2) **There is an institution called NATO**. This

presupposition is based on the word 'member' in statement 2, which states that there is an institution called NATO. These two presuppositions are included in existential presuppositions because they presuppose the existence of something. Meanwhile, in the utterance in data 2, there is also a presumption that **NATO is more united than before**. This presupposition is a factive presupposition, which contains facts if you look at how NATO is currently united to stop the conflict between Russia and Ukraine. The shared knowledge held by President Joe Biden and Journalist 1 in speech data 2 is based on the content of the speech in paragraph 14, Joe Biden said, "...*in response to Russia's aggressive action including his troop presence of Belarus and the black sea, I've authorized deployment of ground and air forces already stationed in Europe to NATO's eastern flank allies*" which explains the shared knowledge that NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) is a military alliance organization that **opposes Russia's actions in invading Ukraine**.

Data 3

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Speaker | Journalist 2 |
| Speech | <i>"Mr. President, you didn't mention Swift in your announced sanctions. Is there a reason why the U.S. uh isn't doing that..."</i> |
| Presupposition | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a network called SWIFT. • America does not impose SWIFT-related sanctions on Russia. |
| Types of Presupposition | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existential Presupposition • Structural Presupposition |

The types of presupposition in the utterance above are Existential Presupposition and Structural Presupposition. The Existential Presupposition

presupposes **the existence of a network called SWIFT**, reported by the site cnbcindonesia.com. SWIFT is a messaging network banks and other financial institutions use to send and receive transaction information quickly and safely. Apart from that, the utterance in data 3 also assumes that **America will not impose SWIFT-related sanctions on Russia**. This presumption is included in the structural presupposition because the word 'why' is used in the speech sentence, where the question word is spoken after a problem occurs, which results in a structured presupposition. The shared knowledge that Journalist 2 and President Joe Biden have when viewed in the context of the speech that happened is that **Joe Biden and his allies did not remove Russia from SWIFT (Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication)**, which is a financial messaging network service provider from Belgium that operates in the whole world.

sentence 'has given sanctions' in utterance 4 is a fact that states the existence of sanctions given to all Russian banks. Apart from that, in utterance four, there is also a lexical presupposition, which presupposes that **there is another position that Europe wants to take**. This presupposition is based on the word 'not' in utterance four, which gives rise to the implied meaning of the utterance, which is understood by the interlocutor. The shared knowledge that President Joe Biden and Journalist 2 have in speech data 4 when seen in the context of the speech that Joe Biden delivered in session 1, in paragraph 8 Joe Biden says "...In today's actions we've now sanctioned Russian-banks that together hold around 1 trillion dollars in assets." This explains the shared knowledge that President Joe Biden has sanctioned Russian banks in the United States.

Data 4

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Speaker | Joe Biden 2 |
| Speech | <i>"The sanctions we've proposed on all their banks of equal consequence may have more consequences than swift number one. Number two uh it is always an option but right now that's not the position that the rest of Europe wishes to take."</i> |
| Presupposition | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some sanctions have been imposed on all Russian banks. There is another position that Europe would like to take. |
| Types of Presupposition | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existential Presupposition Lexical Presupposition |

Data 5

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Speaker | Journalist 2 |
| Speech | <i>"...how and when does this end and do you see him trying to go beyond Ukraine? And a second question I'll just give to you now this statement that he gave last night..."</i> |
| Presupposition | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Something is still not over. Putin stated on the evening of February 24, 2022. |
| Types of Presupposition | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Structural Presupposition Factive Presupposition |

In the utterance in data 5, there is a presumption that **something is still not over**; this presupposition is included in the structural presupposition because there are the words 'how' and 'when' in the speech sentence where the question word is spoken after a problem occurs which results in a structured presupposition. Apart from that, in

The presupposition contained in utterance 4 is: 1) **There are sanctions given to all Russian banks**; the

speech data 5 there is also a factive presupposition which presupposes that **Putin made a statement on the evening of February 24, 2022**. This presupposition is based on the word 'gave', which means 'give', which in English is a past verb that has happened and finished in the past, so the statement that 'Putin made a statement last night' is a fact. The shared knowledge shared by Journalist 2 and President Joe Biden when seen in the context of the speeches and speeches that Joe Biden has delivered, in paragraph 21, he says, "...And Putin's aggression against Ukraine will end up costing Russia dearly, economically and strategically. We will make sure that." explained that **the ongoing sanctions that Joe Biden has imposed on Russia have not achieved the results they want**.

Data 6

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Speaker | Journalist 3 |
| Speech | "...would you still describe them the way that you did in the summer as a worthy adversary?" |
| Presupposition | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Joe Biden describes Russia as a worthy adversary. |
| Types of Presupposition | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Factive Presupposition |

There is a Factive Presupposition in the utterance in data 6, which presupposes that **Biden describes Russia as a worthy enemy**. This presupposition is based on the word 'did', which means 'did', which in English is a past verb that has happened and finished in the past, so the saying that 'Joe Biden portrayed Russia as a worthy enemy' is a fact. The shared knowledge that Journalist 3 and President Joe Biden have in speech data 6 when viewed in the context of the speech is that **President Joe Biden once gave a speech in the summer**.

