PRESUPPOSITION TRIGGERS IN “THE BIG BANG THEORY SEASON NINE” SITUATIONAL COMEDY

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Abstract: This present research is conducted to analyze the types of presupposition triggers performed and to understand the presupposition of the utterances in The Big Bang Theory Season Nine situational comedy. Answering the formulated research question in this research, the researchers used Levinson’s theory (1983) of presupposition triggers. Conducted with the qualitative approach, this present research is designed with the document analysis for the data was analyzed in the form of utterances uttered by the characters as source of data. The subject of this research is a situational comedy entitled The Big Bang Theory Season Nine episode one until five. The result of the research showed the character mostly uttered 11 types of Presupposition from 13 types (Levinson 1983), they are: counterfactual conditionals, temporal clauses, iteratives, change of state verbs, questions, definite descriptions, factive verbs, implicative verbs, comparison and contrasts, verbs of judging, and non-restrictive relative clauses.

Key Words: Presupposition Triggers, Context, The Big Bang Theory Season Nine

INTRODUCTION

Language is the essential medium in which the ability to communicate from the speaker to the hearer. The way to transfer speaker’s intention to the listener or hearer may be different to make communication becomes more effective. In addition, there are two ways to express the language; in written and in oral. Further, both in written and in oral, language consists of structure, form and meaning. Those must be delivered clearly by the locutor to interlocutor to dig up or analyze the unclear conversation to get the cooperative communication. An utterance or a sentence must convey some informations although it is not mentioned in the conversation. This assumption is then, processed by the speaker as the presupposition. Levinson (1983: 181) stated that presupposition triggers are a construction or item that
signals the existence of a presupposition in an utterance. A locutor may assume that the interlocutor understands a thing, then this might drive them to state certain utterance, as the example: Who is the professor of linguistics at MIT? In this utterance the assumption of the speaker is someone is the professor of linguistics at MIT (Levinson, 1983: 184). Presupposition is ultimately the interesting subject to be discussed because there are many presuppositions found in the conversation of daily live. The researchers encounters many utterances which consist of presupposition spoken by human being in daily live and also spoken by characters in a situational comedy based on their perceptions or assumptions. Since the speaker believes that the listener will have the same assumptions or perceptions, inappropriate interpretation of the utterances or dialogues will occur continuously. Situational comedy is one of media which is purposed to entertain people. In this research, media which is appropriate and interesting to analyze the phenomenon of presupposition triggers is situational comedy. There are various characters with different utterances can be analyzed related to presupposition triggers. The researchers is interested in analyzing presupposition triggers in situational comedy entitled The Big Bang Theory Season Nine.

On the conclusion, the researchers would analyze the types of presupposition triggers performed and the presupposition of the utterances in The Big Bang Theory Season Nine situational comedy according to the theory of Levinson (1983:181-184). It is aimed to analyze the types of presupposition triggers performed and to understand the presupposition of the utterances in The Big Bang Theory Season Nine situational comedy episode one until five. This research used qualitative research approach as method to collect and analyze the data. The appropriate design of this current research is document analysis since the data was in the form of utterances uttered by the characters in situational comedy The Big Bang Theory Season Nine episode one until five that contained presupposition triggers.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

According to Levinson (1983: 181), presupposition triggers is a construction or item that signals the existence of a presupposition in an utterance and uses symbol >> for 'presupposes'. The triggers are as follows:

a) Definite descriptions

It is a clear description that shows the existence of something. For example: John saw/didn't see the man with two heads >> there exists a man with two heads.

b) Factive verbs

The trigger of presupposition is used in the classification of verbs, referring to a verb which takes a complement clause, and where the adresser presupposes the truth of the proposition expressed through the clause. So, it is called the factive because it presupposes the truth of their complement. Some factive verbs such as regret, aware, realize, odd.
However, there are some factive predicates such as know, be sorry that, be proud that, be indifferent that, be glad that, be sad that. For example: Martha regrets/doesn’t regret drinking John’s home brew >> Martha drank John’s home brew.

c) Implicative verbs

An implicative verb is an act of implying or the condition of being implied (implied meaning) and uses some further implicative predicates such as manage, forget. For example: John managed/didn’t manage to open the door >> John tried to open the door.

d) Change of state verbs

Change of state verb is verb that have a kind of switch presupposition that the new state is both described and is presupposed not to have held prior to the change. There are some change of state verbs such as stop, begin, continue, start, finish, carry on, cease, take, leave, enter, come, go, arrive. For example: John stopped/ didn’t stop beating his wife >> John had been beating his wife.

