

An Analysis of Presupposition in International News Reporting on Environmental Disaster in Sumatra

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how presuppositions construct narratives in international media coverage of recent environmental disasters in Sumatra, specifically focusing on the flash floods and landslides that occurred in late 2025. Using a qualitative descriptive method, the study analyzes eight news articles from four international outlets: BBC, The Guardian, France 24, and Al Arabiya. The analysis applies Yule's (1996) grammatical presupposition framework and Levinson's (1983) sub-classifications. These grammatical triggers are then cross-tabulated with emerging thematic categories, such as Ecology, State/Politics, and Physical Damage. From 261 identified triggers, Lexical Presuppositions dominate the dataset at 68.2%, primarily conveyed through verbs of change and comparison. The cross-tabulation reveals strategic framing across themes. Lexical verbs of state change establish human causality within ecological frames. Meanwhile, structural negation presupposes state administrative failure, whereas factive presuppositions validate the state's official narrative. Ultimately, presuppositions function as architects of implicit reality in news discourse. They allow the media to naturalize subjective interpretations, presenting them as objective facts to readers.

Keywords: *Presupposition, News Discourse, Environmental Disaster, Critical Pragmatics, Yule, Levinson.*

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INTRODUCTION

Language is not merely a neutral medium for reporting events, but also a tool that shapes how reality is represented and understood. In news discourse, language plays a significant role in organizing information and directing readers' interpretations. Fowler (1991) argues, news language is never entirely neutral. Although journalistic reporting claims objectivity, lexical choices and grammatical structures inevitably influence how audiences perceive particular issues. Similarly, Critical Discourse Analysis emphasizes that discourse contributes to shaping public understanding of social events. Consequently, meaning in news discourse derives not only from explicitly stated information, but also from assumptions implicitly embedded within the text.

One important linguistic feature contributing to the implicit construction of meaning is presupposition. Presupposition refers to background assumptions that are taken for granted within an utterance and remain implicitly understood rather than directly expressed. According to Yule (1996), presuppositions enable speakers or writers to present information as already known or accepted by the audience. Likewise, Levinson (1983) explains that presuppositions rely on shared assumptions between writer and reader. Such assumptions are commonly triggered by specific linguistic forms, including definite noun phrases, fictive verbs, stative verbs, and particular syntactic structures. Through these triggers, information can be subtly embedded into discourse in ways that make it less likely to be critically questioned by readers.

Sumatra, the westernmost island of Indonesia, is highly vulnerable to hydrometeorological disasters due to its geographical characteristics. Its mountainous topography, extensive river systems, and tropical monsoon climate expose the region to severe rainfall, flash floods, and landslides. Furthermore, Sumatra is located within the Pacific Ring of Fire, making it susceptible to frequent and destructive earthquakes (Bencana, 2024; Reduction, 2023). However, many environmental disasters in the region are not solely natural phenomena, but are intensified by human activities. Extensive deforestation caused by oil palm plantations, illegal logging, and mining operations has significantly reduced the land's natural water absorption capacity. Consequently, environmental degradation has transformed manageable weather events into large-scale humanitarian crises (Austin et al., 2019; Margono et al., 2014). In addition, recurring forest and peatland fires generate transboundary haze that affects neighboring countries for prolonged periods (Bank, 2016; Tacconi, 2016). These conditions contribute to severe floods, landslides, displacement, and substantial loss of life (Bencana, 2024).

Considering the scale and recurrence of these environmental crises, international media coverage of disasters in Indonesia plays an important role in shaping global understanding. International attention is driven not only by the scale of destruction, but also by Indonesia's position as a major developing country and a key factor in global climate discourse (Boykoff & Roberts, 2007; Change, 2023). Moreover, the transboundary effects of environmental disasters, particularly haze pollution affecting neighboring countries such as Singapore and Malaysia, intensify international concern (Bank, 2016; Tacconi, 2016). Sumatra's rainforests also hold significant ecological importance as biodiversity hotspots and global carbon sinks that support endangered species, including the Sumatran orangutan (Fund, 2023; Gaveau et al., 2014). Consequently, environmental destruction in the region attracts considerable global attention and criticism.

