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Expression of Presupposition in Wise Sayings

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Abstract: This article examines wise sayings as one of the relevant subjects of contemporary linguistics and provides a scholarly analysis of the expression of presupposition in wise sayings. It also discusses the study of presupposition in global and Uzbek linguistics, its distinctive features, the ways in which it is manifested in wise sayings, and the functions it performs. The article analyzes wise sayings from a pragmatic perspective according to different types of presupposition.

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1. Introduction

Presupposition is another fundamental concept in pragmalinguistic analysis. The concept of presupposition initially emerged in philosophy and was introduced into scholarly discourse by G. Frege. According to Frege, presupposition constitutes the natural basis of a judgment. A primary proposition is often accompanied by another implicit proposition; this secondary implicit proposition expressing existence is regarded as presupposition.[1]

Subsequently, the concept entered the field of linguistics and was studied by Ch. Fillmore, A. Stawicka, G. Gabriel, J. Lakoff, N. Chomsky, V. A. Zvegintsev, D. Arutyunova, A. Kenin, I. M. Vasilev, V. V. Bogdanov, V. G. Gak, E. V. Paducheva, N. A. Toropova, and a number of other scholars.[2]

2. Materials and Method

Presupposition constitutes a bridge between contemporary linguistics and logical semantics. This phenomenon is an essential component for the accurate interpretation of utterances because it encompasses contextual information, situational factors, and the shared background knowledge of speakers and listeners. Therefore, unless sentences and linguistic units are analyzed with regard to presupposition, their meanings cannot always be interpreted accurately.

Presupposition is a phenomenon that emerges in the communicative domain under the influence of several factors, including the communicants' need for economy in speech, the ability of linguistic units to convey additional or secondary information beyond their syntactic structure within a particular communicative situation, and the participants' prior knowledge concerning past and anticipated events and processes.

Thus, presupposition represents implicit information that is not necessarily expressed explicitly in an utterance but is assumed to be known or accepted by the

participants of communication. Its identification is therefore essential for a comprehensive pragmatic interpretation of linguistic expressions.

3. Results and Discussion

Presupposition has primarily been studied within the semantic-syntactic framework in global linguistics and has been regarded as one of the important issues of semantic syntax. E. Kenin proposes distinguishing presupposition into practical and logical types. I. M. Vasilev, in turn, classifies components of meaning according to their degree of association with a particular meaning into obligatory and facultative meaning components. He emphasizes that the former belongs to the significative (semantic) aspect of meaning, whereas the latter relates to the denotative aspect, that is, to the domain of presupposition.[3]

The use of the term presupposition in linguistics is associated with the name of P. Strawson, who argued that there is a particular type of implication in language. This type of implication was interpreted as being closely related to G. Frege's concept of the "natural basis." Both approaches derive presupposition from the semantic relationship between propositions.

V. V. Bogdanov emphasizes that presupposition constitutes an aspect of sentence semantics.[4] N. D. Arutyunova likewise demonstrates that presupposition enters sentence semantics as the "speaker's general fund of knowledge" and as "their prior agreement" [5] Beginning with subsequent studies, pragmatics became increasingly distinguished from semantics, and presupposition began to be investigated within the framework of pragmatics. As a result of these studies, linguists proposed various classifications of presupposition. In particular, V. G. Gak distinguishes the following types:

- a) Broad presupposition — refers to the universal knowledge that people possess about the objective reality surrounding them.
- b) Narrow presupposition — refers to situations that occur only within the framework of a particular context or situation.
- c) Linguistic presupposition — refers to presuppositions arising from speakers' linguistic experience and their knowledge of a particular language.[6]

E. V. Paducheva identifies two types of presupposition:

Semantic presupposition — a semantic component whose falsity results in the semantic incompleteness or inadequacy of the sentence.

Pragmatic presupposition — a component of a sentence that the speaker assumes to be known to the listener under normal conditions of use.[7]

N. A. Toropova also divides presupposition into two groups:

Presupposition of contrasting members.

