

# A PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF PRESUPPOSITIONS IN PRABOWO SUBIANTO'S UN SPEECH WITHIN INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL DISCOURSE

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## ABSTRAK

Studi ini mengkaji penggunaan presuposisi dalam pidato Presiden Prabowo Subianto yang disampaikan pada Sidang Umum Perserikatan Bangsa-Bangsa (PBB) ke-80. Dalam wacana politik, bahasa tidak hanya berfungsi untuk menyampaikan pesan secara eksplisit, tetapi juga membangun makna implisit yang memengaruhi pemahaman audiens terhadap realitas sosial dan politik. Presuposisi sebagai perangkat pragmatik memungkinkan pembicara menyisipkan asumsi dan pengetahuan bersama tanpa mengungkapkannya secara langsung. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi jenis-jenis presuposisi yang digunakan serta menafsirkan fungsi pragmatismenya dalam konteks komunikasi politik internasional. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif. Data berupa segmen-segmen terpilih dari transkrip resmi pidato Presiden Prabowo Subianto yang diperoleh dari sumber resmi Perserikatan Bangsa-Bangsa. Analisis data dilakukan berdasarkan teori presuposisi Yule (1996) yang mengklasifikasikan presuposisi ke dalam lima jenis, yaitu eksistensial, faktif, leksikal, struktural, dan non-faktif. Teknik analisis yang digunakan adalah analisis isi kualitatif yang meliputi kondensasi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Presiden Prabowo secara strategis memanfaatkan berbagai jenis presuposisi untuk menyampaikan pesan implisit terkait tanggung jawab moral global, tantangan internasional, nilai kemanusiaan, dan posisi diplomatik Indonesia. Presuposisi eksistensial dan faktif merupakan jenis yang paling dominan, yang menegaskan isu-isu global sebagai realitas bersama yang diasumsikan telah dipahami audiens. Secara keseluruhan, penggunaan presuposisi berfungsi sebagai strategi retorika yang efektif dalam membangun pemahaman bersama dalam wacana politik internasional.

## ABSTRACT

**Keywords:** Political Discourse Analysis; Presidential Speeches; International Discourse

*This study examines the use of presupposition in the speech delivered by President Prabowo Subianto at the 80th United Nations General Assembly. In political discourse, language functions not only to convey explicit messages but also to construct implicit meanings that influence how audiences perceive social and political realities. Presupposition, as a pragmatic device, allows speakers to embed assumptions and shared knowledge without stating them directly. Therefore, this study aims to identify the types of presupposition used in the speech and to interpret their pragmatic functions within the context of international political communication. This research employs a descriptive qualitative approach. The data consist of selected segments from the official transcript of President Prabowo Subianto's speech obtained from official United Nations sources. Data analysis is conducted based on Yule's (1996) theory of presupposition, which classifies presupposition into five types:*

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*existential, factive, lexical, structural, and non-factive. The analytical technique applied is qualitative content analysis, involving data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings indicate that President Prabowo strategically utilizes various types of presupposition to convey implicit messages related to global moral responsibility, international challenges, humanitarian values, and Indonesia's diplomatic position on the global stage. Existential and factive presuppositions are the most dominant types, emphasizing global issues as shared realities assumed to be understood by the audience. Overall, the use of presupposition functions as an effective rhetorical strategy in shaping shared understanding within international political discourse.*

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## 1. Introduction

Language plays a central role in political communication, functioning not only as a medium for conveying explicit messages but also as a strategic resource for constructing implicit meanings, ideological positions, and shared assumptions. In international political discourse, political actors frequently rely on indirect linguistic strategies to influence interpretation, establish legitimacy, and foster consensus without direct confrontation. Global forums such as the United Nations (UN) constitute highly formal and symbolically charged communicative spaces, where political leaders are expected to articulate national interests while simultaneously appealing to universal values such as peace, justice, and humanitarian responsibility. Consequently, examining implicit meaning in international political speeches remains a significant area of linguistic inquiry.

One pragmatic phenomenon that plays a crucial role in shaping implicit meaning is presupposition. Presupposition allows speakers to treat certain information as already known, accepted, or unquestioned by the audience, thereby subtly guiding interpretation and limiting alternative viewpoints. In political discourse, presuppositions are commonly employed to frame social realities, normalize ideological positions, and present contested claims as shared knowledge. Recent studies in pragmatics suggest that presuppositions can be more persuasive than explicit assertions because they embed assumptions within the discourse structure itself (Thoma, 2023; Abrusán, 2023). As a result, presupposition functions not merely as a linguistic feature but as a strategic rhetorical device in political communication.

