

ANALYSIS OF PRESUPPOSITION IN TAYLOR SWIFT's NEW YORK UNIVERSITY HOLDS 188th COMMENCEMENT

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ABSTRACT

In Taylor Swift's speech given at New York University in 2022 for her graduation ceremony, Taylor Swift used several presuppositions in her speech. Of course, presuppositions, as assumptions inherent to the emotional approach, are crucial to determining the feeling and argumentation of the message Taylor Swift conveys to the audience. Through this analysis, the researcher will identify and explain how these presuppositions can build an emotional connection with the audience and at the same time empower the graduates through her presuppositions.

Keywords : Taylor Swift, Commencement Speech, NYU, Presuppositions, Rhetoric

Article History

Received: Januari 2025

Reviewed: Januari 2025

Published: Januari 2025

Plagiarism Checker No 234

Prefix DOI : Prefix DOI :

10.8734/argopuro.v1i2.365

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Publish by : Argopuro



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ISSN 2988-6309



INTRODUCTION

1. Background of the Study

In pragmatics, Roges (at al (1977; 149-150) in their book, states that presupposition is a thing or something that is the background for the speaker's beliefs whose truth is taken for granted by the listeners. In a speech context, presuppositions can help set the tone, build trust with the audience, and reinforce the main message.

Such as in Taylor Swift's commencement speech from New York University in 2022, Taylor Swift as an accomplished artist and storyteller on the world stage utilized her personal experiences, knowledge, and culture to craft a speech that captured the audience's attention.

The researcher is very fond of Taylor Swift and considering this speech is very memorable, it inspires the researcher to analyze the speech especially in terms of presupposition. Since presuppositions are crucial for successful public communication, the researcher tries to explore how they work in Taylor Swift's speech to provide important insights into the dynamics of motivational and persuasive rhetoric. The research tries to find out how Taylor Swift uses presuppositions to connect with her audience and inspire them.

2. Problem of the Study

Although Taylor Swift's narrative and rhetorical skills have received more attention, the authors know little about how her use of language and sentence presuppositions can influence people, despite the fact that she gives speeches based on experiences that have to be modified.

Studying the presuppositions of Taylor Swift's speeches serves to provide the understanding that listeners should receive, which is also the case with her speeches. Therefore, this statement is the main link that will be studied into a scientific work in developing the researcher's ability to understand pragmatics in the field of presuppositions.

3. Objective of the Study

This research aims to examine the use of assumptions in Taylor Swift's New York speech in 2022 and discuss how these assumptions contribute to the effectiveness of her message. More specifically, the objectives of this study are to:

1. Identify the assumptions embedded in the speech.
2. Analyze how these assumptions shape the themes of resilience, individuality, and personal growth.
3. Find out how conveying presuppositions in the speech helps Swift build a relationship with the audience.
4. Presupposition and its uses in speeches to provide motivation and inspiration are important aspects to discuss.

With these aims, the researcher of this work seeks to expand the knowledge of assumptions as figures of speech and emphasizes their use in developing well-structured and engaging speeches.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In context, Eragamreddy (2024) states that language is an effective tool that allows us to communicate complex ideas. In contrast, presuppositions are layers of implicit assumptions that underlie explicit interpretations that are readily apparent.

Presuppositions in Rhetorical Communication

Asher and Lascarides (1998) substitute the notion that presuppositions are rhetorically connected for the notion that they are introduced into the discourse context. It would be odd if presupposed knowledge were totally unresponsive to rhetorical function, as rhetorical structure theory is used to predict a wide range of linguistic phenomena when applied to statements. They also demonstrate that presupposed knowledge is susceptible to rhetorical function and that a more rigorous concept of discourse updating should take the place of the idea of accommodation. We must first comprehend the essence of rhetorical activity in order to comprehend what a speaker is doing. Simply put, a rhetorical act is what a speaker says, along with the audience and the environment in which he says it (Harlow, 2021)

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative research method to analyze the presuppositions in Taylor Swift's 2022 New York University commencement speech. This approach focuses on identifying

and interpreting the implicit assumptions embedded in the speech and evaluating its impact on the audience.

1. Data Collection

The primary data for this study is the recording of Taylor Swift's 2022 New York University commencement speech. The speech was obtained from publicly available sources, including the audio recording and the video transcript itself. Secondary data such as relevant academic papers on hypotheses, rhetorical communication, and motivational speeches were also reviewed to provide a theoretical background.

2. Data Analysis

The data analysis process involved the following steps:

1. Textual Analysis:

The script was selected from the video transcript to sort out important discussions.

2. Thematic Coding:

The identified presuppositions were categorized into concepts that were consistent with the overall message of the speech. These concepts included shared experiences, the researcher expectations as an audience, and emotional connections.

3. Scope and Limitations

This study is limited to the commencement speech delivered by Taylor Swift at New York University in 2022. The analysis presented in this study is designed to help understand the context of the speech with assumptions in a better realm, but this analysis does not apply to all public speaking events and other public speakers. This study does not consider the understanding of individual audiences who may have different perceptions based on their life experiences and customs.

With this methodology, the researcher attempts to comprehensively analyze the importance of presuppositions in Taylor Swift's speech and at the same time discuss the premise of the appropriate attention pattern in the concept of motivation.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

An analysis of Taylor Swift's 2022 New York University commencement speech reveals a sophisticated use of presuppositions that contribute to its relatability, motivational tone, and overall effectiveness. These presuppositions fall into several key thematic categories, each of which the researcher discuss below.

1. Presupposition of Shared Experience

Swift assumes that her audience shares her experiences of struggle and growth. For example, when she says:

"You will screw it up sometimes. So will I."

