



An Analysis of Lexical Presuppositions and Its Triggers Found in Interstellar Movie

Putu Merta Yasa^{1*}, Nissa Puspitaning Adni²

¹⁻² Bachelor of English, Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Udayana, Indonesia

Address: Jalan Nias No.13, Dauh Puri Kelod, Denpasar 80113 Bali

Author correspondence: putumertayasa406@gmail.com

Abstract. This study aims to explore lexical presuppositions and their triggers found in the film *Interstellar*. Lexical presuppositions are a type of presupposition that arises due to the presence of certain words or expressions that inherently carry additional meanings, thus giving rise to assumptions that are not explicitly stated but can still be understood by the listener or viewer. Thus, lexical presuppositions play an important role in building implicit meaning and depth of dialogue in audiovisual works. This study uses a descriptive qualitative method to identify and analyze the forms of lexical presuppositions that appear in the film. Data were collected through documentation and note-taking techniques, by carefully transcribing dialogues from the film *Interstellar*, then classifying them based on the theory of presuppositions proposed by Yule (1996) and Levinson (1983). The results of the study indicate that there are three types of lexical presupposition triggers in the film's dialogue, namely implicative verbs, change-of-state verbs, and interactive verbs. Of the 59 lexical presuppositions found, the change-of-state verb category was the most dominant, with 49 entries, followed by implicative and interactive verbs. These findings indicate that changes of state implied by certain verbs are frequently used in films to implicitly convey background information without having to directly state it. Furthermore, the use of lexical presuppositions has been shown to help create efficient, natural, and subtext-rich dialogue, supporting story development while enriching the audience's experience. By utilizing specific linguistic triggers, the dialogue in *Interstellar* is able to establish context, establish relationships between characters, and provide in-depth narrative clues. This research is expected to contribute to the study of pragmatics, particularly in understanding the role of lexical presuppositions in film, and to open up opportunities for further research on their application in various genres and languages.

Keywords: Lexical Presuppositions, Triggers, *Interstellar*, Pragmatics, Film Dialogue.

Abstrak. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi praanggapan leksikal dan pemicunya yang ditemukan dalam film *Interstellar*. Praanggapan leksikal merupakan salah satu jenis praanggapan yang muncul karena adanya kata-kata atau ungkapan tertentu yang secara inheren membawa makna tambahan, sehingga memunculkan asumsi yang tidak secara eksplisit diucapkan namun tetap dapat dipahami oleh pendengar atau penonton. Dengan demikian, praanggapan leksikal berperan penting dalam membangun makna implisit dan kedalaman dialog dalam karya audiovisual. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif deskriptif untuk mengidentifikasi dan menganalisis bentuk-bentuk praanggapan leksikal yang muncul dalam film. Data dikumpulkan melalui teknik dokumentasi dan pencatatan, dengan menyalin dialog dari film *Interstellar* secara cermat, kemudian mengklasifikasikannya berdasarkan teori praanggapan yang dikemukakan oleh Yule (1996) dan Levinson (1983). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa terdapat tiga jenis pemicu praanggapan leksikal dalam dialog film, yaitu verba implikatif, verba perubahan keadaan, dan verba interaktif. Dari total 59 data praanggapan leksikal yang ditemukan, kategori verba perubahan keadaan menjadi yang paling dominan dengan jumlah 49 data, disusul oleh verba implikatif dan verba interaktif. Temuan ini mengindikasikan bahwa perubahan keadaan yang diimplikasikan oleh kata kerja tertentu sering digunakan dalam film untuk menyampaikan informasi latar belakang secara implisit tanpa harus memaparkannya secara langsung. Selain itu, penggunaan praanggapan leksikal terbukti membantu menciptakan dialog yang efisien, alami, dan kaya subteks, yang mendukung perkembangan cerita sekaligus memperkaya pengalaman penonton. Dengan memanfaatkan pemicu linguistik tertentu, dialog dalam *Interstellar* mampu membangun konteks, hubungan antar tokoh, serta memberikan petunjuk naratif yang mendalam. Penelitian ini diharapkan dapat memberikan kontribusi terhadap kajian pragmatik, khususnya dalam memahami peran praanggapan leksikal dalam media film, serta membuka peluang penelitian lanjutan mengenai penerapannya dalam berbagai genre atau bahasa yang berbeda.

Kata kunci: Praanggapan leksikal, Pemicunya, Film *Interstellar*, Pragmatik, Dialog film.