When international media report environmental disasters in Sumatra, they do more than merely inform audiences about local events. These reports frequently frame disasters within broader global narratives, including climate change, governmental responsibility, and tensions between economic development and environmental sustainability (Entman, 1993; Van Gorp, 2007). Therefore, the language used by international media becomes an important object of analysis because linguistic choices influence how audiences interpret the causes of disasters, the affected communities, and the actors perceived as responsible (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 2008).

Several previous studies have examined presupposition triggers across various forms of discourse. Al-Zubeiry (2020), for example, analysed presuppositions in newspaper opinion articles and found that presupposition triggers are frequently employed to convey implicit meanings. Thoyyibah (2017) compared presuppositions in television and online news texts, while Ghafoory & Miran (2022) investigated presuppositions in academic discourse. Studies specifically focusing on news discourse have predominantly examined political contexts. Guswita & Widodo (2019), for instance, analysed online political news from The Washington Post and The Los Angeles Times and found that definite descriptions triggering Existential Presuppositions were the dominant category. Similarly, Hassan (2020), in a comparative study of English and Kurdish political news, reported that existential pronouns and definite articles accounted for the highest frequency of triggers. Further explored presupposition triggers in breaking-news tickers, demonstrating how iterative triggers operate within fast-paced reporting environments. Collectively, these studies demonstrate that presuppositions play a significant role in establishing implicit assumptions and shaping perspectives across different discursive contexts.

Despite these contributions, a significant research gap remains. Previous studies have largely concentrated on political discourse, opinion texts, and general news headlines, where the primary communicative function is often the establishment of political actors or the negotiation of viewpoints. In contrast, international hard news coverage of environmental disasters has received limited attention. This genre differs substantially because it involves not only the reporting of events, but also the rapid construction of causality, urgency,

accountability, and crisis narratives. Moreover, although previous studies have identified the frequency and categories of presuppositions, few have explored how grammatical presuppositions correlate with specific thematic realities. Questions concerning how Lexical Presuppositions construct ecological causality or how Structural Negation implies governmental failure remain underexplored.

Examining presuppositions in environmental disaster discourse is particularly important because this genre operates under the appearance of objective crisis reporting. Unlike political discourse, where ideological positions are often openly debated, environmental disaster narratives frequently naturalize assumptions concerning human responsibility, ecological destruction, and state accountability. Presuppositions function as subtle linguistic mechanisms that allow journalists to embed ideological assumptions without explicitly arguing for them. Through grammatical structures such as “exacerbated by deforestation” or “has not yet yielded to pressure,” the media can implicitly frame disasters as socio-political failures rather than purely natural phenomena. As a result, subjective interpretations are presented as objective and unquestionable realities.

To address this gap, the present study analyses the types, frequencies, and thematic functions of presuppositions in international news coverage of environmental disasters in Sumatra. Using data from four international media outlets BBC, The Guardian, France 24, and Al Arabiya this study cross-tabulates Yule (1996) grammatical categories with thematic categories emerging from the texts. Through this approach, the study seeks to provide a deeper understanding of how presuppositions are strategically employed not only to report events, but also to construct implicit narratives and ideological assumptions within disaster news discourse.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive method to investigate the use of presuppositions in news discourse. The method was selected because the research emphasizes the identification, classification, and interpretation of presuppositional triggers in naturally occurring language rather than measuring them through purely statistical procedures. Through a qualitative approach, the researcher was able to explore how presuppositions function contextually and how they contribute to the ideological construction of meaning within news texts.

The data of this study were collected from international online news articles reporting environmental disasters in Sumatra. The sources consisted of four international media outlets: the BBC, The Guardian, France 24, and Al Arabiya. These media outlets were selected using purposive sampling based on several considerations. First, the selected media represent different geopolitical and institutional perspectives. BBC and The Guardian represent Western public-service and left-leaning broadsheet perspectives, France 24 reflects a European state funded international perspective, while Al Arabiya represents a Middle Eastern state-owned perspective. Such diversity is important in examining how different media institutions construct and naturalize particular assumptions regarding the same environmental disaster.

