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# Presupposition and Assertion of The Main Character in *The School for Good and Evil* Novel

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| Article Info | ABSTRACT |
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| *Keywords:*<br><br>Assertion, Fantasy Novel, Presupposition | In writing a literary work, every sentence created by a writer has a purpose of conveying information to the readers, which can be understood by analyzing the presupposition and assertion within each sentence. In this sense, the present study aims on examining how information is organized in the fantasy novel *The School for Good and Evil*, specifically portraying through the main character. The data for this study was taken from the main character's utterances within dialogues in the novel, limited to the sentence-level forms. To collect the data from the novel, a documentation method with stratified sampling technique was applied. In this case, the story was divided into five different plot stages with five utterances were selected for each strata, resulting in a total of 25 data for the analysis. Additionally, the present study also applied a qualitative method following the theory of information structure by Lambrecht (1994). These elements were examined to understand how information is structured and what is assumed to be known or introduced as new to the readers. In the result, it revealed that the writer intentionally organize sentences to share information regarding the story in the main character's utterances throughout the narrative. |

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## 1.    INTRODUCTION

In the context of communication, each sentence is intentionally structured by the speaker to transfer information to the hearer. According to Darmasetiyawan (2010), information arranged in a sentence is influenced by the sentence's patterns within the text. In this sense, the way a sentence is structured to present information can be identified by analyzing the information structure in discourse analysis. The term information structure is known as the subfield of linguistic research concerned with the ways speakers encode instructions to the hearer on how to process the message relative to their temporary mental states (Matić, 2015, p. 95). In addition, the theory of information structure was proposed by Lambrecht (1994), who asserted that information is typically conveyed through a proposition in a combination of old and new elements, derived from prior knowledge. He referred to this old and new information as the presupposition and assertion.

In his theory, Lambrecht (1994, p. 5) has defined the term information structure as the component of sentence grammar that pairs propositions with lexicogrammatically structures based on interlocutors' mental states, who used and understood it as units of information in a given discourse. In this sense, what is the speaker's want to say and how it is structured is determined by their assumptions about what the hearer already knows, expects, or needs to know. Based on Lambrecht's (1994, p. 6) theory, there are three most important elements in information structure, including (i) presupposition and assertion, (ii) identifiability and activation, and (iii) topic and focus.

Moreover, According to Lambrecht (1994, p. 51), information is typically compiled in a sentence by combining the old and new elements of information. In this context, the speakers are believed to convey certain information by structuring their sentences based on what is known and what is new to the hearer. In his framework, Lambrecht (1994, p. 36) asserts the fundamental concept of old and new information as propositional information, which consists of two components, namely presupposition and assertion. Basically, presupposition is the set of propositions present lexicogrammatically in a sentence that is assumed to be known by the hearer at the time the sentence is uttered (Lambrecht, 1994, p. 52). Meanwhile, Lambrecht (1994, p. 52) defined assertion as the propositions in a sentence that are expected to be known by the hearer as a result of hearing it uttered. In this sense, the concept of presupposition and assertion is helpful in understanding the information that is intended to be transferred by one individual to another.

Additionally, these elements of information structure is significant in creating an effective communication. In written communication, for instance, information can be manifest in a form of narrative story where a writer carefully produce sentences to convey information regarding plots and events of a story to the reader. In this sense, a novel writer typically need to ensure that every sentences arranged in a novel covey the information about the plot, conflict, and characterization in which accessible to be interpreted by the readers. Specifically, to be able to transfer information regarding the storyline of a novel, a writer used to create every lines of sentences based on what is already known and hat is new information to the readers. As a result, the theory of presupposition and assertion proposed by Lambrecht (1994) can help the analysis of this phenomena occurs in a novel. Despite the fact that Lambrecht (1994) did not mentioned that this theory could be applied in the analysis of written communication between writer and reader through a novel, it is nevertheless possible to analyze this phenomenon in a narrative story as it focuses the analysis on sentence structure in the combination of words and context. Consequently, the sentences in a literary work such as novel are able to be examined through applying this theory, and referring the term speaker and hearer to become the writer and reader.

Furthermore, the analysis of presupposition and assertion can be identified in various phenomena of occurrences, including in a novel. This literary genre offers a variety of linguistic phenomena as it has a complex narrative structure, which includes lines of narration, monologue, and dialogue. From the lens of information structure, the novel portrays indirect communication between the writer and the reader. In every line of sentences and dialogue, the writer conveys certain information regarding the plot of the story to the readers. In this case, the analysis of presupposition and assertion in a novel can be explored through the character's utterances in the narrative as they also play a significant role in terms of supporting the story. Consequently, understanding the way information is structured within the utterances of characters is crucial for the interpretation of information contained in the novel.

