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**USING PRESUPPOSITION AS A VERBAL  
MEANS OF INFLUENCE IN THE  
COMMUNICATIVE PROCESS**

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In the history of philosophy, presuppositions entered onto the scene when the category of pre-understanding was introduced by Edmund Burke, the late 18<sup>th</sup> century English thinker. Phenomenologists, particularly Alfred Schütz, a co-founder of symbolic interactionism (Woroniecka 1998), drew upon these concepts. Still, the philosophical categories of pre-understanding and prejudice [pre-judgment] have a number of counterparts in every natural language, and these are worthy of researching classification and detailed description.

Among the three functions of language – informative, ritual and persuasive – presuppositions belong to the third group, actually, but their persuasiveness is veiled, as it were, concealed behind the outer form of language communication. So, in the linguistic approach, pre-understandings and prejudices will be understood as expressions and individual utterances which mean that our interlocutor or negotiation partner receives a communication with a hidden assumption. This hidden assumption is supposed to evoke some specific reaction in their consciousness, exert a communicative and social influence that is not immediately perceptible to the interlocutor. Social influence occurs when the sender (individual, social group, institution) causes – by means of communications – changes in attitude, behavior, thinking, motivation and emotions.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The concept of presupposition is sometimes contrasted with the idea of scenarios and metaprograms in a way which has it that metaprograms are habitual mechanisms whereas presuppositions are innovative ones. To what extent they are innovations and how far they are accepted as something natural is not only determined by the

Through the application of presupposition, we can suggest the desirable contents to our interlocutor and with this, affect their actions. We do so in a polite manner, rather than imperative, and therefore we make its reception easier. So, the point is to be capable of persuading others to our ideas, influencing decisions (such as voting, purchasing some goods, etc.). If our influence is not powerful enough, and this is the case in most situations, the point will be to attract someone's attention for some time, inform someone of something, evoke liking and some positive associations related to ourselves and the content of the communication uttered, both at that moment and in the future.

In any sentence that involves presupposition, we can identify an INTRODUCTORY expression, which focuses the attention of the critical mind of the interlocutor and also the part that conveys the HIDDEN COMMUNICATION, acting upon subconsciousness. The part that acts upon subconsciousness can, as an expression, include several semantic strata: the INFORMATIVE LAYER and one that CREATES a PRESUMPTION, often determined by the context, sentence structure, the words used and their meanings.

Along with the postulates of cognitive psycholinguistics, we need notions that build the description of human experience in the categories of unity.<sup>2</sup> In the

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flexibility of our intellect but, above all, by the language, which neutralizes and domesticates – levels the roughness of the cognition of the novel and the different. On metaprograms, cf. Jerzy Kolarzowski (2001). See also Pöppel and Edingshaus (1998). These authors write: "The principle of economicality tells us that we (our perceptions) are driven by hypotheses, attitudes and expectations [i.e. metaprograms, J. K.] or pre-judgments/prejudices. It does mean, though, that we are, indeed, blind to that which is new. In actively shaping our perceptions and thinking only along a top-down principle, we would finally have to lock ourselves in a world of hypotheses, pre-established by ourselves. In recognizing that which we want to see, we would in the end see ourselves only – we would lapse into some sort of perceptive narcissism. However, we want to mix the top-down principle with the bottom-up approach. Then, whatever is new will not be taken as interference but will be built into the world of our thinking and perceiving: the top-down principle imparts a structure on our perception whereas the bottom-up approach gives it life. It seems bizarre (at first sight, at least) that such a manner of connecting the two principles should not only be advantageous in the processes of thinking and perception, but it also can have a general application to any complex system. A business can break up on account of low flexibility where the top-down principle dominates its management, but it can plunge into chaos when all goes along the bottom-up approach. The same concerns a family or a state." (pp. 71-72) [rendered from a Polish translation by L.K.]

<sup>2</sup>In the cognitivist research agenda, the division into traditional philosophical disciplines – epistemology, ontology and axiology – is negated: Looking back, it was ascertained that those who dealt with ethical issues were losing sight of ontological questions. Those few who were laying the foundations for philosophical systems and did ontology, rid it of axiological problems. So, it was either an activity that stemmed from silently accepted philosophical assumptions (e.g. Christian, Marxist or utilitarian

analysis of human consciousness, the realm of really existing objects cannot be separated from the cognitive contents derived from them, the criteria and ways of expressing judgments of the world and objects and also the ways in which these are evaluated. Translating the stream of consciousness for remembering the meanings of words does not differentiate that which is real from what is ideal, that which is subjected to judgment from what eludes judgment, that which is valuable in a context from that which is neutral or anti-valuable in another. It is, then, a project in line with the traditional divide between the sphere of being, methods of its perception and the sphere of values abstracted in our mind.<sup>3</sup>

Cognitivists classify the expressions by means of the opposition that operates two basic ideas: the notion that constitutes the ontological relation and the concept of the context filter.

The notion that constitutes the ontological relation will be any relevant abstract term, such as any word that corresponds to some value or object.

The term "context filter" will be any variable affecting the way an abstract notion is perceived and realized, such as the passage of time, the subject's emotional attitude or cultural determinants. These variables are relevant insofar as they are reflected in the customarily accepted contexts of language use.<sup>4</sup> This distinction will be particularly useful when it comes to determine whether a linguistic expression is still introductory or presuppositional already (see "0. Introductory-presuppositional expressions").

