

# The Pragmatic Functions of Presupposition in Hebrew Advertisement

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## Abstract

This study examines the pragmatic functions of presupposition in Hebrew advertisements, and how advertisers use this strategy to attract the target audience. It also provides a historical overview of the linguistic and content evolution of Hebrew advertisement as a discourse reflecting societal behaviors and culture. The study aims to highlight the importance of employing presupposition in advertisement text, considering presupposition theory as one of the most significant theories in pragmatics, alongside speech act theory and argumentation theory. The research offers a critical analytical perspective on the functions of presuppositions utilized by advertisers and their role in shaping the collective consciousness of the target audience to influence them. The analysis also reveals the hidden intentions of advertisers behind their use of specific words and expressions. The research findings indicate that presuppositions serve several functions, including persuasion and influencing the audience, as well as interestingness. Furthermore, the findings reveal that presupposition is a communication tool based on logical inferences, and it has the ability to transfer highly focused implicit information and create a common ground with the audience.

**Keywords:** Presupposition, Hebrew Advertisement, Pragmatics, Types Of Presupposition, Functions Of Presupposition, Persuasion.

The study of advertisement language has gained importance in recent years because this language has become an essential tool that influences consumer behavior and contributes to building brand image. Advertisement language is not only used for conveying information, but also for creating an emotional connection with the audience, reflecting social and cultural values, and motivating consumers to take action. Advertisers use various linguistic techniques to tailor advertisement messages to the

characteristics of different target audiences, thereby creating effective interaction with the public.

In this research, we will discuss the pragmatic functions of presupposition in Hebrew advertisement based on previous studies such as Ge's study and examine how pragmatic theories, such as presupposition influence the creation of meaning and persuasion in different advertisement contexts.

## Advertising and Advertisement- Definitions and Differences

Lars defines the advertising as "an activity which normally involves language, the purpose of which is to sell a product or service (Lars, 1999, p. 4) .

E. V. Medvedeva, in her study "Advertising communication", defined advertising as a form of mass communication directed at groups of people in order to persuade them to support the advertiser's decision and action. "Advertising is a kind of mass communication in which informative-figurative, expressive-suggestive texts of a unidirectional and non-personal nature are created and distributed, paid by the advertiser and addressed to groups of people in order to encourage them to the advertiser's choice and action" (MounirA.S, 2023, p. 107).

According to Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English advertising is: "the business of encouraging people to buy goods by means of advertisements." (Longman, 1987, p. 15).

In Hebrew, there are misunderstanding in the translation of the English terms "Advertising" and "Advertisement" In other words, a confusion between the advertising activity as a system and the result of this activity. Accordingly, we often notice cases where someone translates the word "Advertising" as an advertisement rather than as advertising. In any case, we can distinguish between the two terms based on the theoretical definitions that we will review in detail during this discussion.

Accordingly advertisement can be defined as an organization of text that provides information about a product or service along with an anchorage of image that suggest some cohesion or logical linkage leading to some relevance or meaningful interpretation to the target consumers (Majumdar, 2006, p. 228).

In other words, advertising is a multi-system of symbols, beliefs, customs, and meanings through which social communities define and express themselves. It is based on prevailing norms and central values of the target audience

in different periods and situations (Zeevi & Sover, 2014, p. 63).

## What is The Pragmatics?

Charles Morris being influenced by Charles Sanders Peirce first used the term 'pragmatics' as a branch of semiotics in 1930s. Later this term was taken in linguistics for granted as a name of one of its core branches dealing with usage of language. Morris, in fact, isolates semiotics into three different branches— syntax, semantics and pragmatics. According to his interpretation, syntax deals with 'the formal relation of signs to one another', semantics denotes the study of 'the relations of signs to the object to which signs are applicable' and, finally, pragmatics incorporates the study of 'the relation of signs to interpreters (Arif, 2016, p. 30).

G.Yule says "Pragmatics a new cognitive science concerned with the study of meaning as communicated by a speaker (or writer) and interpreted by a listener (or reader)" (Rasheed, 2015, p. 23). He argues, "It has, consequently, more to do with the analysis of what people mean by their utterances than what the words or phrases in those utterances might mean by themselves. Pragmatics is the study of speaker meaning" (Yule, 1996, p. 3).