Taylor Swift assumes that making mistakes is a common human experience. By participating in this dynamic herself, Taylor Swift fosters a sense of solidarity with the participants. This presupposition is important in bridging the gap between celebrity status and the everyday realities of her non-celebrity audience.

2. The Ambition and Aspiration Requirement

Taylor Swift speaks as if her listeners are struggling to achieve success and change the world. Example:

"You get to pick what your life has time and room for."

This script assumes that the audience values individuality and the opportunity to shape their own future. Statements like this encourage graduates to prioritize their interests and goals.

3. Requirement of Emotional Universality

Taylor Swift uses her personal experiences to convey and encourage emotions to her audience such as joy, heartbreak, and resilience. For example, she says:

"Never be ashamed of trying. Effortlessness is a myth."

This assumes that it takes perseverance for people to go through challenges, a notion that resonates well with the emotions of young people who may be struggling with uncertainty as they enter new phases of their lives before and after.

4. Presuppositions of Societal Pressures

Taylor Swift also points to the burden of social expectations in the modern era, especially in the digital age. She states:

"Life can be heavy, especially if you try to carry it all at once."

This assumes that her audience is used to multitasking, having opinions in a social setting, and the pressure to keep up appearances. By recognizing these preconceptions in the struggle of living life side by side in every way, she validates her own experiences and theirs in emphasizing the importance of self-care and knowing where one's limits are in such a life.

5. Presuppositions for Success as a Journey

Taylor Swift often describes success as a non-linear process filled with learning and personal growth. She says :

"We are led by our gut instincts, our intuition, our desires, and fears."

This preupposition assumes that success can be shaped by internal drive rather than external validation. With this depiction, Taylor Swift also encourages her audience to embrace their unique journey and trust their instincts as young people who still have high determination.

The Effect of Presuppositions

The Premise in Swift's speech serves several functions:

1. Building Connection:

By drawing on shared experiences and feelings, Taylor Swift creates a Presupposition that creates a strong sense of empathy, making her speech seem impactful and inclusive.

2. Motivating Action:

Taylor Swift's statement in the presupposition, which assumes the possibility and spontaneity of her audience, can inspire the audience to pursue their goals with confidence and determination.

3. Reinforcing Theme:

This analysis aligns with the presupposition that reinforces the main themes of resilience, individuality, and self-expression, ensuring the speech's message is coherent and effective in its meaning.

DISCUSSION

Taylor Swift has been widely attributed to her significant influence in the social media and entertainment industry in addition to her work as a songwriter and storyteller. Taylor is able to write amazing stories that she then turns into song lyrics. As in Taylor's statement in an opening speech at NYU, also utilizes a theme-based approach that alludes to common experiences such as love, grief, and personal growth. The opportunity to extend her study and examine Taylor Swift's rhetorical techniques in a non-musical setting is presented by her commencement speech at New York University in 2022. By placing this analysis within the broader context of studies of celebrity presuppositions and influence, this research aims to contribute to the understanding of implicit meanings in modern public discourse.

An analysis of Taylor Swift's 2022 New York University Commencement Speech shows how presuppositions play a significant role as a rhetorical device to connect the audience's emotions with the speaker and enhance the motivational effect of her message. By incorporating implicit assumptions into her speech, Taylor Swift effectively bridges the gap between her celebrity status and her motivational life experiences.

1. Identification through Shared Experiences

One key takeaway is that Taylor Swift uses presuppositions to highlight common life experiences such as making mistakes, overcoming challenges, and striving for personal growth. For example, her statement, *"You will screw it up sometimes. So will I."* assumes that failure is a common and frequent aspect of life. This assumption not only normalizes failure, but it also fosters self-esteem and helps the audience see it as familiar and authentic, regardless of their status as celebrities and laypeople.

2. Empowerment through Ambition

Taylor Swift's speech assumes that her audience is ambitious and wants to shape their own future. Presuppositions such as *"You get to pick what your life has time and room for"* assume that the audience has the opportunity to make their own meaningful decisions. This is a strategic move that allows the audience to accept their ability to control their own path.

3. Acknowledge Emotional Conflicts

Taylor Swift also uses presuppositions to emphasize emotional conflicts that her audience may be facing, such as social pressures and the challenges of modern life. For example, her statement that *"Life can be heavy, especially if you try to carry it all at once,"* suggests that her audience is familiar with feeling overwhelmed. By addressing these conflicts, Swift reassures her audience that what they are experiencing is normal, thereby sharing a message of compassion for herself and her listeners.

4. Success as a Personal Journey

Taylor Swift portrays success as a journey of intuition, learning, and personal growth, but this also assumes that success is not a universally defined or aligned concept. In other words, Swift herself shatters the myth that success can be achieved without effort and she also encourages her audience to forge their own paths.

CONCLUSION

To conclude that presuppositions in Taylor Swift's speech at NYU in 2022 are cognitive devices inherent in her language that convey her message and reach the audience in a clear approach such as the speaker's emotions being similar to the listener's. For example, by assuming that the audience has the same experience as her, the uncertainty of living a life that has many paths to take, and the difficult journey of self-growth, Taylor tries to establish a bond of trust and emotion between them and herself. This presupposition also strengthens the audience by reminding them of important concepts such as being realistic, resilient, and thinking critically and kindly about yourself which are key to facing life's challenges. In conclusion, Swift's use of presuppositions not only serves to make her speech look interesting but also shows the audience that it is okay to be imperfect and that the audience should also not hesitate about what they think and what they can do in the future. With this simple but effective rhetorical strategy, Taylor Swift successfully speaks directly to her audience with the same perspective as a lay person, and not as a celebrity. Taylor Swift also not only talks about her life achievements but also shares a message to everyone that it is okay to fail but learn to believe in yourself.

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