

Presupposition Role in the Compound-Complex Sentence¹

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Abstract

The article analyzes the role of presupposition in the compound-complex sentence. The authors examine the types of presuppositions and minimal compound-complex sentence as a field of presuppositions action. The analysis of these types of sentences by the material of the English language shows that several kinds of presuppositions are realized in them, contact or distant, developing in the retrospective and prospective plans. The whole complex of presuppositions performs a text-forming function.

Keywords: The Compound-Complex Sentence; The Presupposition; Retrospection; Prospection.

1. Introduction

The term “presupposition” is widely used in modern linguistics. Presupposition denotes some preliminary knowledge of the speaker and the addressee.

Linguistic presupposition, unlike presupposition in logical and philosophical concepts, does not imply any strict procedure aimed at clarifying the truth or falsity of judgment, but it is a means of organizing and perceiving the text on the basis of correctly constructed prerequisites about the knowledge of the communication subject (Kolshansky, 1980).

In linguistic literature (Semenova, 1984; Vladimirova, 2003) it is believed that presupposition is a contextual category. Presuppositions are characterized by

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contextual origination; it means they are produced in various communicative situations and entirely depend on the context of the situation.

In a presupposition study, the linguists distinguish presuppositions based on the type and kind of context they relate to. Text presuppositions are usually classified as contextual, or related to the inner context of the work, and external, or conveying the cultural historical background, which is reflected in the writing through its theme (sub-theme). Further, external presuppositions are subdivided into universal, specific, highly specialized and presuppositions of basic life experience. In the text presuppositions we can distinguish the contextual presuppositions which are connected with a micro context and mega context (Semenova, 1984; Ardakani et al., 2015).

2. Methods

To study the minimal compound-complex sentence we used the method of description of syntactic phenomena by comparing structures and detecting their unique features. As one of our goals was to prove the contextual nature of presupposition, we apply the contextual analysis of both a micro context and mega context.

3. Main Part

To denote the contextual presuppositions, we use two basic terms – the contact presupposition and the distant one. The contact presupposition is based on the context of the dictema – an elementary situational-thematic unit of a text, formed of one or more sentences as units of the immediately lower level of the language segments. The distant presupposition is based on the knowledge of the context of a dictema, located at some distance in prospective or retrospective plans (Rakova, 2003; Jabbari et al., 2019; Nakhaee & Nasrabadi, 2019).

The presupposition functioning in the text has a certain influence on its semantic structure: it promotes its connectedness and coherence, the hierarchical organization of all its parts (Semenova, 1984).

Presuppositions interconnect the contact and distant-located components of the text. The example under review is the four-part compound-complex sentence, taken from the novel "Jane Eyre" by Bronte (1994). It describes how Jane Eyre, carrying on the necessary correspondence with Mr. Briggs about the inheritance, inquired whether he knew where Mr. Rochester was and whether he was healthy; however, as St. John expected, Mr. Briggs knew nothing:

In the course of my necessary correspondence with Mr Briggs about the will, I had inquired if he knew anything of Mr Rochester's present residence and state of

health; but as St John had conjectured, he was quite ignorant of all concerning him (Bronte, 1994, p. 394).

This sentence reflects the presupposition of Jane Eyre's anxiety about Mr. Rochester.

The contact presupposition links this sentence to the previous dictema, where Jane Eyre recalls Mr. Rochester and expresses the desire to know how he is getting on:

Perhaps you think I had forgotten Mr Rochester... Not for a moment. His idea was still with me, because it was not a vapour sunshine could disperse, nor a sand-traced effigy storms could wash away; it was a name given on a tablet, fated o last as long as the marble it inscribed. The craving to know what had become of him followed me everywhere; when I was at Morton, I re-entered my cottage every evening to think of that; and now at Moor House, I sought my bedroom each night to brood over it.

The presupposition of Jane Eyre's anxiety about Mr. Rochester is realized only in the first line of this compound-complex sentence: *I had inquired... Mr Rochester.*

However, the analysis shows that the compound-complex sentence is a universal means of realization of several presuppositions in one construction. For example, in the second sentence, relating to the second communicative type with two thematic-rheumatic lines of a complicated informational structure, there is another presupposition reflected in the second line – St. John's awareness of Mr. Rochester and Mr. Briggs: *St John had conjectured, he was quite ignorant...*

The distant presupposition links this sentence from Chapter 34, with Chapter 33 of the novel, where St. John reports that Mr. Briggs is in London, and expresses doubts that he may know something about Mr. Rochester:

'...where is Mr Briggs? He perhaps knows more of Mr Rochester than you do.'

