RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Use of Presuppositions in the Short Story of *Zilkê Şixatê* (Matchstick)

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A B S T R A C T

This study explores the use of presuppositions in the Kurdish short story, Zilkê Şixatê (The Matchstick), which is written in Northern Kurmanji dialect (hence, NK) by Isma'il Hajani. It attempts to determine which type of presupposition is the most recurring one in the short story and why it is so. The data in this study are analyzed descriptively and qualitatively. Yule's (2006) classification which divides presupposition into six types has been employed: existential, factive, non-factive, lexical, structural, and counterfactual. The data of the research are sentences which contain presupposition triggers (i.e. linguistic forms to mark presuppositions). Applying the formula presented by Oktoma and Mardiyono (2013: 79), the results obtained throughout this paper show that different types of presuppositions have different percentages from the total number of presuppositions. They are (94) in number. It is noted that the most dominant type of presupposition used in the short story is the existential presupposition, manifesting definite descriptions of facts about real life, while the structural presuppositions have the lowest percentage. This shows that much of the story text is written to definitely describe the main theme, the characters and the events as they are. Finally, this study is particularly important because no other such studies have been conducted on the use of presuppositions in any literary work in NK. Therefore, this study occupies a crucial place in the research literature into pragmatic aspects of NK.

Keywords: Presupposition, short story, presupposition triggers, Zilkê Şixatê, Northern Kurmanji (NK)

1. INTRODUCTION

In everyday life situations, speakers often make implicit assumptions about the real world, and the sense or understanding of an utterance may depend on such assumptions. In

other words, when a person produces an utterance, the meaning is actually in the person's head. In a more general way, Yule (2006) and Fromkin and Rodman (1983) focus on the fact that "we design our linguistic messages on the basis of large-scale assumptions about what our listeners already know." These assumptions are called presuppositions.

This study focuses on the use of presuppositions

in a piece of literary work written by the NK writer Isma'il Hajani from Duhok City. Also, as shown in the following sections, the types of presuppositions and their triggers have been classified and interpreted according to Levinson (1983), Yule (1996), Verschueren (1999), and Brinton and Brinton (2010). The data were analyzed by adopting a formula calculated by Oktoma and Mardiyono (2013).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In this part of the study, the term presupposition is defined, and some previous studies are discussed. These are elaborated in the following sub-sections.

2.1. Presuppositions: The Definition

A presupposition (shortened as PS) is defined as "an implicit assumption about the world or background belief relating to an utterance whose truth is taken for granted in discourse" (Akmajian et al., 1995). Presuppositions are unsaid beliefs; these helps provide meaning to what a person says or refers to.

Presuppositions are important in communication. Pragmatically, the presuppositions in our mind are necessary to make our speech concise and clear. If we had to utter every detail underlying what we try to say, we would face difficulties in everyday communication. Presuppositions allow us to use "linguistic shorthand" (Brinton and Brinton, 2010). The following examples highlight the aspects of implied meaning, which are understood and taken for granted:

(1) *Why did you arrive late?* Presupposition: You are late.
(2) *There are pieces of cake on his lips.* Presupposition: He ate a cake.
(3) *I responded to him.* Presupposition: He asked me a question.

All in all, Cruse (2006) states that "presuppositions are like propositions whose truth is taken for granted by the producer of an utterance and which must be known and taken account of for the utterance to make sense to an interpreter."

2.2. Some Previous Studies

A wide range of research has been conducted on the concept of presuppositions, their types, triggers, and uses in written discourse. Khaleel (2010), for example, investigated the use of presuppositions and their triggers in the texts of six different national and regional English newspapers. After giving a literature review about the concept of presuppositions, their types, and triggers, the analysis of data showed that English journalistic texts relied heavily on existential presuppositions (57.7%) of the studied sample. In contrast, the lexical presuppositions showed the lowest percentage (19.7%).