In this essence, the theory of information structure provides novel lens for analyzing the information shared by writers through examining the presupposition and assertion in a sentence. Additionally, several research studies have previously conducted similar analyses in terms of presupposition, specifically in a literary work. An undergraduate thesis written by Damayanti (2023) examined the types of presupposition using the theory by Yule (1996) in the romance novel *Kisses and Croissant*. Next, another research study in the form of undergraduate thesis was also conducted by Perkasa (2020), in which the analysis focuses on identifying the presupposition type following the theory proposed by Yule (1996) in the movie script *The Maze Runner 3*. Similar to the present study, both of these studies focus on the topic of presupposition in the character's utterances in a literary work. However, it is notable that neither of these previous studies explored the analysis of presupposition and assertion by applying the theory of information structure proposed by (Lambrecht, 1994).

To be precise, the present study analyzed presupposition and assertion in a fantasy novel entitled *The School for Good and Evil* within the framework of information structure theory as proposed by Lambrecht (1994). Additionally, the present study aimed to analyze the presupposition and examine the assertion presented of the main character in the novel *The School for Good and Evil*. As it explored the theory of information structure to analyze how the writer presented information to the reader through the main character's utterances in a novel, this present study is relevant and significant to discuss. Additionally, this study is considered urgent due to the limited research applying this theory to literary texts. In this case, this study contributes to the broader understanding of how information is constructed and presented in literature. Consequently, the present study will extend the application of the linguistic theory of presupposition and assertion in narrative discourse.

## 2. METHODS

In analyzing the presupposition and assertion in a literary work, the present study chosen the English version of the fantasy novel entitled *The School for Good and Evil*. This novel was written by Soman Chainani and published in 2013 by HarperCollins Publishers in New York. Additionally, the novel also published in six book series, and the present study chosen the first book to be analyzed as it shows the fundamental information regarding the initial story that will be continued until the rest of the other book series. Moreover, it is also provides a range of utterances that contain presupposition and assertion necessary to collect the data for this study. Essentially, the data in this novel was taken from utterances of the main character, Sophie, in the novel *The School for Good and Evil*. Furthermore, the utterances selected to be analyzed in this study limited to the sentence-level form of utterance.

In conducting the analysis of presupposition and assertion in a fantasy novel, this study will apply a qualitative research method to the process. To collect the data, this study applied the documentation method with a stratified sampling technique. According to Martínez-Mesa et al. (2016, p. 329) stratified sampling technique refers to the type of sampling here the target population is divided into separate strata or categories, and each individual in the population has an equal possibility to be chosen as a participant since this technique select the participants for the study randomly. For this study, specifically, the data from the main character's utterances were divided the strata into five different categories based on the plots of narrative. Additionally, the development of

plot occurs in a novel can follow the plot diagram proposed by Freytag as cite in Hasanah (2023, pp. 14–20), these stages in plots including exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution.

In this context, the five utterances were selected randomly for each strata, resulting to the total of 25 data were analyzed within this study. There were several steps to collecting the data in this study, including (1) First, reading *The School for Good and Evil* novel, (2) observing all of the main character's utterance within the novel, (3) highlighting all utterances that demonstrate the application of presupposition and assertion in the novel as the population, (4) identifying the strata into five categories based on the five stages of plots that used to divide the population, (5) determining the total of 5 utterances as sample size for each stratum, (6) selecting the utterances in each stratum randomly, (7) note-taking the main character's utterances from each stratum that demonstrate the use of presupposition and assertion.

Moreover, the data were analyzed by using qualitative methods by following the theory of information structure proposed by Lambrecht (1994), which focusing on the analysis of presupposition and assertion. Additionally, the analysis also supported by the context surrounding the utterance, the topic, and the focus, as they help the identification of information within a sentence. Furthermore, the data analyzed by following a series of steps, including (1) identifying the context surrounding the utterances to be able to understand the topic, focus, presupposition, and assertion from the utterances of the main characters, (2) identifying the topic and focus that presented within the main character's utterances from the novel as the important elements of the information structure to examine presupposition and assertion, (3) investigating the main character's utterance in which part of the utterance belongs to the old information and which part of the utterance conveyed the new information for the analysis of presupposition and assertion, (4) analyzing the presupposition presented in the main character's utterances by following the theory proposed by Lambrecht (1994) descriptively, (5) analyzing the assertion based on the theory proposed by Lambrecht (1994) conveyed within the main character's utterances descriptively. Finally, the data in this study were presented using the informal method with textual presentation technique.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the stratified sampling technique used in collecting the data, there were 25 data collected for the analysis in this study. Essentially, these data were classified into five strata following the five stages of the plot according to Freytag's pyramid (as cited in (Hasanah, 2023, pp. 14–20). The analysis of presupposition and assertion according to Lambrecht (1994) theory of the main character in *The School for Good and Evil* novel were explained as follows.