Leech in Oka (1993) explains that pragmatics is a science that studies the advertiser meaning connected with the situation. Leech also explains that pragmatics is connected with grammar and language utilization is connected with the certain social situation. The pragmatics connected with grammar is called pragmalinguistics, and that connected with certain social situation is called sociopragmatic (Haryani, 2017, p. 23).

In light of the above claim, it can be concluded that pragmatic research refers to the utterance produced by the speaker, which depends on the context. The utterance in pragmatics can be divided into two types: a performative utterance, meaning a statement that is simultaneously accompanied by an act or action, and a declarative utterance, meaning a statement used to announce something.

The term psycho-pragmatics was coined by Dascal in a lecture he delivered in a conference in Tel Aviv in 1978/9. He states that he coined the word for 'the branch of pragmatics that deals not with the social uses of language such as communication (a task reserved for 'socio-pragmatics') but with the mental uses of language (Hassan & Mahmood, 2018, p. 99).

Psycho-pragmatics, according to Dascal, refers to the psychological aspect of interpersonal communication. Psycho-pragmatics is meant to describe the mechanisms that enable the reception of signals, the understanding of speech acts, and the directions and shifts in conversation. In doing so, it also links the mechanisms of discourse, speech acts, and the entire field of pragmatics to the philosophy of mind (Sovran, 2005, p. 30).

Pragmatics is the study of aspects of meaning that semantic theory does not address. It deals with all aspects of meaning that are not directly related to the truth conditions of the utterance. Simply put: Pragmatics = Meaning minus truth conditions. Moreover, pragmatics involves the study of deixis, conversational implicatures and inferences, presuppositions, speech acts, and various aspects of discourse structure (Livnat, 2014, p. 150).

#### The Presupposition

Advertisers are concerned about the way in which advertising language serves the function of advertisement effectively without causing the recipients' repulsion and resistance. Therefore presupposition is frequently employed in order to enhance the informative and persuasive function of advertising language implicitly because pragmatic functions of presupposition in advertising English will contribute a lot to such a dilemma (Ge, 2011, p. 153).

The concept of presupposition is problematic; the perception of presupposition has undergone changes in the doctrines of philosophers and semanticists. Therefore, presupposition can be defined as an assumption made by the speaker regarding background information that is also assumed to be known by

the listener. This information can be pragmatic or based on logical reasoning (Nir, 1989, p. 91).

George Yule defines the presupposition "is something the speaker assumes to be the case prior to making an utterance. Speakers, not sentences, have pre-suppositions" (Yule, 1996, p. 25).

For Cruse, the term presupposition has been used to cover a very broad category of semantic and pragmatic phenomena that have an essential bearing on the understanding of utterances. Cruse sees presuppositions as inferences that are arising from the use of specific lexical or grammatical categories, they are not attached to them regularly, nor do these categories relate to each other in any systematic way (Cruse, 1986, p. 276).

Fairclough adds that the concept of presupposition has a long history in pragmatics. He maintains to say that this concept is originated in the philosophy of logic, where it is used to denote a special type of implicit information. Information which is explicitly stated and referred to as a "claim" or an "assertion". Any text is a combination of explicit meanings- what is actually 'said'- and implicit meanings- what is left 'unsaid' but taken as given, or presupposed. Presuppositions anchor the new in the old, the unknown in the known, and the contentious in the commonsensical (Fairclough, 1995, p. 107).

The communication between advertiser and reader can well be regarded as an implicit conversation, which occurs the moment a reader casts a glance at an advertisement. In communication, a speaker usually conveys new information on the basis of old or given information to hearers, and the pragmatic presupposition is part of the old information. On the basis of the presupposition, the advertiser can communicate his new information, usually the information about the advertised products or services, to potential consumers. Meanwhile, in order to attract and impress the consumers, presupposition is also frequently employed as an effective means to highlight some important

information (or focused information) (Pang, 2016, p. 126).

