

A COMPARISON ON PRESUPPOSITIONS OF SPEECH'S INTRODUCTION BY AMERICAN VIETNAMESE POLICIANS

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Abstract

The article studies how presuppositions are used in the first parts of political speeches by American and Vietnamese leaders. The results show that both speakers exploit semantic and pragmatic presuppositions. However, the differences are on the types and sentence structures of presuppositions. The American leader, George. W. Bush uses the existential presupposition with simple and compound sentences while Vietnamese one, Mr Tran Duc Luong delivers the speech with factive presupposition and complex structures. The study exploits quantitative and qualitative method to collect and analyse data.

Keywords: *Presupposition, existential presupposition, factive presupposition*

1. Introduction

Presupposition is considered to be one of the most effective tools, which is often used in political speech. Politicians exploit it as much as possible, as a persuasive device in delivering their speech to the audience to achieve the validity of their claims.

Presupposition can be defined as “background assumptions embedded within a sentence or phrase. These assumptions are taken for granted to be true regardless of whether the whole sentence is true” [1]. In pragmatics, the study of meaning of the utterances by speaker relates to the context, presuppositions can be classified

into two types: semantic presupposition and pragmatic presupposition.

In this study, the notion of presuppositions will be looked at in the introduction parts by the two leaders of America and Viet nam - Mr George W.Bush’s speech, which delivers State of the Union Address in 2007 and of the opening speech of the tenth National Party Congress by Mr. Tran Duc Luong – a member of Politburo of the ninth Party Central Committee to see how they use presuppositions in their speeches to gain their purposes. In addition to this, a comparison about presuppositions in the first parts of two speeches will be done to see similarities and differences between languages.

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2. Methods

George Bush delivered the 2007 State of the Union Address – the initiatives about the budget balance and social security on January 23, 2007 [2]. It was collected from the website: <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/stateoftheunion/2007/>

Mr. Tran Duc Luong, the former President of Vietnam gave the opening speech of the tenth National Party Congress on April 18, 2006 [3]. It was collected from the website:

<http://tulieuvankien.dangcongsan.vn/ban-chap-hanh-trung-uong-dang/dai-hoi-dang/lan-thu-x/dien-van-khai-mac-dai-hoi-dai-bieu-toan-quoc-lan-thu-x-cua-dang-1539>

The paper will be analyzed into three parts: Presuppositions in the first parts of Mr. George Bush's speech; Presuppositions in the first parts of Mr. Tran Duc Luong's speech; Compare presuppositions in the first parts of two speeches as the greeting parts: one by Mr. George Bush, the other by Mr. Tran Duc Luong.

A presupposition is defined as something the speaker assumes to be the case prior to making an utterance. He also classifies presuppositions into different types, the existential presupposition the factive presupposition, non-factive presupposition, lexical presupposition, structural presupposition and counterfactual presupposition. All these types of presuppositions are indicators of potential presuppositions, which can only become actual presuppositions in contexts with speakers [1].

A presupposition is a meaning taken as given which does not therefore need to be asserted; variously defined as semantic

presupposition and pragmatic presupposition. Each type of presupposition relates to the areas of language like morphemes, lexical items or grammatical structures [4].

A presupposition is useful in political discourse because it can make it more difficult for the audience to identify and reject views communicated in this way, and can persuade people to take something for granted which is usually open to debate [5]. Thus, semantic presupposition bases on lexical meaning of the utterances that is always true in all context. And pragmatic presupposition relates to context in which the utterance is uttered, its meaning depends on the context.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. *Presuppositions in the first parts of Mr. George's speech*

The State of the Union Address is a speech that the President of the United States gives to Congress every year about the achievements and plans of the Government. The speech consists of greetings, introduction of participants and the meeting's purpose. It begins with greetings and some introductions:

“And tonight, I have a high privilege and distinct honor of my own – as the first President to begin the State of the Union message with these words: Madam Speaker.”

At the very beginning of the speech, there is nothing special in his words. However, Mr. Bush captures his audience by using “the first President” and “Madam Speaker”. He presupposes that there has never been a Madam Speaker before and he himself is the

first one to do that. This triggers a semantic presupposition.

“In his day, the late Congressman Thomas D’Alesandro, Jr. from Baltimore, Maryland, saw Presidents Roosevelt and Truman at this rostrum. But nothing could compare with the sight of his only daughter, Nancy, presiding tonight as Speaker of the House of representatives. Congratulations, Madam Speaker.”

This utterance triggers semantic presuppositions with the phrases “in his day” and “at this rostrum” that when the present President reminds people of the past event. It is a special thing that there is a Madam Speaker (the first woman Speaker of the House of Representatives) in the US government now to congratulate and support her position and success.

