

# PRESUPPOSITIONS IN MOBILE PHONE ADVERTISEMENTS

**Nita Puspita Sari<sup>1</sup>, Zuliati Rohmah<sup>2</sup>**

State Islamic University Sunan Ampel Surabaya

[ntpspt@gmail.com](mailto:ntpspt@gmail.com), [zettira@gmail.com](mailto:zettira@gmail.com)

**Abstract:** *The present study aims to describe the types of presuppositions contained in mobile phone advertisement and to describe the functions of presuppositions contained in mobile phone advertisement. The descriptive will describe and interpret phenomena related to presuppositions. The analysis of the mobile phone advertisements shows that the most dominant type of presuppositions found in selected slogans is lexical presuppositions. In terms of the functions of presuppositions in the advertisement, committing in implicit competition and making the advertisement short and memorable is the functions which are most frequently used.*

**Keywords:** *pragmatics; presuppositions; advertisements*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Presupposition is a central topic in pragmatics. Presuppositions can mean previous estimates. When the speaker or the writer says or writes something without explaining it clearly, the listener or the reader already has previous estimates about the person or what is being discussed. There have been a number of researchers who discuss presuppositions with a variety of topics and research focuses (see, for example, Simons, 2003 & 2010; Khaleel, 2010; Chemla and Bolt; 2011, Ahmed, 2011; Hashim, 2014; Lam, 2009; and Dewi, 2015).

Some of the researchers talk about the meaning and the types of presuppositions that are used in a variety of media such as English journalistic (Khaleel, 2010), religious Islamic text (Hashim, 2014), food advertisements (Lam, 2009), talk show (Dewi, 2015) and so on. Khaleel's (2010) study on English journalistic texts focused the analysis on presupposition triggers. This research collected data from six English journalistic texts which were randomly selected. The six English journalistic texts were from the national newspapers and the regional newspapers. This research is very interesting in terms of topic choice, however, the topic discussed was too broad—it analyzed all branches of presuppositions triggers—the researcher lacked focus on the topic being discussed. Presupposition triggers are divided into three types, they are existential

(definite description), lexical (implicative verbs, factive items, change of state verbs, verbs of judging, counterfactual verbs, conventional items, iteratives) and structural (cleft constructions, wh-questions, adverbial clauses, comparative constructions, counterfactual conditionals, non restrictive clauses). In the analysis, the researcher analyzed all types of presuppositions and their sub-types. It would be better if the study focused on one type only, but discussed it thoroughly.

Another study on presuppositions was also conducted by Chemla and Bolt (2011). The researchers focused their analysis on the processing of the presuppositions; dynamic semantics versus pragmatic enrichment. In this article, the researchers developed and tested two processing accounts of presupposition projection, the global-first model and the local-first model, inspired by dynamic semantic and pragmatic theories respectively.

When a presupposition triggers (realize) occurs under negation (Zoologists do not realize that elephants are mammals), the sentence is most commonly interpreted with the same global presupposition (elephant are mammals) as if negation was not present. Alternatively, the presupposition may be locally accommodated so that the presupposition may become part of what is negated. In experiments conducted in this analysis, the researchers found that the participants tend to get a global interpretation more quickly than the local interpretation. The research focuses on discussing the results in terms of dynamic semantics versus pragmatic models enrichment.

Furthermore, Ahmed (2011) focuses on pragmatic studies that discusses the presuppositions as a pragmatic inference toward a new conceptualization of the term. The analysis is almost the same as the previous analysis conducted by Khaleel (2010). The researcher discussed about the presuppositions triggers but with a different data source. The researcher analyzed how existential presupposition operates in English religious texts and how it can be identified. Existential presupposition was investigated through the use of proper nouns and the names of persons that operate as a distinctive feature due to the frequency of occurrence in Islamic religious texts. The research is very interesting as the researcher focused on one type of presupposition triggers, that is, existential presuppositions, that makes the researcher able to conduct an in-depth analysis on the data. However, the data source was too general. He did not specify the Islamic religious texts used as the data source, whether it is from the Qur'an, Hadist or other texts. The latest analysis was conducted by Dewi (2015) focusing on presuppositions in Mario Teguh's speeches. The researcher found the six types of presuppositions suggested by Yule (1996).

