

Linguistic Nature of Presupposition in American and Persian Newspaper Editorials

Alireza Bonyadi

English Dept. Faculty of letters, Urmia Branch, Islamic Azad University, Urmia, Iran

E-mail: bonyad80@perdana.um.edu.my

Moses Samuel

Department of Language & Literacy Education, University of Malaya, Malaysia

E-mail: mosess@um.edu.my

Abstract

Presupposition as a property of language use is generally exploited by language users. Its role in newspaper editorial is of special importance in that editorial writers tend to make use of this property to establish either a favorable or unfavorable bias throughout the text to manipulate their readers' opinion. Through content analysis of the selected editorials culled from the American newspaper, *The New York Times*, and the Persian English newspaper, *Tehran Times*, the present study aimed at identifying the linguistic nature of presupposition employed in the two *Englishes*. Revealing some genre-specific features of this media discourse, the results of the study also indicated that non-factive verbs and nominalization were the most frequently employed presupposition triggers. However, the papers were different in the frequency and extent of employing other linguistic structures for presupposition purposes.

Key words: Media discourse, Presupposition, Linguistic structures

1. Introduction

Presupposition as a general property of language use has been defined as those taken-for-granted, implicit claims inherent in the explicit meaning of a text or utterance (Richardson, 2007, p.63). These claims are realized textually through “words or phrases that assume the truth of the statements in which they are found” (Huckin, 2002, p.161). It has also been classified as a concept referring to “knowledge that language users must assume in order for what they say to make literal sense, on the one hand, and [to] the discourse presuppositions- the pieces of information that are taken for granted in a give discourse on the other hand” (Bekalu, 2006, p. 152).

The concept has also been defined as semantic and pragmatic. Semantic presupposition refers to propositions that the receiver of the message assumes to be true. Pragmatic presupposition, on the other hand, refers to “proposition that a speaker or writer has taken its truth value for granted in his statement. It consists of previous information about the knowledge, beliefs, ideology and scale of values that the addressee must be acquainted with in order to understand the meaning of an utterance”. (Alcaraz, 1999, p. 46)

Language users might employ presupposition as a kind of *avoidance* strategy. That is, presupposition allows language users not to mention all the details relevant to the topic. Referring to this function of presupposition, Finch, (2000) notes:

If we had to spell out all the details every time we speak, then communicating would be an extremely lengthy and tedious. Being able to assume a certain amount of knowledge on the part of the listeners makes it possible to take shortcuts. The degree of this shortcutting, however, depends on the context in which communication takes place.” (p.165)

In fact, as an inherent part of the language, “it is virtually impossible to utter or write a single sentence of any consequence without making some kind of assumption”(Bekalu, 2006 p.153). However, for critical discourse analysts, this aspect of presupposition, which can be studied like any other property of language, is not the main issue to focus on. What they are really interested in is the truth of those statements the language users assume on the part of the listeners or readers. That is, in some cases, the assumed knowledge or presupposition, is not true at all. Through this kind of presupposition, speakers or writers try to manipulate their listeners’ or readers’ understanding. Critical discourse analysts, then, focus “on those propositions that suggest that some propositions is (accepted to be) true, but in fact is not true at all, or at least controversial” (van Dijk, 2000, p.10).

This manipulative nature of presupposition has made it to be implemented as an influential persuasive device in media discourse. In this line, Bekalu (2006) has revealed the “existence of possible ideological reasons behind journalists’ use of *fair* and *unfair* presupposition” in media texts. He argued that news articles, in an effort to achieve a required cognitive effect on the part of their readers, try to obscure certain issues through unfair use presupposition. (p. 147).

The use of presupposition in newspaper advertisement has been studied by Yingfang (2007).

He has argued that due to presupposition's unique characteristics, it has been used as an oft-adapted language device to make up for the shortcomings brought by short time and space and attract consumers to do the needed inference themselves.

