

## **Analysis of Presupposition in John Mulaney's Stand Up Comedy**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study aims to analyze the types of presupposition used in Stand Up Comedy "There's a Horse in The Hospital" By John Mulaney on YouTube and to describe the most dominant type of presupposition by using Yule's theory. This research used descriptive qualitative method. The data were examined in the form of words, sentences or utterances that contain presuppositions. The findings showed that there were 31 data of presuppositions which consisted of 18 existential presuppositions, 4 factive presuppositions, 4 lexical presuppositions, 2 structural presuppositions, 1 non-factive presupposition, and 2 counterfactual presuppositions. Existential presupposition is the most dominant type which can be seen from the larger amount and percentage of data than others.

**Key words:** Pragmatics; Presuppositions; Stand Up Comedy

### **INTRODUCTION**

Communication is a human need as a social being in life to express meanings and opinions (Aditya, 2014). In addition, communication in social life requires a media called as language (Muhassin, 2018; Hermawan & Faizin, 2023). It is a tool that has an important role in building a communication in society to deliver messages from speakers to hearers. Communication in the current era of globalization cannot merely rely on verbal language, but also requires nonverbal language. The use of verbal language without being accompanied by nonverbal can result in a limited understanding of the object or phenomenon (Muhassin, 2023).

Nowadays, one of communication media that combines verbal and non verbal languages is YouTube. YouTube has a lot of interesting video contents, one of which is funny video content called Stand Up Comedy. Stand Up Comedy is a form

of comedy that is conveyed in monologue to the audience (Syauqillah & Setyaningsih, 2022). It is usually performed live by a known comedian performer.

In this era, almost everyone likes Stand Up Comedy because this content has humor that keeps the audience entertained. This can be seen on YouTube entitled *There's a Horse in The Hospital* delivered by a comedian named John Mulaney on the channel Netflix. This video has many interesting and unexpected jokes that make the audience laugh. All of that cannot be separated from the language and meaning contained in it to represent the message conveyed by the comedian to the audience. Even so, at times there are several information or meanings delivered by comedians with a specific purpose. It is not easy for some audience to be able to understand in details the meaning of the words conveyed. Therefore it takes the ability to capture the implied message behind every utterance, the so-called presupposition uttered by the comedian in this video.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The study that discusses language is called linguistics. One of linguistic aspects is concerned with pragmatics. Pragmatics is a branch of linguistic which includes meaning in the use of language (Yule, 1996). Pragmatics can also be interpreted as a science that examines the meaning behind the meaning of speech. The study of pragmatics cannot be separated from the context of speech (Rohmadi, 2014). The context means who is speaking, to whom, where, and under what circumstances. Through pragmatics, a person does not only know the explicit meaning but also the implied meaning of the utterance which is closely related to the context in which the utterance is spoken.

The study of pragmatics consists of several sub-areas or field such as deixis, references, presupposition, implicature, and speech act. This research focused only on the presupposition topic. Wijana (1996) argues that presupposition is an implied meaning or additional meaning obtained through language activities. Therefore, presupposition can be interpreted as meanings that are implied or not expressed directly. The understanding of presuppositions involves two main participants, namely the speaker and the listener. Interpreting a conversation is not only fixated on the speech delivered, but the context of the situation and its influence on the speaker and speech partner. Presupposition is a human experience so that presupposition is also a symptom that is easily found in daily activities and often a person is not aware of it. To better understand presuppositions, it can be seen from the following examples of utterances.

- (A) "Andi's father came from Surabaya".
- (B) "I imagined being in Hawaii".

From example (A), the presupposition is Andi has a father and His father is in Surabaya.

In example (B) the presupposition is I am not in Hawaii.

The utterance in example (A), when the speaker says "Andi's father came from Surabaya", then the listener can presuppose that Andi has a father and his father is in Surabaya. Next in example (B) there is an utterance from the speaker "I imagined being in Hawaii", the presupposition is I'm not in Hawaii because he is just imagining and the fact that he is not in Hawaii. After seeing the examples, it is clear that some utterances may have a hidden meaning that was not previously known. It also means that the function of presupposition is to help reduce the barrier of a person's response to interpreting an utterance.

In the communication process, there will definitely be a conversation between the speaker and the listener in the delivery of information. Speakers usually hope that their communicative intentions will be understood by listeners. However, sometimes the listener is late in understanding or does not understand because the background knowledge, experience, and feeling possessed by the speaker and the listener are not the same. That is, an utterance in the form of a conversation will be well understood by both the speaker and the listener because there is the same things that the speaker and listener have.