In their paper titled "The Analysis of Presupposition in the Short Stories of Silvester Goridus Sukur," Oktoma and Mardiyono (2013) described the types of presuppositions and their meanings in the short stories by Silvester Goridus Sukur, an Indonesian writer. In order to analyze the data, the researcher employed Yule's theory, which divides presupposition into six types: existential, factive, lexical, structural, non-factive, and counterfactual. From the total of 219 examples, the results showed that existential presuppositions had the highest percentage (58.90%), whereas the counterfactual presuppositions measured only 136%.

Siagian et al. (2015) studied the types of presupposition in *Time* magazine from the advertisements published in the magazine (issues from April to May, 2009). By conducting a descriptive quantitative analysis, the data were collected by reading and underlining the target advertisements. After analyzing the data, the researcher found that the most dominant type of presuppositions was the existential one, which was present in noun phrases. From the total of 143 presuppositions, the highest percentage (62%) was for the existential presuppositions, whereas the lowest percentage (0.64%) was measured for the structural one.

As it is obvious from the above studies, the existential presupposition is measured to have the highest percentage among the other types of presuppositions. As a matter of fact, by using any of the expressions that are present in the assumptions made by speakers or writers, they are assumed to be "committed to the existence of the entities labelled or named" (Yule, 1996).

3. AIMS OF THE STUDY

Depending on the literature review provided and previous knowledge of the concept of presuppositions, the researchers will answer the following question:

- What types of presuppositions are used in the short story of *Zilkê Şixatê* (Matchstick)?

4. TYPES OF PRESUPPOSITIONS: A PRELIMINARY OUTLINE

On the basis of different presuppositional triggers in utterances of contexts, presuppositions can be classified into different types: (1) existential, (2) factive, (3) non-factive, (4) lexical, (5) structural, and (6) counterfactual. Such classification depends on factors, such as the form of utterances, their lexical content, and the conventions associated with them (Yule, 1996; Verschueren, 1999; Brinton and Brinton, 2010).

These linguistic forms (i.e., triggers) are considered as indicators of potential presupposition, which can only become actual presupposition in contexts with speakers. In order to clarify the relation between triggers and their presuppositions, the triggers themselves are italicized, and the symbol (») stands for "presupposes."

4.1. Existential Presuppositions
They are presuppositions where the speakers are committed to the objects and entities named. For example, noun phrases such as *my cat, the boy in the garden, the United States, Peshmerga*, among many others, have existential references, and they presuppose background belief about certain unique utterances. By using any of these expressions, the speaker is assumed to be "committed to the existence of the entities labelled or named" (Yule, 1996).

(4) *My son's cat* is asleep. » I have a son. » My son has a cat.

In the above example, both *my son* and *son's cat* are definite descriptions that refer to entities named by the speaker.

4.2. Factive Presuppositions

According to Yule (1996), certain verbs or constructions indicate that something is a fact:

(5) She did not *realize* that someone was ill. » Someone was ill.

Like many other verbs, *know, learn, regret, discover, understand, hear, notice, resent, accept, appreciate,* the verb *realize* in the above example indicates that the presupposition *Someone was ill* is a fact.

4.3. Non-factive Presuppositions
Non-factive verbs such as *dream, pretend, imagine*, etc., are used to presuppose that something is not true. The verb *dream* in example (6) is used not only to show that the proposition (being rich) is not a fact but also to show that it is not true.

I *dreamed* that I was rich. » I am not rich.

4.4. Lexical Presuppositions
This type of presupposition refers to the assumptions where one lexical item can act as an indicator for understanding another meaning:

(6) You are late *again.* » You were late before.

(7) Suzan *stopped* being on diet. » She used to be on diet.

Here, the use of the expressions *again* in example (7) and *stop* in example (8) are taken to presuppose another unsaid concept. Generally speaking, the use of an asserted form can be used to presuppose a non-asserted form (Yule, 1996). This is clear from examples (7) and (8).

4.5. Structural Presuppositions
Certain grammatical structures such as Wh-question forms are used to show further assumptions in an utterance:

(8) *When* did Ali buy his car? » Ali bought a car.

The Wh-form in the above example makes the listener perceive that the information presented is necessarily true. Here, speakers can use such structures to treat the information mentioned as presupposed and finally accepted as true by listeners (Yule, 1996).