### Exposition or Introduction
Data [4-1]
***"Your mother's never at home when I visit"*** (Chapter 1, Page 14)
Context:

In this scene, Sophie and Agatha sitting side by side while Sophie keep talking about fantasy land, the places outside of their village. She brought up a question about Agatha's parents that she never seen. She thought maybe Agatha's father has found a way out from their village that surrounded by woods and he waited for her on the other side. However, Agatha disagree, she believed her father was died. Still, Sophie shift the question about Agatha's mother existence.
Topic: Your mother (Agatha's mother)
Focus: never at home

In the utterance above, there is no presupposition that can be taken for granted about the topic of Agatha's mother. One of the reason this could happened is that the topic regarding Agatha's mother is firstly brought up in the novel through this sentence. It is just introduced to the readers. Essentially, it is possible for a sentence to not have a presupposition, especially when the topic is newly introduced to the reader. Lambrecht (1994, p. 233), in his explanation about the sentence-focus structure, asserts that there is an absence of presupposition in the structure of sentence-focus since the assertion extends over the entire proposition. In this case, when the sentence is stating that had not mentioned before, it can be inferred that there will be no presupposition evoked in the sentence.

On the other hand, the sentence above proposed a full assertion to the readers. Based on the utterance, the assertion that is expected to know by reading the sentence is that whenever Sophie visit Agatha's home, her mother is never been presence. This assertion can be identified through the use of the word *never* in the phrase *never at home* that implying someone's existence in the house have not been seen at all. Consequently, this assertion increases the reader's knowledge about Agatha's mother and her existence that has not been seen by Sophie whenever she visit the house.

### Rising Action
Data [4-2]

*"He's King Arthur's son?" Sophie breathed.* (Chapter 5, Page 79)
Context:

In this scene, students from both schools are gathered together in the Theatre of Tales for the Welcoming. Before it started, the Ever Boys, refer to the boys that belongs to the Good School, made a special entrance and threw roses to the Ever Girls. In that moment, one boy came last then the others, the finest among all. Hester mentioned that his name is Tedros. By looking at his appearances and the sword he carried when made the entrance, Sophie realized who he is, she knows that sword with lion crest from the storybook she read before.
Topic: He (Tedros)
Focus: King Arthur's son

In the interrogative sentence above, Sophie was ensuring about the boy named Tedros. Based on her question, it can be presupposed that there is a person named King Arthur and he has a son. This presupposition can be identified through the use of possessive construction ('s) in the phrase *King Arthur's son*, which implying a son belongs to King Arthur, that he has a son. This structure implied that the information regarding King Arthur has a son is assumed by the writer to be taken for granted by the readers as this sentence were mentioned in the novel.

Furthermore, the above interrogative sentence also showing new information to the readers regarding the son of King Arthur. From the sentence, the assertion is that Tedros is the son of King Arthur. It can be understood through the use of personal referent *he* that referring back to the topic under discussion between Sophie and Hester, which talking about Tedros. Moreover, from the context this information can also be inferred, as the writer stated *a sword with a lion crest she knew from story book. A sword named Excalibur.* From this context, Tedros as King Arthur's son can be inferred through the existence of Excalibur, which is King Arthur's sword.

**Climax**
Data [4-3]
*"He'll know in a few more minutes."* (Chapter 21, Page 335)
Context:

In this scene, the setting was taken inside the Blue Forest during the Trial by Tale. Since Sophie has the lowest score rank, she has to come inside the forest first, while Tedros will come the last because he has the highest score rank. Agatha help Sophie to go through many challenges in the Blue Forest, including saving her from a murder plot by all of the Trial's students. In order to survive, both Sophie and Agatha were turned themselves into shrubs, waited until the sun rises. However, Tedros suddenly appeared. Agatha told Sophie to go to him, but she refuse.
Topic: He (Tedros)
Focus: will know in a few more minutes

In the utterance above, the information that is assumed to be taken for granted by the reader is Tedros did not know the fact that Sophie is there. From the context, the readers already has a knowledge that both Agatha and Sophie turned themselves as a shrubs. The writer stated, *Before Sophie could cry out, Agatha's eyes widened and she circled her glowing orange fingertip around them – "Floradora pinscoria!" – They both turned to scrawny blue pine shrubs* (Chapter 21, Page 333). As the utterance above occur, the reader has known the information that Sophie and Agatha was there as a shrubs when Tedros come, yet he does not know it. Additionally, from the sentence itself, this presupposition can be identified from the word *will*. This auxiliary verb indicating future tense, something that will happens later in the future. In this case, at the present moment, that thing has not been happens yet. This is means *he will know*, indicating Tedros has not yet know they are exist in the same place as him.