e) Iteratives

The trigger of presupposition is involving repetition or a term used to refer to an event which takes place repeatedly. There are some further iterative such as: again, return, another time, to come back, restore, repeat. The example of iterative is ‘The flying saucer came/ didn’t come again >> the flying saucer came before’.

f) Verbs of judging

It is an opinion or estimation. The example of verb of judging is ‘Ian criticized/ didn’t criticize Agatha for running away >> (Ian thinks) Agatha ran away’. Other verb of judging is accuse.

g) Temporal clauses

It relates to the time. There are some temporal clause constructors such as after, during whenever, as, since, while, before. For example: While Chomsky was revolutionizing linguistics, the rest of social science was/wasn’t asleep >> Chomsky was revolutionizing linguistics’.

h) Cleft sentences

It is a complex sentence that has a meaning that could be expressed by simple sentence. For example: ‘It was/ wasn’t Henry that kissed Rosie >> Someone kissed Rosie’. Another example of cleft sentences is ‘What John lost/ didn’t lose was his wallet >> John lost something.

i) Implicit cleft with stressed constituents

This trigger of presupposition contains the implicit meaning with stressed constituents. For example: ‘John did/ didn’t compete in the OLYMPICS >> John did compete somewhere.

j) Comparisons and contrasts

Comparison and contrasts may be marked by stress (or by other prosodic means), by particle like too, back, in return, or by comparative constructions. The example of comparisons and contrast is ‘Carol is/ isn’t better linguist than Barbara >> Barbara is a Linguist’. Another example of
comparison and contrast is 'Jimmy is/isn’t as unpredictable gauche as Billy
>> Billy is unpredictably gauche’.

k) Non-restrictive relative clauses

Non-restrictive relative clauses provide essential information about the noun to which it refers. The example of non-restrictive relative clauses is ‘The Proto-Harappans who flourished 2800-2650 B.C., were/ were not great temple builders >> The Proto-Harrapans flourished 2800-2650 B.C.’

l) Counterfactual conditionals

A counterfactual conditional contains an if-clause which is contrary to fact. The example of counterfactual conditionals is ‘If Hannibal had only had twelve more elephants, the Romance languages would/would not this day exist >> Hannibal didn’t have twelve more elephants.

m) Questions

The presupposition triggers of question is divided into three kinds which are WH-question, yes/no question and alternative question. WH-question introduce the presupposition obtained by replacing the WH-word by the appropriate existentially quantified variable, such as ‘who’ by ‘someone’, ‘where’ by ‘somewhere’, ‘how’ by ‘somehow’. The example of WH-questions is ‘Who is the professor of linguistics at MIT? >> Someone is the professor of linguistics at MIT’.

Yes/no question is characterized by the auxiliary before the subject that can be addressed by either yes or no. The auxiliary can be auxiliary verbs, copular ‘be’, and modals. For example: Is there a professor of linguistics at MIT? >> either there is a professor of linguistics at MIT or there isn’t. this presupposition has the possibilities of the truth.

Alternative question is like yes/no question texts that occurs a separation of possibilities of answer, but there are choices of it. Hence, the presupposition of alternative question text also indicate that there is a “case” that is not yet known to be true, but the truth is available in the choices that are offered. For example, Is Newcastle in England or is it in Australia. >> Newcastle is in England or Newcastle is in Australia.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research employed qualitative approach as method to collect and analyze the data. The appropriate design of this current research is document analysis since the data was in the form of utterances uttered by the characters in situational comedy The Big Bang Theory Season Nine episode one until five that contained presupposition triggers.

The data of this current research are all utterances which contained the presupposition triggers uttered by the characters in The Big Bang Theory Season Nine episode one until five. Meanwhile, the source of the data was taken from the transcript of the dialogues among the characters in a situational comedy The Big Bang Theory Season Nine.
As the key instrument of the research, the researchers have vital roles from collecting the raw data until drawing the conclusions of the research. The other instruments that support the researchers in this research were documentation and note taking.