In Peccei's view, presupposition is inferences about what is assumed to be true". The fact that presupposition is a kind of inference contributed to the conciseness of advertising language because it needn't to be said on purpose and even can omit corresponding expression of such information accordingly. He identified numerous pragmatic functions of presupposition in advertising, which will be discussed in the following sections (Ge, 2011, p. 153).

### Types Of Presupposition

In his book *Pragmatics*, George Yule identified six types of presupposition, which are presented in the diagram below: (Yule, 1996, p. 26).

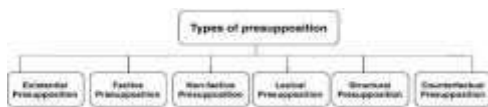


Diagram No.(1) Types of presupposition

#### 1. Existential Presupposition

This type relates to how we understand definite noun phrases. The English philosopher Bertrand Russell brought attention to this type of presupposition in an article he published in 1905, where he referred to the sentence: "The present king of France is bald."

Russell argued that this sentence should be understood as if it contains three sentences:

A. In 1905, there is a king in France.

B. In that year, there is only one king in France.

C. This king is indeed bald.

Sentences A and B create the presupposition regarding the existence of the "king of France." Sentence B specifically relates to the fact that the phrase "the king of France" is a definite noun phrase. The use of a definite form implies that the entity referred to by the definite phrase exists and can be pointed to (Livnat, 2014, p. 60). Another example of existential presupposition can be seen in "possessive phrases" or "possessive pronouns," such as:

"Miri's dog is beautiful" (Presupposition: Miri has a dog).

#### 2. Factive Presupposition

Crystal argues that the term 'factive' is used in the classification of verbs, referring to a verb which takes a complement clause and where the addresser presupposes the truth of the proposition expressed through the clause. Thus, they are called 'factive' because they presuppose the truth of their complement clause. Example:

"She didn't realize he was ill" (Presupposition: He was ill) (Crystal, 1989, p. 147).

Examples illustrate that the presupposed information following the verbs 'realize' and 'regret' is treated as a fact and is described as factive presupposition. Other examples of this set of verbs include: know; appreciate; saw; forced to; agree; make sense; amuse; bear in mind; etc. (Ibid.)

#### 3. Non-factive presupposition

Non-factive presupposition is one that is assumed not to be true. Taylor states that such a kind of sentences is called non-factive due to the fact that they do not presuppose the truth of the proposition expressed in the complement clause. Verbs like dream, imagine, and pretend as shown below are used with the presupposition that what follows is not true (Taylor, 1977, p. 192).

Example:

"I dreamed that I was rich" (Presupposition: I am not rich)

"He pretends to be ill" (Presupposition: He is not ill) (Yule, 1996, p. 29).

#### 4. Lexical Presupposition

The use of a single word, where the speaker/writer assumes that this word will be understood with an additional implied meaning. There are several key terms for this type, such as stopped, started, returned, again.

"Efrat returned to Jerusalem" (presupposition: Efrat had been in Jerusalem before).

"I stopped smoking" (Presupposition: I used to smoke in the past).

“Noa ate another cake” (Presupposition: Noa had already eaten at least one cake before).

“Omer called again” (Presupposition: Omer had already called at least once before) (Livnat, 2014, p. 59).

#### 5. Structural Presupposition

Structural presupposition refers to the assumption associated with the use of certain structures. The listener perceives that the information presented is necessarily true rather than just the presupposition of the person asking the question (Thoyyibah, 2017, p. 15).

“When did he died?” (Presupposition: He died)

“Where did you buy the jacket?” (Presupposition: You bought the jacket).

“Why did she cry last night?” (Presupposition: She cried last night).

#### 6. Counter-factual Presupposition

Counter-factual presupposition is the assumption that what is presupposed is not only untrue, but is the opposite of what is true, or contrary to facts (Thoyyibah, 2017, p. 15). Presuppose that information in the if- clause is not true at that time.