The other newspaper sub-genre in which the role of presupposition can be investigated is newspaper editorials. Classified as a type of media discourse, editorials belong to the large class of *opinion* discourse (van Dijk, 1995). They are different from both the news reports and advertisements in that they are supposed to present evaluations and comments about the news events already reported in the newspapers. As professional writing, editorials are of argumentative and persuasive nature, that is, their main objective is to influence the readers to accept the editorials' intended interpretation of news events.

Thus, presupposition as "assumptions that are 'built in' to an utterance, rather than directly stated" (Reah, 2002. p: 106) can be of importance in editorial texts as the choice the editorial writers make in expressing the information in an explicit or implicit way is usually effected by certain ideology they stick to. It is also a powerful way to influence the readers as the editorial readers usually tend to not examine the truth value of the hidden or indirectly expressed information. Editorial writers, then, tend to employ this textual strategy to convey their intended meaning without of course directly asserting it.

Based on the notion that different speech communities have different ways of organizing their ideas in writing reflecting their cultural thoughts (Kachura, 1995), the present study, then, sets out to shed light on the linguistic nature of presupposition in selected editorials of *New York Times*, as an example of American English, and the Persian English newspaper *Tehran times*, as an example of Persian English. The study, in particular, aims at identifying the linguistic devices employed to realize the presupposition in the editorial texts of the two newspapers.

2. Methodology

2.1 Data collection and analysis

The present study has employed a purposeful sampling for the data collection, mainly due to two reasons. Firstly, we aimed at focusing on only editorials of criticism as they are considered as a kind of argumentative writing. (Rafael, 1995) Secondly, as some editorials in *Tehran Times* had not been written by Iranians and so could not be the true representative of Persian English, there was a need to identify and exclude them from the corpus so as to focus only on non-native English writers.

Thus, by adopting a nonrandom purposeful sampling, the present study selected 40 editorial [20 culled from the electronic version of the Iranian English newspaper, *Tehran Times* at <http://www.tehrantimes.com/>, and 20 editorial headlines culled from the electronic version of The English daily newspaper, The *New York Times* at <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/18/opinion/> out of a large pool of editorials published daily over a specific span of time (April to September, 2008). The two newspapers are among the top broadsheets in terms of readership as stated by the official websites of the papers. Content analysis of presupposition in the selected editorials has been carried out in term of the categories described by Yule (2002).

2.2 Classification of the Editorials

For selecting the editorial to be included in the corpus, we used the classification proposed by Hall (2001). Based on the proposed classification, it is possible to sort the newspaper editorials into editorials of Criticism, Attack, Defense, Endorsement, Praise, Appeal and Entertainment. Editorials of criticism are defined here as editorials that aimed at criticizing policies and decisions that are considered as controversial by the newspaper staff. Since editorials of criticism are very similar to the editorials of attack, which are supposed to be much more forceful and “call for changes to be made immediately” (Hall, p.159), the two kinds of editorials in the corpus have been referred to as editorials of criticism. The main reason for selecting the editorials of criticism lies in the fact that these type of editorials usually have a social and philosophical commitment to the ideology of the publisher and to the interest of the readership (Rafael, 1995). This commitment, thus, makes them to be more argumentative and persuasive than the other types.

3. Analysis

The analysis of the selected editorials of the NYT revealed that presupposition, indicated by (>>) was realized through certain different linguistic structures described below. Note that the analysis focused only on those propositions that are controversial in terms of truth value.

3.1 Presupposition through Nominalization

Nominalization was found to be one of the linguistic structures the editorial writers employed to trigger presupposition. A certain *claim* expressed through the predicate of a declarative sentence like *The report was painful* is potentially open to challenge but when the same claim is embedded in a noun phrase like: *They were described in a painful report by the justice ...*, it would seem to be an established fact.

The following excerpts are examples of presupposition triggered by nominalization in NYT.

<u>Noun phrase</u>		<u>Presupposed meaning</u>
A desperate move	>>	The move is desperate
A real danger	>>	The danger is real
The repressive Taliban	>>	Taliban is repressive
Rising number of civilian casualties	>>	The number of civilian casualties is rising

(Ref. NYT 4)

Presupposition through nominalization was evident in the editorials of *Tehran Times* too. The following excerpts are examples of the cases.