Conversational events as mentioned above sometimes occur in everyday life. It can be seen when watching a video on YouTube. YouTube is one of the communication media that is often used as a medium for delivering messages. The form of the message in a video on YouTube is words, phrases, clauses, and sentences that create a certain point of view for the audience. Therefore, in understanding a video, each viewer has a different perception in understanding the meaning in the video according to the existing context. Occasionally there is a message or speech that is not explicitly conveyed in video. Unexpected assumptions can occur when there is a conversational interaction or a content creator's own words in a video on YouTube, so more understanding is needed about presuppositions so that the intent in video can be understood.

There have been several studies on the topic of presupposition with various research objects. For example, the use of presuppositions in films has been studied by Prasetyani et al. (2022), Aziza and Amatullah (2019). In addition, other studies discuss the use of presuppositions in the news (Sapar et al., 2022), speeches (Abdulabbas, 2020), novels (Agustina, 2023), advertisements (Ijabah & Argina, 2022), and classroom activities (Tyas et al., 2020).

Related to the above discussion, there is a significant difference from previous studies in terms of the research object in which the present study focuses on stand up comedy with its own characteristics. Therefore there is a research enhancement in pragmatic area by finding out the types and the most dominant types of presupposition in Stand Up Comedy "There's a Horse In The Hospital" By John Mulaney.

## METHOD

### Design and Sample

This research used descriptive qualitative approach. The data is described based on the existing reality. Sugiyono (2020) explains that research using a qualitative descriptive approach describes the data obtained in the form of words or images without emphasizing numbers. The data source used in this research is a video of Stand Up Comedy “There's a Horse In The Hospital” By John Mulaney on YouTube. The data source is in the form of speech or utterances from the comedian in the video that contain presuppositions.

### Instrument and Procedure

Documentation technique was used in collecting data. Here the researchers downloaded the video, watched the video several times, noted the utterances that contain presuppositions, classified the data of presuppositions, arranged the data obtained systematically into the utterance classification table.

### Data Analysis

Data were processed and analyzed qualitatively. The steps for the data analysis were identifying data that contains presupposition, classifying the presupposition data, analyzing the data, and drawing conclusions from the analyzed data.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study aims to explore the types of presuppositions used in the Stand Up Comedy “There's a Horse In The Hospital” By John Mulaney on YouTube and find the most dominant types of presuppositions. Based on the research findings, it is confirmed that there are six types of presuppositions found, namely existential, factive, lexical, structural, non-factive, and counterfactual presuppositions. The following details can be seen on table 1.

*Table 1. Distribution of presupposition types*

<b>Types of presupposition</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Existential presupposition	18	58%
Factive presupposition	4	13%
Lexical presupposition	4	13%
Structural presupposition	2	6,5%
Non-factive presupposition	1	3%

Counterfactual presupposition	2	6,5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>100%</b>

The table displays the results of data analysis that has been carried out. The researchers found six types or kinds of presuppositions with a total of 31 utterances containing presuppositions. This confirms Yule's (1996) assertion that the types of presuppositions are divided into six, each of which consists of 18 existential presupposition, 4 factive presupposition, 4 lexical presupposition, 2 structural presupposition, 1 non-factive presupposition, and 2 counterfactual presupposition. The most dominant type of presupposition can be seen from the number and percentage level. In the table, the highest order is in existential presupposition with 58%, followed by factive and lexical with 13%, structural and counterfactual with 6.5% and the lowest is non-factive presupposition with 3%. So, the most dominant type of presupposition is the existential presupposition with the highest percentage among others.

In the discussion, the researchers explain in detail the data obtained from analyzing the comedian's utterances, where the context is the comedian standing alone delivering a joke with a monologue on a stage attended by many audiences. The following is an explanation of each data.

### 1) Existential Presupposition

The first type is existential presupposition, the researcher has found 18 data belonging to this type, which is explained as follows:

#### Data 1

The utterance at 0:02

(u): Now I don't know if you've been following **the news**.

(p): *The news exists.*

In data 1, the utterance is classified as existential presupposition because there is an utterance "the news" uttered by the comedian which indicates the existence of a news and implies that there is a news. So it can be said that the presupposition in this utterance is "*the news exists*".

#### Data 2

The utterance at 0:06

(u): But I've been keeping **my ears** open.

(p): *He exists and he has ears.*

In data 2, the utterance is classified as existential presupposition because there is an utterance "my ears" uttered by the comedian which indicates the existence of his ears and implies that he has ears. So it can be said that the presupposition in this utterance is "*he exists and he has ears*".