“If you were my brother, you would help me” (Presupposition: You are not my brother)

“If I were rich, I would buy a Mercedes” (Presupposition: I am not rich)

#### Functions of Presupposition

Through an in-depth review of the topic of presupposition, we have observed that presuppositions serve numerous pragmatic functions in Hebrew advertisement. In this section, we will highlight these functions in detail to understand one of the functional aspects of advertisements in the Hebrew language. As is well known, the purpose of advertising is to stimulate customers' desire to purchase products without using direct and explicit language. Consequently, it can be argued that the appropriate utilization of presupposition is a linguistic strategy to meet this requirement.

#### 1. Conciseness Function

Many advertisements contain pragmatic presuppositions that are not stated out. Take one of the most often-used syntactical structures in advertising language—imperative sentence for instance. The structure, like “Buy x” or “Do x”, and “you will...” in advertisements means something more like the structures “You need X”, “X will bring you...” or “You’ll find comfort and relief with X”. These presuppositions, unnecessary to be spoken out, make advertising language directly concise. And they bring immediate effectiveness to advertisers (Ge, 2011, p. 153). For example:



קנו 2 יח' ממוגוון גבינות פיראוס [1]  
קבלו גבינות תנובה 3% מתנה!

“Buy 2 units from the variety of Piraeus cheeses

Get Tnuva 3% fat cheese as a gift”

In the advertisement above, the advertiser addresses the target audience with an imperative sentence: “Buy.” The question arises: why does the advertiser use such a form of address, and is there perhaps a presupposition underlying this usage? As noted, presuppositions reside with the speakers and not in the sentences themselves. Therefore, the advertiser’s use of the imperative verb stems from a presupposition that assumes the target audience or recipients need this product—something that is not explicitly mentioned in the linguistic context.

#### 2. Interestingness Function

The essential and aesthetic components of advertisement language are considered a key factor in arousing the reader’s interest.

Presuppositions activated by presupposition triggers make the claim appear in various forms, for example:



[2] "סיוטה יאריס - רכב השנה באירופה 2021"

[2] "Toyota Yaris - Car of the Year in Europe 2021."

[2a] "Toyota Yaris - Car of the Year in Europe 2021."

[2b] "Toyota Yaris is not the Car of the Year in Europe 2021."

[2c] "Is Toyota Yaris the Car of the Year?"

From all the sentences above, it is implied that there is a car called "Toyota Yaris." Sentence (2a) claims that it is the Car of the Year in Europe 2021, sentence (2b) denies the claim that it is the Car of the Year in Europe 2021, and sentence (2c) questions whether it is the Car of the Year in Europe 2021. The fact that "Toyota Yaris" exists in all the above statements as a presupposition sparks the reader's interest (i.e., it becomes a point of interest), even if its status is denied or questioned in the European market.

### 3. Enlargement Function

A presupposition can increase the amount of advertisement information because the information in an advertisement is often condensed and compact. For example:



[3] "בית שמש בתנופה!"

מחפשים קריירה יציבה ורווחית?

"הגעתם ליעד!"

[3] "To Beit Shemesh is by Tnuva!"

Looking for a stable and profitable career?

You've arrived at your destination!"

The primary information in example (3) is embedded in the question itself, while the presupposition conveys the following: "You are looking for a stable and profitable job," and "You have not yet found a stable and profitable job." The example above contains two types of information: primary information and presuppositional information. Therefore, presupposition can expand the amount of information conveyed in an advertisement.

### 4. Emphasis Function

In communication, no matter in oral form or in written form, people convey certain information. The information can be classified into two kinds: given information and new information. As Halliday suggests the speaker will order given information before new information. The "unmarked" sequencing of information structure is taken to be "given-new", which means the arrangement of information is in a sequence that is from given information to new information. The information focus is often arranged at the last lexical item of the new information that is put at the end of an utterance. Since this order is the most common way in sequencing information units and the most common way in marking the information focus, it is called "normal focus" or "unmarked focus."

However, advertisers often adjust the position of information focus in order to highlight or emphasize certain information. They may make the information focus falls on the other lexical items rather than the last one in the information units. Presupposition keeps a close relationship with information focus. The change of presupposition information determines the change of information focus (Ge, 2011, p. 153). For example:



[4] "העם החליט - קפה עלית"

[4] "The people have decided - Elite Coffee"

In the example above, the advertiser emphasizes their claim (that the people have chosen Elite Coffee) as new information presented against a given background (that people like the beverage "coffee"). The focus of the new information is placed on the lexeme "the people" rather than on "the product or the brand." As noted, one of the functions of presupposition is emphasis, meaning the advertiser starts from the presupposition that the entire people have chosen the brand "Elite Coffee," and this decision is conclusive.