<u>Noun phrase</u>		<u>Presupposed meaning</u>
The legitimate president of Sudan	>>	The president of Sudan is legitimate
Arms shipment to Darfur	>>	Someone has sent arms to Darfur

Interference by certain neighbors >> Certain neighbors are interfering

Nominalization is said to be a linguistic device that is used to establish cohesion and facilitates reference to previously mentioned concepts (Bhatia, 1993, p. 148). However, in the editorials it was employed as a persuasive device aiming at promoting a certain kind of ideology through indirect assertion of the propositions.

3.1.1 Existential Presupposition

In the present study those linguistic constructions that are associated with “a presupposition of existence” (Yule, 2000, p: 27) are referred to as Existential presupposition. This kind of presupposition was realized through *possessive* constructions. Although they are a part of nominalization process, for the sake of clarity, they are presented separately here. The following excerpts exemplify this kind of presupposition identified in the selected editorials of *The New York Times*.

<u>Existential phrase</u>		<u>Presupposed meaning</u>
Zimbabwe’s brutalized citizens	>>	Zimbabwe’s citizens are brutalized
Mr. Mugabe’s history of bad faith	>>	Mr. Mugabe has a history of bad faith
(Ref. NYT 4)		
Mr. Bush’s disastrous war	>>	Mr. Bush has started a disastrous war.
(Ref. NYT9)		
His administration’s inhuman policy	>>	He has inhuman policy in his administration
(Ref. NYT17)		

The following excerpts exemplify the existential presupposition in the editorials of *Tehran Times*.

<u>Existential phrase</u>		<u>Presupposed meaning</u>
Brown’s flattering speech	>>	Brown delivered a flattering speech
(Ref. TT 1)		
Iran’s peaceful nuclear activities	>>	Iran’s nuclear activities are peaceful
(Ref. TT 2)		
His economic corruption scandal	>>	Olmert has economic corruption record
(Ref. TT 10)		
Israel’s massacre of Palestinians	>>	Israel has massacred Palestinians
(Ref. TT 20)		

3.1.2 Factive and Non-factive Presupposition

The presupposed information after certain verbs can be categorized as either “factive” or

“non-factive” (Yule, 2000, pp. 27, 29). The difference between factive and non-factive lies in their semantic properties. That is, the “truth” of the sentential complement is presupposed in factive verbs but it is not presupposed in non-factive one (de Cuba, 2007, p.1). For example, the following excerpt represents the factive presupposition.

1) It is frustrating that Mr. Olmert ... waited so long to say these things. (Ref. NYT1)

As evident in the excerpt, the phrase *that Mr. Olmert waited ...so long to say these things* has been presupposed to be an established fact through the phrase *It is frustrating*.

However, the truth of proposition expressed in that-clause of the following excerpt has not been presupposed.

2) We *hope* she is willing to do what is needed to build a lasting peace. (Ref. NYT1)

Unlike the case in excerpt 1, the nonfactual verb, *hope*, in the above-mentioned excerpt in fact does not presuppose the truth of the proposition expressed through the underlined sentence.

In the *New York Times* editorials the factive presuppositions were triggered through the following verbs and phrases.

It is frustrating that ... , It is tragic that , it is a frightening reminder that ..., it is conceivable that ..., It is increasingly clear that ..., he made clear that ..., he grasped the idea that ..., acknowledge, declare, know, prove, admit, share, warn, insist, regret, remind, and indicate

The following excerpts exemplify how the factive presupposition were expressed in the editorials.

3) Wealthy countries *acknowledged* that poverty can be a fertile ground for terrorism and pledged to open their markets to exports from the world’s poorest nations. (Ref. NYT2)

>> (Poverty can be a fertile ground for terrorism ...)

4) Finally, late Monday, the United Nations Security Council issued its first condemnation of the violence sweeping Zimbabwe, *regretting* that the campaign of violence and the restrictions on the political opposition have made it impossible for a free and fair election to take place on 27 June. (Ref. NYT 14)

>> (The campaign of violence and the restrictions on the political opposition have made it impossible for a free and fair election to take place on 27 June.)