Expected presupposition.[8]

It should be noted that, to date, there is no universally accepted and definitive classification of presupposition based on a single criterion. In Uzbek linguistics, the phenomenon of presupposition has been examined in the works of prominent Uzbek linguists such as A. Nurmonov, N. Mahmudov, M. Khakimov, Z. Burkhanov, and U. Rahimov. In particular, they emphasize that "for speech communication to take place correctly and realistically, communicants must be familiar with certain facts prior to the moment of communication and possess knowledge and awareness related to the general situation. These facts and knowledge are collectively referred to in linguistics as presupposition." [9]

In the Uzbek language, the grammatical means that express presupposition include the following:

- a) facultative meaning components of lexical units;

- b) particles such as *hatto* (even), *faqat* (only), *yolg'iz* (alone), *gina* (only/merely), *ham* (also), *tag'in* (again), and *yana* (again);
- c) conjunctions such as *bo'lsa* (if/whereas) and *esa* (whereas/as for);
- d) postpositions such as *tashqari* (besides), *boshqa* (other than), *o'zga* (other), *bilan* (with), *birga* (together with), and *o'rniga* (instead of).

Pragmatic analysis is distinguished by its orientation toward a particular communicative purpose. In the case of the wise sayings examined in this study, the purpose of employing presupposition is to express the fundamental logic of an idea in a clear, concise, and generalized manner.

The power of wise sayings lies in their brevity. Since wise sayings constitute concise, succinct, and generalized expressions of thought, the conclusions and lessons derived from them require clarity and factuality. Presupposition provides this factual basis. Thus, presupposition plays a central role in shaping the semantic core of a wise saying and contributes to the effective transmission of its implicit meaning and pragmatic message.

Functions of Presupposition in Wise Sayings

Presupposition performs the following functions in wise sayings:

Conciseness and clarity of thought: The power of wise sayings lies in their brevity. Presupposition contributes to the formation of the central meaning of a wise saying while allowing a substantial amount of information to be conveyed in a concise form.

Identification of general and universal truths: Wise sayings generally express ideas that are applicable to human experience. Presupposition helps identify and reinforce these generalized truths underlying the explicit statement.

Creating a logical framework in the listener's mind: Presupposition in wise sayings assists the listener in establishing logical connections and drawing meaningful conclusions from the expressed idea.

Giving the meaning a universal and timeless character: Wise sayings are not restricted to a particular period and may remain relevant across different historical contexts. Presupposition functions as an underlying proposition that reinforces the enduring and generally applicable nature of the expressed idea [10].

As discussed above, although the analysis of presupposition can be observed in the works of a number of linguists, this phenomenon has not yet been sufficiently examined in the analysis of wise sayings. This gap demonstrates the relevance and potential significance of the present study. The preceding discussion examined the implicit meanings underlying wise sayings; the following section focuses specifically on their presuppositional structure [11].

Example 1

"Difficulty becomes the whetstone that sharpens the mind and the grindstone that sharpens diligence."

— Abdulla Qahhor

In this wise saying, the expressions "difficulty sharpens the human mind" and "difficulty increases diligence" constitute the explicit meaning, or proposition, of the utterance [12].

The presuppositions underlying the statement include the following:

Difficulty exists in human life. Difficulty is presented as a natural and common phenomenon in human existence [13].

Intelligence and diligence are qualities inherent in human beings. The saying refers to the mind and diligence as qualities that can be "sharpened," implying that they already exist and can undergo further development [14].

The mind can be sharpened and developed. The metaphor of sharpening presupposes that intellectual ability is not static but can develop, strengthen, and become more effective [15].

Diligence is a capacity or quality that can be strengthened. The expression “to sharpen” implies that human determination and effort can be increased and cultivated.

Difficulty has a positive dimension. The saying presupposes that difficulties are not exclusively harmful; they may also serve as factors that strengthen, mature, and develop an individual.

From the perspective of presupposition types, the following categories can be identified in this wise saying:

Existential presupposition: The existence of difficulty, intelligence, and diligence is presupposed.

Lexical presupposition: The words “sharpen” and “whetstone” evoke the conceptual domain of sharpening and strengthening something, thereby presupposing that the mind and diligence are qualities capable of development and enhancement.

Structural presupposition: The construction “bo’lar ekan” (“turns out to be,” “proves to be”) presents the stated relationship as an established or recognized state of affairs.

Example 2

“The air that a creator breathes is the literary environment. This air must be clean and pure.”

— Erkin Vohidov

The explicit meaning, or proposition, of this wise saying is that a literary environment is necessary for a creator to live, develop, and produce creative work.