##### 5. Euphemism Function

Euphemism, in general, is a word or phrase used in specific language or an extralinguistic context to soften or conceal something unpleasant. As a result, euphemism prevents offense, as it no longer carries the negative connotation of the direct meaning (Rasheed, 2015, p. 82). Many advertisements aimed at overweight individuals, for example, avoid the direct use of harsh words related to weight gain

or loss that might offend these individuals. In such cases, advertisers employ the strategy of "euphemism," meaning the use of indirect methods and substitute words when presenting products or instructions to the target audience. For example, consider the following advertisement:



[5] "לרדת במשקל בקלות 10-40 ק"ג פחות!!!"

[5] "Lose weight easily: 10-40 kg less!!!"

This claim is based on the presupposition that "there are overweight people who have excess weight." Meanwhile, the claim addresses this issue indirectly through the use of the modal predicate "can lose" to avoid offending the feelings and dignity of individuals within this group.

##### 6. Concealment Function

Sometimes advertisers intentionally conceal certain promotional information in advance to achieve a specific effect on the recipients. Presupposition plays an active and significant role in hiding such information. For example, the advertisement by Toyota:





[6] "טויוטה קורולה 2023 מתעלה על עצמה כל " פעם מחדש"

[6] "Toyota Corolla 2023 surpasses itself time and again."

This phrasing contains at least two presuppositions: (1) "Toyota Corolla surpasses other global car brands or manufacturers," and (2) "Toyota Corolla 2023 surpasses previous Toyota Corolla models."

Regarding the first presupposition, it conceals the information that Toyota Corolla holds a superior position in the global car market. Meanwhile, the second presupposition conceals the information that the 2023 model of Toyota Corolla breaks the industrial record set by previous Toyota Corolla models.

In our view, the concealment function serves as a form of manipulation that could lead the recipient to act according to the advertiser's intent.

#### 7. Persuasion Function

The presuppositional information embedded in utterances plays a persuasive role in a subtle and concealable manner. One of the characteristics of advertising is the frequent use of questions, as questions inherently contain presuppositions with factual value. Advertisers skillfully leverage this phenomenon to promote their products. Let us consider, for example, the advertisement for the cosmetic center "Moran Ellzam":



[7] "איך תשמרי על עור פנים בריא גם בחורף?"

[7] "How can you keep your facial skin healthy even in winter?"

This advertisement carries the presupposition: "You maintain healthy facial skin throughout the year." If we negate the advertisement, saying, "You will not maintain healthy facial skin in winter," this negation does not refute the presupposition that "You maintain healthy facial skin" or "You maintain healthy facial skin in most seasons of the year."

Such a question lends the advertisement persuasive power due to the truth value of the presupposition. Questions like this intellectually stimulate the recipients, implying that winter poses a serious threat to healthy facial skin, leading to dryness. Advertisers exploit this stimulation to present their products as a solution to this danger.

#### Conclusion

The research findings reveal the impact of presupposition on advertisement texts, as they help uncover advertisers' hidden intentions in crafting their advertisements to influence the audience's awareness indirectly, without using explicit or direct language. By condensing information into a limited number of words, attention can be effectively captured, providing a concise context that is easy to read and simultaneously contains a large amount of information, enhancing the linguistic and visual aesthetics of the advertisement. The results also show that the presupposition serve as a tool for



manipulation, as the indirect transmission of information is used to create psychological effects on the recipient, such as sparking curiosity or triggering emotional responses, which helps guide consumers' thinking without them being aware of it. Additionally, presupposition can be used to expand and

confirm information in order to deliver complex advertising messages. The use of mitigation and concealment also helps avoid presenting sensitive or negative information. Overall, presupposition in advertisement assist in conveying messages in a clever and more effective way to influence the recipient.

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