The non-factive presuppositions in The *New York Times* editorials were triggered through the following verbs and phrases.

It is unlikely that ..., he dropped hints that ..., he dismissed the idea that ..., he made it less likely that..., hope, say, warn, fear, declare, persuade, speculate, tell, agree, seem, claim, believe, declare, predict, charge

The following excerpts indicate how the editorial writers in the NYT employed non-factive

presupposition in the selected editorials.

5) Moscow *claims* it is merely defending the rights of ethnic minorities in South Ossetia and Abkhazia. (Ref. NYT 11)

>> The presupposition expressed through the underlined phrase (*That Moscow is merely defending the rights of ethnic minorities in South Ossetia and Abkhazia*) is assumed no to be necessarily true.

6) But no one *believes* that industry will invest in those new technologies until existing ways of producing energy become too expensive. (Ref. NYT 13)

>> The presupposition expressed through the underlined phrase (*Industry will invest in those new technologies until existing ways of producing energy become too expensive*) is not necessarily true.

The factual presuppositions were realized in the selected editorials of *Tehran Times* through the following verbs and phrases.

It was not first time that ..., there is no doubt ..., forget, warn, prove, express regret, realize, to be aware

The following excerpts reveal how factual presupposition has been expressed throughout *Tehran Times* editorials.

7) Surely, under such circumstances, the leaders of Hamas and Fatah have *realized* that Palestinians have no choice but to rely on themselves. (Ref. TT 10)

>> (Palestinians have no choice but to rely on themselves)

8) U.S. officials have *admitted* that the Islamic Republic's power has risen in the Middle East region to the point where it cannot be threatened easily by military strikes or economic sanctions. (Ref. TT 10)

>> (the Islamic Republic's power has risen in the Middle East region)

The non-factive presuppositions in *Tehran Times* editorials were triggered through the following verbs and phrases.

It is said that ..., it is believed that ..., there is no doubt that..., say, quote, vow, claim, tell, believe, state, proclaim, mean, suggest, show, announce, report, recommend

The following excerpts indicate how the editorial writers in *Tehran Times* employed non-factive presuppositions in the selected editorials.

9) Both Russia and Georgia *claim* the current conflict started after the other side violated a ceasefire in South Ossetia. (Ref. TT 2)

<< The presupposition expressed through the underlined phrase (the current conflict started after the other side violated a ceasefire in South Ossetia) is not necessarily true.

10) It is *believed* that Rice only traveled to the region to show that the U.S. supports the Israeli prime minister's policies. (Ref. TT 10)

<< The presupposition expressed through the underlined phrase (Rice only traveled to the region to show that the U.S. supports the Israeli prime minister's policies) is not necessarily true.

3.1.4 Counter-factive Presupposition

Moreover, editorial writers in some cases used linguistic structures such as some conditional sentences and certain phrases like *Instead of...* or *Until there is ...* which were found to be semantically reflecting a kind of counter-factive (contrary to the fact) presupposition. The following excerpts from *The New York Times* editorials represent the point.

11) *If Russia and China block action at the Security Council*, Europe and Washington will have to act without them. (Ref. NYT 3)

>> (Russia and China have NOT blocked action at the Security Council now)

12) *Until there is a clearly free and fair second round of the presidential election*, the only legitimate basis for a government of Zimbabwe is the outcome of the 29 March 2008 election. (Ref. NYT 14)

>> (There is NOT a clearly free and fair second round of the presidential election)

Counter-factive presupposition was also evident in the selected editorials of *Tehran Times*. The following excerpts represent this kind of presupposition in the paper.

13) *If the Westerners really believe in 'one person, one vote' democracy*, they should extend it to 'one country, one vote' for the dispute about Iran's nuclear program... (Ref. TT 3)

>> The westerners do not really believe in *one person, one vote' democracy*.

14) *If liquidity was a panacea*, there would be no need for the new Central Bank governor (Ref. TT 12)

>> Liquidity was not a panacea.