'Briggs in London. I should doubt his knowing anything at all about Mr Rochester...' (Bronte, 1994, p. 377).

Thus, the minimal compound-complex sentences, representing two thematic-rheumatic lines of complicated informational structure, show the ability of integrating a number of presuppositions that are implemented in different lines into one complex.

Semantic correlation in the text is carried out in two directions – retrospective and prospective; and the presupposition is an organic part of the formation of the retrospection and propection in the text (Bloch, 1983).

The retrospection is a grammatical category of the text, combining forms of the language expression, referring the reader to the previous relevant content information (Galperin, 2004; Tagay & Ballesteros, 2016). The above example illustrates a retrospective relationship between the components of the text as it restores the previously described events in the reader's memory (as in the example from the novel "Jane Eyre" by Bronte (1994)).

According to Galperin (2004), the retrospection and propection differ in that the retrospection always takes some place in the progressive advance of the text, while the propection is rarely caused by the plot development itself (Shayakhmetova & Chaklikova, 2018).

In the following example the presupposition of the news that Professor Pesca brought to his friend Walter Hartright connects the five-part sentence in the prospective direction:

The Professor has brought some wonderful news with him, in which he says you are concerned; and he has cruelly refused to give us the smallest hint of it till his friend Walter appeared (Collins, 1994, p. 6).

This sentence from W. Collins' novel "The woman in white" refers to the wonderful news which is relevant to Walter Hartright, a drawing teacher, but Professor Pesca refuses to talk about it until his friend Walter comes. The sentence under study is connected with the sentences in the following part of the novel, which tells the story of the news: A Mr. Fairlie is looking for a drawing teacher for three to four months:

Pesca handed me the paper... It informed me...that Frederick Fairlie, Esquire, of Limmeridge House, Cumberland, wanted to engage the services of a thoroughly competent drawing-master, for a period of four months certain (Collins, 1994, p. 10).

In the example given, the propection is distant, i.e. the minimal compound-complex sentence relates to the other components of the text within one chapter and several pages.

Some compound-complex sentences can combine with other components of the text, both in retrospective and in prospective directions. As an example, there is a four-part compound-complex sentence from the novel by Bronte (1994) "Jane Eyre", which contains the presupposition of the representatives of the Reed family:

Sir George Lynn was talking of a Reed of Gateshead, who, he said, was one of the veriest rascals in town; and Ingram was mentioning a Georgiana Reed of the same place, who was much admired for her beauty a season or two ago in London (Bronte, 1994, p. 222).

This sentence, which represents the two lines of the complicated informational structure, conveys Mr. Rochester's words about the Reeds from Gateshead, which were reported to him by Sir George Lynn and Mr. Ingram. Both lines of this sentence retrospectively are related to the opening chapters of the novel, in which Jane's relatives are described, namely: cousin John, notable for cruelty in his childhood, and his sister Georgiana, whose beauty and attractiveness charmed everyone quite early in her life:

Her beauty, her pink cheeks, and golden curls, seemed to give delight to all who looked at her, and to purchase indemnity for every fault. John no one thwarted, much less punished, though he twisted the necks of the pigeons, killed the little peachicks, set the dogs at the sheep, stripped the hothouse vines of their fruit, and broke the buds off the choicest plants in the conservatory... (Bronte, 1994, pp. 16-17).

Along with this, the first line of the analyzed compound-complex sentence is related prospectively with the information about Jane's cousin in Chapter 21, where the reader learns that John Reed went bankrupt and committed suicide:

John Reed is dead...: he ruined himself and half-ruined his family, and is supposed to have committed suicide (Bronte, 1994, p. 222).

The second line is also connected prospectively with the same chapter, which describes Georgiana:

The other was certainly Georgiana...This was a full-blown, very plump damsel, fair as waxwork, with handsome and regular features, languishing blue eyes, and ringleted yellow hair (Bronte, 1994, p. 227).

It should be noted that the presupposition links either the entire compound-complex sentence, or only part of it with other components of the text. And often there is a "stepwise implementation of the presupposition" (the term of Semyonova), for example, the presupposition about a strange woman from Collins' novel "Woman in white". This presupposition is unfolded gradually in several chapters to arouse the reader's interest at every stage.

This presupposition is reflected in the compound-complex sentence from one of the opening parts of the novel in Chapter 6:

I at once related the circumstances under which I had met the woman in white, exactly as they had occurred; and I repeated what she had said to me about Mrs. Fairlie and Limmeridge House, word for word (Collins, 1994, p. 28).