In psycholinguistics, dealing with presuppositions deriving from the scientific program of cognitivism, and practically in NLP as well, rests upon a significant assumption.

The assumption is that the meaning of a communication is the listener's reaction (interest, better or worse shown, or, better still, exposing the motivations

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ethics) or an abstract philosophical speculation on being that was easily susceptible to any ideological influence.

<sup>3</sup>See: the closing stages in Lakoff, Johnson (1980) and the introduction in the Polish translation (by Tomasz P. Krzeszowski) (1988).

<sup>4</sup>In the context of the language we use there are a number of axiological systems. In one of these we deal with a division into three: in a given context, we consider some goods valuable, neutral in another, and in yet another these will be considered anti-values, such as *drogi* [*dear/expensive*] in reference to prices. In another system, objects are divided depending on the context in which these are discussed, into dynamic and static. Again, only that which is dynamic can be positive on one occasion and negative on another; a neutral semantic context also can be envisaged. Another division was borrowed from psychoanalysis: the contents of cognition were divided into those that serve life – vital (connected with life instinct, erotic) – and not in the service of life (related to the instinct of death – tantalogical). Because in the latter case life was juxtaposed with death, and this is a dichotomy, the distinction introduced has contexts limited to the two, but are often symmetrical, e.g. in the expressions *life after death* or *death for life* – metaphorical representations of the states of human spirit.

of this interest) (Mudyń 1999). The originality of this assumption is about a peculiar understanding of meaning – different from the one traditionally accepted in epistemology, logic and non-cognitive linguistics. Left out are such problems in the history of European philosophy as the issue of universals, the classical definition of truth, denotation and semantics of the vocabulary used. To make this assumption more detailed and "reinforced," it will be given an obligatory and practical character. It has a status of "good advice." It is believed that, in the name of communication effectiveness, it is better to adopt the primacy of subjective comprehension on the part of the listener. One cannot adopt an assumption that identifies the meaning of our communications with our intentions. There are only two tools for exerting influence on our part as sender. These should not be seen in the context of cultural background where the encounter occurred. The tools we have at our disposal (here understood as skills) can only be more or less effectively selected and applied. We cannot rest upon an assumption that there is within the language used by the sender and the addressee an objective true meaning of the words being said, that there is some fellowship to be appealed to within the understanding of the world of ideas. We cannot treat our communication as a trustworthy, reliable and objectivized description as there are no reasons for it to be such for our listeners. A meaning of communication thus perceived becomes detached from the world of ideas objectively constructed or construed. Adopting the perspective that the meaning of a communication is that the listener's reaction protects (or at least warns) the participants, in communication, from entering the paths of fruitless polemics and disputes of the kind "what does the word mean?" "what should it mean?" "whose interpretation is right?" etc. At times, however, it can be a good starting point for the constructive process of negotiating meanings.

The same expression (independent sentence or part of a sentence) can be one presupposition or it can include several presuppositions. Presuppositions can be combined. By combining presuppositions we attain different effects. We either make them more subtle – creating a subtype of a presupposition; or we reinforce them, with an accumulation; we can also create a new type of presupposition, which has a different semantic meaning and a different context of application – we attain a new presupposition.

Those who apply persuasion techniques into practice will have noticed that it is a good idea to accumulate three or four presuppositions. One or two can be "unpacked" by our brain during a conversation. What is meant by "unpacking" is both the right comprehension of the words and a correct understanding of the meaning of the words. The task of presuppositions is a veiled imputation of our intentions, thanks to which they are more easily accepted by the other party. The listener memorizes them and, unless their attention is intense and defenses inherent in the habits of consciousness keen, they can receive the speaker's intentions more easily, even if they do not suit them at all. The problem inherent in that which

they have heard, if valid, will be appearing in their consciousness, recur and accompany them in a number of everyday activities, but it can also be considered from various angles. If the listener has no negative experiences connected with the speaker and the problem mentioned, they will seek to find positive sides in what the less conscious mind has remembered. Naturally, most people seek good rather than evil in the whirl of professional and social experiences.

Applying this idea to too many presuppositions one after another, such as more than four, is not to be recommended. If we do so, what we are saying may sound unnatural and cause more attention to be directed at our words and outer behavior. As a result of keen observation, the interlocutor can, based on our appearance, presume our intentions, these kinds of speculations do not always lead to the right conclusions.

No more than four presuppositions used in one sentence sound persuasive and enable the achievement of communicative objectives, which can be either about attracting attention to the first part of the sentence – an introductory-presuppositional expression – or on its subsequent parts connected with the intentions being conveyed. The subsequent course of the conversation will determine, depending on the atmosphere and context, whether the other party will deal with introductory settlements and their specification, or immediately proceed to providing an answer, along with our expectations or not as the case may be.

It may also happen, and indeed it does happen, that the reaction to the second or third presupposition will not come at once and that in the first part of the conversation it may not occur at all. It is only when we combine the wishes of our partner with our own selves – expressing that in words or gestures – will we discover the effects of the effort undertaken and appreciate the time devoted to the study of presuppositions.

In selecting some expressions from casual language and classifying those, I mean to make the skill available to all who will get familiar with the following classification of presuppositions. This classification is not easy as it is made up of a number of subsets. These will be divided into subsets such as implications – they are generally one type of presuppositions but because there are divisions among implicative expressions, every expression that differs in structure from others is a different type of presupposition. Presuppositions appearing as questions with a concealed intention only constitute separate classification types. The difficulty in classifying presupposition is that the existence of a new type of presupposition is determined by the bond connecting words and their grammatical form with the intention of the speaker. What determines the intentions of our communications, in turn – other than the richness of vocabulary – is the syntactic capacity of the expressions used: there are questions that can include a negation and those that lose their point in the interrogatory form.

