

## A Semantic Analysis of Sentences, Utterances, and Presuppositions in Moana (2016)

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### ABSTRACT

*This article explores the roles and relationships between sentences, utterances, and presuppositions in creating meaning in the film Moana (2016). Using a qualitative semantic analysis approach, the study examines a selection of dialogues to reveal how these three linguistic elements interact with each other. The analysis indicates that the structural and functional differences between sentences (as grammatical forms), utterances (as actual contextual realizations), and presuppositions (as underlying meanings) are crucial for understanding the meaning intended by the speaker and interpreted by the listener. These findings underscore the importance of understanding these three concepts in the transition from semantics to pragmatics, particularly when analyzing meaning in audiovisual media, such as films.*

**Keywords:** Linguistics, Semantics, Sentence, Utterance, Presupposition, Film, Moana.

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## INTRODUCTION

Semantics is a branch of linguistics, which is the scientific study of language that involves analyzing its form, structure, and use in human communication (Yule, 2010, p. 1). This branch focuses on the study of meanings contained in language units. This study is not limited to lexical meanings but also encompasses how meanings are formed, interpreted, and understood within a broader context. In semantics, several basic concepts are fundamental in linguistic analysis, including sentence, utterance, and presupposition. Although these three concepts are interrelated, they have significant conceptual differences. The sentence refers to the grammatical structure of a sentence; utterance refers to the actual realization of that sentence packaged in a specific speech situation, while presupposition is the information assumed to be true by the speaker and listener before a statement is made.

Understanding the differences and relationships between these three concepts is crucial in deciphering meaning in communication. In the context of film, particularly animated films that combine verbal and visual aspects, analyzing the meaning in character dialogues provides a significant opportunity to explore how meaning is produced, conveyed, and received by the audience. The term "film" itself, according to Effendi (1986), refers to an audiovisual communication medium used to describe a message to a group of people gathered in a specific place. The film presents verbal interactions rich in context, expression, and nuance, making it an ideal medium for studying semantic phenomena.

This article seeks to provide both theoretical and practical insights into the concepts of sentence, utterance, and presupposition through a semantic analysis framework, utilizing the film *Moana* (2016) as a case study. By examining selected dialogues, this study illustrates how these three concepts are interwoven and collaboratively enhance the contextual meaning within the film's narrative. This research is likely to contribute to the advancement of semantic understanding in media, particularly in the realm of audiovisual content. It will provide valuable insights into the practical application of linguistic theory for readers.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Sentence

In linguistics, a sentence is a grammatically complete construction consisting of one or more clauses with a complete syntactic structure. A sentence is distinguished from an utterance in that it is an abstract form independent of any particular context. A sentence, Hurford, Heasley, and Smith (2007) inform us, is a theoretical linguistic entity traditionally examined within syntax and formal semantics. A sentence may be written or spoken, but attention is concentrated on the structure of the sentence, not on the fact of when or where it chances to be uttered.

### Utterance

An utterance is the actual realization of a sentence in a real communication situation. Yule (1996) differentiates a sentence as a linguistic unit from an utterance, which is the physical production of the sentence in social interaction. All utterances occur at a specific time, location, and circumstance and include prosodic elements such as intonation and stress. Speech can also be analyzed, Austin (1962) contends, in terms of speech acts, where what is said is not simply intended to inform but to carry out acts such as commanding, questioning, or requesting.

### Presupposition

The presupposition is one of the most essential notions in pragmatics. It is defined as assumptions or background knowledge shared by both speaker and hearer before the act of utterance. Levinson (1983) views presupposition as shared background knowledge that must exist for an utterance to be interpreted appropriately. For instance, the sentence "John's sister is a lawyer" presupposes that John has a sister. Karttunen (1973) also explains that presuppositions are triggered by specific linguistic structures, known as presupposition triggers, such as active verbs (e.g., "know," "realize"), relative clauses, and temporal clauses. Presuppositions must be understood to avoid ambiguity and to grasp the implied meaning in speaker interaction.