#### Data 3

The utterance at 0:26

(u): **This guy** being **the president**.

(p): *A guy exists and the president exists.*

In data 3, the utterance is classified as existential presupposition because there are two utterances spoken by the comedian that contain presuppositions. The first utterance is "this guy" which indicates the existence of a guy and implies that there is a guy, it can be said that the presupposition is "*a guy exists*". The next utterance is "the president" which indicates the existence of a president and implies that there is a president. So it can be said that the presupposition is "*the president exists*".

#### **Data 4**

The utterance at 0:28

(u): It's like there's **a horse** loose in **a hospital**.

(p): *A horse exists and a hospital exists.*

In data 4, the utterance is classified as existential presupposition because there are two utterances spoken by the comedian that contain presuppositions. The first utterance is "a horse" which indicates the existence of a horse and implies that there is a horse, it can be said that the presupposition is "*a horse exists*". The next utterance is "a hospital" which indicates the existence of a hospital and implies that there is a hospital. So it can be said that the presupposition is "*a hospital exists*".

#### **Data 5**

The utterance at 0:44

(u): And neither do **your parents**.

(p): *You exists and you have parents.*

In data 5, the utterance is classified as existential presupposition because there is an utterance "your parents" uttered by the comedian which indicates the existence of your parents and implies that you (the audience) have parents. So it can be said that the presupposition in this utterance is "*you exist and you have parents*".

#### **Data 6**

The utterance at 1:07

(u): We are joined now by **a man** that once saw **a bird** in **the airport**.

(p): *A man exists, a bird exists, and the airport exists.*

In data 6, the utterance is classified as existential presupposition because there are three utterances spoken by comedians that contain presuppositions. The first utterance is "a man" which indicates the existence of a man and implies that there is a man, it can be said that the presupposition is "*a man exists*". The second utterance is "a bird" which indicates the existence of a bird and implies that there is a bird, it can be said that the presupposition is "*a bird exists*". The last utterance is "the airport" which indicates the existence of an airport and implies that there is an airport. so it can be said that the presupposition is "*the airport exists*".

#### **Data 7**

The utterance at 1:31

(u): **The updates**, they're not always bad.

(p): *The updates exists.*

In data 7, the utterance is classified as existential presupposition because there is an utterance "the updates" uttered by the comedian which indicates the existence of an update (new information) and implies that there is an update. So it can be said that the presupposition in this utterance is "*the updates exists*".

#### **Data 8**

The utterance at 1:36

(u): You're like, the horse used **the elevator**?

(p): *The elevator exists.*

In data 8, the utterance is classified as existential presupposition because there is an utterance "the elevator" uttered by the comedian which indicates the existence of a elevator and implies that there is the elevator. So it can be said that the presupposition in this utterance is "*the elevator exists*".

#### **Data 9**

The utterance at 1:58

(u): Like down in **the operating room**.

(p): *The operating room exists.*

In data 9, the utterance is classified as existential presupposition because there is an utterance "the operating room" uttered by the comedian which indicates the existence of an operating room and implies that there is the operating room. So it can be said that the presupposition in this utterance is "*the operating room exists*".

#### **Data 10**

The utterance at 2:17

(u): I am gonna run towards **the baby incubators** and smash 'em with **my hooves**.

(p): *The baby incubators exists and he exists and he has hooves.*

In data 10, the utterance is classified as existential presupposition because there are two utterances spoken by the comedian that contain presuppositions. The first utterance is "the baby incubators" which indicates the existence of a baby incubators and implies that there is a baby incubators, it can be said that the presupposition is "*the baby incubators exists*". The next utterance is "my hooves" which indicates the existence of his hooves and implies that he (the horse) has hooves. So it can be said that the presupposition is "*he exists and he has hooves*".

#### **Data 11**

The utterance at 2:20

(u): I have got nice hooves and **long tail**, I am a horse.

(p): *He exist and he has long tail.*

In data 11, the utterance is classified as existential presupposition because there is an utterance "long tail" uttered by the comedian which indicates the existence

of his tail and implies that he (the horse) has a long tail. So it can be said that the presupposition in this utterance is *"he exist and he have long tail"*.

#### **Data 12**

The utterance at 2:32

(u): Then you go to brunch with **people**.

(p): *People exists*.

In data 12, the utterance is classified as existential presupposition because there is an utterance "people" uttered by the comedian which indicates the existence of people and implies that there is people. So it can be said that the presupposition in this utterance is *"people exists"*.

#### **Data 13**

The utterance at 2:46

(u): I'm gonna say the n-word on **TV**.