These are the expressions made up of the verbs *know* or *imagine* as well as

words having a big syntactic potential, such as *if you, surely, once/one day, what would it be like, how, whether*, as combined with the verbs *know* or *imagine*. These words make numerous combinations with others as well as amongst themselves, and therefore we can say that what is meant is an introductory communication, which contains words that are unusually "adhesive:"

*What would it be like if you imagined...*

*Imagine what it would be like if one day...*

*If you knew that one day your imaginings...*

(Numerous permutations of such expressions are possible)

The thing is that each of the words discussed here can "play an introductory part" and can itself be a presupposition depending on the context in which it is used.

The verb *know* occurs in these expressions as a signal of a communication that appeals to reason and performs a role that is both introductory and presuppositional (see "4. Consciousness Presuppositions").

The verb *imagine* has a bigger introductory and presuppositional power as that which is imagined does not have to fulfill the requirements of the rigor of a critical mind – it becomes a signal to let fantasies go free, lowers the tension related to intense attention and sets in motion this part of our mind which is responsible for sensory constructions (usually visual).

It has been observed that women tend to use the verb *imagine* while men usually appeal to the interlocutor's knowledge and transform an affirmative sentence into the question starting from *Do you know?*

For men, the expression *imagine* usually means irony or irritation whereas women use it freely as a way of starting a social chat or attracting attention to what they have to say (Tannen 2001).

Communicative sentences in the form of questions appealing to reason are more natural and more common for men than for women in positive and neutral situations. Women associate tension, irony and irritation with such questions.

The expression *surely* and *once* tended to act in two ways: as an introducing expression and a presupposition through homonyms, appealing to certainty, something possible which, though improbable, has none the less happened (see: "6. Ambiguity").

Likewise, the conjunction *if*, as well as the expression *what it would be like* may just as well be introductory and constitute an important element of implicative presuppositions (see: "9. Implications").

### **PRESUPPOSITIONS WITH "NO(T)"**

People do not accept *no(t)* into their subconsciousness. So, when we say a sentence with *no(t)*, the addressee behaves as though they have not heard the negation. How does our mind react to persuasion communications containing

negation? Dear reader, please ignore your left hand for a while and the sensations that come from it. Are you still ignoring your left hand? Another example: *Do not think of a black cat*. Surely, after hearing these expressions, we will pay attention to our left hand and will think of a black cat. It happens this way because for our brain to be able to accept and comprehend the communication about the non-thinking of a black cat first it must understand the word *cat* – think of a cat. This is extremely important when it comes to persuasion communications which, irrespective of our intentions, may be negative or positive in the semantic foreground.

Presuppositions containing *no(t)* may be used in a negative, positive and subtly positive meaning.

A subtype of a presupposition containing *no(t)* in a negative meaning.

*Do not get angry.*

*Do not worry.*

Let us imagine that we are on our way home and hear: *Do not get angry: I want to tell you something, but please promise that you will not get angry*. Obviously, upon hearing that we attract our attention to "getting nervous" and its possible causes. How do we react if, before an important conference, attended by a number of important people, we hear the following words of consolation from a friend: *Do not worry. You will surely not lose face during this speech*. So that we can process this communication we must first understand the words "worry" and "lose face" (before we make those negative), so we must admit the experiences, feelings and images connected with worrying and disgrace. If, instead, we heard this: *I am sure your address will be great*, then our attention would concentrate on positive sensations, images and associations.

If we address somebody in a negative form: *Don't worry. Just do not fall over, Do not fall down*, we evoke the thought of worrying about falling and we can cause such results (Maciuszek 1999).

A subtype of a presupposition with *no* in a positive meaning:

*Do not desire fame.*

Using the word *no(t)* in commands or suggestions can be a tool of exerting a positive influence on the interlocutor's mind. Somebody encouraging us to work may say:

*Do not yet think about the riches you can get or the most beautiful places you can go to, organized by a company for leaders, about a dream car or of the education of your children. Do not think of it yet, focus of the work you are supposed to do and what is expected of you.*

When listening, the images of beautiful cars, holidays in exotic places, elegant hotels and foreign universities will cross the interlocutor's mind and the addressee can experience a joyful arousal.

A subtype of the presupposition *no(t)* in a subtly positive meaning:

Sometimes our influence can be more delicate, when we precede a negation containing *no(t)* with a conjunction *if/or*.

*I wonder IF you would. We could go there OR not.*

A positive and subtle use of presupposition containing *no(t)* can sometimes be weakened by the word that follows: *do not joke, do not be jealous*. The listener does not stop joking or being jealous right away. Sometimes we can repeat the communication several times. If in such communications we achieve the desired effect, it is not thanks to their semantics, but thanks to the tone of voice, change in posture and other extra-semantic means of influence.

### PRESUPPOSITIONS USING TIME SEQUENCE

These are sentences using the words positing an activity in time: *during, after, when, at the time, before*. Adding positive associations, we obtain certainty that the information will be well received by the listener.

*When we sit down to talk tomorrow, these documents will be in order.*

This sentence assumes that despite the lack of order with the documents, tomorrow the talks will go as planned before.