Second, the selected articles were published as headline or lead stories during the peak period of disaster coverage, particularly from late November to early December 2025. This criterion ensured that the selected data represented highly visible and influential discourse consumed by global audiences.

In total, this study analysed eight news articles, with two articles selected from each media outlet. The decision to choose two articles from every source was based on both analytical and practical considerations. Analytically, the use of two articles enabled the researcher to observe the progression of discourse within the media coverage. The first article generally represented the initial breaking-news phase, emphasizing immediate impacts such as casualties and physical destruction, whereas the second article reflected the follow-up phase, which focused on broader issues including ecological causes, political accountability,

and humanitarian consequences. Therefore, the pair of articles provided richer contextual depth for discourse analysis.

Furthermore, in qualitative linguistic research, the adequacy of data is determined not merely by quantity but by contextual richness and data saturation. The eight selected articles generated a sufficiently dense corpus of presuppositional triggers, enabling detailed micro linguistic analysis using the frameworks proposed by Yule and Levinson without producing excessive or repetitive data.

The data were collected through a documentary method. First, the researcher selected relevant news articles discussing environmental disasters in Sumatra and ensured that the articles constituted major news coverage during the disaster events. Second, the researcher carefully examined the articles to identify sentences containing presupposition triggers. Third, the identified sentences were extracted and organized as the primary dataset for analysis. Only sentences that clearly demonstrated presuppositional elements were included in the analysis.

This study primarily adopted the theory of presupposition proposed Yule (1996) which categorizes presuppositions into existential, lexical, structural, fictive, non-fictive, and counterfactual types. This framework served as the principal basis for data classification, supplemented by (S C Levinson, 1983) sub-classifications (e.g., Verbs of State Change, Iterative Verbs) to support a more detailed lexical analysis. To ensure rigor and replicability, the data analysis followed a systematic coding procedure comprising the following sequential phases:

Phase 1: Data Familiarization and Thematic Coding The researcher carefully read all eight news articles to gain a holistic understanding of the discourse. During this initial reading, the texts were inductively coded for emerging thematic categories. Sentences and clauses were labelled based on their primary semantic focus, resulting in five distinct thematic categories: (1) Ecology & Environment, (2) Nature & Climate, (3) Physical Destruction, (4) State & Politics, and (5) Human Suffering.

Phase 2: Identification of Presupposition Triggers Following the thematic coding, the researcher conducted a micro-linguistic analysis to identify presupposition triggers. To ensure systematic identification, a word, phrase, or syntactic structure was recognized as a trigger only if it met the "constancy under negation" test meaning the assumed information remained true even if the main clause was negated. The researcher specifically scanned the texts for:

Lexical markers: change-of-state verbs (e.g., stop, start, worsen), iterative/comparative words (e.g., again, still, more), and implicative verbs. Structural markers: Wh-questions, cleft constructions, and negation structures (e.g., not yet, nowhere). Existential markers: definite noun phrases and possessive constructions (e.g., the, his, their). Factive markers: verbs and phrases implying the truth of their embedded clauses (e.g., regret, realize, according to).

Phase 3: Categorization of Grammatical Presuppositions Once identified, each trigger was classified into Yule (1996) grammatical categories. For example, a definite noun phrase like "the rubble" was categorized as an Existential Presupposition, whereas a change-of-state verb like "forced" was categorized as a Lexical Presupposition. Furthermore, S C Levinson (1983) sub-taxonomy was applied to lexical triggers to specify whether they functioned as "Verbs of State Change" or "Iterative Verbs." If a sentence contained multiple triggers (e.g., a definite noun phrase within a negated clause), each trigger was coded and categorized separately to ensure comprehensive data extraction.

Phase 4: Cross-Tabulation and Frequency Calculation After both grammatical and thematic coding were completed, the data were cross-tabulated. Each identified presupposition trigger was mapped against its corresponding thematic category to determine how specific grammatical assumptions align with narrative realities. The frequency of each trigger type was calculated to identify dominant patterns overall and within specific themes.