The most interesting of all is the research conducted by Lam (2009). In his study, Lam discusses the relationship between presuppositions in advertisement and the Hong Kong's culture. This article gives details on the functions of presuppositions in the ads and the ways in which cultural aspects

are reflected in the ads. The researcher analyzes how the Hong Kong's culture is reflected in the food advertisements.

Presuppositions always appear in every conversation because the conversation certainly has meaning in the sentence, it makes the interlocutor use a presupposition."A presupposition is something the speaker assumes to be the case prior to making an utterance" (Yule, 1996, page 25) and "presupposition can be informally defined as an inference or presupposition whose truth is taken for granted in the utterance of a sentence"(Huang, 2007, page 65). Yule (1996) divides types of presuppositions into six, they are, existential presupposition, factive presupposition, lexical presupposition, structural presupposition, non-factive presupposition and counterfactual presupposition. The function of presuppositions is to gear certain responses or predictions that are considered in accordance with the existing use of the spoken sentence. For example, in "*My wife is pregnant,*" the presupposition is 'the speaker has a wife'.

The phenomenon of presupposition is not only used in religious Islamic texts, food advertisements, novel, movie and so on, but also used in the mobile phone advertisements. Many advertisements compete to offer products at affordable prices and claim to sell good quality gadgets. The advertisement writer makes use of presuppositions in the advertisements to attract potential buyers. Advertisement is very important in business because advertising is closely related to the marketing strategy. Advertisement is a part of promoting a product or service. "Advertising is a sales message directed at a mass audience that seeks through persuasion to sell goods, services or ideas on behalf of the paying sponsor" (Burke, 1980, page 6). Consumers get information about the product with advertisements. Thus, large companies will spend a lot of money to advertise their products and promote what consumers get when they buy the product. The cost to create advertisement is quite expensive because it requires the media to boost the selling of the products. Therefore, any company that wants to advertise a product or service should be able to choose the right media so that it can escalate the selling point.

There are a variety of media to advertise products or services, one of which is the brochure. To advertise products or services, media advertising through brochure is considered cheaper than other media such as TV's advertisements, billboards, posters and so on. In addition, the slogan of advertisement is also important in introducing a product or service to consumers because an attractive slogan will make consumers become interested in buying the product or service being offered. Slogans are the sentence used to convey a message about the product or service. Usually a phrase used in advertising slogan is easy to remember.

This paper focuses on presuppositions of slogans in mobile phone advertisements, especially in brochures. This is because recently the

competition in gadget technology and sale is increasingly prevalent. This paper analyzes various slogans of mobile phone promotion to know what types and functions of presuppositions that are often used to attract consumers. Yule's (1996) theory on preposition has a great contribution on the analysis of the types of presuppositions existing in the brochures. Lam's (2009) article is one important source in analyzing the functions of presuppositions. In brief, this paper focuses the analysis on the types and functions of presuppositions in mobile phone advertisements, especially, in brochures.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

The study of *Presuppositions in Mobile Phone Advertisements* applied descriptive research method. This study describes, interprets phenomena such as conditions or existing relationship using scientific procedures to address the research questions related to types and functions of presuppositions. Descriptive method is a research method which describes systematically a situation or area of interest factually and accurately (Isaac and Michael, 1987, page 42). The data in this study were words, sentences and pictures taken from slogans in the mobile phone advertisements, especially in the brochures, gathered from mobile phone counters in Plaza Marina and WTC Surabaya on January 2015. Twenty one slogans from fifty collected slogans were analyzed by identifying, classifying and explaining them to find the types and functions of the presuppositions.

## **3. FINDINGS**

In line with the research questions, the findings are presented in two sub headings: the types of presupposition and the functions of presupposition in advertisements.

### **A. The Types of Presupposition in Mobile Phone Advertisements**

Based on data collected from the mobile phone advertisement, four types of six types of presuppositions by Yule (1996) are found out. The following figure shows the results of the analysis of the types of presuppositions in the mobile phone ads.