*Before you sign the contract, I want to discuss something with you.*

The presupposition makes an assumption that the person will sign the contract. Similarly, the structures:

*Do you want to read the flyer before you decide to buy this product?*

*Are you visiting her after our meeting?*

This sentence assumes that the meeting will take place.

*I wonder if after purchasing this product you will see our offer.*

Presuppositions using the word *after* usually have a structure as follows: *Do you want to do x after doing y?*

Presuppositions with time sequences using the synchronizing word *during* direct the listener's attention on the first time plane implied by the time adverbial and allows for suggesting something less nice in the (other) clause.

*During the wedding, we will be able to discuss some of the issues that have come up.*

The nice associations connected with the word *wedding* build up an assumption that while it is being held, there will be a time when we will be able to probe or "soften" our interlocutor.

*While you are getting to know our business, you will fully appreciate the possibilities related to entering into co-operation with us.*



The sentences using the word *while* will have this form: *x will happen while y happens*. The word *while* refers to the synchronicity of past or future situations and thus is perfectly suited to time sequences.

Presuppositions using a time sequence are easy to detect for a skilled negotiator. The thing is that suggesting a time sequence might allow us to know about what has happened, what will happen or what has been planned and what our interlocutor is unaware of. Using time presuppositions might cause our partners to accuse us – rightly or not – of dishonesty, bad intentions or keeping silent about circumstances that are important for our interlocutors. Therefore, in consciously using a time sequence presupposition, one needs to take into consideration the possible effects of their use.

In official language, presuppositions with a time sequence tend to sound artificial as these refer to circumstances unrelated to the situation, which, however, might attract the listener's attention, such as:

*Before I came here to address you...*

In Polish, we appeal to presuppositions with time sequence more often in relations with the near and the dear as well as in those contacts we would like to make seem familial.

#### <CLIPS>

The metaphorical term *clips* has been used to denote affirmative and, more often, interrogative sentences, containing the words: *as/for, but, either, or*. "Clips" create a choice, without questioning the experiences of the interlocutor. Possibly, when interrogative, they create some assumptions.

*Do it for me for I'm in a hurry.*

It is interesting that the word *for* in a sense acts in such a way that whatever follows is not very important. It may be significant for the sender of the communication but not necessarily for the addressee. The following experiment has proved it: various people joined the queue standing before a photocopier asking for them to be let through. Those who gave some justification stood a better chance than those who did not provide any (Maciuszek 1999: 68).

*Please let me through for I want to copy some pages in peace.*

*Please let me through to the ticket office as I need to buy a ticket and get to ...*

We can use this trick in difficult situations, such as when we are in a hurry to catch a train, but we need to remember about a nice and concerned tone of voice and an attitude that is expecting a concession, which incidentally can be rather vague (such as a slight movement of the body that allows us to get to the ticket office).

It happens that we get this answer: *You are absolutely right, but . . .* meaning that it was conceded that we were right, but the request was denied. Using *but* cancels the first part of the sentence in a subtle manner. Let us compare how we react to the first two sentences:

*Yes, you are satisfied with the collaboration with company X, but we would like to present you with our company.*

*One can hardly be satisfied with company X in the long run. You had better learn about our offer.*

The difference between the sentences is that the latter overtly undermines the conviction of the speaker and provokes them to defend their position. The first, though, arouses doubt regarding the first part of the sentence without an open negation and thus causes no opposition (Maciuszek 1999: 69).

A subtype of the presupposition of "clips" using an option of choice rests on the use of the word *or*. It provides even bigger possibilities than *for/as*. It is assumed that at least one of the number of possibilities will come about. It creates the situation of choice to a limited extent, dependent upon a more fundamental assumption.

*Do you prefer to discuss the issue now or in the afternoon?*

The content of the sentence assumes that we will discuss something, but we do not know when. So is the case with the questions:

*Will you be coming to the presentation this coming Tuesday or next?*

*Are you paying in cash or by money transfer?*

Sentences featuring such words as *because, since, providing* often contain assumptions-presuppositions that suggest a limited choice or making it a matter of interest to us (those on account of which we want to influence the listener).

*Because you are interested in new ideas, I will tell you about a proposal.*

Interestingly, the presuppositions of the "clip and choice" type occur as statements or questions and using them in the form of questions increases their strength and muffles the suggestion. Their impact manifests itself more strikingly if we use several assumptions and do the so-called accumulation of presuppositions. The mind of the listener will accept more presuppositions unconsciously than (Maciuszek 1999: 71-72).

*I was wondering WHETHER you will copy documents for me IF you have some free time WHEN you go to work.*

In communicating the above we are making assumptions: you will surely go to work, but I know you may be busy, so I want to be polite to use your kindness.

In creating presuppositions of the "clip and choice" type, we had better remember to empathize in the situation of the other party and avoid the weakening of the power of presuppositions but accumulating too many of those; rather we should reinforce them. Therefore, choice presuppositions ought to be made use of in correspondence when we have the time and can think over each word that goes into our commercial letter of intention, response to an offer, arrangement of a meeting, demand for explanations or one that urges the other party to do something specific.

### **CONSCIOUSNESS PRESUPPOSITIONS**

These are presuppositions that attract the listener's attention without allowing them to undermine the idea contained in it. We use the construction of "hidden authority" then. These sentences include words and phrases such as: *know, realize, notice, see, hear, imagine*.

*Do you realize how much I have done for you?*

Explaining the presupposition: I have done so much for you – a certainty. Are we certain how much?