Phase 5: Pragmatic Interpretation Finally, the cross-tabulated findings were interpreted contextually to explain how presuppositions are strategically employed to structure information and naturalize ideological assumptions within news discourse. Representative examples from the dataset are presented and discussed in the Findings and Discussion sections to illustrate how these triggers operate within authentic news texts.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study examines presupposition triggers found in disaster-related news articles published by four international media outlets: The Guardian, France 24, BBC, and Al Arabiya. A total of 261 presupposition triggers were identified throughout the dataset. To present a clearer and more systematic overview of the findings, the triggers were cross-tabulated according to (George Yule, 1996) grammatical classifications and five thematic categories that emerged from the analysis.

Overall Distribution of Presupposition Types

Table 1 presents the overall frequency and percentage of presupposition types based on Yule (1996) framework, along with representative example extracted from dataset.

Presupposition type	Frequency	Percentage	Representative example from articles
Lexical	178	68.2%	".... which has been exacerbated by a layer of carbon pollution..." "...the heaviest in 300 years." "...the situation has forced us..."
Structural	43	16.5%	"...he has not yet yielded to the pressure..." "No aid has reached our village at all."
Factive	21	8.0%	"...according to figures released by the national disaster agency."
Existential	20	7.3%	"The rubble of the village..." "The impact marks a deadly escalation..."
Non-Factive	0	0%	No occurrences found
Counterfactual	0	0%	No occurrences found
Total	261	100.0%	

As shown in Table 1, Lexical Presuppositions overwhelmingly dominate the dataset, accounting for 178 out of 261 triggers (68.2%). This is followed by Structural Presuppositions (16.5%), Factive Presuppositions (8.0%), and Existential Presuppositions (7.3%). Notably, Non-Factive and Counterfactual presuppositions are entirely absent from the dataset.

Distribution of Presupposition Types Across Media

To understand how different media outlets employ these triggers, the 261 triggers were cross-tabulated across the four international media outlets, as presented in Table 2.

Media	Lexical	Structural	Factive	Existential	Total
The Guardian	66	8	7	5	86
France 24	40	24	5	6	75
BBC	68	10	4	8	90
Al Arabiya	4	0	5	1	10
Total	178	43	21	20	261

Table 2 highlights a striking contrast in the distribution of triggers among the outlets. Western media (The Guardian, BBC, France 24) make extensive and varied use of presuppositions. In contrast, Al Arabiya relies almost entirely on Factive Presuppositions and

completely avoids Structural/Negation Presuppositions (0 triggers).2. Cross-Tabulation of Presupposition Types and Thematic Categories

Cross Tabulation of Presupposition Types and Thematic Categories

To address critical questions about the assumptions made by the media, the 261 triggers were cross-tabulated with five thematic categories. To ensure traceability, the media outlets that most frequently used specific presuppositions for a given theme were identified in the “Dominant Media” column, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Cross Tabulation of Presupposition Types and Thematic Categories

Thematic Category	Lexical	Structural	Factive	Existential	Total	Dominant Media
Ecology & Environment	18	0	0	2	20	The Guardian
Nature & Climate	40	2	10	0	52	BBC / The Guardian
Physical Destruction	70	2	0	15	87	BBC
State & Politics	30	30	10	0	70	France24
Human Suffering	20	8	1	3	32	France24/ BBC
Total	178	42	21	20	261	-

Table 3 presents the distribution of presupposition triggers across the five thematic categories. Within the Ecology & Environment theme, Lexical Presuppositions dominate the data, accounting for 18 out of 20 identified triggers, with The Guardian emerging as the primary contributor. In the State & Politics theme, the findings reveal an equal distribution between Lexical and Structural Presuppositions, each appearing 30 times, predominantly in articles published by France 24. Meanwhile, the Physical Destruction theme is largely characterized by Lexical Presuppositions (70 triggers) and Existential Presuppositions (15 triggers), with the BBC identified as the dominant media outlet. In the Human Suffering theme, the data consist of 20 Lexical Presuppositions and 8 Structural Presuppositions. A more detailed pragmatic interpretation of how these grammatical triggers function in constructing implicit narratives within each thematic category is further discussed in the Discussion section.