The underlying presuppositions can be identified as follows:

A creator lives within society and is influenced by a surrounding environment. The creator is therefore not completely isolated but functions within a particular social and cultural context.

A literary environment is as essential to a creator as air is to human life. The comparison presupposes that creative activity is influenced by its surrounding literary environment and that the absence of a healthy environment may hinder or even prevent creative development.

A literary environment may not always be healthy or pure. The characterization of the environment as requiring purity presupposes the possibility of an unhealthy environment in which phenomena such as hostility, slander, envy, or other negative influences may arise.

The metaphor of “air” implies a requirement for spiritual purity. The literary environment is not merely required to exist; it should be morally, spiritually, and intellectually healthy, honest, and constructive. Creative activity is thus presented as dependent upon an environment grounded in spiritual and ethical integrity.

Presuppositional Analysis of the Wise Saying

From the perspective of the types of presupposition, the following categories can be identified:

Existential presupposition: The existence of the creator and the literary environment is presupposed.

Lexical presupposition: The words “clean” and “pure” presuppose the possibility of an environment that is not clean or pure. Similarly, the expression “air that one breathes” emphasizes the essential nature of air and, metaphorically, the indispensable role of the literary environment.

Metaphorical presupposition: Just as air is a fundamental source of life for human beings, the literary environment is presented as a vital source of creative life and development. The metaphor therefore establishes a conceptual equivalence between air and the literary environment, emphasizing that a healthy creative environment is indispensable to the creator's intellectual and artistic existence.

Example 3

"A person's worth in this world is determined not by what they have gained, but by what they leave behind."

— O'tkir Hoshimov

In this wise saying, the author expresses the idea that a person's true value is determined not by what they acquire throughout their lifetime, but by the legacy, deeds, values, and lasting impact they leave behind in society after their departure from this world. The presuppositions underlying the statement can be identified as follows:

Every person may leave a trace after their death, although some may leave little or no lasting trace. Human life is transient, and the manner in which a person has lived is ultimately evaluated after they have passed away.

The concepts of "taking" and "leaving behind" are contrasted with one another. "Taking" may metaphorically refer to material benefits, wealth, status, and personal comfort, whereas "leaving behind" refers to good deeds, a positive reputation, a legacy, and contributions to others. Thus, the saying presupposes that human worth cannot be measured solely in material terms.

Society and other people remember individuals not merely for what they possessed or acquired, but for the legacy they left behind. A person's reputation and social value are therefore associated with the contribution they make to society.

Some individuals may live primarily for acquisition and personal benefit. The saying presupposes the existence of people who prioritize their own interests; however, such a way of life is presented as insufficient for attaining lasting value or recognition.

What a person leaves behind should ideally have a positive character. Although an individual may also leave behind a negative legacy, the wise saying implicitly rejects and disapproves of such a possibility by presenting positive contribution as the desirable form of legacy.

Human worth should not be measured by material wealth. The saying challenges the widespread assumption that wealth constitutes the primary measure of a person's value and explicitly rejects this perspective.

Classification According to Types of Presupposition

Existential presupposition: The existence of human beings and their participation in society are presupposed. It is also assumed that individuals acquire certain things during their lives and leave something behind after their departure.

Lexical presupposition: The verbs "acquired" and "left behind" presuppose the existence of the processes of acquisition and leaving something behind. Their lexical meanings activate the conceptual opposition between obtaining something and contributing something that remains.

Contrastive presupposition: The construction "not by what they have gained, but by what they leave behind" establishes a contrast between two previously distinguishable concepts: personal acquisition and social legacy.

Structural presupposition: The construction "is determined" presupposes that a person possesses a value or worth that can be evaluated according to certain criteria.

4. Conclusion

The analysis presented above demonstrates that wise sayings are concise linguistic units characterized by profound semantic content. Alongside their explicit meaning, or proposition, they contain important implicit layers of meaning, particularly implicature and presupposition. These two layers complement one another, enhance the communicative and aesthetic impact of wise sayings, and enrich their surface-level meaning. Therefore, the artistic and pragmatic power of wise sayings arises largely from the distinctive interaction and harmony between implicit meaning and presupposition. Presupposition enables a considerable amount of conceptual and cultural information to be conveyed without explicit verbal expression, while implicit meaning encourages the reader or listener to interpret the deeper philosophical and moral message of the saying.

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