## METHODOLOGY

This research employs a descriptive qualitative method to analyze the forms of Sentence, Utterance, and Presupposition found in the dialogues of the film Moana (2016). According to Bogdan and Taylor (Nugrahani, 2008), qualitative research is a procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from observed individuals and their behaviors.

The data in this study were obtained from the film script of Moana, which was downloaded from an online source. The steps of data collection included searching for and accessing the film script, identifying dialogues that contain sentences, utterances, or presuppositions, and selecting and classifying these according to their categories. The analysis was conducted by examining the grammatical structure, speech functions, and implied meanings within the sentences.

For example, the sentence "I am Moana of Motunui" is categorized as a sentence because it has a complete structure consisting of a subject, predicate, and complement. The phrase "And thank you!" is classified as an utterance, as it may lack complete grammatical structure but still conveys meaning within the context of communication. Meanwhile, the sentence "I thought we could make it" is an example of presupposition, as it implies an underlying assumption that an attempt had been made but failed. From the analysis, a total of 20 data samples were identified, consisting of 10 sentences, five utterances, and five presuppositions. Each type has distinctive characteristics in terms of both structure and communicative meaning.

## FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

- **Sentence**

*You are the next great chief of our people.*

Type: Declarative Sentence

Analysis: Reflects the moment when Moana's father expresses his vision for her future role as a leader. This line is not merely a statement of fact but a declaration of expectation and responsibility. It reveals that her father envisions her as the rightful successor who will carry on the legacy and leadership of their people. Implicitly, it shows that he places his hope, trust, and the weight of tradition on Moana's shoulders. According to Quirk et al. (1992), declarative sentences are characterized by having the subject placed before the verb and lacking inversion and are primarily used to make statements. This sentence fits those criteria and functions to affirm his expectations, marking it as a declarative sentence.

*I am Moana of Motunui.*

Type: Declarative Sentence

Analysis: This line is spoken by Moana during a pivotal moment in the film when she confronts Te Kā, the lava monster, and is classified as a declarative sentence according to Quirk et al. (1992), who state that declarative sentences are used to convey information, typically structured with the subject placed before the verb and without inversion. This sentence follows the structure:

Subject (I) + Linking Verb (am) + Subject Complement (Moana of Motunui).

It is neither a question nor a command, and it ends with a period, further confirming its declarative nature.

*We were voyagers.*

Type: Declarative Sentence

Analysis: This line is spoken by Moana's grandmother, Gramma Tala, as she reveals the hidden history of their ancestors and is categorized as a declarative sentence based on Quirk et al. (1992), who define declarative sentences as those used to convey information, with the subject preceding the Verb and without inversion. This sentence follows the structure:

Subject (We) + Linking Verb (were) + Subject Complement (voyagers).

It is used to state a fact or express an identity, and it concludes with a period, which further indicates its declarative form.

*You're not my hero*

Type: Negative Declarative Sentence

Analysis: This line is spoken by Moana to Maui during a moment of emotional tension. After Maui disappoints her and shows reluctance to help restore the heart of Te Fiti, which also is a negative declarative sentence, based on the theory by Quirk et al. (1992), which states that declarative sentences typically follow the pattern of a subject preceding the verb without inversion and are used to convey information or make statements. This sentence follows the structure: Subject (You) + Verb (are) + Negation (not) + Subject Complement (my hero). The presence of the negation "not" classifies it as a negative declarative, as it denies a statement rather than affirms it

*You tried to drown me!*

Type: Declarative Sentence

Analysis: In the film Moana, this line is delivered when Moana confronts Maui after he throws her off the boat to abandon her. Her exclamation reflects her shock. Also, this is a declarative sentence, as it conveys information in the form of a statement, albeit expressed with strong emotion or anger. According to Quirk et al. (1992), declarative sentences are characterized by having the subject placed before the verb, lacking inversion, and being primarily used to make statements. This sentence follows the structure:

Subject (You) + Verb Phrase (tried to drown) + Object (me).

Although it ends with an exclamation mark, the sentence is not interrogative or imperative but rather a forceful assertion.