These kinds of presuppositions use an externally or internally hidden authority, veiled under the words: *know, realize, etc.* In such presuppositions, the context and self-confidence are essential, but these should not be strikingly overdone. A subtype of consciousness presuppositions operates the other group of words: *see, hear, imagine*. They refer to functions related to consciousness rather than consciousness itself, and force the listener to focus their attention; they can also convey indignation.

*Imagine what has happened to me.*

— to pay closer attention.

*Has anyone heard of such a behavior that...*

— indignation.

### **TIME CHANGE**

Time change is a weak presupposition, which is essentially about the confirmation of any information and creating a context, which in the name of agreement calls for the specification of the extent of the information. In a presupposition with a time sequence, a limited choice is proposed; in the presupposition using time change the listener is made to face the necessity of making a vague utterance more specific so that they can understand the intentions of the speaker.

The sentences that contain the words: *begin, finish, stop, continue, as well as yet, already, still, continually*, along with the appropriate verb are the explication of this presupposition.

When we want to stop collaboration for a time, which is in our opinion not tantamount to ceasing friendly relations, we can say:

*What will finish and what will continue?  
Are you still bearing a grudge?*

– why don't you give up your emotional stance and all will come back to normal?

The above presuppositions with time sequence and time change as well as consciousness presuppositions can be applied when forming application or splitting sentences.

### **AMBIGUITIES**

Phonological ambiguity occurs when a word of the same form has a different meaning. Synonymous to phonological ambiguity is the term "homonyms," except that the term encompasses ambiguities arising when a figurative use of language is used. Linguists are arguing about the existence of strong and weak versions of homonyms.

Strong homonyms<sup>5</sup> occur when the same word has two different meanings that have nothing to do with each other, such as a *lock* in the door and a *lock* on one's head.

Examples of weak homonyms include the noun *labor*, the adjective *fishy* and the verb *consume*. The verb *labor* always means an effort, such as *labor force*,

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<sup>5</sup>The authors of a book on the foundations of cognitive linguistics deliberate on the gap existing in language research regarding homonymous ambiguity: "The authors of a book on the foundations of cognitive linguistics deliberate on the gap existing in language research regarding homonymous ambiguity: "To our knowledge, no one explicitly holds the strong homonymy position, according to which concepts expressed by the same word (like the two senses of "buttness" or the many senses of "in"), are independent and have no significant relationships. [...] Although virtually all homonymy theories espouse weak version, in practice there seem to be only strong homonymy theories, since no one has attempted to provide the detailed account of similarity necessary to maintain the weak version of the theory. And there is a good reason why no attempt has been made to give such a detailed account of the kinds of examples we have been discussing. The reason is that such an account would require one to address the issue of how we comprehend and understand areas of experience that are not well-defined in their own terms and must be grasped in terms of other areas of experience. In general, philosophers and linguists have been concerned with such questions." (Lakoff, Johnson 1980, p. 114).

but it can also mean specific efforts connected with childbirth. The verb consume can be related to eating food, but also, more kind of figuratively, to feeding, as it were, of a person, money or resources and in overpowering or such as using up an object of consumption.

Problems in communication, such as negotiations, are also caused by adjectival homonyms. Words such as fishy and suspicious. Fish sometimes stink and so do deals, and so this metaphor has entered the language of business. Suspicion is close to falsity:

*This is a false perception of the issue.*

This sentence might mean a lack of consent or misunderstanding of the interlocutor, having no knowledge and an erroneous view due to error or it could mean a deliberate disinformation, a lie. The word *false* thus means a wide range of guilt: from a carefree lack of focus, misunderstanding of someone's reasoning or value judgment to misinforming on purpose. This ambiguity can easily be exploited for the sake of defending one's position, company or oneself by explaining:

*We really care for the truthfulness or reliability of information.*

*Our products have for years been prepared and tested in laboratories of such scientific institutes as ...*

The first sentence is polemical to the more negative semantic reference of the word false;

the other – to the milder one. Also, the latter makes an appeal to an external authority, which might be important in specific polemic.

It is somewhat different concerning the adjective *fishy*.

*There is something fishy about that guy. This is a fishy issue. This is a fishy deal.*

In all the above examples, the word *fishy* has a metaphorical context, but at the same time has some openness to the root *fish*: fish stink and so do deals or issues. Fish are slimy and easily slip through fingers, and so can deals.

Ambiguity of range frequently occurs with the metaphorical usage of verbs. These will be with a negative potential (though vague in the communication): *abandoned, broke, burned out*.

*He abandoned the trade.*

*They broke the deal.*

*Retail isn't broken.*

*She burned out professionally.*

The indefiniteness of "destruction" words leaves a broad margin for a positive semantic context, such as:

*Poles broke the Enigma code.*

Metaphorical ambiguity may also occur in the use of verbs having a positive semantic potential, such as back, arouse or expand.

*He backed the case.*

*He aroused interest.*

*He expanded the offer.*

Sometimes for the sake of creating a sentence containing presuppositional ambiguity of range, it is a good idea to change demonstrative pronouns *this/that* into personal pronouns: *your*, etc.

*This situation – your situation – your plight.*

*This assistance – your assistance – your backing.*

On top of the grammatical change of pronouns, what we need in these operations is rich vocabulary and linguistic experience.

Ambiguity connected with sentence stress is about changing the sense of a sentence depending on which the verb is stressed.

*I liked to come to this restaurant WITH HER.*

*I liked to come to THIS RESTAURANT with her.*

The emphasis either points to a person or place.