In collecting the data, the researchers involved several steps. First, the researchers watched the situational comedy of The Big Bang Theory Season Nine episode one until five to analyze the types of presupposition triggers. Second, the researchers found out the transcript of the utterances uttered by the characters in situational comedy The Big Bang Theory Season Nine episode one until five by downloading from www.subscene.com. Third, the researchers read the theory of presupposition triggers then, confront it to find out the data of the research. Fourth, the researchers classified or categorized the data on the data sheets to code based on the types of presupposition triggers. In doing the analysis, the researchers prepared the result of making note on transcript of situational comedy The Big Bang Theory Season Nine episode one until five and classified the data based on the categories using the table sheets of presupposition triggers based on the theory of Levinson (1983: 181-184). Accordingly, the data described based on those categories and also verified the data by re-reading and re-checking. After making written reports of the analysis data, then conclusion were drawn.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

After analyzing the utterances contained on situational comedy The Big Bang Theory Season Nine episode one until five, the researchers found that there are only eleven types of presupposition triggers used by the characters in this situational comedy based on the theory of Levinson (1983: 181-184). They are definite descriptions, factive verbs, implicative verbs, iteratives, change of state verbs, verbs of judging, temporal clauses, comparisons and contrasts, non-restrictive relative clauses, counterfactual conditionals, and questions.

1. Definite descriptions
   a) Sheldon : **Amy** has ended our relationship.
      Leonard : Oh, no. Seriously?
      (DD/Sh/00:01:55)

   The presupposition triggers in this utterance is categorized into definite description. This is categorized into definite description because it is clear description that shows the existence of something. It is definite description because there is assumption that someone is exist. “**Amy**” in this utterance refers to the name of Sheldon’s ex-girlfriend and she has already been known by Leonard.

   **Presupposition:**
   - There is a girl named Amy
   - There was a relationship between Sheldon and Amy
   - There is not a relationship between Sheldon and Amy
- Amy is Sheldon’s ex-girlfriend
- Sheldon is single

Simply it shown if Sheldon has ever had the relationship with Amy but when Amy decided to end the relationship with him, Sheldon becomes a single.

2. Factive verbs
   b) Leonard : Look, it-it’s not how I pictured it either, but I’m still glad we are doing it.
      Penny : Mee too.
      (FV/Le/00:05:19)

The presupposition triggers in this utterance is included into Factive verbs. It is factive verbs because the trigger “glad” presupposes the truth of their complement. The truth of the complement is Leonard and Penny are doing the wedding that has been prepared by them as a couple.

Presupposition:
- Leonard and Penny have been preparing to be married couple
- Leonard ever thinks that he will not be able to be holding the wedding with Penny
- Leonard and Penny are holding the wedding
- Leonard and Penny succeded to hold the wedding
- Leonard and Penny are husband and wife

In paraphrasing, it is seen that Leonard has been preparing a marriage with Penny. So, when Leonard and Penny are holding the wedding, their status becomes a husband and wife.

3. Implicative verbs
   c) Sheldon : Why are you up?
      Leonard : How am I supposed to sleep? I've been married less than 24 hours, and my wife isn't speaking to me.
      Sheldon : Perahips you can think of this in more positive light. In one day, you’ve managed to do what it takes many couples decades to achieve.
      (IV/Le/00:00:08)

The presupposition triggers in this utterance is included into implicative verbs because there is the condition of being implied (implied meaning). It can be seen in utterance “you've managed to do what it takes many couples decades to achieve”. By using the trigger “manage” can be presupposed that Leonard tried to do what it takes many couples decades to achieve.

Presupposition:
- Leonard has a wife
- Penny is Leonard’s wife
- Leonard and Penny are a husband and wife
- Penny isn’t speaking to Leonard
There are many couples aren’t speaking to their couples
Many couples tried to do what it takes many couples decade to achieve
Leonard tried to do what it takes many couples decade to achieve

In paraphrasing, it is seen that Leonard has a wife who isn’t speaking to him. This thing is also experienced by many couples, and they try to do what it takes many couples decade to achieve. So, Leonard tries to do what it takes many couples decades to achieve too.

4. Iteratives
d) Sheldon : Boy, I’m glad we’re going out again.
Amy : We’re not back together.
(I/Sh/00:04:23)
The presupposition triggers in this utterance is categorized into iterative. From the utterance we’re going out again, it can be assumed that Sheldon and Amy are going out before. This utterance is uttered by Sheldon to show Amy that the condition is ever happened before or when they still have the relationship. It can be seen by using iterative “again”. In this case the speaker uses this trigger to show the event before.

Presupposition:
- Sheldon is single
- Amy is single
- Sheldon and Amy had the relationship before
- Sheldon and Amy has not have the relationship
- Sheldon ever went out with Amy before
- Sheldon doesn’t go out with Amy

It shown that Sheldon is single, and so, Amy is, but Sheldon and Amy ever had the relationship and also ever went out together before.