4.6. Counterfactual Presuppositions

These presuppositions refer to the assumption that what is presupposed is not only untrue but also the opposite of truth, or contrary to facts. This is represented by means of if-clauses:

If I was a doctor, I would cure my wife. » I am not a doctor.

5. PRESUPPOSITION TRIGGERS

Presupposition triggers are lexical items or linguistic constructions, which are in charge of creating presuppositions. These triggers simply signal the existence of presuppositions in utterances. Levinson (1983), Brinton and Brinton (2010), and Verschueren (1999) put a list of presuppositional triggers. These are explained below with examples.

5.1. Definite Descriptions

Definite descriptions are usually singular common nouns or noun phrases in general. These noun phrases are usually described in terms of definite articles (Verschueren, 1999). A noun phrase is described as "proper" when the phrase has exactly one referent (object). In contrast, a phrase is said to be "improper" when there is more than one referent. In speech, definite descriptions are implicitly assumed to be appropriate; hence, such phrases trigger the presupposition that the referent is usually unique and existent.

> (9) *The handicapped boy* in our school did not play *the game*. » There is a boy who is handicapped. » There is a game.

The phrase *the handicapped boy* in example (11) is proper because it refers to one unique person (object) in our school. Here, this phrase is a presuppositional trigger that presupposes the assumptions *there is a handicapped boy* and *there is a game* at the same time. So, example (11) is an utterance that is definitely used to describe the situation as being a fact.

5.2. Factive Verbs

Factive verbs, such as *know, learn, regret, discover, understand, hear, notice, resent, accept, appreciate, tolerate, remember,* and *realize*, among others, presuppose the factual truth of their objects. In addition, factive predicates such as *be sorry that, be proud that, be glad that, be aware that, the fact*

that, be sad that, etc., can function as presuppositional triggers (Brinton and Brinton, 2010). The following examples include factive verbs as triggers:

> (10) David *regrets* drinking a beer. » David in fact did drink a beer.

> (11) Jacob *realized* that he was in trouble. » Jacob was in fact in trouble.

All the family *was aware that* their lost son would not come back. » Their son is in fact lost.

5.3. Implicative Verbs

Verbs, such as *manage, forget, avoid, happen*, etc., are considered implicative. In the two following sentences, the verb *manage* is used to mean *try* and *succeed,* whereas the verb *forget* is used to send a message of intention.

> (12) Hala *managed* to open the door. » Hala tried to open the door.

Sarah *forgot* to close the door. » Sarah intended to close the door.

5.4. Change of State Verbs

State verbs such as start, finish, cease, take, enter, come, go, arrive, leave, carry on, and others, are used as presuppositional triggers. The following examples show further assumptions or background belief because they contain a kind of change of their verbs:

Juliet stopped singing classic songs. » Juliet had been singing classic songs.

The babies started crying. » The babies were not crying.

5.5. Iteratives

Iteratives are lexical items that show repetition in actions and events. Iteratives may be verbs (*return, repeat, restore, come back, go back, redial, renew*) or adverbs (*again, anymore, too, so*). The following examples have iteratives that presuppose assumptions about the event:

> (13) ISIS will attack Peshmerga *again*. » ISIS attacked Peshmerga before.

Dalal Bridge has not been *renewed* yet. » There was an attempt to renew Dalal Bridge.

5.6. Temporal Clauses

Subordinate clauses starting with lexical items such as before, after, during, whenever, as, while, or when have a semantic function of temporality. These clauses are used to trigger further assumptions, as in the following examples:

(14) When you leave, please close the door. »
You will leave.

Since Aram graduated, he has not found any job. » Aram graduated.

5.7. Cleft Sentences
Clefts typically put a particular constituent into focus. Cleft constructions as a whole are used as triggers to presuppose a background belief about the relation between the speaker and the hearer, as in the following examples:

(15) *It* was Henry that kissed Rosie. » Someone kissed Rosie.

What John lost was his wallet. » John lost something.