Presuppositions and Narrative Construction in Disaster Reporting: A Cross-Tabulation of Grammatical Forms and Thematic Realities

Based on an analysis of eight news articles yielding 261 presupposition triggers, a cross-tabulation of Yule (1996) grammatical categories with thematic categories reveals that presuppositions play a fundamental role in constructing disaster narratives. As previously indicated by the data, the media do not merely report factual events; through specific presupposition triggers, they implicitly embed assumptions about the disaster's causes and responsibilities. By embedding assumptions into grammatical structures, the media naturalizes certain interpretations of the disaster, making those interpretations appear as established facts rather than journalistic constructions. This section explains how Yule (1996) framework, enriched with taxonomic specifications from S C Levinson (1983) uncovers the linguistic mechanisms used to construct these narratives.

The Dominance of Lexical Presuppositions: A Reflection of Disaster Dynamics Before discussing specific thematic categories, it is crucial to address the overall dominance of Lexical Presuppositions in the dataset, which accounted for 178 out of 261 triggers (68.2%). This statistical prevalence is not coincidental but is intrinsically linked to the nature of disaster reporting as a journalistic genre. Disasters are essentially dynamic events characterized by transformation, destruction, and escalation. Rivers overflow, homes are swept away, and the death toll rises. To report on these phenomena, journalists must frequently use lexical items that encode a shift from a previous state to the current one. S C Levinson (1983) subcategories

of Verbs of State Change (e.g., destroyed, forced, worsened) and Iterative/Comparative Verbs (e.g., more, still, increased) are key linguistic tools used to capture these dynamics. When journalists write that a village has been “swept away” (Lexical), they are implicitly comparing it to a previous state of intactness. When they report that the death toll has “increased” (Lexical), they assume a lower previous figure. Therefore, the dominance of Lexical Presuppositions is logically rooted in the genre’s requirement to narrate the severity and progression of a catastrophe. In contrast, Factive and Existential Presuppositions, which assume the truth of a fact or the existence of an entity, are more static. Consequently, these two types of presuppositions appear less frequently in rapidly evolving disaster narratives.

First, Ecology and Forests: Lexical Presuppositions as Linguistic Affirmations of Human Causality One of the most significant findings is found in the Ecology and Forests theme (20 triggers). Of the total triggers in this theme, 18 are categorized as Lexical Presuppositions. According to Yule (1996), Lexical Presuppositions operate by assuming that the use of certain words indicates a prior state that differs from the current state. Specifically, triggers such as “aggravated by,” “compounded by,” and “exacerbated by” fall under the subcategory of State-Changing Verbs according to S C Levinson (1983) The use of these verbs fundamentally shapes the narrative of the disaster’s causes by establishing layered assumptions. This is evident in The Guardian’s reporting: “The impact marks a deadly escalation of extreme weather in the region, which has been exacerbated by a layer of carbon pollution that is heating the planet” and “the damage is believed to have been compounded by deforestation.” Linguistically, these clauses assume two conditions simultaneously: (1) extreme weather and flooding have occurred naturally as baseline conditions, and (2) these baseline conditions have become more destructive due to specific human interventions (carbon pollution and deforestation). Pragmatically, the use of the “State-Changing Verb” mechanism here serves to emphasize human agency. By assuming that the disaster is “made worse” rather than “caused” entirely, The Guardian subtly shifts the framing of the event. This shifts the narrative from a purely natural and unpredictable phenomenon (an “act of God”) toward a socio-environmental crisis in which human actions are integrated as causal factors. This lexical choice compels readers to process deforestation and pollution not merely as background context, but as active contributors to the severity of the tragedy. Notably, this lexical framing is entirely absent in Al Arabiya, which relies on a different set of presuppositions to construct the event.

