

ANALYSIS OF PRESUPPOSITION IN THE MOVIE FIVE FEET APART BY JUSTIN BALDONI

Neysa Meviola Manurung¹, Charles David Marudut Silalahi²

University of Methodist Indonesia

Email : nesyameviola@gmail.com¹, lie.chuck.dave@gmail.com²

ABSTRACT

This study examines the use of presupposition in the movie *Five Feet Apart* directed by Justin Baldoni, focusing on its role in enhancing the narrative and character interactions. Presupposition, a linguistic concept that assumes certain information to be true within communication, is analyzed to explore how it contributes to the film's emotional depth, thematic development, and overall storytelling. The research applies a qualitative approach to identify and categorize the types of presuppositions present, such as existential, lexical, factive, non-factive, structural, and counterfactual. It further investigates how these presuppositions function in the dialogues to convey implicit meanings, reveal character motivations, and foster relational dynamics among the protagonists. The findings highlight that presuppositions are strategically employed to subtly portray themes such as love, illness, resilience, and the boundaries imposed by cystic fibrosis, which the central characters face. By embedding unspoken truths and shared understandings within the conversations, the film effectively engages viewers, making the narrative more relatable and emotionally impactful. This study contributes to the fields of pragmatics and film studies by demonstrating how presupposition can be a powerful tool in cinematic storytelling, enriching both the linguistic and emotional layers of a narrative. It underscores the importance of linguistic analysis in understanding the deeper elements of film communication and the nuanced ways in which language shapes audience perceptions and experiences.

Keywords: Pragmatics, Presupposition, Five Feet Apart

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INTRODUCTION

Pragmatics is a branch of linguistics that explores how people use language in real-life situations to convey meaning. Unlike syntax, which studies the structure of sentences, or semantics, which focuses on the meaning of words and phrases, pragmatics is concerned with how context influences the interpretation of language. It delves into the ways meaning goes beyond the literal definitions of words to include the speaker's intention, the listener's

understanding, and the situation in which the communication takes place. Language is a multifaceted tool of communication, capable of conveying explicit meanings as well as implicit assumptions. In linguistics, the concept of **presupposition** refers to the underlying assumptions that a speaker assumes the listener already accepts as true. Presuppositions play an essential role in daily communication and are critical in creating meaning in narratives, particularly in movies. Through dialogue and context, presuppositions help audiences infer relationships, emotions, and thematic elements without overt explanation. In essence, pragmatics enriches our understanding of language by revealing how meaning is shaped by context, intention, and interaction. It is a crucial field of study for anyone interested in how humans communicate effectively and interpret subtle, unspoken messages in everyday life.

Presupposition analysis has its foundation in the field of pragmatics, which studies how context contributes to meaning. Scholars such as Levinson (1983) and Yule (1996) have categorized presuppositions into several types, including existential, factive, lexical, structural, and counterfactual. These categories provide a framework for analyzing how meaning is constructed in both spoken and written language. In films, these types of presuppositions often function as narrative devices, shaping character development and audience interpretation while driving the story forward.

Presuppositions can be categorized into several types based on their characteristics:

1. Existential Presupposition

This type assumes the existence of a person, object, or entity mentioned in the statement.

For example : "Her dog is very playful." d(Presupposition: She has a dog.)

2. active Presupposition

This occurs when certain verbs or phrases imply the truth of the information that follows.

For example : "I regret telling her the truth." (Presupposition: I told her the truth.)

3. Lexical Presupposition

Certain words inherently carry assumptions.

For example: "She managed to finish the project on time." (Presupposition: Finishing the project was difficult.)

4. Structural Presupposition

The grammatical structure of a sentence can imply assumptions.

For example: "Why did he leave early?" (Presupposition: He left early.)

5. Counterfactual Presupposition

This type assumes something contrary to reality.

For example: "If I had studied harder, I would have passed." (Presupposition: I didn't study hard, and I didn't pass.)