Presupposition through Adverbial/Relative Clauses

Adverbial and relative clauses were found to trigger the presupposition in the selected editorials. The following excerpts exemplify how presuppositions have been realized through the adverbial clauses in the selected editorials of both *The New York Times* and *Tehran Times*.

15) *While Mr. Bush and his party's nominee, John McCain, both want to stay the course until some undefined "victory" is achieved*, American voters have run out of patience. (Ref. NYT 9)

>> Mr. Bush and his party's nominee, John McCain, both want to stay the course until some undefined "victory" is achieved.

16) Israel has not been able to wipe out the Palestinians *after decades of slaughters and*

suppression. (Ref. TT 1)

>> Israel has slaughtered and suppressed the Palestinians for decades.

In the same way excerpts no. 17 and 18 represent the instances of presupposition through relative clause.

17) But Tehran's scientists are getting ever closer to mastering the skills *that are the hardest part of building a nuclear weapon.* (Ref. NYT 3)

>> Skills are the hardest part of building a nuclear weapon.

18) Iraq's Arab neighbors, *which are seeking to weaken the Maliki government,* are playing a significant role in this process. (Ref. TT 16)

>> Arab neighbors are seeking to waken the Maliki government.

Presupposition through "Parenthetical" and "Prepositional" and "Given" clauses

Triggering presupposition through parenthetical phrases was found to be one of the common ways of expressing presupposition in the selected editorials in the two papers as exemplified through the following excerpts.

19) Putin ruthlessly and efficiently engineered the selection — *none dare call it an election in any credible democratic sense* — of his successor. (Ref. NYT 20)

>> None dare call it an election in any credible democratic sense.

20) More than one million Israeli citizens were driven out of their homes, *a defeat whose repercussions are still being felt.* (Ref. TT 19)

>> It is a defeat for Israel that more than one million Israeli were driven out of their houses.

Some Prepositional phrases exemplified through the following excerpts were used to trigger presupposition in the two papers.

21) *Instead of defending Zimbabwe's people and their right to democratic change,* he (South African's president) has shamefully chosen to protect Mr. Mugabe. (Ref. NYT 14)

>> South African's president did not defend Zimbabwe's people and their right to democratic change.

22) Iraqi government forces tried to disarm the followers of Moqtada al-Sadr in Basra, *without taking heed of their influential role in maintaining security in Baghdad's Sadr City district.* (Ref. TT 16)

>> Followers of Moqtada al-Sadr have an influential role in maintaining security in Sadr City

Given Clauses, although limited in number, were used in the editorials as a way of triggering presupposition as presented below.

23) *Given Russia's oil wealth and nuclear arsenal,* the West's leverage is limited, but not inconsequential. (Ref. NYT 11)

>> Russia has oil wealth and nuclear arsenal.

24) *Given that North Korea has made this decision to serve its own national interests*, the same approach cannot be used for other countries. (Ref. TT 8)

>> North Korea has made this decision to serve its own national interests.

Lexical Presupposition and Iterative Verbs

Editorial writers also used certain verbs as source of presupposition. Verbs such as *begin*, *refuse*, *rekindle*, *reenter*, *establish*, *again*, *continue* and *cool* are examples of the verbs used in this category. The following sentences present the point.

25) He must tell his aides to *cool* the rhetoric and begin a high-level dialogue with Georgia. (Ref. NYT 19)

>> The rhetoric was hot and unfriendly.

26) Unfortunately, the evolving deals could well *rekindle* understandable suspicions in the Arab world (Ref. NYT 15)

>> There was already suspicious in the Arab world.

27) The 118-member Non-Aligned Movement *re-endorsed* Iran's right to the peaceful use of nuclear energy at a ministerial conference in Tehran on Wednesday. (Ref. TT 3)

>> Non-Aligned Movement has already endorsed Iran's right to the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

3.2 Presupposition through "Even"

Moreover, the editorial writers in some cases employed the word *even* to trigger presupposition. Excerpt no. 28 and 29 are examples of the point.