Second, State and Politics: Structural Negation as a Presupposition of Administrative Absence The theme of State and Politics yielded 70 triggers, with the distribution evenly split between Lexical Presuppositions (30 triggers) and Structural Presuppositions (30 triggers). Within Yule’s framework, Structural Presuppositions assume the truth of the subordinate clause. In the context of disaster reporting, the most prominent form used is structural negation. Structural negation implicitly frames the government’s role by assuming unmet expectations. In pragmatics, negation inherently assumes a counter-expectation or a violated norm. This is evident in France 24’s reporting: “However, he has not yet yielded to the pressure to declare a national state of emergency.” The phrase “has not yet yielded” structurally assumes two things: (1) there is legitimate and mounting public pressure, and (2) the government’s current position violates the expected norm of an immediate crisis response. Furthermore, the temporal adverb “yet” assumes an inevitable future capitulation, framing the current refusal as temporary resistance rather than a legitimate administrative decision. Similarly, absolute negation is used in the victim’s quote: “No aid has reached our village at all,” which structurally assumes that the provision of aid is an absolute obligation that has been completely violated, emphasizing the total absence of the state’s administrative presence.

This stands in sharp contrast to Al Arabiya, which uses a factive presupposition: “The death toll... according to figures released by the national disaster agency.” A factive trigger assumes the truth of the inserted clause. By using “according to,” Al Arabiya linguistically validates the state’s bureaucratic process and assumes the government’s authority and control over information. This choice indicates a highly objective and depoliticized reporting style. Thus, the choice between Structural Negation and Factive Presupposition does not merely report different facts; linguistically, this choice constructs diametrically opposed

representations of state accountability either as a party that violates expectations or as a legitimate and functioning administrator.

Third, Physical and Natural Damage: Lexical Iteration and Definitive Existential Descriptions The themes of Physical Damage (87 triggers) and Nature/Climate (52 triggers) are dominated by Lexical and Existential Presuppositions. In the Nature theme, the use of Lexical Presuppositions specifically Iterative and Comparative S C Levinson (1983) assumes a historical baseline of normality that has been disrupted. A BBC report states: "The city of Hat Yai experienced 335mm of rainfall in a single day last week the heaviest in 300 years." The superlative "heaviest" lexically assumes an extreme deviation from the 300-year historical norm. By assuming this broken baseline, the text constructs a narrative of unprecedented anomaly, reinforcing the severity of the event solely through lexical comparison without requiring explicit evaluative adjectives such as "terrifying" or "unimaginable."

Meanwhile, in the theme of Physical Damage, Existential Presuppositions through Definite Descriptions S C Levinson (1983) assume the indisputable physical reality of the aftermath. A BBC report states: "The rubble of the village." The use of the definite article "the" in "the rubble" is linguistically significant. It does not merely introduce rubble as a new concept; it assumes that the transformation of the intact village into rubble is an established, non-negotiable reality that readers collectively understand. This existential trigger effectively constructs the scale of the damage as an absolute fact. The damage is presented as a completed, irreversible state of being, positioning the dynamic process of the flood that caused it in the background, and focusing the reader's attention solely on the permanence of the loss.

Fourth, Human Sufferings: Spatial Negation and Loss of Agency in the Human Suffering theme (32 triggers), the combination of Lexical State-Change Verbs (e.g., "forced to flee," "struggling") and Structural Negation (e.g., "nowhere to go," "no higher ground") produces a presupposition of absolute spatial scarcity. The linguistic mechanism is evident in: "...causing 300 families to have nowhere to go" and "...we cannot go anywhere else, because there is no higher ground." These phrases structurally assume that the geographical space necessary for human survival has reached zero. The negation "no" in "no higher ground" assumes the complete absence of safe topography, presenting the environment itself as hostile and entirely devoid of shelter.