The movie *Five Feet Apart* (2019), directed by Justin Baldoni, is a compelling romantic drama that follows the story of Stella Grant and Will Newman, two teenagers with cystic fibrosis. The characters must maintain a physical distance of at least six feet to prevent cross-infection, which creates a unique emotional dynamic and tension in their relationship. The film addresses themes of love, loss, boundaries, and the human need for connection, making it rich with linguistic and narrative elements worth analyzing. *Five Feet Apart* is a moving and thought-provoking film that captures the complexities of love, loss, and resilience. Through its compelling performances and heartfelt storytelling, it resonates with audiences, offering a glimpse into the lives of individuals navigating the challenges of chronic illness. Justin Baldoni's direction brings

sensitivity and authenticity to the narrative, making it a memorable exploration of the human spirit's ability to find connection and hope in even the most difficult circumstances. This study delves into how presuppositions are used in the film's dialogues and narrative structure to convey deeper meanings. For example, the title itself presupposes the importance of physical distance, setting the stage for the central conflict. The analysis explores how presuppositions reveal character emotions, reflect social norms, and engage the audience emotionally. By examining these implicit assumptions, the research contributes to a broader understanding of the interplay between language and storytelling in cinematic context.

METHODOLOGY

Research Method

The qualitative descriptive method is a widely used approach in linguistic and pragmatic studies, particularly for analyzing language and communication in specific contexts. In the context of studying presuppositions in *Five Feet Apart* by Justin Baldoni, this method focuses on understanding and describing the implicit meanings embedded in the dialogue, narrative, and interactions within the film. The qualitative descriptive method is a research approach aimed at providing a detailed and accurate description of a phenomenon, event, or concept. It is grounded in real-world settings and focuses on exploring "what" happens and "how" it happens, making it ideal for studying language use in context.

Data and Source data

The primary source of data is the movie itself, including its dialogue, scenes, and character interactions. Transcripts of the film's conversations can also be used for a more detailed analysis. The data collected for this analysis typically includes selected scenes, character interactions, and key dialogues that contain presuppositions.

The analysis of presupposition in *Five Feet Apart* likely draws on a combination of these foundational theories, particularly, Karttunen's focus on presupposition triggers to identify instances in the film's dialogue. Stalnaker's common ground theory, which helps explain how characters assume shared knowledge or experiences and Levinson's pragmatic framework, which integrates presupposition into broader communication and narrative analysis.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The researchers have found the Presuppositions in the Movie *Five Feet Apart* by Justin Baldoni, based on the movie there are some existential, lexical, factive, non-factive, structural, and counterfactual Presupposition, such as :

1. Existential Presupposition

- Stella says, "I can't lose another person I love."

Presupposition: Stella has already lost someone she loved in the past.

Analysis : This presupposition reflects Stella's emotional baggage and fear of loss, a theme that recurs throughout the movie as she struggles to balance her deepening relationship with Will and the risk of losing him due to their medical condition.

- Will says, "You're not the first girl I've liked."

Presupposition: Will has liked other girls before.

Analysis: This implies that Will has a history of romantic interests, which humanizes his character and suggests that while his feelings for Stella are genuine, they are not the first romantic feelings he's had.

- Stella says, "I've had my lung transplant waiting list for years."

Presupposition: Stella has been on the transplant waiting list for a long time.

Analysis: This presupposition highlights the prolonged nature of Stella's illness, underlining the uncertainty and frustration of living with cystic fibrosis.

- Will says, "You've been taking care of yourself for a long time now."

Presupposition: Stella has been managing her illness for a long time.

Analysis: This presupposition highlights the duration of Stella's illness and the fact that she has been responsible for her own health for a significant period, reinforcing the idea that she is mature and self-reliant despite her condition.

- Stella says, "I've had cystic fibrosis for as long as I can remember."

Presupposition: Cystic fibrosis has been a part of Stella's life for a long time.