(p): *TV exists*.

In data 13, the utterance is classified as existential presupposition because there is an utterance "TV" uttered by the comedian which indicates the existence of TV and implies that there is TV (Television). So it can be said that the presupposition in this utterance is *"people exists"*.

#### **Data 14**

The utterance at 2:58

(u): **A hippo** was like, I have **a nuclear bomb**.

(p): *A hippo exists* and *a nuclear bomb exists*.

In data 14, the utterance is classified as existential presupposition because there are two utterances spoken by the comedian that contain presuppositions. The first utterance is "a hippo" which indicates the existence of a hippo and implies that there is a hippo, it can be said that the presupposition is *" a hippo exists"*. The second utterance is "a nuclear bomb" which indicates the existence of a nuclear bomb and implies that there is a nuclear bomb. So it can be said that the presupposition is *"a nuclear bomb exists"*.

#### **Data 15**

The utterance at 3:23

(u): I am a fuckin' hippopotamus, I live in a fuckin' **lake of mud**.

(p): *Lake of mud exists*.

In data 15, the utterance is classified as existential presupposition because there is an utterance "lake of mud" uttered by the comedian which indicates the existence of lake and implies that there is lake of mud. So it can be said that the presupposition in this utterance is *"Lake of mud exists"*.

#### **Data 16**

The utterance at 3:34

(u): Like poor **Andy Cohen** at those goddamn reunions.

(p): *Andy Cohen exists*.

In data 16, the utterance is classified as existential presupposition because there is an utterance "Andy Cohen" uttered by the comedian which indicates the existence of Andy Cohen and implies that there is person named Andy Cohen. So it can be said that the presupposition in this utterance is "*Andy Cohen exists*".

#### **Data 17**

The utterance at 3:44

(u): Maybe **the horse catcher** will catch the horse.

(p): *The horse catcher.*

In data 17, the utterance is classified as existential presupposition because there is an utterance "the horse catcher" uttered by the comedian which indicates the existence of the horse catcher and implies that there is a horse catcher. So it can be said that the presupposition in this utterance is "*the horse catcher*".

#### **Data 18**

The utterance at 4:02

(u): I don't remember that in **Hamilton**.

(p): *Hamilton exists.*

In data 18, the utterance is classified as existential presupposition because there is an utterance "Hamilton" uttered by the comedian which indicates the existence of Hamilton catcher and implies that there is Hamilton (musical). So it can be said that the presupposition in this utterance is "*Hamilton exists*".

### **2) Factive Presupposition**

The second type is factive presupposition, the researcher has found 4 data belonging to this type, which is explained as follows:

#### **Data 1**

The utterance at 0:02

(u): Now I **don't know** if you've been following the news.

(p): *He doesn't know.*

In data 1, the speech is classified as factive presupposition because there are "don't know" words spoken by the comedian which here shows a fact that he does not know about the audience whether they have followed the news or not. so it can be said that the presupposition of this utterance is "*he doesn't know*".

#### **Data 2**

The utterance at 0:51

(u): **No one knows** what the horse is gonna do next.

(p): *Everyone does not know.*

In data 2, the utterance is classified as factive presupposition because there is an utterance "no one knows" uttered by the comedian which here shows a fact that everyone does not know about what the horse will do next. so it can be said that the presupposition of this utterance is "*everyone does not know*".

#### **Data 3**

The utterance at 1:08

(u): They are like, we are joined now by a man that **once saw** a bird in the airport.  
(p): *A man has seen a bird.*

In data 3, the utterance is classified as factive presupposition because there is an utterance "once saw" uttered by the comedian which here shows a fact that this incident existed and that there is a man who has seen birds before. So it can be said the presupposition is "*a man has seen a bird*".

#### **Data 4**

The utterance at 1:44

(u): He **knew** how to do that.

(p): *He knows and can do it.*

In data 4, the speech is classified as factive presupposition because there is a "knew" utterance uttered by the comedian which indicates a fact that he knows and can do it (used elevator). so it can be said that the presupposition of this utterance is "*he knows and can do it*".

### **3) Lexical Presupposition**

The third type is lexical presupposition, the researcher has found 4 data belonging to this type, which is explained as follows:

#### **Data 1**

The utterance at 0:49

(u): It's never happened **before**.

(p): *The first time this has happened.*

In data 1, the utterance is classified as a lexical presupposition because there is a certain word that makes this utterance have another meaning. The word "before" uttered by the comedian indicates that all this time incident has never happened and this is the first time this incident happened. so it can be said that the presupposition of this utterance is "*the first time this has happened*".