*He stole the heart of Te Fiti.*

Type: Declarative Sentence

Analysis: This line appears in Moana when characters explain Maui's actions, specifically when it is revealed that Maui stole the heart of Te Fiti, which led to environmental decay and imbalance in the world. This is a declarative sentence based on the theory by Quirk et al. (1992): "Declarative sentences have the subject placed before the verb and lacks inversion. They are primarily used to make statements." In this

sentence, the subject "He" comes before the verb "stole," and the sentence is used to state a fact or information. Therefore, it fulfills the criteria of a declarative sentence.

*You will board my boat.*

Type: Declarative Sentence

Analysis: In this scene from Moana, Moana asserts her authority and tells Maui that he will help her restore her heart by boarding her boat. This is a declarative sentence, according to Quirk et al. (1992), which states that "declarative sentences have the subject placed before the verb and lack inversion. They are primarily used to make statements." The subject "You" precedes the verb phrase "will board," fulfilling the structural criteria of a declarative. However, contextually, this sentence functions as a command; Moana is not merely stating a future event but directing Maui's action, thus giving the sentence an imperative function despite its declarative form.

*The ocean chose you.*

Type: Declarative Sentence

Analysis: In this pivotal scene from Moana, the characters reveal to Moana that The ocean specially chose her to restore the heart of Te Fiti. This is a declarative sentence based on the theory of Quirk et al. (1992), which states that "declarative sentences have the subject placed before the verb and lack inversion. They are primarily used to make statements." In this sentence, the subject "The ocean" comes before the verb "chose," and the sentence is used to convey information or a revealed truth. Therefore, it meets both the structural and functional criteria of a declarative sentence.

*The water is sweet inside.*

Type: Declarative Sentence

Analysis: In this scene from Moana, Moana discovers that the water inside a coconut is sweet as part of her learning experience about her island's natural resources. This sentence is a declarative sentence based on Quirk et al. (1992), who state that "declarative sentences have the subject placed before the verb and lack inversion. They are primarily used to make statements." The subject "The water" precedes the linking verb "is," and the sentence provides factual information about the water's taste. It satisfies both the structural and functional aspects of a declarative sentence.

*The island gives us what we need.*

Type: Declarative Sentence

Analysis: In an early scene from Moana, this line is spoken to emphasize the island's abundance and how it provides for the people's needs, reinforcing the villagers' belief in staying within their safe environment. This is a declarative sentence based on the description by Quirk et al. (1992), which states that "declarative sentences have the subject placed before the verb and lack inversion. They are primarily used to make statements." The subject "The island" precedes the verb "gives," and the sentence delivers factual or perceived information. Structurally and functionally, it fits the definition of a declarative sentence.

- **Utterance**

*"I'm here 'cause you stole the heart of Te Fiti!"*

Type: Expressive Utterance

Analysis: This utterance is spoken by Maui when he confronts Moana, expressing frustration and blame. According to Yule (1996), expressive utterances are used to express the speaker's psychological state or emotional reaction to a situation. In this case, the speaker (Maui) expresses anger or accusation

regarding the listener's (Moana's) involvement with the heart of Te Fiti. The emotional tone, combined with the reason ("...you stole the heart..."), reflects the speaker's attitude toward the event. Therefore, this is categorized as an expressive utterance.

*"We have to find Maui. We have to restore the heart!"*

Type: Directive Utterance

Analysis: This utterance is spoken by Moana as she asserts the urgent need to take action and begin the mission to save the world. According to Yule (1996), directive utterances are intended to get the hearer to do something. Although phrased declaratively, Moana's words function as a strong suggestion or call to action. By stating, "We have to...", she is urging both herself and others to find Maui and restore the heart of Te Fiti. Thus, this utterance performs the function of a directive.

*"But why would it choose me?"*

Type: Representative Utterance

Analysis: This utterance is spoken by Moana when she questions the ocean's decision to choose her for the mission of restoring the heart of Te Fiti. According to Yule (1996), representative utterances are used to convey the speaker's belief about the truth of a proposition. In this case, Moana is expressing doubt and disbelief, revealing her internal state of uncertainty. Though framed as a question, the utterance functions to represent her perspective and evaluation of the situation, making it a representative speech act.