28) But Mr. Olmert was never willing to take *even* the tactical steps needed to improve the lives of ordinary Palestinians. (Ref. NYT 1)

>> Mr. Olmert had not taken any action at all towards improving the lives of ordinary Palestinians.

29) Iran is conducting its nuclear program under the full supervision of the UN nuclear watchdog and has *even* allowed the media to make videos of its nuclear facilities. (Ref. NYT 1)

>> The media is not usually allowed to make videos of nuclear facilities, but Iran has allowed them to do so.

3.2.1 Interrogative presupposition

Interrogative forms have been used in the editorials as a further source of presupposition. This kind of presupposition called as *structural presupposition* presupposes that the information embedded in the question itself is necessarily true (Yule. 2000, p: 28). The following excerpt clarifies the point.

30) *And how would Mr. Bush reach his own inadequate goals.* (Ref. NYT 13)

>> Mr. Bush has set inadequate goals.

31) *Should civilian neighborhoods become battlegrounds in the conflict between Georgia?*
(Ref. TT 2)

>> Civilian neighborhoods have become battlegrounds in the conflict.

Thus, as the above-mentioned excerpts revealed, editorial writers in both The NYT and TT did employ different linguistic structures and certain words to presuppose their own intended meaning. Table No. 1 and 2 tabulate the various linguistic constructions and certain words identified in the selected editorials of the NYT and TT respectively.

Table 1. The presupposition triggers identified in NYT editorials

Editorial No.	Factual verbs	Structural verbs	Non-factual verbs	Iterative verbs	Prepositions	Counter-factual	Lexical	Given	Existential	Even	Relative Clause	Adverbial clause	Parenthesis	Nominalization
1	2	-	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	4	-	1	3
2	1	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	4	3	-	1	3	-
3	4	-	3	-	-	3	-	-	1	-	2	1	4	-
4	3	-	5	-	-	3	-	-	3	-	3	1	2	5
5	4	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	1	2	3	8
6	-	-	3	2	2	-	-	-	2	-	1	-	-	4
7	1	1	4	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	-	1	1
8	-	-	3	-	1	2	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	6
9	1	-	5	-	-	-	2	-	3	-	2	3	1	5
10	1	-	3	-	-	3	-	-	2	-	-	1	3	1
11	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	1	2	3	2	5	-
12	1	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	1	1	4	3
13	3	1	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	3	1	4	2
14	2	-	2	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	3	-	4	-
15	-	-	1	1	1	1	1	1	-	1	6	2	3	2
16	1	-	3	2	-	-	-	1	1	-	3	2	4	2
17	1	-	5	-	1	1	2	-	1	-	6	2	4	3
18	-	-	2	1	2	2	-	2	1	-	1	-	3	-
19	2	1	2	-	-	1	1	-	3	1	-	2	2	-
20	1	1	4	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	2	1	2	1
Total	29	4	58	6	10	18	7	5	28	10	42	22	54	43

As Table No. 1 indicates, Non-factual presupposition (N=58) and Parenthetical presupposition were the most dominant ways for the editorial writers to trigger their presupposed propositions. Presupposition through Nominalization (N=43) and Relative

clauses (N=42) were the next preferred ways of revealing presupposition. Existential presupposition (N= 28) and presupposition through Adverbial clauses (N= 22) were also the next preferred ways of expressing presupposition.