A growing body of research has examined the use of presupposition in political speeches, debates, and media discourse. Studies by Eragamreddy (2024) demonstrate that presuppositions in political speeches serve to legitimize policy decisions and reinforce speaker authority by presenting ideological assumptions as factual realities. Similarly, Thoma (2023) argues that presupposition contributes to ideological framing by positioning particular values and beliefs as universally accepted. Research by Abrusán (2023) and Chen, Thalmann, and Antomo (2022) further highlights the role of presupposition triggers, such as definite descriptions and factive verbs, in shaping audience expectations and guiding interpretation. Collectively, these studies confirm the central role of presupposition in political discourse analysis.

Presupposition has long been recognized as a crucial pragmatic mechanism in political discourse, as it enables speakers to present certain propositions as given, natural, or beyond dispute. By embedding assumptions within linguistic structures, presuppositions allow political actors to shape audience interpretation while minimizing overt contestation. In political communication, presuppositions often function to legitimize ideological positions, normalize policy agendas, and frame social realities as shared knowledge. Because presuppositions operate implicitly, they are less likely to be questioned, making them particularly effective as persuasive rhetorical strategies in political discourse (Thoma, 2023; Abrusán, 2023).

In political speeches, presuppositions do not merely function as linguistic triggers but also as tools for reinforcing authority and credibility. By treating specific values, problems, or responsibilities as already acknowledged, speakers can guide audience alignment without explicitly arguing for these positions. Therefore, analyzing presupposition in political discourse provides critical insight into how power, ideology, and persuasion are constructed through language. Speeches delivered at the United Nations General Assembly represent a distinct diplomatic genre characterized by high formality, symbolic representation, and a global audience orientation. Unlike domestic political speeches, UN speeches are addressed not only to national constituents but also to international leaders, diplomats, and global publics. Consequently, political leaders must carefully balance national interests with appeals to universal values such as peace, cooperation, humanitarianism, and shared global responsibility. Within this diplomatic genre, linguistic choices tend to be cautious, indirect, and strategically framed to avoid confrontation while maintaining persuasive force. Presupposition plays a particularly important role in this context, as it allows speakers to embed assumptions about global challenges, moral obligations, and collective responsibility without explicitly imposing viewpoints. As a result, presuppositions function as subtle yet powerful tools for constructing legitimacy, fostering diplomatic alignment, and positioning nations within international political discourse.

Despite the growing scholarly attention to presupposition in political discourse, existing research predominantly focuses on Western political figures or domestic political contexts. Studies that specifically examine presuppositions in presidential speeches delivered at international forums, particularly the United Nations General Assembly, remain relatively limited. Furthermore, research on Southeast Asian political leaders within global diplomatic settings is still underrepresented. In the Indonesian context, political discourse studies have largely concentrated on election campaigns, domestic debates, or media representations, leaving international presidential speeches insufficiently explored from a pragmatic perspective. President Prabowo Subianto's speech at the 80th United Nations General Assembly offers a valuable case for addressing this gap. Delivered within a high-level international diplomatic setting, the speech addresses global challenges, humanitarian values, and international responsibility, reflecting Indonesia's positioning in world politics. The novelty of this study lies in its focus on the pragmatic functions of presupposition in an Indonesian presidential speech delivered at a major international forum—an area that has received limited scholarly attention. Unlike previous studies that primarily identify types of presupposition, this research emphasizes how presuppositions function rhetorically to construct moral responsibility, shared global values, and diplomatic alignment.

Therefore, this study aims to examine the types and pragmatic functions of presuppositions employed in President Prabowo Subianto's speech delivered at the 80th United Nations General Assembly. By focusing on an Indonesian presidential speech within a global diplomatic forum, this study contributes to pragmatic and political discourse studies by offering insights into how

presupposition operates as a strategic rhetorical device to construct shared understanding, legitimize national positions, and establish global moral legitimacy in international political discourse.

