ON THE CONCEPT OF PRESUPPOSITION

ALFONSAS PILKA

Philosophers and logicians have long been interested in the nature of presupposition. More recently linguists began making use of presuppositional analysis as well. There are widely differing views about what exactly constitutes it. As R. Garner puts it, "There is not one concept of presupposition, differing but slightly from one person who employs it to another, but several radically different concepts, all of which have been related to the word presupposition" (Garner, 1971, p. 23).

The philosophical debate about the existence of logical presuppositions has centred on the semantic analysis of definite descriptions such as "The King of France" in the statement *"The King of France is bald"* The concept of a definite description is closely connected with the presupposition of existence as well as with that of uniqueness. For B. Russell such sentences as the one above are logically equivalent to the conjunction of three propositions:

(a) *"There is a King of France"* (i.e. the condition of existence);

(b) *"There is not more than one King of France"* (i.e. the condition of uniqueness);

(c) *"The person is bald"* (i.e. the proposition proper).

In his approach the two presuppositions are not distinguished in status from the overt assertion (cf.: Рассел, 1982, с. 51).

Thus, the logical problem involved here centres, first of all, on the question of existence. K. S. Donnellan pointed out that the definite description in such sentences as *"The murderer of John Smith is insane"* allows two interpretations: (a) "The murderer of John Smith, i. e. Peter Brown, is insane" and (b) "Whoever murdered John Smith must be insane" (Доннелан, 1982). The first of these is referential, the second is attributive. The referential use predicates an actual state of affairs of an existing entity while the attributive use states an inferential fact about the presumed entity.

We may distinguish two main approaches used to describe presupposition: the semantic and the pragmatic.

The semantic, or logico-semantic, theory of presupposition is committed to a truth-functional interpretation. The presuppositional formula "X presupposes y" means that if x is true, then y has to be true and if not-x is true, y is true as well, i.e. the truth of y is a necessary condition for the truth and falsity of x. The sentence *"John's daughter is very pretty"* and

its negative counterpart *"John's daughter is not very pretty"* both presuppose that John has a daughter. In case of existential presupposition failure such sentences for B. Russell are false, for W. Quine and J. L. Austin they lack logical value.

In the literature, a large number of syntactic structures and lexical items have been associated with presupposition: definite (indefinite) descriptions, factive, implicative and phasal, or change of state, verbs, cleft and pseudo-cleft sentences, stressed constituents, wh-questions, iterative adverbs, counterfactual conditionals, certain subordinate clauses (temporal, relative, comparative), verbs of judging, presuppositions arising from selectional restrictions, etc. For instance, all the following sentences containing a phasal verb carry the same presupposition *"Fred had been reading the book"*: (a) *"Fred continued (didn't continue) / resumed (didn't resume) reading the book"*, (b) *"When (why) did Fred resume reading the book?"*, (c) *"Do you think Fred resumed reading the book?"*, (d) *"Tell Fred to resume reading the book"*, (e) *"If Fred resumes reading the book..."*, etc.

Presupposition is a relation not restricted only to assertions; it can involve other types of predication as well. The presupposing utterance can also be a direct or indirect question, a command, etc. The relation between a question and its presupposition is revealed most directly by relating interrogative words to indefinite ones in such a way that the presupposition of a question is in fact a part of the underlying question. Thus the question *"Where did he go?"* presupposes (and has part of its underlying structure) the proposition *"He went somewhere"*, and the question *"Who did that?"* presupposes that *"Someone did something"*. Consider the classical joke "Have you stopped beating your wife?" Both affirmative and negative answers commit a person addressed to having beaten his wife. E. L. Keenan defines presuppositions of questions as the sentences which are the logical consequences of every one of their answers: *"Did it surprise Mary that Fred left?"*, Presupposition: *"Fred left"*; *"Where did they bury the survivors?"*, Presupposition: *"They buried the survivors"* (Keenan, 1971, p. 48).