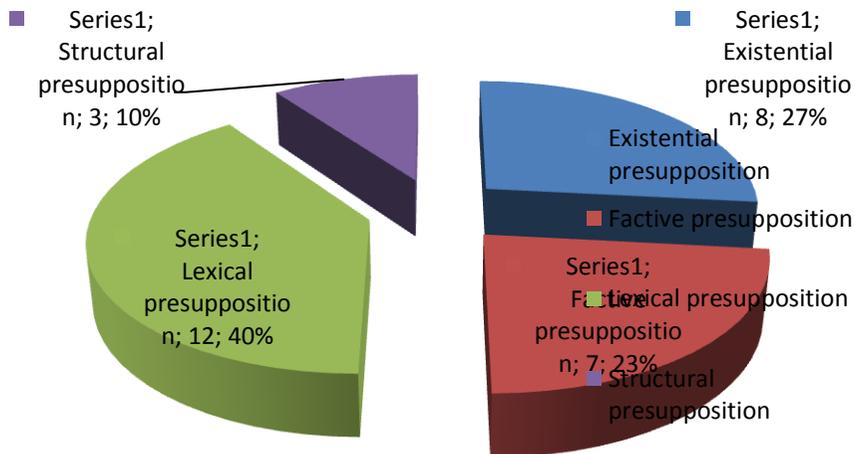


Figure 1: The Results of the Types of Presupposition

Figure 1 shows the types of prepositions existing in the brochures, they are, *existential presupposition* (8 items), *factive presupposition* (7 items), *lexical presupposition* (12 items) and *structural presupposition* (3 items). In this study, non factive presuppositions and counter factual presuppositions are not found. One slogan can contain more than one type of presuppositions, therefore, out of twenty one brochures, it was found out thirty presuppositions.

### 1) Existential Presupposition

Existential presupposition is presupposition which does not only assume the existence of something in the sentences that show ownership, but also more widely assumes the presence of existence of the statement in the utterances. Since all data that have been analyzed by the writer, there are eight slogans or 27% containing existential presuppositions. The eight data from the slogan which contain existential presuppositions are data no 2, 4, 7, 8, 13, 16, 19 and 21. Figure 2 show three examples of data containing existential presupposition.



**Figure 2: Existential Presupposition**

Let us see an example of existential presupposition from data no 16. The data contain an interesting slogan. Through this slogan, the readers directly geared to make presuppositions that there is a smart phone with a mini size compared to other smart phone in general. The slogan "Mini in Size" already represents the existence or characteristic of a smart phone with the Oppo N1 Mini's brand. The slogan contains existential presuppositions because through the slogan "Mini in Size", the readers can see the existence which is shown through the word "mini" in the slogan.

In short, data no 13, 16 and 19 contain the existential presupposition. The slogans and pictures shows the existence of a smart phone which can be seen clearly by the readers in the ads.

## 2) Factive Presupposition

Factive presupposition is presupposition which appears from information delivered and expressed with words which show a fact or news which is absolutely true. There are seven slogans or 23% containing factive presuppositions. The seven data from the slogan which contain factive presuppositions are data no 3, 4, 9, 12, 14, 18 and 20. Figure 3 shows the ads containing factive presupposition.



**Figure 3: Factive Presupposition.**

By seeing the slogan, the readers will make presuppositions in accordance with the facts in the slogan. When the readers read the slogan "The Super tablet" (data number 9), the readers will make presuppositions that this smart phone certainly has tremendous advantages compared to other smart phones in general. The slogan contains factive presuppositions since it gives real information or facts. The slogan is actually describing the many advantages of this smart phone by summarizing it in a short, attractive slogan, "The Super tablet". Hence, the ads shows facts about the sophistication of smart phones that are offered to the readers.

### 3) Lexical Presupposition

Lexical presupposition is the presupposition obtained through utterances which are interpreted through assertion in the utterances. Since all data that have been analyzed by the writer, there are twelve slogans or 40% containing lexical presuppositions. The twelve data from the slogan which contain lexical presuppositions are data no 1, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12, 14, 16, 17, 19, 20 and 21. The following is a more detailed explanation of the data no 17, 20 and 21.

The slogan from the data no 20 in Figure 4, for example, show a slogan "High Performance" which contains an implied meaning because the readers will begin to make a presupposition that this smart phone will be very suitable for the high-performance job. The ads further appeals to the reader by mentioning that the smart phone is equipped with a dual SIM, offline maps and even Microsoft Office. All these advantages remain wrapped with beautiful design with cheerful colors such as shown in the picture of the brochure. The slogan contains a lexical presupposition because through the slogan "High Performance", the readers are wondering about the meaning of the slogan and finally make presuppositions based on the words and the picture.



**Figure 4: Lexical Presupposition**

**4) Structural Presupposition**

Structural presupposition is a presupposition which is expressed through utterances containing a clear structure that can be directly understood without looking at further use of the words. From all the data that have been analyzed by the writer, there are three slogans or 10% containing structural presuppositions. The three data from the slogan is containing structural presuppositions are data no 5, 10 and 15. The following is a more detailed explanation of the data no 10 and 15.