5.8. Comparisons and Contrasts
Comparisons and contrasts may be marked as presuppositional triggers to show a background belief about the speaker of the utterance.

(16) My friend swims *better than* I do. » I swim.

Rosie is *the best* student. » There are other good students.

5.9. Questions
According to Belnap (2009), "every question presupposes *precisely* that at least one of its direct answers is true." For example, the following question seeks further assumptions:

Why did you stop smoking? » You were a smoker.

5.10. Possessive Case
Possessive constructions are used to function as presuppositions in certain contexts. In example (28), the noun phrase, *my two kids*, is in the possessive case. It is used as a presuppositional trigger showing that the speaker of the utterance has two kids.

My two kids are very clever. » I have kids.

6. METHODOLOGY

The methodology used in this study was descriptive and qualitative. The story of Zilkê Şixatê (Matchstick) was analyzed according to the application of the presupposition types via trigger frequency and percentage. This story (pages 45-53) is one of the short stories published within the collection of *Meydana Koçikan (A Pack of Dogs)* written by Isma'il Sileman Hajani, a writer from Duhok City. According to Grundy (2008), there are two ways in which presuppositions are identified. The first way is through presupposition triggers, and the second one is to think of them as expressions with shared background belief of knowledge. Following the presupposition triggers, the six types of presuppositions by Yule (2006) were taken as the basis of analyzing data. To analyze the availability of presuppositions, the steps below were applied:

1. Reading the short story.

2. Identifying the items that are related to presupposition triggers.

3. Collecting the sentences that contain triggers.

4. Listing the sentences into the table of presupposition.

5. Classifying the data into the types of presuppositions (existential, factive, non-factive, lexical, structural, and counterfactual).

6. Finding percentage of presupposition types.

To know the percentage and dominant type of presuppositions in the mentioned short story, the following formula by Oktoma and Mardiyono (2013) was employed:

$$\% \text{ of type}: \frac{\text{No.of one type occurrence}}{\text{Total No.of all types occurrence}} \times 100$$

7. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF PRESUPPOSITIONS IN THE SHORT STORY OF *ZILKÊ ŞIXATÊ* (MATCHSTICK)

Yule (2006) states that when speakers' assumption and expressions are analyzed, presuppositions are associated with the use of a large number of words,

phrases, and structures (or presupposition triggers). Following Oktoma and Mardiyono (2013), their formula mentioned in the Methodology section calculates the percentage of any type of presupposition. These calculations were processed via Excel sheets. For the purpose of analyzing the data obtained from the short story, the following table shows the types of presuppositions, examples (written in the Kurdish alphabets and letters), presuppositions (i.e., assumption), and explanations for these sentences:

Table 1: Data obtained from the story of *Zilkê Şixatê* (Matchstick)				
No.	**Type**	**Examples**	**Presuppositions**	**Explanation**
		Metîn Bilinde (Metîn is high.)	» There is a mountain called Metîn.	It is a definite description of an existent entity.
		Asman deryayeka reş u şîne (The sky is a dark blue sea.)	» The sky is there.	Even if this sentence is negated, the sky is still there.
		Ewir gizîrtên spîne (Clouds are white islands.)	» Clouds exist.	There is a definite reference to the entity of clouds.
		… bi leztirîn ritmê jiyanê… (the fastest rhythm of life)	» *leztirîn* presupposes existential assumption.	Comparative structures show real face of situations.
1.	Existential	Pên wî (his foot), swîka Nebî (Nebi Bazar), çavên wî (his eyes), milê wî (his shoulder), tivenga te (your rifle), Hebîb, didanê min (my tooth), kîskê min (my tobacco bag), devê wî (his mouth), gewrîya wî (his throat), devê xwe (his mouth), koxka xwe (his cough), gupalê wî (his stick), stuye xwe (his neck), Sînema Nîcum (Nijoom Cinema), derzîkeka Morfînî (Morphine), giyanê wî (his soul), leşê wî (his body), lingên wî (his legs), Şeytan (Satan), serê xwe (his head), Ecne (Gini), piştên xwe (their bags), tivengên xwe (their rifles), bejna xwe (his body), aleka min (his cheek), devê wî (his mouth), tilên min (my fingers), tilên xwe (his fingers), zilkekê şixatê (a matchstick), leşkerê	» All these phrases, including some proper nouns, are woven into as triggers within the lines of the story. They presuppose definite descriptions about the utterances produced.	The speakers are committed to the objects and entities named. These triggers show uniqueness of denotation.