When a statement is introduced by the so-called factive verbs or predicates we may speak about the presupposed factuality of embedded predications. A predicate may be classified as factive, non-factive and counterfactive according to whether it ascribes factuality, non-factuality or counterfactuality. Thus "realize", "suspect" and "pretend" are instances of factive, non-factive and counterfactive predicates respectively. These predicates are not totally distinct categories, since some predicates can belong to more than one of them. Pure factive predicates, such as "know", "be odd', "realize", "regret", etc. (see: Kiparsky and Kiparsky, 1970), confer the status of presupposition on whatever assertion precedes or follows them in the form of a that-clause. The marker "factual" means, when applied to assertions, no more nor less than "judged to be true" (Leech, 1977, p. 307).

Factivity depends on presupposition and not on assertion. For instance, when someone says *"It is true that John is ill"* he is asserting that the proposition *"John is ill"* is a true proposition. But the sentence *"I regret*

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that John is ill" may illustrate an instance of presupposition. The latter example and its negative counterpart *"I don't regret that John is ill"* presuppose the statement expressed in the subordinate clause *"John is ill".* The truth of the complement sentence is a necessary condition for the entire sentence in which it occurs to be true or false. From the expression "I regret (don't regret) that p" (where p is any arbitrary statemant) we can conclude that p, but from the expression "I think that p" we cannot conclude that p. The non-factive predicate "think" neutralizes the factuality of the embedded predication and thus erases a presupposition. An argument in favour of the presence of factive presuppositions after certain predicates may be the occurrence of the word "fact" as a possible subject or object of factives: "I recognize that fact", "The fact is odd".

Similarly the cleft or the pseudo-cleft sentence *"It was John who did it"* or *"Who did it was John"* presuppose the proposition *"Someone did it".*

The application of referential and attributive use of definite singular terms has been extended to indefinite noun phrases as well, both in transparent and opaque contexts. Functionally indefinite noun phrases are heterogeneous. Only specific phrases presuppose the existence of their referents in the speaker's universe of discourse. In a referentially transparent situation the standard interpretation of the sentence *"Mary is reading an English book"* takes it as equivalent to the existentially quantified sentence *"There is something that is both an English book and that Mary is reading".* If a statement is made about concrete time-space bound states of affairs or it attributes a property to some individual object, then generally it also presupposes the existence of the objects involved. In the so-called opaque contexts, produced within the scope of intensional verbs, modal expressions, negation, quantifiers, etc., indefinite phrases admit of two possible readings: referential and attributive.

G. Lakoff showed that for many sentences it makes no sense to ask whether or not they are grammatical in any absolute sense, but only to ask whether they are grammatical relative to certain presuppositions. For example, in a reciprocal contrastive stress construction *"John called Mary a virgin and then she insulted him"* the pronouns can be stressed only if it is presupposed that to call someone a virgin is to insult that person (Lakoff, 1971, p. 63). He then considered the use of the conjunction "but" in the statement *"It is June, but it is snowing".* It asserts that it is June and it is snowing, and it presupposes that one would not expect it to be snowing in June. That is, this example has the following form:

Assertion: S_1 and S_2

Presupposition: $\text{Exp}(S_1 \supset \sim S_2)$,

where S_1 = it is June, S_2 = it is snowing, $\supset$ — an implication sign "if..., then", $\sim$ — negation (op. cit., p. 66).

It has been claimed that what is presupposed can be identified by the fact that presuppositions are preserved under negation. That is, if one negates the presupposing sentence, the presuppositional relation still holds good.

But, unfortunately, the negation test does not work all the time. In *"John was worried by his wife's infidelity"* it is suggested that what is présupposed is that his wife was unfaithful. But it is not necessarily true of the negative *"John was not worried by his wife's infidelity"*, since this could be taken to mean either that she was unfaithful but that he was not worried, or that he was not worried BECAUSE she was not unfaithful. In other words, the negative can negate what is allegedly the presupposition as well as assertion (Palmer, 1982, p.93).