Moreover, the assertion that the readers got from the utterance above is that, even though Tedros did not know about Sophie and Agatha's existence now, he will know in a few more minutes. This information can be identified as a new information as it increase the reader's knowledge about the topic through Sophie's plan. Additionally, the combination of the word *will* and the temporal clause *in a few more minutes* in this utterance referring to the time when Tedros will be able to finally see Sophie and knows about her existence. This is the new information that update the situation where Tedros that does not aware of her existence during the trial.

**Falling action**
Data [4-4]
*"I've been very busy, Grimm. And still more work to do."* (Chapter 28, Page 445)
Context:

In this scene, Sophie lets Hester, Anadil, and Dot go away and locks her in their room. Then, Grimm was helping Sophie to get out of the tie. She got her sewing kit calmly and did not even bother by being locked.
Topic: I (Sophie)
Focus: have been very busy and still more work to do

In this utterance, the information that is assumed to be known by the reader is that Sophie has lots of works. This presupposition can be understood through the use of the phrase very busy that signified a tight schedule, which is related to do a lots of works. Moreover, from the story, it is known that Sophie has been done a lot of things from the Circus of Talents attack to planning war between Good and Evil. In the previous page, Hester, Anadil, and Dot has been searched for Sophie everywhere but she cannot found, stated in chapter 28 page 443, *"Where's Sophie?"* From this point, it is what is being referred by Sophie as *have been very busy*, she was doing a series of things before coming to the room.

Besides that, the information stated in the utterance above also provided new information to the readers based on what has been taken for granted. In this case, the assertion that was structured through the sentence above is that Sophie has lots of works to do, and she still has more to do later. Essentially, it can be understood as the new information through the use of conjunction *and* that demonstrate further explanation of the information already stated in the previous clause. This word indicating that the work referred by Sophie in her *very busy* term is continuing, still required to be done.

**Resolution**
Data [4-5]
***"I don't – want to – be Evil"*** (Chapter 30, Page 486)
Context:

In this scene, Sophie jump out from the window into the sludge below where students fight witch each other. The School Master come along, raised Storian in hand, and direct it to Agatha. However, Sophie blocked its way, making her stabbed through her heart. Every students stunned in shock. Suddenly the swan crest in their uniforms came alive, blasted into a glittering silhouette of the Good School Master's spirit. Through the help of Professor Sader's body as a seer, he killed the Evil School Master. The villain is dead, and Sophie also almost die.
Topic: I (Sophie)
Focus: don't want to be Evil

In the utterance above, the information that is assumed to be known by the reader is that Sophie has been seen as being Evil. This presupposition can be identified through the use of the word *to be…*, which indicates someone is seen as being something. In this case, Sophie is seen as Evil in the phrase *to be Evil*. Moreover, from the context, the readers were already been familiar with see her as part of Evil from her bad actions and intention to her transformation into a witch in the previous chapter. Consequently, this information can be identified as the presupposition.

Furthermore, the assertion that can be interpreted from the sentence is that despite having been seen as being Evil, Sophie does not want to be Evil. This assertion can be interpreted through the use of the negation *don't* with the verb *want*, which indicates denial of her current identity. In this case, the sentence above demonstrates new information that Sophie denies her identity as being Evil. Additionally, from the context, it is known that Sophie tried to save Agatha's life which shows her denial to be identified as Evil, since she only wants to be Good.

## 4.    CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the analysis of presupposition and assertion in a fantasy novel *The School for Good and Evil* demonstrates how information is structured by a writer based on the theory proposed by Lambrecht (1994). From the analysis, this study found that 20 data were identified the use of both presupposition and assertion in the sentence structure, 2 data were identified to have more than one sentence that showing one sentence included both presupposition and assertion but the other sentence only included assertion in the sentence structure, and 3 data were identified the use only assertion in the sentence structure without any presupposition. As a result, the information stated in a novel through the main character's utterances analysis was structured by the writer based on whether the reader has already known the information before or not. Additionally, the present study offers an analysis of the presupposition and assertion of the main character in a fantasy novel, which specifically focuses only on the sentence structure of utterances. Consequently, future research on the same topic is recommended to focus on the sentence structure of non-fiction literature text, to reveal how information is structured in the context of non-fiction literary narration from the writer to the reader.

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