**Figure 5: Structural Presupposition**

Obviously that the advertisement no 10 is different from that in the data no 15 but both contain structural presupposition. Ads in number 15 contains a structural presupposition because the word “Does your phone camera have a night life?” is an interrogative sentence which is expressed with clear structure and can be directly understood as a rhetorical question. The presupposition that the readers will make is that this phone has a camera that can capture night life very excellently as shown in the brochure. The brochure shows the picture of a woman portrayed in the night, hence, it shows the result of the camera. The ads show that the phone certainly has a sophisticated camera and great for photographing at night even in the dark.

After analyzing the whole data and found four types of six types of presuppositions, the writer concludes that the lexical presupposition’s type is the type which most often used by the advertisers in the gadget competition through advertising slogan in a brochure. The advertisers are not interested in using non factive presuppositions and counterfactual presuppositions. The advertisers might be afraid if their advertising slogans become ambiguous or biased and not understood by the readers that make their product lost in competition.

### **B. The Functions of Presupposition in Mobile Phone Advertisements**

In this study, there are three functions of presupposition in advertisements found during the data analysis. The functions are presenting implied competition, causing readers to consider the existence of the products or service and making the advertisement short and memorable.

Figure 6 shows the results of the analysis of the functions of presuppositions in the mobile phone brochures. The functions of presenting implied competition and making the advertisement short and memorable are used in similar frequency, which is,16. The functions of causing readers to consider the existence of the products or service is applied not as often as the other two functions. It is only used 4 times.



**Figure 6: Functions of Presuppositions**

### 1) Presenting and Winning Implied Competition

Presenting implied competition is one of the functions of presupposition in the advertisement which is often used in advertising discourse and an important function of it is to make comparative advertising and most importantly to avoid breaking the law. Nokia Lumia 1020’s advertisement with slogan “Stunning 41 Megapixel Camera” is the example of the data which contain presuppositions that implied competition with other products.

The slogan contains implied competition because through the slogans, the advertisers try to thrust certain advantage if the readers buy this smart phone. The advantage is in the form of sophistication of the camera up to 41 megapixels that makes the pictures look very nice and clear like the results of D-SLR cameras. The readers will make presuppositions that the sophistication of Nokia Lumia 1020's camera is not owned by other smart phones in general because other smart phones are usually equipped with a camera 2-8 megapixels.

### 2) Causing Readers to Consider the Existence of the Products or Services

Causing readers to consider the existence of the products or service is one of the functions of presupposition in the advertisement. It may cause “the readers to consider the existence of objects, propositions and culturally defined behavioral properties” (Sells and Gonzalez, 2002). Samsung Galaxy Note 4’s advertisement which slogan “Do You Note?” is the example of the

data which contain presupposition that cause readers to consider the existence of the products or service.

Through the slogan, the advertisers create the readers who like to make notes or make design. They realize that readers will desperately need this smart phone to support the performance. The readers will make presuppositions that if they have this smart phone, they can make important notes such as schedules, plans or design, etc. very easily. In their busy days, they no longer need to carry a notebook wherever they go. Through this smart phone, they can write notes, edit, make a design and even can directly share it through social media. This sophisticated smart phone will greatly help the performance of the users.

### **3) Making the Advertisement Short and Memorable**

Making the advertisement short and memorable is a further function of using presupposition in the advertisement. I Phone 5s's advertisement which contains the slogan of "Forward Thinking" is the example of the data containing presupposition that makes the advertisement short and memorable. This slogan is very short and very easy to remember. Through the very short slogan, the readers will directly remember the previous presuppositions that this smart phone is already one step ahead than other smart phone because this smart phone presents sophistication earlier before other smart phones.

In terms of the functions of presuppositions in advertisement, *implicit competition* and *making the advertisement short and memorable* is the function which most frequently used.

## **4. CONCLUSIONS**

Every speaker has a different assumption and this may allow every speaker to have different presupposition. Through slogans and pictures in the advertisements, the advertisers hope that the readers make good prejudices or presupposition so that the readers will be interested in buying it. The advertisers apply four kinds of presuppositions to attract the prospective customers. The presuppositions are employed and inserted in the advertisements to present implied competition, cause readers to consider the existence of the products or service and make the advertisements short and memorable.

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