## 2. Method

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive research design. A qualitative approach is considered appropriate because the research aims to interpret implicit meanings and explore the pragmatic functions of presupposition in political discourse, rather than to quantify linguistic features or test statistical hypotheses. The data of this study consist of utterances containing presupposition triggers drawn from the official transcript of President Prabowo Subianto's speech delivered at the 80th United Nations General Assembly. The data source is the official United Nations website, ensuring the authenticity, credibility, and accuracy of the speech text.

### Data Selection Criteria

Although the speech is delivered as a single unified text, this study does not analyze every sentence in the transcript. Instead, purposive sampling is applied to select relevant segments. The selection is based on the following criteria: Utterances that contain explicit presupposition triggers as classified by Yule (1996). Segments that address major thematic concerns of the speech, such as global responsibility, humanitarian values, peace, and international cooperation. Utterances that demonstrate rhetorical significance, particularly those used to build shared assumptions, moral alignment, or diplomatic positioning in an international forum. Through this approach, only segments that are directly relevant to the research objectives are analyzed, allowing for a focused and in-depth interpretation.

The unit of analysis in this study is the sentence and clause level, as presupposition may be realized within a complete sentence or embedded in specific clauses. This level of analysis enables a precise identification of presupposition triggers and their associated pragmatic functions within the discourse. Data are collected using document analysis. The transcript is read carefully and repeatedly to ensure thorough comprehension. Utterances containing presupposition triggers are identified and categorized according to Yule's (1996) classification of presupposition types, including existential, factive, lexical, structural, and non-factive presuppositions. Data analysis is condensation using qualitative content analysis and follows three main stages. Data condensation, in which relevant utterances are selected and reduced according to the focus of the study. Data display, where the selected data are organized systematically based on presupposition types. Conclusion drawing and interpretation, in which the pragmatic functions of presuppositions are analyzed in relation to the international political and diplomatic context of the United Nations General Assembly speech.

## 3. Result and Discussion

### 3.1 Types of Presuppositions in President Prabowo Subianto's Speech

This section presents the results of the analysis of presuppositions identified in President Prabowo Subianto's speech delivered at the 80th United Nations General Assembly. The data were analyzed using Yule's (1996) presupposition typology, which classifies presuppositions into existential, factive, lexical, structural, and non-factive types. The findings indicate that existential and factive presuppositions are the most dominant types in the speech, while lexical, structural, and non-factive presuppositions occur less frequently but still perform important pragmatic functions in shaping the overall message.

### **Existential Presuppositions**

The analysis shows that existential presuppositions are the most frequently used type in the speech. These presuppositions are commonly triggered by definite noun phrases and possessive constructions, which presuppose the existence of particular entities, groups, or conditions. For example, the statement “Our children are watching. They are learning leadership not from textbooks, but from our choices” presupposes the existence of children who are directly affected by political actions. The possessive phrase *our children* functions as the presupposition trigger, constructing a sense of collective ownership and shared responsibility between the speaker and the audience. From a pragmatic perspective, the frequent use of existential presuppositions reflects a deliberate rhetorical strategy. By presupposing the existence of global problems such as hunger, conflict, and inequality, the speaker avoids questioning their reality and instead directs attention toward moral responsibility and collective action. This finding supports Abrusán’s (2023) argument that existential presuppositions in political discourse function to normalize particular worldviews and establish shared social realities.

Within the context of international diplomacy, existential presuppositions also enhance the speaker’s authority by presenting global challenges as unquestionable facts. Similar findings are reported by Eragamreddy (2024), who notes that political leaders often employ existential presuppositions to strengthen credibility and reinforce persuasive impact.

### **Factive Presuppositions**

The analysis further reveals that factive presuppositions are prominently used throughout the speech. These presuppositions are typically triggered by expressions that presuppose the truth of the embedded proposition. For instance, the statement “We live in a time when hatred and violence can seem like the loudest voices” presupposes that hatred and violence are real and observable phenomena in the current global context. By presenting these conditions as factual realities, the speaker limits potential disagreement and enhances the persuasive force of the message. Pragmatically, factive presuppositions function to establish common ground between the speaker and the international audience, regardless of political or cultural differences. This finding aligns with Thoma’s (2023) study, which emphasizes that factive presuppositions are frequently employed in political discourse to frame ideological positions as shared knowledge rather than subjective opinions.

### **Less Dominant Presupposition Types and Their Functions**

In addition to existential and factive presuppositions, the analysis identifies the presence of lexical, structural, and non-factive presuppositions. Although these types occur less frequently, they play significant roles in shaping the rhetorical and motivational dimensions of the speech.