In this sentence, Walter Hartright mentions a mysterious woman in white and informs the reader that she spoke about Mrs. Fairlie and their estate, Limmeridge House.

The five-part sentence under consideration is followed by another one in which Walter recalls how a stranger confidently said that Mrs. Fairlie and her husband had already died; she spoke of Miss Fairlie as if they had known each other since childhood:

She knew that Mrs. Fairlie and her husband were both dead; and he spoke of Miss Fairlie as if they had known each other when they were children (Collins, 1994, p. 28).

The analyzed presupposition (about the strange woman in white) connects the considered constructions with distantly located parts of the novel, for example, with the sentences from Chapter 9, in which the stranger identification continues:

She remembered the likeness between herself and her mother's favourite pupil, as something which had been supposed to exist in past times; but she did not refer to the gift of the white dresses, or to the singular form of words in which the child had artlessly expressed her gratitude for them (Collins, 1994, p. 51).

This sentence conveys Miss Fairlie's recollections of a little girl who looked like Miss Fairlie herself.

The result of this very presupposition is the appearance of one more compound-complex sentence in the same Chapter:

We had identified the unhappy woman whom I had met in the night-time with Anne Catherick, so we had made some advance, at least, towards connecting the probably defective condition of the poor creature's intellect with the peculiarity of her being dressed all in white, and with the continuance, in her maturer years, of her childish gratitude towards Mrs. Fairlie – and there, so far as we knew at that time, our discoveries had ended (Collins, 1994, p. 51).

This sentence summarizes the investigations into the identity of the woman in white: it was discovered that the person whom Walter had met that night was Anne Catherick.

Therefore, the presupposition connects the contact and distant located constructions of the minimal compound-complex sentences.

We elicit the fact that a minimal compound-complex sentence extremely rare realizes only one contact or distant presupposition. Usually, the formation of different parts of a minimal compound-complex sentence is the result of the actions of different presuppositions, the synthesis of which occurs in a compound-complex sentence as a component of the text.

To illustrate this concept, let us analyze a five-part compound-complex sentence, which is a combination of open- and closed-type subordinate blocks. Informational structure formula: (T /T1 + T2/ - R/ R1 + R2/) - (T - R / R1 + R2/).

When Mr. Hartright had met Anne Catherick at Limmeridge, she had informed him of the locality in which the house was situated, and Miss Halcombe had noted down the direction in her diary, with all the other particulars of the interview exactly as she heard them from Mr. Hartright's own lips (Collins, 1994, p. 377).

This sentence, which reports that Anne Catherick during her unexpected encounter with Walter Hartright in the cemetery at Limmeridge told him where her clinic was, and Miss Halcombe then wrote down the address in her diary along with other details of the meeting as she heard from Walter Hartright's own lips, applies to the second communication type with two thematic-rhematic lines. These constructions are characterized by complicated structures with a variety of the extension of theme and rheme in the lines. The first line, which implements the presupposition of Walter Hartright's encounter with Anne Catherick, when she tells him about the hospital, is connected retrospectively with parts 1-2:

She saw nobody from the house then, except a certain Mr. Hartright, who accidentally met with her in the churchyard here (p. 116).

She mentioned the place – a private Asylum, as its situation informed me; a private Asylum not very far from the spot where I had seen her... (p. 84).

The second line implements the presupposition of the diary, which Miss Halcombe kept and where she wrote down everything that happened in her life, and where she put down the address of the hospital along with the details of the meeting, which Walter Hartright told her himself:

Half an hour later I was back at the house, and was informing Miss Halcombe of all that had happened (p. 91).

My journal has been very much neglected of late (p. 175).

I recall the impulse that awakened in me to preserve those words in writing, exactly as they were spoken (p.301).

I refer to the perusal (...) of this interesting Diary (p. 302).

In this case, the five-part compound-complex sentence, where two presuppositions are realized, performs an integrating function in the text.

5. Results

The significance of the on-going study is to identify new data on the communicative organization of the compound-complex sentence. The development of the theory of the text-forming potential of the compound-complex units can contribute not only to a more complete identification of the “inventory” of the syntactic means of the language, but can also help to describe their functioning in the text.

4. Conclusion

The presupposition (contact and distant) binds different components of the text into one structural unit – a compound-complex sentence – by the means of retrospective and prospective communication, thus the presupposition performs an integrating function in the text. Usually, the formation of several lines is the result of the action of different presuppositions, the synthesis of which occurs in a compound-complex sentence as a component of the text.

The study of the minimal compound-complex sentence from the point of view of its functioning in the text allows to define its text-forming potential and to reveal factors of origination and expansion of this construction.

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