1. BACKGROUND

Language is used not only to convey information directly but also to express deeper, more complex meanings through implied messages. In every utterance, the meaning produced is not always explicit or clear. Often, speakers convey messages implicitly, depending on the listener's ability to interpret these messages based on context, shared knowledge, and pragmatic competence. This aspect reflects the complexity of language as a social instrument, where much of the intended meaning relies not solely on what is said, but also on what is assumed, implied, or left unsaid.

Pragmatic is a branch of linguistics that focuses on how meaning is constructed, conveyed, and interpreted in relation to context. According to Levinson (1983:21), pragmatics studies the relationship between language and context that forms the basis for understanding utterance meaning. According to Yule (1996), pragmatics encompasses various subfields that collectively explain how communication functions in context. These include deixis, reference and inference, presupposition and entailment, cooperation and implicature, speech acts, politeness strategies, conversation structure and preferences, as well as the influence of discourse and culture.

Among these subfields, presupposition holds a very important place because it deals with implicit assumptions that are considered true in communication. Presupposition refers to background beliefs or assumptions that are assumed by the speaker to be true and expected to be accepted by the listener as part of the shared context. Yule (1996:25) explains that presupposition is an assumption made by the speaker in making an utterance, which is considered to be accepted as true by the listener. Presupposition is not limited to everyday communication in real life, but can also be found in fictional media such as movie. In movie, characters convey various utterances that are not only explicit in meaning, but also contain implicit meanings that are assumed to be information already known to the audience. The movie such as *Interstellar* (2014) directed by Cristopher Nolan is an interesting object for analysis because it contains many utterances that are rich in implicature. The implicit meaning in a movie is sometimes not immediately understood by the audience. Therefore, knowledge is needed to analyze the implicit meanings in the discourse. In this study will focus more on meanings that are not fully understood by the audience, which come from implied assumptions, rather than from what is said directly.

This study examines the *Interstellar* movie dialogues as the object of research, with a focus on the lexical presuppositions and their triggers. By analyzing lexical presuppositions, this study aims to uncover how meaning is communicated indirectly yet effectively, and how the speaker's assumptions shape the listener's or audience's understanding.

2. THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

Pragmatics focuses on understanding meaning within the context of interplay. According to Levinson (1983:3) describes pragmatics as the study of language elements that concentrate on how speech is used, making it a fundamental vicinity of linguistics. It goes beyond syntax and semantics, focusing on how linguistic forms interact with situational factors to create meaning. Similarly, Griffiths (2006:6) emphasizes that pragmatics is concerned with the meaning of utterances rather than just the meaning of individual words or grammatical constructions. Mey (2001:6) also defines pragmatics as the study of language use shaped by situational context in communication. Mey (1993:42) emphasizes that pragmatics is the study of how language is used in relation to social context, which is crucial for a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of human communication. Gazdar (1979a:2) also adds that pragmatics relates to aspects of meaning in utterances that cannot be fully explained solely through the truth conditions of the sentences spoken. Another explanation by Levinson (1983:5-6), pragmatics is defined as the study of language usage. The field of pragmatics encompasses principles that explain why certain sets of sentences are considered anomalous or unacceptable as utterances. Yule (1996) defines pragmatics as the study of meaning as communicated by a speaker and interpreted by a listener during the process of communication. Yule's (1996:3), pragmatics can be understood as the belief that the meaning of a message is not always the same as what is directly said; that is, a message can have a broader meaning than just the words used.

One important branch of pragmatics is presupposition. Presupposition relates to assumptions made by the speaker and considered to be known or understood by the listener as part of shared background knowledge. Griffiths (2006:143) supports this by explaining that presuppositions are assumptions about shared background knowledge that is considered to be known in communication. Meanwhile, Grundy (2008) refers to them as background knowledge used by speakers to convey their meaning implicitly to their interlocutors. Huang (2007) adds that presuppositions are inferences whose truth can be assumed in a phrase or utterance. Khaleel (2010) also emphasizes that presuppositions are information that implicitly emerges in

conversation, often broader than what is explicitly stated in the sentence itself. In this sense, presupposition is a semantic relationship between two sentences, without directly involving the speaker, the listener, or the context in which the sentences are spoken. It is not the human being who makes the presupposition, but the sentence itself that carries the presupposition as said by Karttunen (1973). As Putrayasa (2014:78–79) notes, presupposition represents an initial assumption implicitly contained within a linguistic expression, which shapes the listener's initial interpretation and response. The presupposition theory developed by Yule (1996) is the type of presupposition employed in this study. In Yule's theory (1996:27–29), presuppositions are classified into six kinds of presuppositions; for instance, existential presupposition, factive presupposition, non-factive presupposition, lexical presupposition, structural presupposition and counter-factual presupposition.