At the same time, the lexical trigger "forced" in "...the situation has forced us" (classified under Levinson's State-Changing/Implicative Verbs) lexically assumes a loss of agency (free will) on the part of the victim. The verb "forced" assumes that the actualization of the action (fleeing or suffering) is not based on choice, but rather on an overwhelming external compulsion. Through this combination of presuppositions, the text constructs a narrative in which the victims are stripped of their autonomy. They are depicted not as decision-making agents, but as subjects entirely subject to the overwhelming force of the disaster and the absolute absence of spatial alternatives. This heightens the dramatic gravity of their suffering solely through linguistic structure.

The Absence of Non-Factive and Counterfactual Presuppositions: A Genre Constraint An interesting structural observation from the cross-tabulation is the complete absence of non-factive and counterfactual presuppositions in the dataset, even though both are integral categories in Yule (1996) taxonomy. This absence is not a methodological oversight but a significant finding determined by the normative constraints of the disaster news genre. This aligns with previous research; for instance, Guswita & Widodo (2019) also noted the absence of counterfactual verbs in Washington Post online news, reinforcing the idea that hard news operates on the imperative of certainty.

Non-factive presuppositions, triggered by verbs of doubt or speculation (e.g., imagine, pretend, doubt), assume that the embedded clause is not an established fact. In the high-pressure environment of disaster reporting, the use of such triggers would severely undermine journalistic authority. For example, if a journalist writes "The government doubts that any aid has reached the village" (non-Factive) rather than the actual structural negation "No aid has reached the village," the allegation of state failure loses its force and becomes merely an opinion. Hard news requires certainty to maintain credibility. Similarly, Counterfactual

Presuppositions, which assume the unreality of a proposition (e.g., “If the dam had not burst”), are pragmatically inappropriate because disaster reporting focuses on the harrowing reality of what has occurred, not on hypothetical scenarios of what might have happened. The absence of these categories empirically demonstrates that disaster news discourse inherently filters out linguistic features that introduce doubt or hypothetical alternatives, thereby ensuring the narrative remains singular, urgent, and factual.

Comparison with Previous Literature When the findings of this study are compared with previous literature, a striking difference emerges, Guswita & Widodo (2019) and Hassan (2020) consistently report that existential presupposition triggers (specifically definite descriptions and pronouns) are the most dominant category in their datasets of political and general online news. In contrast, this study found that lexical presuppositions dominate disaster coverage with a percentage of 68.2%, surpassing existential triggers.

This difference can theoretically be attributed to the distinct pragmatic demands of the disaster news genre. In political news (as examined by Guswita and Hassan), writers primarily focus on establishing the existence of political entities, actors, and concepts hence the dominance of definite noun phrases. However, hard disaster news is not about static entities; it is about dynamic transformation. This genre demands the narration of damage, escalation, and causal attribution. Therefore, journalists shift from merely affirming existence (existential) to encoding changes in state (lexical). The reliance on State Change Verbs S C Levinson (1983) and iterative verbs demonstrates that in disaster discourse, what matters is not merely that “the village exists,” but that “the village was swept away” (lexical). The specific constraints of this genre fundamentally reverse the typical dominance of existential triggers found in previous literature.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings, presuppositions function as a central linguistic mechanism in constructing environmental disaster narratives rather than merely serving grammatical cohesion. Lexical presuppositions, particularly state-change, iterative, and comparative verbs, dominated the news discourse, reflecting the dynamic nature of disaster reporting. The analysis also revealed that different presupposition types strategically framed causality, institutional responsibility, and environmental consequences. State-change verbs emphasized human responsibility for ecological crises, structural negation implied governmental failure, and factive presuppositions reinforced institutional authority. These findings demonstrate that international media implicitly shape public understanding of disasters by presenting particular interpretations of causality and accountability as unquestionable facts. The study contributes to discourse analysis, media studies, and environmental communication by showing that grammatical structures carry ideological meanings and influence public perception. It also highlights differences in framing strategies across international media outlets. Readers are therefore encouraged to critically evaluate both explicit information and implicit assumptions in news discourse. Future research should compare international and Indonesian media, incorporate larger datasets, and apply multimodal approaches combining linguistic and visual analyses to provide a more comprehensive understanding of disaster discourse.

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