“Two members of the House and Senate are not with us tonight, and we pray for the recovery and speedy return of Senator Tim Johnson and Congressman Charlie Norwood.”

This time, he shows his sympathy and concerns to two members who are ill. By using the phrase “the recovery and speedy return”, he triggers a semantic presupposition here with a hope of their return to the work.

“The rite of custom brings us together at a defining hour - when decisions are hard and courage is needed.”

It is a regulation of the Government to have a meeting at fixed time to discuss problems and give suitable solutions. This creates a pragmatic presupposition that there are some

new problems in this meeting. And he calls for people’s courages to solve problems.

“We enter the year 2007 with large endeavors underway, and others that are ours to begin. In all of this, much is asked of us.”

This creates semantic presuppositions that the US did something, but there are still a lot of duties to do now.

“We must have the will to face difficult challenges and determined enemies –and the wisdom to face them together.”

In this sentence, the semantic presuppositions show the fact that the US has some difficulties now with two words: “challenges” and “enemies”. And these two words also lead the listeners to infer to the context of the US: some members in the Congress may not have strong will and there are some problems in economy or other fiels of the society. Moreover, the US has to face with terrorisms that is considered to be the enemies of the country. Thus, the utterance gives both semantic and pragmatic presuppositions.

“Some in this chamber are new to the House and the Senate – and I congratulate the Democrat majority.”

The information shows the Democrat won in election and new members are Democrats now. It is a semantic presupposition that the Democrats were not the majority before.

“Yet we’re all held to the same standards, and called to serve the same good purposes: To extend this nation’s prosperity; to spend the people’s money wisely; to solve problems, not leave them to future generations; to guard

America against all evil; and to keep faith with those we have sent forth to defend us.”

The word “the same” here gives rise to a semantic presupposition that all people in the Government have common responsibilities and purposes to the country. And this also presupposes that the previous Government left a lot of problems to him and the Congress now- this is a pragmatic presupposition.

The existential presuppositions are used with a lot of possessions and definite article to express targeted information that only the speaker and hearers know.

3.2. Presuppositions in the greeting parts of Mr. Tran Duc Luong’s speech

The speech also consists of three parts, greetings, introduction of members and content of the meeting. In the first part of the speech Mr. Luong introduces members of the Congress and expresses the deep gratitude of the whole nation to the great former President Ho Chi Minh and people who died for the process of struggling to liberate nation.

“Tôi xin nhiệt liệt chào mừng 1.176 đại biểu, được bầu ra từ đại hội đại biểu các cấp, đại diện cho trên 3,1 triệu đảng viên, tiêu biểu cho sức mạnh đoàn kết, ý chí và nguyện vọng của toàn Đảng, về dự Đại hội trong thời điểm lịch sử quan trọng của cách mạng và của dân tộc ta.”

This presupposes semantically that delegates who take part in this Congress are outstanding people to be elected from different parts of the country and the time at the Congress happens is an important time to Vietnam’s revolution. This also gives rise to pragmatic suppositions that the important

time of Vietnam is achievements after 20 years of renovation.

“Đại hội chúng ta thành kính tưởng nhớ và bày tỏ lòng biết ơn vô hạn Chủ tịch Hồ Chí Minh, Người sáng lập và rèn luyện Đảng ta, lãnh tụ vĩ đại của Đảng và dân tộc ta, Anh hùng giải phóng dân tộc, Danh nhân văn hóa thế giới, chiến sỹ lỗi lạc của phong trào cộng sản quốc tế”.

This subordinate clause gives a semantic presupposition here the former President Ho Chi Minh who laid the foundation of Vietnamese revolution are worthy of being set an example for latter generations. A pragmatic presupposition is triggered that President Ho Chi Minh was a person who devoted all his life for the nation’s liberation, for the birth of Socialist Republic of Vietnam

“Sự nghiệp cách mạng của Đảng và nhân dân ta 76 năm qua đã khẳng định rằng, tư tưởng vĩ đại của Người cùng với chủ nghĩa Mác- Lênin mãi mãi là nền tảng tư tưởng, kim chỉ nam cho hành động của Đảng và cách mạng Việt Nam, là tài sản tinh thần vô giá của Đảng và dân tộc ta.”

The factive verb “khẳng định” means “reaffirm” or “be aware” takes presupposed information following. The clause after the verb is semantic presupposition of the utterance. Moreover, this presupposes pragmatically that Vietnamese revolution will follow Ho Chi Minh’s ideologies and Marxism – Leninism now and future time.