The presupposition which uses of one form with a meaning that is conventionally interpreted with the assumption that the other has an understood meaning is called Lexical presupposition as the third type of presupposition. Yule (1996:28) defines lexical presupposition as the author's ability to assume that other meaning (word is not asserted) will be interpreted and understood. Lexical presuppositions, such as “again,” “start,” “manage,” and “stop,” are used to assume that another (unstated) meaning is understood. The following lexical items contain assumptions, among others: manage, try, succeed, stop, start, again. So, this type uses implicative verbs (manage), change verbs (stop), and iteratives (again) as trigger assumptions.

According to Levinson (1983:181) states that “presupposition triggers are constructions or elements that indicate the presence of presuppositions in a statement”. The presupposition triggers include such as definite descriptions, factive items, implicative verbs, change of state verbs, iteratives, verbs of judging, temporal clauses, cleft sentences, implicit cleft with stressed constituents, comparisons and contrasts, non-restrictive relative clauses, counterfactual conditionals, dan questions. Lexical presupposition trigger is a signal for the emergence of a lexical presupposition, which is marked by the use of a verb that automatically has an assumption. The signals of the emergence of lexical presupposition in dialogues can be marked by the emergence of certain words which are classified as implicative verbs, change of state verbs, iteratives.

Implicative verbs are Implicative verbs are presupposition triggers marked by verbs that imply an action. Some examples of words that fall under implicative verbs are ‘manage’, ‘avoid’, ‘happen’ and ‘forget’. Change of state verbs are According to Khaleel (2010) states

change of state verbs presupposes that an item has been in a particular place or condition and involved in a shift of a kind of behavior. Such verbs include start, stop, begin, continue, finish, go, arrive, change, leave, enter. And Iteratives are Iteratives are presupposition triggers that refer to something that happens repeatedly. There are several words that fall under the category of iterative words, such as ‘again’, ‘return’, ‘another time’, ‘to come back’, ‘restore’, and ‘repeat’.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

A descriptive qualitative approach to examine the lexical presupposition and their triggers were found in *Interstellar* movie. The data were taken from the characters’ dialogues in *Interstellar* movie, which contains lexical presupposition or assumption meaning. The data collection was conducted using a documentation method and note taking technique. The documentation method involved with gathering the necessary data from the data source, on this matter, the movie *interstellar*. On the other hand, the note-taking technique involved with capturing the relevant data for the analysis. To Identify and classify the chosen data would follow two theories by Yule (1996) about the lexical presupposition understanding and Levinson theory of presupposition triggers (1983). The analysis was conducted by categorizing the data according to lexical presupposition and its trigger frameworks. Every utterance was analyzed to identify the lexical presupposition and communicative purpose of the presupposition. The findings were subsequently interpreted to explain the ways in which lexical presupposition is employed in the movie and the meaning behind its usage.

4. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

This research focused on investigating the emergence of lexical presuppositions along with the triggers of lexical presuppositions in the *Interstellar* movie. The analysis process was carried out by marking their emergence using Yule's theory about the lexical presupposition type in several utterances of the characters in the movie. Then, to analyze the triggers of the lexical presuppositions, they examined based on Levinson's theory of trigger presuppositions. A total of 59 lexical prepositions were found in this study with their triggers. From the analysis, there were 3 main triggers that trigger or indicate the emergence of lexical presuppositions, including: implicative verbs, change of state verbs, and iteratives. For more clarity, it will be explained in the following table:

No	Triggers of Lexical Presupposition	Numbers
1	Implicative Verbs	3
2	Change of State Verbs	49
3	Interative	9
Total		61

Based on the table above, there were 3 triggers out of 59 lexical presuppositions found, and the most dominant one appearing in the movie was Change of State Verbs, with 49 occurrences.

Change of State Verbs described a change, they logically presuppose a state before the change occurs. In other words, they describe a subject (someone or something) undergoing a transition from one state or condition to another, with the primary focus being the verb that changes the state, moving from A to B. Further explanation of lexical presuppositions and their triggers will be explained in the following explanation.

A. Lexical Presupposition and Implicative verbs as Its Trigger

Lexical presupposition is a presupposition that explains an assumption with a meaning that is simply accepted by the listener with another meaning that is not asserted in the sentence but can be accepted as a truth that actually occurs. An implicative verb functions as a trigger because its meaning forces us to draw a conclusion (presupposition) about whether the outcome of an action is successful or unsuccessful. To understand the relationship between lexical presupposition and implicative verbs as triggers, we can look at the following data.:

Data [4-1]

(27:13 – 27:29)

Cooper : It's kind of hard to explain. We learned these coordinates from an anomaly.

Doyle : What sort of anomaly?

