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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of The Study

It is common for people to create assumptions about what they believe or understand based on their interlocutors' statements in a conversation. Those assumptions, known as presuppositions, play a crucial role in shaping meaning in conversations as well as revealing the implicit truths unstated behind utterances. In pragmatics study, presuppositions are essential because they help speakers and listeners navigate meaning beyond what is explicitly stated. For instance, the presupposition in the *A Haunting in Venice (2023)* movie screenplay reflects the assumptions created by the characters on a mysterious murder case as the conflict arises. Therefore, it is arguable that presupposition falls under the field of pragmatics because it relies on context behind people's utterance in order to understand meanings, both stated or unstated, in conversations.

Presupposition refers to something that is assumed by the speaker to be the case before they produce an utterance (Yule, 1996). Griffiths defines presupposition as the shared background presumptions that are taken for granted in a communication between the speaker and the listener in order to understand the intended message (Griffiths, 2006). Presupposition is one of the pragmatics' field of study that is defined as presumptions rather than knowledge as it is concerned with how common information is shared by certain individuals within a communication. Presupposition, despite having the

similar term with proposition, they both present different concept and definition. Proposition refers to the literal meaning of a sentence that may be true or false, while presupposition refers to the unstated truth or meaning behind a sentence that is taken as an assumption by the listener. Yule (1996) divides the use of presupposition into six types which present different structures and assumptions: existential, factive, lexical, structural, nonfactive, and counterfactual.

Griffiths (2006) stated that presupposition does not have to be true as it depends on mutual understanding of any pretences or stereotypes that are false by individuals. Therefore, the use of negation clearly has no effect on the presupposition uttered by the speaker. Presupposition is concerned with how the speaker and the listener share the same presumptions when engaging in daily communication, and thus it also appears frequently in movies of various genres.

Therefore, Griffiths (2006) states that presupposition remains a failure if the hearer does not share the same knowledge or understanding with the speaker. However, Kroeger (2022) opposes this statement of Griffiths by placing his argument that presupposition does not have to be the shared knowledge or information that appears in the speaker utterances. Rather, as long as the hearer is able to accept and take the "new" information unstated by the speaker as an assumption, the presupposition still remains successful.

A Haunting in Venice (2023) is a mystery movie screenplay with a horror ambience directed by Kenneth Branagh in an adaptation to Agatha Christie's novel *Hallowe'en Party*. This movie itself is the third part of

Branagh's *Hercule Poirot* film series, following *Murder on the Orient Express* and *Death on the Nile*. Although those three movies share the same main character, they feature standalone stories. Set in Venice in the aftermath of World War II, the story follows the retired detective hercule Poirot (also starred by Kenneth Branagh) as he is brought back to another case. The characters in the story include: Hercule Poirot, Rowena Drake, Ariadne Oliver, Joyce Reynolds, Olga Seminoff, Vitale Portfoglio, Maxime Gerard, Leslie Ferrier, Leopold Ferrier, Desdemona Holland, Nicholas Holland, and Alicia Drake.

The story begins when Poirot's old friend, Ariadne Oliver, invites him to a séance at a palazzo or a palace owned by a famous opera singer Rowena Drake, who hopes to contact her deceased daughter, Alicia. Despite his scepticism on mystical things, Poirot still manages to attend with her and his guard, Portfoglio. The séance itself is led by a famous medium Joyce Reynolds and her assistants, orphaned siblings Desdemona and Nicholas Holland. Reynolds manages to communicate with Alicia's spirit, which reveals a clue about her murder through a classical typewriter. As the séance is over, a terrible event occurs which forces Poirot to resume his job as a detective to unveil the truth behind the murder with clues lying inside the palace.

The case investigation becomes more challenging when mystical things are also believed to take part of the murder, while Poirot himself is seen as a sceptical and rational detective who does not believe in the existence of God and spirits. Therefore, his sceptical behaviour also leads to plenty use of presupposition in his utterances, in which they may also reflect his rational

belief, and same goes with the other characters in which their utterance may also reflect their belief on mystical things.

The use of presupposition has been analysed in various genres of movies through the application of presupposition as explained by Yule. Haryati (2022) examined the use of presupposition in the mystery-thriller movie *Escape from Pretoria* with the application of six types of presupposition as explained by Yule and Halliday's functions of language. The study reveals that existential presupposition remains the most dominant, while structural and non-factive type remain absent.

Furthermore, Prasetyani et al. (2022) studied presupposition in the documentary movie *Patriots Day*, in which they recognised existential presupposition as the most frequently used with the purpose to assert leadership, to describe circumstances, and to express the characters mental state. Furthermore, Perdana et al. (2022) have also explored the use of presupposition in the fantasy-drama movie *The Water Horse: Legend of the Deep* through categorising presuppositions based on linguistic elements such as possessive construction, in/definite noun phrase, etc. Their findings align with Prasetyani et al., revealing a dominance of existential presupposition. Additionally, Kristy et al. (2020) examined presupposition in a fantasy-musical movie entitled *Beauty and the Beast*. The finding also aligns with Perdana et al., highlighting existential presupposition as the most dominant type to be used compared to the others.