“Đại hội nhiệt liệt hoan nghênh và trân trọng cảm ơn sự tham gia nhiệt tình và sự đóng góp quý báu, đầy trách nhiệm của các tổ chức đảng, của toàn thể đảng viên, của các đoàn thể chính trị xã hội các cấp, của các vị

lão thành cách mạng... vào các văn kiện Đại hội lần thứ X của Đảng, góp phần quan trọng làm cho các văn kiện trình Đại hội hôm nay thực sự là kết tinh của trí tuệ và sức sáng tạo của toàn Đảng, toàn dân và toàn quân ta.”

Again, the complex sentence rises two semantic presuppositions after the phrase “warmly welcome and thank for people who...”. The two clauses following trigger presupposed information: individuals and organizations of the Party take part enthusiastically and contribute fully with their responsibilities to build documents of the Congress. And the documents of National congress are the results of people’s intellectuals and hard working.

3.3. Comments on the uses of presuppositions in both speeches

It can be seen that both speeches have the same structure with greeting, introduction and the reasons for meeting. The speakers both mention the former people who play important political roles in countries.

The similarities between two speeches are a number of presuppositions used in the first parts of the speeches, both semantic and pragmatic presuppositions. Semantic presuppositions is associated with lexical item or grammatical structures, while pragmatic presuppositions relate to context to determine the meaning of the utterance. In some utterances, there are the existence of both semantic and pragmatic presuppositions.

However, the prominent differences between them are sentence structures. Most of the utterances in Mr. Bush’s speeches are written in simple or compound sentences,

while the utterances in Mr. Luong’s speech are in complex sentences. This could be explained by the differences between communicative styles of Vietnamese and American. English styles can be used in direct way and straightforward while Vietnamese people prefer indirect and expressive way [4] and also as it is proposed that writers from different cultural and language backgrounds may have different assumptions about preferred rhetorical organization, and accordingly, may structure and develop their compositions differently [7].

In Mr. Bush’s utterances, a type of presupposition is used namely existential presupposition with a number of definite such as articles, possessives and demonstratives as the analysis above. The utterances are formed simply.

In Mr. Luong’s speech, a type of presupposition is used that is associated with subordinate clauses in most utterances and after some factive verbs. The more complicated utterances are constructed to create presuppositions.

4. Conclusions

The findings of presuppositions in two speeches above show how powerful a persuasive tool is. It is used as much as possible at the beginning of the speeches to convey the speaker’s intentions. Different languages may have different ways of constructing presupposed information.

The findings can be provided for people who study English as a foreign language or people who learn Vietnamese as a foreign language to avoid cultural inferences. Hence,

firstly, it is crucial to raise students' awareness of understanding the theory of the speech structure and formation. Since then, students can distinguish Vietnamese style from English one in term of linguistic and cultural factors. In addition, when making the introduction of the speech in both Vietnamese and English, remember to exploit presupposition which is "what a speaker or writer assumes that the receiver of the message already knows" [7] to make speech gain the aim. It is a polite way to say something indirect in order to have special effect. Finally, due to differences of speaking styles between eastern and western one, both English and Vietnamese speakers should choose appropriate ways to deliver speech effectively to the particular audience.

Due to the scope of the paper, the focus is only on presuppositions of the introduction parts of the speeches, which are analysed. The further studies of the whole speeches would be investigated to see more varieties of presuppositions between Vietnamese and English language in the future.

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SO SÁNH VỀ CÁCH DÙNG TIỀN GIẢ ĐỊNH TRONG LỜI MỞ ĐẦU CÁC BÀI PHÁT BIỂU CỦA CHÍNH TRỊ GIA NGƯỜI MỸ VÀ VIỆT NAM

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Tóm tắt

Bài báo nghiên cứu về tiền giả định được dùng như thế nào trong phần mở đầu của hai bài phát biểu của hai nhà chính trị gia người Mỹ và Việt Nam. Kết quả cho thấy rằng cả hai nhà lãnh đạo đều sử dụng cả hai loại tiền giả định ngữ nghĩa và ngữ dụng. Tuy nhiên sự khác nhau thể hiện ở loại tiền giả định và cấu trúc câu tiền giả định. Nếu như nhà lãnh đạo người Mỹ, ông Bush khai thác loại tiền giả định chỉ sự tồn tại với câu đơn và câu ghép thì nhà lãnh đạo người Việt, ông Trần Đức Lương lại dùng loại tiền giả định thực tế với các loại câu phức. Nghiên cứu sử dụng phương pháp định tính và định lượng để thu thập và phân tích dữ liệu

Từ khóa: *Tiền giả định, tiền giả định tồn tại, tiền giả định hàm thực.*