Cooper : I **hesitate to** term it supernatural, but it definitely wasn't scientific.

Man : You're going to have to be specific, Mr. Cooper. Right now.

Murph : It was gravity.

The dialogue above can be classified as a lexical presupposition. According to Yule (1996:28), lexical presupposition is defined as the author's ability to assume that other meanings (words) will be interpreted and understood. In this data, the use of the word "Hesitate to" is the primary trigger. This word is included in the Implicative Verb category, which implies the result of the action or verb that follows it. "Hesitate to" specifically implies that the doubtful action will not be carried out. When Cooper says "I hesitate to term it supernatural," the implied

meaning is: "I wouldn't call it supernatural." In this dialogue, the speaker, Cooper, is being interrogated after he and Murph are discovered at a secret NASA facility. Scientists demand to know how Cooper discovered their top-secret location. It is in this context that he utters, "I hesitate to term it supernatural, but it definitely wasn't scientific," demonstrating Cooper's hesitation to use an unscientific term like "supernatural" to explain the phenomena he experiences.

B. Lexical Presupposition and Change of State Verb as Its Trigger

The presuppositional triggers that indicate that a condition has changed are known as change of state verbs. This will be explained more clearly in the data below.

Data [4-2]

(57:44 – 57:56)

Romilly : Hey, Coop? Can we **stop** the spinning?

Cooper : Why?

Romilly : Because we're close enough to see it now?

Cooper : All right.

Romilly : Thanks.

This sentence is spoken by Romilly to Cooper on the Endurance station, which is spinning toward the wormhole. Romilly asks Cooper to temporarily stop the station's rotation as they approach the wormhole. She is eager to see what she has been researching and tries to explain it simply to Cooper. The utterance "Can we stop the spinning?" is an example of lexical presupposition. This is because there is a basic assumption hidden in the word choice, which must be accepted as true for the sentence to make sense. In this case, the word "stop" uttered by the speaker (Romilly) already implies that the station is spinning without needing to further state, "The station is spinning. Can we stop it?". By simply asking "Can we stop it?", she automatically assumes that her interlocutor (Cooper) also knows that "the station is spinning." The trigger for this presupposition is the verb "stop," which falls into the category of "change of state verbs," which are verbs that indicate a transition from one state to another. How it Works "stop" specifically signifies a transition from a state of "doing something" (in this case, spinning) to a state of "no longer doing something" (not spinning). Logically, one can only "stop" something if it is already in progress. Therefore, the word "stop" inherently forces us to make an assumption about the state before the change occurs. It is this choice of the word "stop" that immediately raises the presumption that the Endurance station is spinning.

C. Lexical Presupposition and Iterative as Its Trigger

Iteratives are presupposition triggers. These triggers are used to refer to something that occurs repeatedly, such as the data below.

Data [4-3]

(25:03 – 25:16)

Robot : How did you find this place?

Cooper : Where's my daughter?

Robot : You had the coordinates for this facility marked on your map. Where did you get them?

Cooper : Where's my daughter?

Robot : Don't make me take you down **again**. Sit down!

This sentence is uttered by a guard (or security guard) who is a robot at a secret NASA facility. In this scene, Cooper has just been arrested after infiltrating the facility. He is uncooperative and demands to know where his daughter, Murph, is. In response to Cooper's resistance, the guard threatens him with the words: "Don't make me take you down again. Sit down!" The guard orders Cooper to sit down and obey, while threatening to use physical force again if Cooper doesn't comply. This sentence is a very clear example of lexical presupposition. The presupposition (basic assumption) arising from this sentence is: "I've taken you (Cooper) down before." This presupposition is called lexical because it arises from the meaning inherent in one specific word, namely "again." The word "again" is an iterative word that refers to something that repeats an action. The word "again" serves to indicate that an action is repeated. The guard doesn't need to say, "I've taken you down before. Don't make me do it again." By simply adding the word "again," he assumes that Cooper (and the listener) already know and accept that the first paralyzing incident has occurred. The function of "again" is to indicate that an action (in this case, "take you down") is a repetition of the same action that occurred in the past. The presence of "again" logically forces the assumption that the action has occurred before for the sentence to be meaningful.