This kind of ambiguity often occurs in sentences using some determiners, such as ordinal numbers: *first, last, numerous*.

*At the university, the FIRST day was spent doing administrative business.*

*AT THE UNIVERSITY, the first day was spent doing administrative business.*

*This is our LAST evening.*

*This is OUR last evening.*

*On this day, a BIG CROWD gathered at the square.*

*On THAT DAY a big crowd gathered at the square.*

*On that day a big crowd gathered AT THE SQUARE.*

It often happens that the information on which part of the sentence should be particularly focused on and emphasized is placed in the subsequent sentence. When we read a letter or document addressed to us, we have the time for the analysis of the coherence of the text and so the investigation of the intentions of the author. In living speech we can by negligence or engrossment cause an unintended effect, particularly if our rapport with the interlocutor is far from perfect. Still bigger problems are encountered by those who are supposed to take

down someone's utterances in the form of a press communication. In compound sentences, the sense and stress may be dependent on commas.

### **ORDINAL NUMBERS AND POSITION ADJECTIVES**

Using ordinal numbers is often fraught with the potential to cause ambiguous statements. All words like these – *first, second, third* – but also *beginning, another, next, subsequent, middle, central, ultimate, last*, on top of two- or many-fold information, may contain a judgment that is determined by context. The power of this presupposition is in its context and a multi-stratum quality of the information conveyed. The ordinal number first gives rise to the presumption of the existence of something that is second or opening the whole sequence. The ordinal number 'second' assumes something first and a presumption of elements that follow. The context and, even more so, the customs that hold in a given situation affect that which is certain and what is presumed.

*The first prize has not been granted.*

Upon hearing a sentence like this, a communication taken out of context, we can guess that only the second and third prizes as well as distinctions were awarded.

Position adjectives – beginning, next, subsequent, middle, central, last and ultimate – build similar ambiguities of information and value judgment.

First – may mean: best, beginning but also inexperienced,

Central – often means the same as situated in a filled space or important,

Ultimate – closing, perfect or unique,

Last – might mean: old, precious unique,

Beginning – easy, poor or inexperienced, untested.

Adjectives that refer to both space and activity, such as *open, opening, closed, closing* are less common in expressions where they have ambiguous meanings. They may be referring to some space, they have a smaller potential of presuppositional ambiguity – they are definitive in their meanings.

### **GRADABLE ADJECTIVES**

Particular presuppositional power has been conferred on the comparative. It informs the existence of one of the categories indicated by the base form and creates a presumption of the existence of the superlative: *smaller* makes it 1. certain for *small* to exist and 2. presumable – for the superlative. The presuppositional power of gradable adjectives increases when we ask for them, forcing the interlocutor to provide specific information or force comparisons, which by nature are relative and ambiguous.

*This boat is smaller than...*

*This is a very small town.*

We are forced to ask ourselves or the interlocutor questions: How much smaller? How small? To what degree smaller? Smaller than what?

### **IMPLICATIONS**

Implications are about combining two possibly unrelated strands.

Implications using the conjunctions: *if, but, but not*:

*If you don't study more, you will fail entrance exams.*

Implications using the connector *and*:

*You may come to meetings and feel ever greater interest.*

*Get a grip of yourself and do it now!*

Implications containing the words: *because, as/if, while*:

*As/If you are here, you might want me to make you interested in something.*

Equivalent-temporal implication contains the words: *and at the same time, simultaneously*.

*The best fun is when at the same time the child is learning.*

Semantic implication is one where the grammar forms used, such as participles, refer to a specific meaning

*When coming here, I noticed a poster, which said...*

– the speaker makes a reference to the content of the poster he has noticed.

Cause-and-effect implication using the words: *can, should, need, enable, usually*.

*Now that you are left alone, you must find a job that will ENABLE you to earn more.*

Implication – compound equivalent, using the words *meaning that*:

*Participation in the course MEANS THAT you want to make a career in business.*

Each of the implications has a strong presuppositional potential. It suggests and even imposes some idea, some part of someone's worldview, may serve the construction of an expression testifying to an ability to read someone's mind (see "13. Reading One's Mind"). Sentences containing implication have a natural ease of merging with others, hence they are often used in various contexts and types of discourse, particularly when we are accumulating presuppositions.

### **NON-IMPLICATIVE CONNECTION**



Non-implicative connection is a combination of completely random and unrelated clauses or expressions.

*Getting high grades at school testifies to high intelligence.*

*Association of images and contents that are doubtful for an average addressee is the basis of advertising.*

### **PRESUPPOSITIONS WITH CONCEALMENT**

Presuppositions with concealment occur as questions, they are made up of a key introductory phrase and a command hidden behind it in the form of a question. The power of this presupposition is about this concealment being two-fold: through both the key introductory question and the form of a question, which is nicer to the listener.

The interrogatory part of command need not, however, be reinforced by a question mark at the end of the sentence. A polite command need not be a question – it is enough that one or two polite expressions are applied, such as

*Please lock the door.*

KEY INTRODUCTORY EXPRESSIONS	QUESTIONS AS COMMANDS
I wonder if you can →	tell me what you really want.
I am asking myself whether you know how →	to learn in a different way.
I am wondering if you know how →	to play with these expressions and learn them at the same time.

The latter example contains an additional presupposition – equivalent-temporal implication (hence a full stop rather than a question mark).