#### **Data 2**

The utterance at 2:12

(u): It looks like the horse has **finally** calmed down. (2:12)

(p): *The horse was not calm before.*

In data 2, the utterance is classified as a lexical presupposition because there is certain word that makes this utterance have another meaning. The word "finally" uttered by the comedian shows another meaning that during this time the horse has not been calm. so it can be said that the presupposition of this utterance is "*the horse was not calm before*".

#### **Data 3**

The utterance at 3:15

(u): I want, i **want** you do it.

(p): *He has not done it.*

In data 3, the utterance is classified as a lexical presupposition because there is a certain word that makes this utterance have another meaning. The word "want" spoken by comedians shows another meaning that you (the hippopotamus) have

not done something. so it can be said that the presupposition of this utterance is *"he has not done it"*.

#### **Data 4**

The utterance at 3:48

(u): I have **fired** the horse catcher.

(p): *Previously the horse catcher was still working.*

In data 4, the utterance is classified as a lexical presupposition because there is a certain word that makes this utterance have another meaning. The word "fired" uttered by the comedian indicates another meaning that previously there was a horse catcher who was still working. so it can be said that the presupposition of this utterance is *"previously the horse catcher was still working"*.

#### **4) Structural Presupposition**

The fourth type is structural presupposition, the researcher has found 2 data belonging to this type, which is explained as follows:

##### **Data 1**

The utterance at 1:36

(u): You're like, **the horse used the elevator?**

(p): *The horse used it.*

In data 1, the utterance is classified as a structural presupposition because there is a question sentence spoken by the comedian which indicates that there is a case that is clearly known and true that there is a horse that has used the elevator. So it can be said that the presupposition is *"the horse used it"*.

##### **Data 2**

The utterance at 3:48

(u): I have fired the horse catcher. **He can do that?**

(p): *He has done it.*

In data 2, the utterance is classified as a structural presupposition because there is a question sentence uttered by the comedian which indicates that there is a case that is clearly known and true that there is someone who has fired the horse catcher. So it can be said that the presupposition is *"he has done it"*.

#### **5) Non-factive Presupposition**

The fifth type is non-factive presupposition, the researcher has found 1 data belonging to this type, which is explained as follows:

##### **Data 1**

The utterance at 2:34

(u): There **shouldn't** be a horse in the hospital.

(p): *In the hospital there is a horse.*

In data 1, the utterance is classified as a nonfactual presupposition because there is the word "shouldn't" spoken by the comedian which show that is only an image and not a real situation or not true. So it can be said that the presupposition in this speech is *"in the hospital there is a horse"*.

#### 6) Counterfactual Presupposition

The sixth type is counterfactual presupposition, the researcher has found 2 data belonging to this type, which is explained as follows:

##### **Data 1**

The utterance at 2:44

(u): **If** there's gonna be horse in the hospital, I am gonna say the n-word on TV.

(p): *There are no horses in the hospital, he doesn't say that word.*

In data 1, the utterance is classified as a counterfactual presupposition because it is a conditional sentence spoken by the comedian which is indicated by the word "if" which means contrary to the existing facts. So it can be said that the presupposition in this utterance is "*there are no horses in the hospital, he doesn't say that word*".

##### **Data 2**

The utterance at 3:09

(u): **If** you even fucking look at the hospital, I will stomp you to death with my hooves.

(p): *You don't look at the hospital, he doesn't stomp you.*

In data 2, the utterance is classified as a counterfactual presupposition because it is a conditional sentence uttered by the comedian which is indicated by the word "if" which means contrary to the existing facts. So it can be said that the presupposition in this utterance is "*you don't look at the hospital, he doesn't stomp you*".

## CONCLUSION

After analyzing the utterances using Yule's theory in Stand Up Comedy "There's a Horse in the Hospital" By John Mulaney on YouTube, the researchers found that there were 31 utterances of presuppositions which consisted of 18 existential presupposition, 4 factive presupposition, 4 lexical presupposition, 2 structural presupposition, 1 non-factive presupposition, and 2 counterfactual presupposition. From the six types obtained, the existential presupposition is the most dominant found in the data. The researchers hopes that this research can increase the reader's knowledge about presuppositions and contribute to developing better knowledge about presuppositions. It is also hoped that after reading this research, the reader will realize that some utterances made by the speaker sometimes have an implied meaning conveyed to the listener, so that it allows the reader to find easily the meaning when interacting with others. Then, this research is also expected to be used as a reference for other researchers to add sufficient information in developing several studies related to presuppositions in the future.

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