5. Change of state verbs
e) Penny : How could you not tell me that?!
Leonard : I wanted to tell you in the car, but you told me to stop talking!
(CSV/Le/00:13:02)
From the utterance “you told me to stop talking!”, it can be seen that the presupposition triggers used by the speaker is change of state verbs. The utterance can be presupposed that Leonard has been talking to Penny. This utterance is uttered by Leonard to show that the day before Leonard has been talking to Penny in the car. So, we can get another assumption from the utterance said by the speaker that the condition has been doing. It is also can be said that change of state verbs is the assumption that have a kind of switch presupposition.

Presupposition:
- Leonard has ex-girlfriend
- Leonard didn’t tell Penny about his ex-girlfriend yet
Leonard has been talking to Penny
- Penny knows Leonard ex-girlfriend
- Penny can’t believe to Leonard
Simply it shown if Leonard has ex-girlfriend but he doesn’t tell Penny about his ex-girlfriend yet. So when Penny knows about Leonard ex-girlfriend, she can’t believe to Leonard.

6. Verbs of judging
   f) Leonard : Okay, yeah, um. Do you remember when you accused me of trying to sabotage our wedding?
      Penny : Uh-huh.
      (VJ/Le/00:15:47)

   The presupposition triggers in this utterance is included into verbs of judging because there is an opinion or estimation from the speaker in the utterance “you accused me of trying to sabotage our wedding”. This utterance can be assumed or presupposed that (Penny thinks) Leonard is trying to sabotage their wedding. This utterance is uttered by Leonard when he is talking about the problem during their wedding that Penny is sure that at that moment, Leonard is trying to sabotage their wedding

   **Presupposition:**
   - Penny and Leonard have ever held the wedding
   - There was an accident in their wedding
   - Leonard almost sabotages their wedding
   - Penny (thinks) Leonard is trying to sabotage their wedding
   - Leonard didn’t sabotage their wedding
   - Leonard and Penny are a husband and wife

   In paraphrasing, it is seen that Penny and Leonard ever held the wedding but there was an accident that made Leonard almost sabotages the wedding. So, Penny (thinks) Leonard is trying to sabotage their wedding before they become a husband and wife.

7. Temporal clauses
   g) Leonard : I’ve loved you since the moment we met, and I will keep loving you until the end of time.
      Penny : Oh, my God. That is the most beautiful thing anyone’s ever said to me.
      (TC/Le/00:16:53)

   The presupposition triggers in this utterance is included into temporal clauses. It is temporal clauses because it relates to the time. “I’ve loved you since the moment we met” indicates that there is something going on. And by saying “I’ve loved you since the moment we met” can be presupposed that Leonard has loved Penny the moment they were meeting. The first utterance is uttered by Leonard as new married couple
and he expresses his feeling to Penny that Leonard has been loving Penny the first moment they met.

**Presupposition:**
- Leonard and Penny ever met
- Penny has something that makes someone spellbound
- Leonard is interested in Penny
- Leonard is not interested to someone else
- Leonard loved Penny the moment they met
- Leonard promises to keep his love to Penny till the end of time

In paraphrasing, it is seen that Leonard ever met with Penny and it makes Leonard interested and loved Penny the moment they met because Penny has something that makes someone spellbound. So, Leonard promises to keep his love to Penny till the end of time.

8. **Comparisons and contrasts**
   h) **Sheldon**: Oh, you don’t need to worry about her. She’s brilliant and attractive. **She can do way better than Leonard.**
   **Penny**: That’s great.
   (CC/Sh/00:16:43)

   It can be seen that the presupposition triggers used in the utterance “She can do way better than Leonard” is comparison and contrast because the word “better” can be used in the sentence to compare something. This utterance is uttered by Sheldon because he has known the quality of Leonard’s ex-girlfriend Mandy Chao in university he studies. So, by saying this utterance the speaker knows the quality between Mandy Chao and Leonard in detail.

   **Presupposition:**
   - She (Mandy Chao) has the quality
   - Leonard has the quality
   - She (Mandy Chao) has good quality
   - Leonard has good enough quality
   - Leonard and Mandy Chao have different quality
   - She (Mandy Chao) can do way

   In paraphrasing, it is seen that Mandy Chao and Leonard have the quality but there is the difference quality between them. So, she (Mandy Chao) can do way herself.