Analysis: This emphasizes the chronic and longstanding nature of her illness, further enhancing the movie's depiction of the limitations and challenges that come with living with cystic fibrosis.

2. Factive Presupposition

- Will says, "You know the doctors are right."

Presupposition: It is assumed that the doctors' opinions are valid and factual.

Analysis: This presupposition underscores Will's acceptance of the medical restrictions placed on him and Stella. It implies that their medical conditions and the rules that govern their lives are absolute and must be followed, creating a sense of inevitability.

- Stella says, "I'm going to take my pills now."

Presupposition: Stella regularly takes medication.

Analysis: This presupposition reflects the ongoing nature of her illness. The use of "now" assumes that Stella follows a routine and highlights her battle with cystic fibrosis, as regular medication is essential for managing the condition.

- Will says, "I'm not going to let you get away with this."

Presupposition: Will has tried to stop Stella from doing something before.

Analysis: The presupposition implies that there is a history of resistance or control between the characters, possibly referring to past instances where Will or Stella tried to influence each other's actions.

- Will says, "You're the perfect patient."

Presupposition: Stella has exhibited behaviors that align with being a model patient.

Analysis: The use of "perfect" assumes that Stella follows medical protocols and routines perfectly. This presupposition reinforces Stella's disciplined and controlled approach to managing her condition.

- Stella says, "You've been really selfish."

Presupposition: Will has behaved in a way that Stella interprets as selfish.

Analysis: The word "selfish" implies that Will's actions or decisions have been driven by self-interest, contrasting with Stella's own selflessness and desire to help others, especially regarding her medical care and relationships.

3. Lexical Presupposition

- Stella says, "I need my medication."

Presupposition: Stella relies on her medication to survive.

Analysis: The statement implicitly assumes the constant presence of Stella's illness and the necessity of ongoing treatment, highlighting the harsh realities of living with cystic fibrosis. The presupposition emphasizes her routine and the constant threat of illness that shapes her life.

- Stella says, "I know you won't let me down."

Presupposition: It is a fact that Will is trustworthy.

Analysis: This presupposition assumes that Will has shown himself to be reliable in the past, underscoring the trust that Stella places in him despite the risks they face due to their illness.

- Will says, "You've already made your decision."

Presupposition: Stella has made a decision about something.

Analysis: This reflects the fact that Stella has a strong sense of agency and has already come to a conclusion or plan regarding her actions, highlighting her character's decisiveness.

- Will says, "You know it's impossible to be close to me."

Presupposition: It is a fact that physical closeness between them is dangerous because of their cystic fibrosis.

Analysis: This presupposition reinforces the reality of their illness, which makes physical intimacy impossible. It also shows Will's acceptance of this fact, indicating his resignation to the barriers it creates in their relationship.

- Stella says, "I need to take my antibiotics every day."

Presupposition: The use of antibiotics is a necessary and established part of Stella's treatment routine.

Analysis: This presupposition highlights the ongoing nature of Stella's illness and the medical regimen that controls it, symbolizing the reality that illness and treatment dominate the characters' lives.

4. Structural Presupposition

- Will asks, "Why do you always follow the rules?"

Presupposition: Stella habitually follows the rules.

Analysis: This question presupposes Stella's strict adherence to rules and regulations, which is central to her character. She approaches her illness with a sense of discipline and control, which contrasts with Will's more rebellious and less predictable attitude toward his condition. The contrast between their approaches creates tension in their relationship.

- Will asks, "Don't you ever wonder if there's more to life than this?"

Presupposition: Stella has never questioned whether there's more to life beyond her medical routine.

Analysis: This question presupposes that Stella is focused solely on her illness and daily routines, suggesting that she may not have considered what life might be like if she were able to live outside of the constraints of cystic fibrosis.