### **QUOTATIONS**

A sentence that makes us think that somebody said something – the "mysterious they:"

*They've just told me/I've just been told.*

Quotes are presuppositions that are really useful to express sensitive issues, sometimes ones the direct utterance of which would put the speaker outright at risk of excessive straightforwardness, too strong intervention in someone's business or even rudeness.

*My friend would say in such situations...*

– simple quotations.

Using quotes, we might resort to inventing things. We may say to Y:

*Z is [...now we hear a pejorative term regarding Z] – I heard what Z said to V.*

– and we report their words.

We say this not necessarily to express indignation. We may say so to convey the information included in S's communication and thus make a shocking impact on the listener.

Quotations are among the few presuppositions we can mutually accumulate, e.g.:

*My coach told me how once his course companion addressed a person, who had to respond....*

### READING ONE'S MIND

The speaker knows – or thinks they know – what others think or feel.

*I know why you did that.*

*She said that only because she was mad at me.*

*I can see that you are irritated.*

It is important to realize that such statements may, on their own or as accumulated, perform the function of a means of exerting influence, such as in propaganda or advertising, not to mention situations where we make efforts to persuade someone.

### ANONYMOUS AUTHORITY

These are opinions and judgments where their author is omitted.

*Curiosity is a good thing.*

*It is good to be punctual.*

*Children have a right ...*

*Old age is rich in experiences.*

*Beauty will fast pass away.*

It is a way to weaken or eliminate action in a sentence by way of using gerunds. This is a particular kind of strong presupposition – it affords a possibility of constructing a communication without alienating anyone or making any people responsible for any given event. These are often used in technical language, politics and public relations as it is impersonal, accounts for the reality but it avoids words that can be interpreted as an intention to stigmatize someone.

*We have a problem communicating with one another.*

### VAGUE VERB

Vague verbs are used in reference to consciousness: *realize, experience, discover, understand, bear in mind*.

*It ought to be borne in mind...*  
*It could be realized...*

The "vague verb" presupposition is close to the homonymous ambiguity of using a verb, but in this presupposition the verb only appears in the infinitive form. Therefore it constitutes a different taxonomical unit of presupposition.

### GENERALIZATION

Sentences that contain certain words such as: *others, foreign, fellow countrymen*.

Using this presupposition must be veiled or nuanced if it is to make an impact. Otherwise, it might indicate a problem between the speaker and the representative of the group.

*Young workers do not succeed in this area.*  
*Germans are envious in business contacts.*

These sentences do not sound convincing. We may, however, use them in free conversations when we back them up with an example or additional justification.

### REFERENCED INFORMATION MISSING

It is about a pronoun replacing a word or sentence part that would otherwise be written/said in its stead.

*One could expect THAT.*  
– what exactly?

*IT is not difficult.*  
– what exactly do you mean saying "It is not difficult."

### QUESTION AS CRITICISM

Formulating a question in such a way that its form conceals disapproval.

*Don't you think that you put on too much lipstick?*  
*Do you think this is the right way to behave in this kind of situation?*

### QUESTION AS MAKING ONE THINK

It often happens that there can be a question in a communication that forces an intellectual effort.

*Do you think this is a good method of ... ?  
Would you be happy if I ... ?*

#### QUESTION AS BOASTING

A question can be a form of concealing information to do with our prestige.

*Do you know that I have been given a new computer?*  
– read: better than yours.

*I do not know whether you have been told that our small company earned \$1 m last year.*

#### QUESTION AS A STATUS SYMBOL

In this presupposition, unlike all the others, almost everything depends on the context.

*Did I do a good thing choosing a college close to home?*

The context is about the addressee being someone that has not been able to work or study in another place.

A question that stresses the status of the speaker acts best if it is spitefully given a negative form:

*Isn't dealing with presuppositions a waste of time?  
Is anyone today questioning the benefits of foreign language skills?*

#### QUESTION AS COMPELLING TO MAKE A DECISION

This category includes questions that may lead to the conclusion of talks but to disorientation, too. It is a weak presupposition.

*We have made a decision to close negotiations. What are then your final proposals?*

– a question asked of partners who have not yet made a decision.

*Have you decided to buy this, madam?*

Presuppositions in Polish are formed better when used in colloquial speech, addressing someone directly or by name (see "6. Ambiguity"). Therefore it is often worthwhile to change the official language, in Polish characterized by *Sir/Madam*, into direct conversation and then use a presupposition and sentences constructed thus might then be re-translated into the language that holds in business contacts.

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Language is a kind of tool that can be used in a number of ways. The same pattern of language use in one situation can be classified as incomplete and distorted, but in another it can do very well to build consensus in a conversation with an agitated person.

The presupposition tools, described from the perspective of cognitive psycholinguistics, can have numerous applications:

- they facilitate communication, particularly when we are supposed to convey novel or vital contents;
- anticipate possible problems in communication; our discourse is dictated by fears and is designed to anticipate them;
- help hide our confusion as interlocutor (sender of the communication);
- help decode embarrassment our interlocutor has fallen into.

#### NAMES, EXAMPLES AND DESCRIPTIONS OF THE WAY PRESUPPOSITIONS ACT

NAME	EXAMPLES	DESCRIPTION
0. introductory-presuppositional expressions	<i>If only you knew how easy it is to imagine that one day...</i>	Appeal to knowledge or imagination and include a number of highly syntactically “adhesive” words
1. “No(t)” presuppositions	<i>Do not expect quick success. Do not worry about the future of this project.</i>	Subconsciousness does not know the word “no(t)” – negative particle. Therefore sentences with no(t) might be used with negative or positive meanings.
2. Presuppositions using time sequence	<i>Before we conclude the negotiations, please go over the protocol of additional agreements.</i>	Sentences using words that place an activity in time: <i>during, after, in, when, while, before</i> . Attaching to them positive associations, we become certain that the information was well received by the listener.