*"And Thank you!"*

Type: Expressive Utterance

Analysis: This utterance is an example of an expressive speech act based on Yule's (1996) theory. Speakers use expressive utterances to express their psychological state or feelings toward a situation or listener. In this case, the speaker directly conveys gratitude to the listener, making it a clear example of an expressive utterance.

*"You're welcome."*

Type: Expressive Utterance

Analysis: This utterance is an example of an expressive speech act based on Yule's (1996) theory. The phrase "You're welcome" functions as an expression of the speaker's attitude, often kindness, humility, or politeness in response to someone's gratitude. It conveys a social courtesy, making it a clear example of an expressive speech act.

- **Presupposition**

*That is not a heart. It's a curse*

Type: Existential Presupposition

Analysis: In this scene from Moana, the characters realize that the object they have is not the heart of Te Fiti but rather a dangerous curse that has caused destruction. This line contains presupposition, according to Yule (2006, p. 133).

The speaker assumes that the listener already knows what "that" refers to, namely, a heart. However, the speaker denies this and instead asserts that the Object is a curse. The presupposition here is existential: it assumes the existence of the entity "heart" being discussed. Therefore, this line contains an existential presupposition because it relies on the assumption that the heart exists as a known entity for the utterance to be meaningful.

*I thought we could make it.*

Type: Factive Presupposition



Analysis: This line presupposes a fact based on Yule's theory (2006, p. 133). The use of the verb "thought" implies that the speaker once believed or was confident that "we could make it" (succeed or achieve something). Even though the outcome may have been a failure, the utterance assumes that this belief or expectation existed in the past. This makes the line an example of a factive presupposition, where the presupposition is that the event or state of "thinking" or "believing" occurred, regardless of the actual outcome.

*We're never making it to Fiti. This mission is cursed.*

Type: Existential Presupposition

Analysis: In this context, the speaker assumes that there is an ongoing mission or journey to Fiti. According to Yule (2006, p. 133), presuppositions are implicit assumptions that must be accepted as accurate for the utterance to make sense. This line presupposes the existence of the mission to Fiti but implies that the mission will fail or never be completed. Therefore, it contains an existential presupposition because it assumes the existence of the journey as a known fact before expressing doubt about its success.

*We'd never make it without my hook. Not past Te ka.*

Type: Existential Presupposition

Analysis: According to Yule (2006, p. 133), this line contains presupposition because it assumes specific background knowledge. The speaker believes the existence of a goal or destination to be reached ("We'd never make it") and an obstacle called Te Ka ("Not past Te Ka") must be overcome. Additionally, the line presupposes that the speaker's hook is essential for overcoming this obstacle. These assumptions are implicit in the utterance, making it an example of existential presupposition as it relies on the existence of these entities and circumstances being already known or accepted.

*If you wear a dress and you have an animal sidekick... you're a princess.*

Type: Existential Presupposition

Analysis: According to Yule (2006, p. 133), this line contains presupposition because it implicitly assumes specific background knowledge. The conditional statement presupposes the existence of the concepts of "wearing a dress" and "having an animal sidekick" as typical attributes linked to being a princess. The statement suggests that if these conditions are met, the person is recognized as a princess. These assumptions are implied rather than stated explicitly, making it an example of existential presupposition, where the categories and attributes are assumed to be known and accepted by the listener.

## CONCLUSION

Understanding the differences and relationships between sentences, utterances, and presuppositions is crucial for analyzing meaning in film dialogue. Through a qualitative semantic analysis of the film Moana (2016), it is evident that each linguistic element plays a distinct yet complementary role in constructing and conveying meaning. Sentences provide the grammatical framework; utterances reflect speech acts that are context-dependent, while presuppositions reveal the implicit assumptions shared by the speaker and the listener. Together, these three elements form a comprehensive picture of how meaning operates not only structurally but also pragmatically. These findings underscore the importance of both semantic and pragmatic approaches in language studies, especially in analyzing meaning within audiovisual media such as films.

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