5. CONCLUSION

After obtaining the data, this section of the chapter aims to clarify the answers to the research questions. The main research question in this study was to identify lexical presuppositions and their triggers in characters' dialogues in the movie *Interstellar*. This study found that lexical presuppositions have triggers, as explained in Levinson's trigger presupposition theory. This type has three triggers: implicative verbs, change-of-state verbs,

and interatives. During the study, 59 lexical presuppositional utterances were found in the movie *Interstellar*. The most dominant type was change-of-state verbs (49), followed by interatives (9), and the least common was implicative verbs (1). The presence of presuppositions, especially lexical presuppositions in movie scripts, helps make dialogue efficient, natural, and rich in hidden meaning (subtext). Presuppositions allow writers to convey a wealth of background information without having to explicitly state it. This makes the dialogue concise, fast, and to the point, which is crucial for maintaining the flow of the story. Then, the connection between Yule's (1996) theory of presupposition types and Levinson's (1983) presupposition triggers can be concluded that presuppositions are not phenomena that appear randomly in conversation. Instead, each type of presupposition identified by Yule always has a specific 'trigger' or linguistic signal, as Levinson describes it, that indicates its presence. Simply put, the trigger is the cause (the word or structure used), and the presupposition type is the effect (the resulting background assumption). Levinson's trigger can be likened to a signal in language, while Yule's presupposition type is the assumed meaning contained in that signal.

REFERENCES

- Andi, N. H. (2023). The analysis of presupposition found in *Enola Holmes* movie (Undergraduate thesis). Hasanuddin University, Makassar.
- Aravind, A., et al. (2023). Principles of presupposition in development. *Linguistics and Philosophy*, 46, 291–332. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10988-022-09364-z>
- Eragamreddy, N. (2024). Presuppositions: The hidden force shaping everyday conversations. *Premise: Journal of English Education and Applied Linguistics*, 13(3), 842–870. <https://doi.org/10.24127/pj.v13i3.10121>
- Fitriani, E. S. (2021). The presupposition triggers in thesis abstract. *International Journal of English and Applied Linguistics*, 1(3), 283–290. <https://doi.org/10.47709/ijeal.v1i3.1273>
- Gazdar, G. (1979). *Pragmatics: Implicature, presupposition and logical form*. Academic Press.
- Ghafoory, D. D. S., & Miran, D. L. (2022). The realization of presupposition triggers in the types of presupposition in articles by non-native English writers. *Journal of Tikrit University for Humanities*, 29(10), 64–95. <https://jtuh.org/index.php/jtuh/article/view/343>

- Griffiths, P. (2006). *An introduction to English semantics and pragmatics*. Edinburgh University Press.
- Grundy, P. (2008). *Doing pragmatics*. Hodder Education.
- Huang, Y. (2007). *Pragmatics*. Oxford University Press.
- Jannah, M. (2022). *An analysis of presupposition in “Johnny English Reborn” movie (Undergraduate thesis)*. Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim, Malang.
- Karamat, H., et al. (2023). *Uncovering presuppositions in The Guardian news: A pragmatic perspective*. *Journal of Xi’an Shiyou University, Natural Science Edition*, 19, 1780–1794. <http://xisdxjxsu.asia>
- Karttunen, L. (1973). *Presuppositions of compound sentences*. *Linguistic Inquiry*, 4, 169–193. The MIT Press.
- Khaleel, L. (2010). *An analysis of presupposition triggers in English journalistic texts*. *Journal of Linguistics*, 523–551.
- Khaleel, L. M. (2010). *An analysis of presupposition triggers in English journalistic texts*. *Journal of College of Education for Women*, 21(2). <https://scispace.com/pdf/an-analysis-of-presupposition-triggers-in-english-3trvh2to5w>
- Levinson, S. C. (1983). *Pragmatics*. Cambridge University Press.
- Mey, J. L. (2001). *Pragmatics: An introduction (2nd ed.)*. Blackwell Publishing.
- Moldovan, A. (2023). *Persuasive presuppositions*. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 211, 96–104. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2023.04.004>
- Putrayasa, I. B. (2014). *Pragmatik*. Graha Ilmu.
- Rizani, M. (2019). *An analysis of presupposition in English slogan of universities in Indonesia (Undergraduate thesis)*. Antasari State Islamic University.
- Sbisà, M. (2021). *Presupposition and implicature: Varieties of implicit meaning in explicitation practices*. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 182, 176–188. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2021.05.027>
- Solehah, M., et al. (2022). *An analysis of presupposition on the main characters of Frozen movie script*. *Wanastra: Jurnal Bahasa dan Sastra*, 14(1), 72–76. <https://doi.org/10.31294/wanastra.v14i1.10990>
- Vallauri, E. L. (2021). *Presupposition, attention and cognitive load*. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 183, 15–28. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2021.06.022>

Yang, Q., & Jiang, X. (2023). On the scope of presupposition in discourse reading comprehension. *Acta Psychologica*, 237, Article 103955. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.actpsy.2023.103955>

Yule, G. (1996). *Pragmatics*. Oxford University Press.