Based on the previous studies, it can be seen that the use of presupposition is possible to occur in any genres of movies with various

presupposition types. There are also a great number of studies that focus on animated and fantasy movies as the object of analysis compared to the other genres of movies such as action, drama, and mystery. However, the movie *A Haunting in Venice (2023)* itself has not been much explored in previous studies, despite of the interesting plot and conflict it presents. Therefore, the writer views this as an urgency to conduct a study concerning the use of presupposition in a mystery movie as the object of analysis. Furthermore, many previous studies applied the theory of presupposition to their analysis, but the ones that combine presupposition with binary opposition is also not explored much. Therefore, this phenomenon leads the writer to explore more on the movie *A Haunting in Venice (2023)* through the lens of presupposition and binary opposition.

The characters' use of presupposition reflects two opposing beliefs such as rational and mystical belief, and thus this conflict aligns with the concept of binary opposition by Claude Levi-Strauss which focuses on how meaning emerges through contrast between certain elements that also reflects people's way of thinking (Levi-Strauss, 1963). Basically, binary opposition refers to a system of language that consists of a paired opposition. It is a system by which theoretical opposites are strictly defined and set off against one another (Chunmei, 2018). Structuralists define binary opposition as the simplest but most essential relation as it helps people to know meaning through the difference or the contrast between an element to one another. Saussure (as cited from Chunmei, 2018) defines binary opposition as the means by which the

units of language have value or meaning, and each unit is defined in reciprocal determination with another term as in binary code.

As the main theme of this movie is a murder investigation, there are a lot of presuppositions uttered by the character that an be further analysed using the presupposition theory as explained by Yule (1996). Furthermore, since the murder case also has something to do with mystical things such as spirits, the characters' ways of thinking are divided into two based on their beliefs and perspectives regarding the case investigation, which are rational and mystical. Characters with rational beliefs are certain that this case can be solved logically, meaning that the murderer is human, not spirits. In contrast, characters with mystical beliefs are certain that the murder is caused by spirits that have stayed in the place for a long time and have been targeting to murder everyone who lives there.

This study aims to examine the types of presupposition by the characters in the mystery movie *A Haunting in Venice (2023)* movie in accordance with George Yule's six types of presupposition. Such a corpus is chosen as it portrays a murder investigation as the main story which leads to plenty and various use of presupposition by the characters. Furthermore, there are two opposing beliefs shown by the characters as the conflict emerges, such as rational and mystical. Some characters are also seen to face some transition in their belief and certainty. Therefore, the writer sees this movie screenplay as having an interesting conflict to be explored more deeply through the lens of binary opposition by Claude Levi Strauss. As for the output of this study, the

writer hopes to present a new insight in this analysis through revealing the characters' belief through the use of presupposition.

1.2 Research Questions

1. What dominant types of presupposition employed by characters in *A Haunting in Venice (2023)* movie screenplay?

2. How do the characters' utterances reflect the transition in their certainty of rational and mystical belief as the binary opposition?

1.3 Purpose of The Study

As previously mentioned, Yule (1996) divided the use of presupposition into six types: existential, factive, lexical, structural, non-factive, and counterfactual. Therefore, this study aims to find out the dominant types of presupposition employed by the characters in *A Haunting in Venice (2023)* movie screenplay. Furthermore, this study also aims to reveal the transition of belief and certainty that is rooted from their rational and mystical belief through the lens of binary opposition by Levi Strauss (1963).

1.4 Scope and Limitation of The Study

The focus of this study is to explore how the characters' utterances indicate Yule's six types of presupposition. Furthermore, the characters' use of presupposition will also be further analysed through the lens of binary opposition by Levi Strauss in order to reveal their rational and mystical belief. However, it is to be noted that the utterances taken as the data for the analysis

will be limited to the indication of both presupposition and the characters'
rational and mystical belief.

1.5 Significance of The Study

This study is expected to enrich the scope of linguistics studies,
particularly concerning how presupposition, as explained by Yule (1996), is
performed within mystery movies or any movie genres that portray a case
investigation. Through this study, the writer intends to serve a new insight and
to assure the possibility of combining both theory of linguistics and
structuralism into a single study. Furthermore, this study is expected to be
beneficial for the readers to enhance their understanding not only about how
we can make assumptions from people's utterances and how we can produce
utterances that might trigger the hearers to make assumptions, but also about
how those assumptions reflect their various beliefs.