<p>3. "Clips"</p>	<p><i>Do what I am asking for as I am in a hurry. Before we sign the agreement, we will check some agreed clauses.</i></p>	<p>"Clips" build a choice without questioning the experiences of the interlocutor. Possibly, when they take on question forms, they create some assumptions. These are affirmative, but more often interrogative sentences, using the words: <i>since, but, either, or</i>.</p>
<p>4. Consciousness presuppositions</p>	<p><i>Do you know how important it is for me? Please be so kind as to note that your behaviour leads to... Do you realize the situation we are in?</i></p>	<p>Presupposition that cause the listener to make a note of something but allow for no questioning of the "idea" contained in the sentence. The structure of "hidden authority" is used in it. Words and phrases used: <i>know, realize, notice, see, hear, imagine</i>.</p>
<p>5. Time change</p>	<p><i>We should like to stop our co-operation for some time, which in our opinion does not preclude our friendly mutual contacts.</i></p>	<p>A weak presupposition, which is essentially about the confirmation of any information and creating a context, which in the name of agreement calls for the specification of the extent of the information. The sentences that contain the words: <i>begin, finish, stop, continue, as well as yet, already, still, continually</i>, + the appropriate verb are the explication of this presupposition. In (2-time change) we suggest a spurious choice; In (5) we make the listener confront the need to make a vague utterance specific.</p>

6. Ambiguities	<p><i>This is a fishy issue.</i>  <i>She is burning out professionally.</i>  <i>The first day at work WAS SPENT xxxing THE FIRST DAY at work was spent xxxing</i></p>	<p>These are divided into homonymous, weak and strong, ambiguity of range and stress.</p>
7. Ordinal numbers and position adjectives	<p><i>The first prize has not been awarded.</i>  <i>This is the last stage of the games.</i></p>	<p>On top of information, any ordinal numbers and synonymous adjectives – <i>beginning, last</i>, etc. – contain a presumption of a sequence or order.</p>
8. Gradable adjectives	<p><i>They tried harder.</i></p>	<p>On top of information, the comparative, in particular, contains a presumption of the base form and the superlative.</p>
9. Implications	<p><i>If you are learning negotiations, perhaps after graduation you will seek a job in business.</i>  <i>Because you neglected classes, you are having problems during exams.</i>  <i>Coming to see you, I have made an assumption that..</i>  <i>Doing NLP means that you want to control others.</i></p>	<p>Simple sentences or, more commonly, complex ones, built in such a way that they contain:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– connectors such as: <i>if, but, because</i>,</li> <li>– conjunctions: <i>and, if/as</i>,</li> <li>– cause-effect structures: their reflectiveness and power of implication depends on the context,</li> <li>– semantic structures starting from or including participles,</li> <li>– compound equivalent: <i>x means y</i>.</li> </ul>

10. Non-implicative connection	<i>A good disciple is someone with a servile attitude to the teacher.</i>	Combining two logically or contextually unrelated truths in one sentence.
11. Presuppositions with concealment	<i>I am wondering if you could see the problem differently.</i>	Made up of an introductory sentence and a question functioning as a command. The interrogative part of the command need not be reinforced with a question mark at the end.
12. Quotations	<i>In such situations, our boss would say... You should ask me what I think about it (introductory).</i>	Attributing some sentence to someone else. Particularly useful in embarrassing situations.
13. Reading one's mind	<i>I know why you did that. You need not talk to them – I know what they will say.</i>	The speaker knows or thinks they know what others think, feel or are planning.
14. Anonymous authority	<i>It is good to be punctual. Curiosity is the first step to hell. Beauty will pass away fast.</i>	Opinions and affirmative sentences where the speaking subject has been hidden.
15. Nominalizations	<i>We have a problem with communication.</i>	Weakening or eliminating the activity of the sentence by way of using gerunds. It might indicate a desire to avoid responsibility.



16. Vague verb	<i>It needs to be borne in mind... You could say that...</i>	This presupposition “likes” verbs related to consciousness, used in the infinitive and in ways close to all sorts of ambiguities.
17. Generalization	<i>Others, strangers, all....</i>	Poorly persuasive sentences with generalizations, which can be used if supported by an example in a casual conversation.
18. Reference index missing	<i>This could not have been predicted</i>	A pronoun replaces a word or part of a sentence, that would have otherwise been used.
PRESUPPOSITIONS OCCURRING AS QUESTIONS ONLY		
19. Question as criticism	<i>Do you think it is the right behaviour?</i>	
20. Question that forces one to think	<i>Do you want such a solution?</i>	(19) and (20) are often used for responding with criticism to criticism, making criticism milder or demanding additional explanations. Thanks to this we gain time, show courtesy and we can also demonstrate the absurdity of someone’s way of thinking.
21. Question as boasting	<i>Do you know what turnover our company recorded last year?</i>	Tends to be a form of thinly veiling our prestige.
22. Question as a status symbol	<i>Is it worth doing NLP?</i>	How important the context is for this presupposition will become obvious upon deeper deliberation.

23. Question that forces one to make a decision	<i>Have you made a decision on the size of order?</i>	Such questions can lead to concluding talks but also to disorientation.
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