### **Lexical Presuppositions**

Lexical presuppositions are triggered by specific lexical items that carry implicit assumptions. An example can be found in the statement “The United Nations was born from the ashes of the Second World War,” which presupposes the occurrence of the Second World War. By invoking historical events, the speaker situates contemporary diplomatic messages within a shared global history. This strategy reinforces the legitimacy of international institutions and strengthens moral authority. This finding is consistent with Chen, Thalmann, and Antomo (2022), who argue that lexical presuppositions often function to connect political discourse with broader historical and ideological frameworks.

### **Structural Presuppositions**

Structural presuppositions are identified through grammatical constructions that implicitly convey assumptions. For example, the sentence “Only then can we have real peace” presupposes that peace has not yet been fully achieved and that it depends on certain conditions. Pragmatically, structural presuppositions guide audience interpretation without explicit explanation. They frame particular actions as logically necessary, thereby increasing persuasive effectiveness. This finding supports Abrusán’s (2023) observation that structural presuppositions are especially powerful in political discourse because they present proposed solutions as inevitable.

### **Non-Factive Presuppositions**

Non-factive presuppositions appear in expressions that signal uncertainty while still conveying hope and encouragement. For instance, the statement “Maybe this is a dream, but it is a dream we must work toward together” presupposes that the realization of the dream remains uncertain. Despite this uncertainty, the presupposition functions rhetorically to motivate collective effort and optimism. This result aligns with Thoma’s (2023) findings that non-factive presuppositions are often used to soften political claims and invite cooperation rather than resistance from the audience.

### **Pragmatic Functions of Presupposition in the Speech**

Overall, the findings demonstrate that presuppositions in President Prabowo Subianto’s speech serve multiple pragmatic functions. First, they construct shared realities by presenting assumptions as common knowledge. Second, they enhance persuasive impact by embedding ideological positions implicitly rather than explicitly. Third, they support diplomatic communication by minimizing confrontational language and encouraging consensus. Compared to previous studies that primarily focus on Western political figures, this study shows that Indonesian political leaders employ similar presuppositional strategies in international forums. This confirms that presupposition functions as a universal pragmatic device in political discourse, while also highlighting Indonesia’s active participation in global diplomatic rhetoric.

## **4. Conclusion**

This study examined the types and pragmatic functions of presuppositions in President Prabowo Subianto’s speech delivered at the 80th United Nations General Assembly. The findings demonstrate that presupposition plays a central role in shaping political meaning and diplomatic persuasion. Existential and factive presuppositions emerged as the most dominant types, indicating the speaker’s strategic effort to construct global issues as shared and uncontested realities. Through these presuppositions, ideological positions are communicated implicitly, allowing the speaker to guide audience interpretation without overt argumentation.

Furthermore, the presence of lexical, structural, and non-factive presuppositions, although less frequent, reveals their important supportive functions. These presuppositions reinforce historical legitimacy, frame proposed solutions as necessary and logical, and encourage collective optimism among the international audience. Together, these strategies enable the speaker to balance authority, persuasion, and diplomatic sensitivity within an international political context.

This study implies that presupposition is not merely a linguistic feature but a powerful pragmatic tool in political discourse, particularly in international forums where explicit confrontation is often avoided. The findings contribute to pragmatic and discourse studies by demonstrating that Indonesian political leaders employ presuppositional strategies comparable to those used by global political figures, thereby reinforcing the universality of presupposition as a pragmatic mechanism in political communication.

Despite these contributions, this study has several limitations. First, the analysis focuses on a single presidential speech, which limits the generalizability of the findings to broader political discourse. Second, the study relies solely on the official transcript of the speech, without considering prosodic features, delivery style, or audience responses that may also influence pragmatic interpretation. Third, as a qualitative study, the analysis involves interpretative judgment, which may introduce a degree of subjectivity in categorizing presupposition types and interpreting their functions.

Future research is therefore recommended to examine presuppositions in a wider range of political texts, such as debates, interviews, or policy documents, and to conduct comparative studies across different political leaders or cultural contexts. Incorporating quantitative methods or multimodal analysis may also provide deeper insights into the frequency, distribution, and communicative impact of presuppositions in political and diplomatic discourse.

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