Data 7

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Speaker | Joe Biden 3 |
| Speech | "...I've read most of everything he's written, did you read, I shouldn't say, I'm not a wise guy. You heard the speech he made almost an hour's worth of speech is why he was going into Ukraine, he has 56 much larger ambitions in Ukraine, he wants to re-establish the former Soviet Union that's what this is about... " |
| Presupposition | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Putin wrote something down. Putin gave a 1-hour speech about his reasons for attacking Ukraine. |
| Types of Presupposition | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lexical Presupposition Factive Presupposition Existential Presupposition |

The utterance in data 7 contained three types of presuppositions, namely; 1) lexical presupposition which assumes that **Putin wrote something**, this is based on the implied meaning contained in the sentence that Joe Biden read Putin's writing; 2) Factive presupposition, which presupposes that **Putin gave a speech for 1 hour about his reasons for attacking Ukraine**. This presupposition is based on the word 'made' which means 'made' which in English is a past verb that has happened and finished in the past, so the statement that 'Putin's 1-hour speech about why he attacked Ukraine' is a fact. The shared knowledge that President Joe Biden and Journalist 3 have when viewed in the context of the speech that has been delivered is that President Putin once gave a speech about his reasons for attacking Ukraine.

Data 8

| | |
|---------|----------------------------|
| Speaker | Journalist 4 & Joe Biden 4 |
|---------|----------------------------|

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Speech | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>“If sanctions can’t stop President Putin, what penalty can?”</i> • <i>“I didn’t say sanctions couldn’t stop him.”</i> |
| Presupposition | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sanctions could remove Putin. |
| Types of Presupposition | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counterfactual Presupposition • Lexical Presupposition |

In the utterance in data 8, there is a presumption that **sanctions can dismiss Putin**. If seen from the speech of Journalist 4, this presupposition includes a counterfactual presupposition because the speech contains an 'if clause,' a presupposition sentence that is not only not true but also inversely proportional to the facts. Then, if you look at Joe Biden's answer, this presupposition is included in the lexical presupposition because this presupposition is the result of the implied meaning expressed by Joe Biden. In utterance 8, there is no shared knowledge between Journalist 4 and President Putin. If seen in the context of the existing statement, Journalist 4 did not know that the sanctions given by Joe Biden would undoubtedly be able to stop Russia's attacks on Ukraine.

Data 9

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Speaker | Journalist 4 |
| Speech | <i>“..., is that a step that you're prepared to take and if not---sanctioning President Putin?”</i> |
| Presupposition | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joe Biden sanctions President Putin. |
| Types of Presupposition | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counterfactual Presupposition |

There is a counterfactual presupposition in utterance nine that presupposes that **Biden gave sanctions to President Putin**. This presupposition is because the sentence in the utterance contains an 'if clause,' which is

a presupposition sentence that is not only untrue but also inversely proportional to the facts. The shared knowledge that Journalist 4 and President Joe Biden have when viewed in the context of the speech is that **Joe Biden has imposed sanctions on Ukraine**.

Data 10

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Speaker | Journalist 4 |
| Speech | <i>“Why not sanction him today, sir? Why not sanction him today?---”</i> |
| Presupposition | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joe Biden still hasn't sanctioned Putin. |
| Types of Presupposition | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structural Presupposition |

The structural presupposition in data 10 presupposes that **Joe Biden has not yet sanctioned Putin**. The sentence in the speech has the question word 'why' where the question word is spoken after a problem occurs, which results in a structured presupposition. The shared knowledge shared by Journalist 4 and President Joe Biden in speech data 10 when seen in the context of the previous speech, journalist 4 said, "...you recently said the idea of personally sanctioning president Putin was on the table..." explaining that **there is a plan to provide personal sanctions against President Putin in addition to imposing sanctions on Russia**.

IV. CONCLUSION

Of the 17 speech data that were analyzed in the question-and-answer session at the press conference of Joe Biden's speech condemning Russia's invasion of Ukraine, five types of presuppositions were found in the session, namely, existential presuppositions, factive presuppositions, structural presuppositions, lexical presuppositions, and counterfactual presuppositions.

Of the five types of presuppositions, the most frequently found presuppositions are existential presuppositions with a total of 8 data, and the fewest presuppositions found are structural presuppositions and lexical presuppositions with a total of 4 data, while the other presuppositions have a total of 5 active presuppositions and five counterfactual presuppositions. Meanwhile, of the 17 speech data above, 16 speech data have shared knowledge, and one speech data does not have shared knowledge.

Through the discussion above, presupposition is a pragmatic study that is not only found in everyday speech but can also be found at certain moments. With the presence of speakers and interlocutors, presuppositions can be found in various types of conversations, such as in question-and-answer sessions at press conferences. It can also be concluded that presuppositions are closely related to knowledge sharing.

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