9. **Non-restrictive relative clauses**
   i) **Leonard**: Sheldon, can you believe that we’re driving in a van that was owned by one of the greatest scientific minds of the 20th century?
   **Sheldon**: It’s extraordinary.
   (NRRC/Le/00:06:59)

   It can be seen that the utterance “we’re driving in a van that was owned by one of the greatest scientific minds of the 20th century” is included into non-restrictive relative clauses because it provides essential information about the noun to which it refers. The trigger “the
20th century” indicates the information to “a van”. This utterance is uttered by Leonard who explains about the information of a van which is driven by Howard. He knows the information about a van very well. So, by saying this utterance the speaker (Leonard) makes the hearer (Sheldon) know the information about a van. This utterance has the assumption that a van of the 20th century.

**Presupposition:**
- There is a van
- A van is driven by Leonard, Sheldon, Rajesh, and Howard
- Rajesh knows the information of the van
- A van is owned by one of the greatest scientific minds
- A van is made in 20th century

In paraphrasing, it is seen that there is a van which is driven by Leonard, Sheldon, Rajesh, and Howard which has the information that a van is made in 20th century.

10. **Counterfactual conditionals**

j) Leonard : If you're not into this, we can do it another time.
   Penny : No. No, I want to. Look, we've put this off long enough. Let's do it.
   (CFC/Le/00:01:20)

   The presupposition triggers in this utterance is included into counterfactual conditional. It is counterfactual conditional because it contains an if-clause which is contrary to fact. The utterance “If you’re not into this, we can do it another time” can be presupposed that Penny is into this (wedding). This utterance is uttered by Leonard to show the real condition in which between Leonard and Penny before holding the wedding in church. Leonard said that if Penny is not into the wedding is contrary to the fact that they are into the wedding. So, the real situation is quite the opposite of what is spoken by Leonard.

   **Presupposition:**
   - Penny is holding the wedding (>> there is not an accident that makes Penny is not able to hold the wedding, Leonard just give an excused and it is expressed by the statement which means he actually can hold the wedding )

   In paraphrasing, it is seen that Leonard and Penny are holding the wedding.

11. **Questions**

k) Leonard : Who do you think carries Sheldon to bed when he falls asleep in front of the TV?
   Penny : Okay, let’s do it.
   (Q/Le/00:11:12)

   From the utterance “Who do you think carries Sheldon to bed when he falls asleep in front of the TV?” can be seen that it is categorized into question because the question trigger ‘who’ that presupposes ‘someone’. This is the assumption of the addresser that is believed as the truth ‘case’.
The addresser believes that there is someone in this ‘case’ that he still doesn’t know who the person is. The assumption of the addresser here is that “someone carries Sheldon to bed when he falls asleep in front of TV”. This utterance is uttered by Leonard to make Penny believe that the person is Leonard.

**Presupposition:**
- Sheldon watches TV
- Sheldon often falls asleep in front of the TV
- Sheldon always let the TV on
- There is someone that he still doesn’t know who the person is
- The person always carries Sheldon to bed
- Sheldon sleeps on the bed

It is shown that Leonard often known Sheldon fallen asleep in front of TV while watching television. The television was always on and there was always someone that he still didn’t know who the person was that carries carries Sheldon to bed. This person could be Leonard or another person.

**CONCLUSION**

After doing the research, it can be concluded that there are only eleven types of presupposition triggers; definite descriptions occur in the situational comedy (episode 1, 2, and 3), factive verbs occur in the situational comedy (episode 1, 4, and 5), implicative verbs occur in the situational comedy (episode 1 and 2), iteratives occur in the situational comedy (episode 1, 2, 3, and 4), change of state verbs occur in the situational comedy (episode 1, 2, 3, and 5), verbs of judging ones just occur in the situational comedy (episode 1), temporal clauses occur in the situational comedy (episode 1, 2, and 3), comparisons and contrasts occur in the situational comedy (episode 1 and 3), non-restrictive relative clauses ones just occur in the situational comedy (episode 3), counterfactual conditionals occur in all episodes of situational comedy (episode 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5), and questions occur in the situational comedy (episode 1, 2, 3, and 5). The number of presupposition triggers found are 46.

Presuppositions can be defined as assumptions that shared by the speakers to the listeners. Presuppositions can be applied in daily life and situational comedy conversation. The situational comedy *The Big Bang Theory Season Nine* episode one until five as it found in episode one until five, mostly, the utterances from the characters contain presuppositions and counterfactual conditional is dominant types of presupposition in the data of the research.

**REFERENCES**