Table 2. The presupposition triggers identified in TT editorials

Editorial No.	Factual verbs	Structural presupposition	Non-factual verbs	Iterative verbs	Prepositions	Counter-factual	Lexical	Given	Existential	Even	Relative Clause	Adverbial clause	Parenthesis	Nominalization
1	2	-	4	-	-	-	1	-	2	1	2	2	2	1
2	1	1	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	4	2	-	2
3	1	-	3	1	-	2	-	-	9	1	-	1	-	5
4	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	5	-	4	2	-	7
5	1	-	-	-	1	2	-	-		-	3	5	-	3
6	1	1	1	-	2	-	-	-		-	3	3	-	2
7	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	7	5	-	2
8	-	-	1	-	-	1	-	1	2	1	4	2	-	2
9	-	-	4	2	2	2	-	-	2	1	5	2	-	7
10	1	-	6	1	2	1	-	-	4	-	1	4	-	1
11	2	-	4	-	3	1	-	-	5	-	4	4	-	2
12	1	-	1	-	-	2	-	-		-	4	2	-	2
13	-	-	6	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	4	3	-	2
14	1	-	3	-	1	1	2	-	3	-	-	-	-	1
15	-	-	3	-	-	1	1	-		1	2	1	1	1
16	2	-	3	-	2	1	-	-	4	-	4	2	1	3
17	1	1	6	-	1	2	-	-	2	-	3	3	-	1
18	2	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	1	2	-	3
19	-	2	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	1	-
20	1	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	4	1	-	-
Total	18	5	52	5	14	18	4	1	43	7	62	46	5	47

Comparing the frequency of Non-factive verbs such as *claim*, *say*, *predict*, and *think* with that of Factive verbs (N= 29) such as *acknowledge*, *prove*, *demonstrate*, and *realize*, one might suggest that editorial writers tended to presuppose Non-factive propositions rather than Factive ones. This might be ascribed to editorial writers' intention for adding a sense of *uncertainty* or *neutrality* towards the presuppositions within the texts. Employing certain words like *even* (N=10), Iterative words (N= 6) such as *rekindle* and grammatical structures such as Interrogatives (N= 4) and Prepositional phrases (N= 10) for triggering presupposition revealed the importance of these textual strategies in enabling the editorial writers to make claims without actually asserting them directly in the editorial texts.

The different ways of triggering presupposition in the selected editorials of *Tehran Times* have been presented in Table 2.

As Table 2 indicates Relative clauses (N = 62), Non-factual verbs (N = 52), Nominalization (M = 47), Adverbial clauses (N = 46) and Existential presupposition (N= 43) were the most –frequently-employed ways for triggering presupposition in *Tehran Times*. Also, presupposition through Factual verbs (N =18), Counter factual verbs (N= 18) and prepositional phrases (N= 14) were among the preferred ways of triggering presupposition. The least preferred ways of revealing presupposition were Given statements (N = 1), Lexical presupposition (N = 4), Iterative verbs (N = 5) and Structural presupposition (N= 5).

4. Discussion

Textual analysis of the selected editorials in the two newspapers revealed that the editorial writers tried to persuade their readers through the process of presupposition. That is, they tried to embed implicit claims within the explicit statements of the editorial texts creating “the impression that their views disguised as truths represent given knowledge apparently shared by all discourse participant” (Schmid, 2001, p. 1545). The analysis indicated that the editorial writers triggered their intended presuppositions through certain linguistic structures. (cf. Table 1 & 2) Basically, the identified presupposition triggers in the two sets of editorials confirms the idea that in different languages, the linguistic structures triggering presuppositions seem to be parallel (Levinson, 1983, p. 216). However, the difference lies in the frequency and extension of certain triggers.

The most frequently employed linguistic means and structures for triggering presupposition in the editorials of NYT were found to be non-factive presupposition, presupposition through parenthesis and presupposition through Nominalization while editorial writers in *Tehran Times* preferred to mark the presupposition through mainly Relative clause, Non-factive verbs and Nominalization. The common preference of triggering presuppositions through Nominalization and Non-factive verbs in the editorials of the two newspapers might suggest the importance of these two linguistic means in marking the presupposition in newspaper genre in general and editorials in particular. Of course, nominal expressions are associated with other different professional genres such as scientific writing in which nominalization is used to mainly “facilitate concise reference” to new concepts (Bhatia, 1993, p: 153). However, the analysis of the selected editorials revealed that Nominalization in newspaper genre and specifically in editorials was mainly employed to convert a certain *claim* (which is usually expressed through a *subject – predicate structure*) into a supposedly shared-knowledge to both prevent the possible challenges towards the original claim and enhance the coherence of the text. The comparison of a *claim* with a piece of “shared-knowledge” might help clarify the point.