D. Wilson also argues that the statement *"The archbishop of Manchester read the lesson"* entails that there is an archbishop of Manchester, while *"The archbishop of Manchester didn't read the lesson"* does not. Hence, if there is no archbishop of Manchester the affirmative statement will be false but its negative counterpart will be true: they will be contradictories rather than contraries (Wilson, 1975, p. 42–43). "I deny", he states, "that the statement "X has not stopped doing something" is logically equivalent to the statement that he is still doing it: rather it is logically equivalent to the statement that either he is still doing it or he has never done it" (op. cit., p. 22). He further adds that probably an adequate theory of presuppositions must allow for negative sentences to be ambiguous between readings on which they carry presuppositions and readings on which they do not (op. cit., p. 35).

Selectional restrictions may be treated as a sort of nonexistential lexical (general or idiosyncratic) presuppositions. N.-Y. Kuroda suggests that "the idea of presupposition is the correct generalisation of the notion of selectional restrictions, and the latter is now to be subsumed under the former in the theory of grammar" (quoted from Wilson, 1975, p. XII). Presuppositions arising from selectional restrictions can be explained by the presence of a certain feature in the argument affected, i.e. semantic features of the noun phrase should match up with semantic requirements of the predicate:

He frightens x_1 (x_1 is (+ animate).

X_2 admires Picasso (x_2 is (+ human).

X_3 is pretty (x_3 is (+ human), (− male).

The verb "to eat" displays a selection restriction that its subject should be (+ animate). If it does not satisfy this condition, it is not compatible with the predicate, and a word combination would become analytically false.

We may have presuppositions of presuppositions, or higher order presuppositions: (man) presupposes (human), (human) presupposes (living), (living) presupposes (concrete). Presupposition is a logically transitive relation. Higher order presuppositions are less vulnerable to a negation than first order presuppositions (Noordman, 1979, p. 127).

There are presuppositional cases holding between particular classes of nouns and verbs, where the noun is the subject of the verb (e.g., bird : fly, fish swim), between adjectives and nouns (blond hair, addled egg), between verbs and objects (drive car), between verbs and nouns in an instrumental relation (bite teeth, kick foot) and so on (Lyons, 1968, p. 440).

There have been marked changes in the analysis of selectional restrictions over the past ten-fifteen years. N. Chomsky formalized some selection restrictions in terms of syntactic co-occurrence rules, J. D. McCawley challenged N. Chomsky's approach by arguing that selection restrictions are semantic rather than syntactic. Later still he has claimed that they are to a great extent a matter of extra-linguistic knowledge and therefore outside the scope of linguistics altogether (see   Leech, 1977, p. 366). G. Leech notices that "selection restrictions give rise to the problem of where to draw the line between "linguistic knowledge" and "real-world knowledge" (op. cit., p. 145).

From a pragmatic point of view presupposition is explained as the felicity, or pragmatic appropriateness, governing the use of expressions and/or mutual knowledge of participants in the communicative process. Felicity relates sentences to contexts (or situations) in which they are appropriate or felicitous rather than true or false. The utterance *"Tu atrodai gerai pailsė-jęs"* addressed to a senior and/or official person would be inappropriate but possibly true. Likewise there are other cases where a sentence could be both felicitous and false or, conversely, felicitous and true or false. Some of the most important felicity conditions are created by communicative norms such as the norm of competence and the norm of relevance or point. If I said *"John was sober yesterday"*, the listener would implicitly assume a relevant background against which this new information is conveyed. If John is usually sober we feel that the utterance is pointless, even if it is completely true.

By way of illustration, Ch. J. Fillmore gives the following conditions of "happiness" or "appropriateness" for the simple imperative sentence *"Please shut the door":*

(a) The speaker and the addressee of this sentence are in some kind of relationship which allows the speaker to make requests of the addressee.

(b) The addressee is in a position where he is capable of shutting the door.