		Osmaniya (Ottoman army), destên xwe (his hands), gupalê xwe (his stick), çavên me (our eyes), and cigara xwe (his cigarette).		
		Ne zelamê van ahengane (Not the man of these celebrities.)	» Life is tough.	The example presupposes that life is tough, which is definitely a true description.
		… bi leztir rêk kêşa ber xwe (walked the road faster)	» He walked fast.	*faster* is descriptive
		Demê gehiştîne gelyê kur…. qoşenê pêşiyê xwe da ser berekê bilind (When they reached the deep valley, the leader went on a high rock.)	» There is a leader. » There is a high rock. The leader did something.	A place is presupposed; hence, it should be reached by somebody.
		Agir ji wan wêvetir geşbu (A distance from them, the fire was lit.)	» There is fire. » There was no fire before.	A change of state verb (lit) is used to show that there was no fire before. This is a constant assumption.
		Bi êkcarî ji janê rizgarkim (I will release you from pain forever.)	» There is pain.	When negated, the presupposition remains constant.
		Piştî kizên ji didanî hatî,… pên azad xavbun (After his tooth was burnt,… he felt weak in the knees.)	» He has toothache. » He is weak.	The subordinate clause presupposes a definite description.
2.	Factive	Pên wî… fêrboyne rêveçunê (His feet… learnt walking.)	» He was walking in fact.	Factive verbs such as fêrboyne (learnt), niyasî (realized), dizanit (knows), cerbandî (tried), dizanin (know), negehte (hear not), ageh nema (forgot), dizanim (know), and dîtin (saw) all presuppose facts
		Hinêra befrê niyasî (He realized the strength of snow.)	» There was in fact a snow storm.	
		Ew dizanit tivenga wî mezintrîn şerefa wî ye (He knows that his rifle is his unique honor.)	» His rifle is in fact his honor.	

		Min bxwe yê cerbandî (I have tried it before.)	» I did something before.	about their referred objects and events.
		Em dizanin ji ber çi revîne (We know why they escaped.)	» They surely escaped.	
		Da deng negehte quşenê pêşyê (So that the leader will not hear his cough.)	» The leader did not hear him cough.	
		Ageh ji seqem u jana didanî nema (He forgot his toothache.)	» He did have a toothache.	
		Ez dizanim hun westiyan (I know you are tired.)	» You are in fact tired.	
		Hind dîtin ji nişkave agir ji wan wêvetir geşbu (They suddenly saw the fire lit.)	» There was in fact a fire.	
		Hevalan, hun dizanin ev kumbuna me liser çiye? (My friends, you know what this meeting is about?)	» There was surely a meeting.	
		Ya! (Are you sure?)	» You are not sure.	Sometimes exclamatory expressions presuppose to be against the truth.
3.	Non-factive	Ecne newêrin derkevin (Demons dare not to go out.)	» There are demons, and they can go out.	Verbs such as newêrin (dare not), bê hişkir (pretended) and dixwazim (hope) presuppose assumptions opposite to truth.
		Weko leşkerekî mariş dikir (He was walking like an army march.)	» He was weak.	
		Xwe bê hişkir (He pretended to be mindless.)	» He was not mindless.	
		Dixwazim ev tişte êdî dubare nebit (I hope this is not repeated anymore.)	» Something was done.	
		Neko sera vî zilkî min gulebaran bikit (I'm afraid he will shoot on me because of this matchstick.)	» He will not shoot.	
4.	Lexical			