Claim: *The power-sharing agreement has been defined vaguely.*

Shared-knowledge: *A vaguely defined power- sharing agreement ...* (Ref. NYT 6)

As evident in the above examples the propositions in the claim sentence is potentially open to challenge, however the same propositions by being embedded in the subject position have

been changed into a shared- knowledge, presupposition, in the second sentence. That is the claim has been changed into a fact needing no challenge.

Furthermore, the commonality of employing *non-factive* presupposition in newspaper genre might be ascribed to editorial writers' intention to add a sense of *uncertainty* towards the presuppositions as the status of the news events and the news actors might be subject to further changes in the course of time.

The noticeable difference between the papers in terms of the linguistic structures triggering presuppositions was found to be in the extent of making presuppositions through Relative clause and Parenthesis. Based on the analysis, the second most frequently used linguistic structure for making presupposition in NYT was found to be Parenthesis. In other words, editorial writers tended to take for granted some claims within the parenthetical information which added a sense of freshness and immediacy to the text. Editorial writers in TT, however, in most cases preferred to make presupposition through Relative clause structures.

The other difference between the two newspapers was found to be the extent of employing Existential presupposition triggered through possessive construction. Editorial writers in TT made twice as much of this kind of presupposition than those in NYT. Through this kind of linguistic structures the editorial writers in both newspapers presupposed negative attributions of *Others* and positive ones of *Themselves*. Excerpts A and B exemplify the point.

A: *Negative Attribution: Zionist regime's plot in Africa* >>(The Zionist regime has plots in Africa.)

B: *Positive Attribution: Iran's peaceful nuclear activities* >>(Iran has peaceful nuclear activities)

As one can see, excerpts A presupposed a negative attribution (plot in Africa) of Others (Israel) and B a positive presupposition of Themselves (Iran).

The least frequently employed triggers of presupposition in NYT included *structural, iterative words, lexical and given statements* while in TT it included *given clauses, lexical, iterative words and structural* presuppositions. In general, the analysis of the selected editorials in the two newspapers in terms of presupposition triggers indicated that one of the generic specific characteristics of newspaper genre is triggering presupposition mainly through non-factive verbs, nominalization and subordinate constructions such as adverbial and relative clauses. Furthermore, referring to the study of Reah (2002) in which he identified only a limited number of presupposition markers namely *implicative verbs, definite and possessive articles* and *Wh-questions*, the present analysis indicated that in the context of the newspaper editorials the editorial writers might resort to other linguistic structures such as *prepositional phrases, relative and adverbial clauses*, and other less frequently employed devices identified in Tables 1 and 2.

5. Conclusion

Considering the important role of presupposition in manipulating readers' opinion in newspaper editorials, the present study set out to identify the linguistic structures employed in

the newspapers editorials for triggering the presupposed information. The analysis of the selected editorials from the two newspapers, *The New York Times* and *Tehran Times*, revealed some similarities and differences between the two papers. Based on the analysis, the most commonly used linguistic structures for triggering presupposition were found to be through Non-factive verbs and Nominalization in the two papers. The noticeable difference, however, between the two papers was found to be the extent of using parenthetical information and relative clauses. That is, editorial writers in NYT resorted to parenthetical information for triggering the presupposition while those in TT preferred to communicate the presupposed information through relative clauses.

Moreover, editorial writers in TT employed existential presupposition twice as much as those in NYT. The identified linguistic devices for triggering presupposition indicated how editorial writers made use of these devices to establish a favorable or unfavorable bias in the editorial texts so that they can manipulate their readers' point of view. Of course, editorial writers occasionally might resort to these linguistic devices in an honest way, however, this honest way of employing devices, as Schmid (2001) has put it, "is a prerequisite for their bluffing potential as nobody will be taken in by the bluffs of a player whose cards are never good (p. 1549).

While revealing how a certain language property, presupposition, can be realized in two "Englishes" - American and Persian- , the study aimed at assisting EFL teachers to guide their the students towards a more critical approach to language learning.

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