- Stella says, "I don't want to be here anymore."
Presupposition: Stella has spent a long time in the hospital and feels trapped.
Analysis: This presupposition highlights Stella's growing frustration and desire to break free from the constraints of the hospital environment, reflecting her emotional exhaustion with her condition.
- Stella asks, "Don't you ever get tired of fighting this disease?"
Presupposition: Will is constantly battling his illness and must find it exhausting.
Analysis: This presupposition reveals Stella's understanding of Will's constant struggle and hints at her own fatigue from the same fight. It draws attention to the mental and physical toll of living with cystic fibrosis, which impacts both characters.
- Will says, "I don't want to lose you, but I have to."
Presupposition: Will is already facing the possibility of losing Stella due to their medical conditions.
Analysis: This structural presupposition underscores the inherent tragedy in their relationship. It reflects Will's internal conflict, where he wants to preserve their bond but is constrained by the realities of their illnesses.

5. Counterfactual Presupposition

- Stella says, "If we could be together, I would..."
Presupposition: They cannot be together physically due to their medical condition.
Analysis : This presupposition highlights the central conflict of the film: the enforced physical separation of the characters due to their cystic fibrosis. It reflects their longing for physical intimacy but acknowledges the harsh limitations imposed by their illness.
- Will says, "If I could stay, I would."
Presupposition: Will cannot stay, implying that something external (such as his health or the rules governing their interactions) prevents him from being able to stay with Stella.
Analysis: This presupposition reflects Will's deep sense of longing and regret, showing the emotional and physical barriers that prevent him from being with Stella in a way he desires.
- Stella says, "If I weren't sick, we could be together."
Presupposition: If Stella didn't have cystic fibrosis, she would have the freedom to pursue a normal relationship.
Analysis: This counterfactual presupposition highlights the central conflict in the film—their inability to be together due to their illness. It reflects the emotional and physical toll that cystic fibrosis takes on their relationship, suggesting that under different circumstances, they could have a normal, unrestricted relationship.
- Stella says, "If I didn't have cystic fibrosis, we could be together."
Presupposition: If Stella were healthy, they would be able to have a normal relationship without restrictions.
Analysis: This counterfactual presupposition highlights the central barrier to their relationship: the medical condition that limits them both physically and emotionally. It reflects the hope for an alternate reality where they could live a normal life together.
- Will says, "If I hadn't been diagnosed with cystic fibrosis, I would have gone to college and started a normal life."

Presupposition: Will believes that his diagnosis prevented him from achieving a typical life path.

Analysis: This counterfactual presupposition reveals Will's sense of loss, as he reflects on the life he could have had if not for his illness. It expresses the pain of unfulfilled potential and the way illness alters one's future.

CONCLUSION

In *Five Feet Apart*, presupposition plays a crucial role in conveying the emotional and psychological depth of the characters' experiences. Through various types of presuppositions—existential, lexical, factive, non-factive, structural, and counterfactual—the film subtly reveals the internal conflicts, desires, and limitations faced by the main characters, Will and Stella, who live with cystic fibrosis. These presuppositions help the audience understand not only the characters' physical struggles with their illness but also the emotional complexities tied to their relationships and desires.

The use of presupposition enhances the narrative by providing insight into the unspoken thoughts of the characters, allowing for a more nuanced portrayal of their longing for connection and the boundaries i

Imposed by their medical conditions. For example, the existential presupposition about the inevitability of illness, the lexical presuppositions about the characters' behavior, and the counterfactual presuppositions about their wish for an alternate reality all serve to deepen the emotional resonance of the film. Through these linguistic cues, the film effectively portrays the tension between the characters' yearning for intimacy and the harsh realities they face.

Ultimately, the presuppositions in *Five Feet Apart* contribute significantly to the audience's understanding of the complex dynamics between Will and Stella. They underscore the emotional weight of their love story, which is defined by both their intense desire for each other and the painful limitations of their illness. The analysis of presupposition demonstrates how language subtly reflects the profound challenges of living with a chronic illness, the sacrifice required for connection, and the emotional vulnerability that comes with hope and love in the face of insurmountable barriers.

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