(c) There is some particular door which the speaker has in mind and which he has reason to assume the addressee can identify without any further descriptive aid on the speaker's part.

(d) The door in question is, at the time of utterance, open.

(e) The speaker wants that door to become closed.

We can see that the violation of any of these conditions would cause the utterance to be in some sense "unhappy" or "inappropriate".

In G. Leech's opinion conditions (c) and (d) (and possibly (b)) are identifiable as presuppositions, but conditions (a) and (e) are illocutionary in a narrower sense and may be called speech-act conditions (Leech, 1977, p. 343–344). Consider C. Fillmore's definition of presupposition: "By the presuppositional aspects of a speech communication situation I mean those conditions which must be satisfied in order for a particular illocutionary act to be effectively performed in saying particular sentences" (Fillmore, 1971, p. 276).

For a question to be "felicitous" at least the following speech-act conditions must obtain:

(a) There is a piece of information (X) of which the questioner is ignorant.

(b) The questioner wants to know (X).

(c) The questioner believes that the addressee knows (X).

(d) The questioner is in a position to elicit (X) from the addressee (Leech, op. cit., p. 344).

The pragmatic approach stands closer to the nature of presuppositional activity in natural language communication. It can best be explained only inside a theory of discourse. Here we always find a textual perspective which obliges us to see everything from a given point of view (Violi, 1988, p. 1188–1189). Some elements of information with higher relevance are more focalised than others which are set as the background of discourse. In sentences carrying presuppositions the background frame consists of the presupposed meaning both speaker and addressee should take for granted. The mutual, or background, knowledge of participants can include anything they happen to know about the state of the universe at the time when the linguistic expression under consideration was uttered. The asserted meaning constitutes the foregrounded information.

In a broader logico-semantic approach it has been possible to hold presupposition failure to account for such widely ranging defects in sentences or statements as inappropriateness, ungrammaticality, unintelligibility, failure to perform a speech-act and lack of truth value.

In addition to, presupposition, it is possible to distinguish other semantic, or truth-dependence, relations such as entailment (strong entailment and weak entailment), expectation, implication, etc. (Leech, 1977, esp. p. 137, 318; Bickerton, 1979, p. 239; Остин, 1986, с. 53–55). L. Karttunen and S. Peters maintain that a large set of cases that have been called presuppositions are really instances of conventional implicatures. They contend that the implicature associated with, for example, the word "even" in a particular sentence depends on two things: the focus and the scope of the particle. This analysis can be sketched by the following illustration:

Bill likes even MARY.

Focus of even: Mary.

Scope of even: Bill likes x.

Existential implicature: There are other x under consideration besides Mary such that Bill likes x.

Scalar implicature: For all x under consideration besides Mary, the likelihood that Bill likes x is greater than the likelihood that Bill likes Mary (Karttunen and Peters, 1979, p. 26).

Our fragmentary review does not pretend to present a satisfactory and comprehensive analysis of presupposition. Under its label a wide range of different things have been lumped together. Presupposition and other such parameters of implicit meaning are not totally distinct categories and their delimitation or specification, in strict logical terms, has not so far been sufficiently developed.

DĖL PRESUPOZICIJOS SĄVOKOS

A. PILKA

Reziumė

Susidomėjimas presupozicija lingvistikoje atsirado dėl tiesioginės loginių-filosofinių jos koncepcijų, turinčių senas tradicijas, įtakos. Loginė (semantinė) presupozicija dažniausiai suprantama kaip santykis tarp propozicijų S ir S': propozicija S presuponuoja propoziciją S', jei ir tik jei S' yra būtinai tuomet, kai yra S, taip pat kai nėra S, t. y. kai yra ne-S.

Nedisponuojant kokiu nors griežtu presupozicijos sąvokos apibrėžimu, sunkiai nusakomos jos ribos su kitais turinio plano (implicitiniais) komponentais.

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Vilniaus valstybinio pedagoginio
instituto
Anglų kalbos katedra