Bi tinê zelam liber semayê dikin (Only men dance for it.)	» Only men, not women, dance for it.	Lexical items, including bi tinê (only), bi rê di et (is coming), ji nu (newly), carcar (from time to time), hêş (yet), careka dî (once again), pitir (more), baştir (better), -jî (too), ji nişkave (suddenly), raweste (hold on), ev şeve (tonight), êdî (anymore), and dîsa (again), that are mentioned here in the story are used as triggering items. These triggers presuppose indications for further meanings (presuppositions).
U karwan yê bi rê di et (And the caravan is coming.)	» There is a caravan.	
Ji nu hinêra befrê niyasî (He newly knew the strength of snow.)	» There was a snow storm.	
Carcar tiveng ji milê wî dket (From time to time, his rifle was falling down.)	» He could not carry his rifle.	
Hêş ne gehiştye ser ferşa spî (It [the rifle] has not reached the white carpet yet.)	» The rifle did not fall down.	
Careka dî qulingê qerimî yexbu (Once again the frozen craven appeared.)	» The frozen craven appeared before.	
Lingên wî pitir erd girt (His feet were fixed on the ground more.)	» His feet fixed on the ground.	
Hebîb carcar li xwe dizivrî (He used to look behind from time to time.) Baştire! (It's better.)	» He kept an eye on his friends.	
	» Something is better.	
Hun dişên agirîjî helkin (You can light fire too.)	» You can light fire.	
Hind dîtin ji nişkave agir ji wan wêvetir geşbu (They suddenly saw the fire lit.)	» There was no fire before.	
Raweste ezê bu te cigarekê helkim (Hold on, I will light a cigarette for you.)	» There is a cigarette.	
Kombuna me ev şeve liser zilkê şixatêye (Our meeting tonight is about matchstick.)	» There is a meeting.	
Dixwazim ev tişte êdî dubare nebit (I hope this is not repeated anymore.)	» Something was done.	
Korê min dîsa dbêjim ew zilik beyhude çu (My son, I say again that matchstick has gone in vain.)	» Something was uttered before.	

5.	Structural	Wey babo, ev şeve min çikir? (Oh God! What have I done this night?)	» I did something.	The *Wh*-question form is used to show further assumptions in this utterance.
			» I regretted on doing something.	
6.	Counterfactual	Heke rêya me bi gundekê ket, pêş vî zilkîve ez deh derzinên şixata bu şoreşê bikrim (If we passed across a village, I will buy a dozen of matchsticks for the revolution.)	» He did not buy a dozen matchsticks.	If-conditionals are used as triggers. What is presupposed is not only untrue, but is the opposite of truth, or contrary to facts.
		Ew zilik beyhude çu heke tu hindî kargehên cîhanê bînî (That matchstick has gone in vain if you can buy all the matchsticks of the world.)	» He cannot buy all the matchsticks of the world.	

It is clear from the above formula that the existential trigger (53 occurrences, 56.38%) was the most frequently used presupposition in the transcript of the short story of *Zilkê Şixatê* (Matchstick). In contrast, the least frequently used presupposition triggers were structural (1 occurrence, 1.06%) and counterfactual (2 occurrences, 2.12%).

The storyteller describes the characters, events, plot, and settings according to referential facts. Hence, all these things are clearly asserted by obvious existential presuppositions. The writer tries to be more realistic and accurate rather than unrealistic and fanciful.

8. CONCLUSION

The types of presupposition and their triggers were talked about in this study. In addition, presuppositions were tested by means of negation, modals, and questions. As a pragmatic application of the topic of presuppositions, the short story of *Zilkê Şixatê* (Matchstick) written by Isma'il Hajani was analyzed pragmatically. The types of presuppositions and the presuppositional triggers were studied, concluding that all the types of presuppositions occurred in the story. The occurrence of presuppositional triggers in the story varies. The total number of these triggers was

ninety-four. It is concluded that the most dominant type of presupposition used in the short story was the existential presupposition, whereas structural presupposition were the lowest measured presupposition triggers. This shows that much of the story text was written to describe the main theme, characters, and events. To conclude, the writer of *Zilkê Şixatê* adds a sense of certainty to his propositions.

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