

## Presupposition as an Interpretive Mechanism in the *Tangled* Movie

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### Abstract:

This study investigates presupposition as an interpretive mechanism in the animated film *Tangled*, with a focus on how implied meaning contributes to character interaction and narrative progression. The research specifically examines how presuppositions contribute to the interpretive depth of the story. A qualitative descriptive approach was employed, emphasizing meaning construction within dialogue and context. The data were presented narratively to demonstrate how presuppositions operate in character utterances, while numerical counts were included to clarify the frequency and distribution of each presupposition type. The analysis identified 40 instances of presupposition: 18 existential, 1 factive, 1 non-factive, 5 lexical, 10 structural, and 5 counter-factual. Existential presuppositions appeared most frequently, suggesting that assumptions related to existence and possession play a central role in conveying shared knowledge and background information among characters. These findings indicate that presupposition is integral to guiding audience inference and enhancing narrative coherence. Overall, the study demonstrates that presuppositions significantly contribute to implicit meaning-making in *Tangled*, reinforcing the film's storytelling depth and interpretive richness.

**Keywords:** Pragmatics; Presupposition; *Tangled* Movie; Interpretive; Existential

### Abstrak:

Penelitian ini mengkaji presuposisi sebagai mekanisme interpretatif dalam film animasi *Tangled*, dengan fokus pada bagaimana makna yang tersirat berkontribusi pada interaksi karakter dan perkembangan naratif. Penelitian ini secara khusus menganalisis bagaimana presuposisi berkontribusi pada kedalaman interpretatif cerita. Pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif digunakan, dengan penekanan pada konstruksi makna dalam dialog dan konteks. Data disajikan secara naratif untuk menunjukkan bagaimana presuposisi beroperasi dalam ucapan karakter, sementara hitungan numerik disertakan untuk menjelaskan frekuensi dan distribusi setiap jenis presuposisi. Analisis mengidentifikasi 40 contoh presuposisi: 18 eksistensial, 1 faktual, 1 non-faktual, 5 leksikal, 10 struktural, dan 5 kontrafaktual. Presuposisi eksistensial muncul paling sering, menunjukkan bahwa asumsi terkait keberadaan dan kepemilikan memainkan peran sentral dalam menyampaikan pengetahuan bersama dan informasi latar belakang di antara karakter. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa presuposisi merupakan bagian integral dalam membimbing inferensi penonton dan meningkatkan kohesi naratif. Secara keseluruhan, studi ini menunjukkan bahwa presuposisi secara signifikan berkontribusi pada pembentukan makna implisit dalam *Tangled*, memperkuat kedalaman naratif dan kekayaan interpretatif film tersebut.

**Kata kunci:** Pragmatik; Pengandaian; Film *Tangled*; Interpretatif; Eksistensial



## INTRODUCTION

Language operates not only as a medium for transmitting information but also as a system for expressing assumptions, beliefs, and shared understandings between interlocutors. One linguistic phenomenon that reflects this interpretive dimension of communication is presupposition. Presupposition refers to information implicitly assumed to be known by both speaker and hearer, functioning as background meaning that shapes how utterances are understood. These assumptions often remain unstated yet significantly influence meaning construction. For example, the sentence “She stopped playing the piano” presupposes that she previously played the piano. Although unstated, the listener infers this meaning based on linguistic cues and contextual knowledge.

In pragmatics, presupposition is recognized as a core mechanism that enables indirect meaning-making. Pragmatics itself concerns meaning that arises from context, speaker intention, and language use rather than literal semantic content. Scholars such as Levinson (1983) and Yule (1996) emphasize that presuppositions are triggered by specific lexical items and grammatical structures, which signal implied meanings that become interpretable only within context. Yule identifies six categories: existential, factive, lexical, structural, non-factive, and counterfactual presuppositions, demonstrating the range of linguistic forms that can produce implicit meaning.

Beyond spoken interaction, presupposition also emerges as a meaning-making mechanism in multimodal narrative forms, including cinema. Film narratives frequently rely on implicit assumptions conveyed not only through spoken language but also through visuals, tone, pacing, character behavior, and situational context. These layered cues invite audiences to infer meaning beyond what is explicitly stated. As Bezuidenhout (2018) suggests, presuppositions become interpretively richer within dynamic contexts such as storytelling, where viewers continuously evaluate implicit information to construct emotional, thematic, and narrative coherence.

In contemporary media consumption, audiences increasingly engage with film content analytically and emotionally, expecting narratives to be meaningful and layered. Animated films, particularly those produced by major studios such as Disney, exemplify this expectation by embedding subtle presuppositions that support character development, conflict progression, and audience immersion. Disney’s *Tangled* presents a rich example of this phenomenon, as its dialogue and narrative rely on shared assumptions that guide viewer interpretation while shaping the film’s emotional and thematic depth.



Therefore, this research analyzes presupposition as an interpretive device in the film *Tangled*. The study aims to identify the types of presuppositions present in the characters' utterances and examine how these presuppositions contribute to meaning construction, character representation, and narrative interpretation. By doing so, the research seeks to demonstrate how presupposition functions as a subtle yet powerful linguistic tool within cinematic storytelling. To guide this exploration, the study addresses the following research question: How do presuppositions enhance the interpretive richness of the story?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The study of presupposition occupies an important place in the field of pragmatics, as it deals with the implicit assumptions and background knowledge that speakers rely on to communicate effectively. Presuppositions help interlocutors interpret utterances beyond their literal meanings and understand what is implied but unstated. According to Yule (1996), presupposition refers to what a speaker assumes to be true or shared with the listener before an utterance is made. It functions as a cognitive and communicative bridge between the explicit content of language and the shared knowledge that supports interpretation. Thus, presupposition operates as an interpretive mechanism that allows meaning to be constructed collaboratively between speaker and listener.

In cinematic discourse, presuppositions play an equally crucial role. Films communicate through both verbal and visual elements, and these layers of meaning often depend on what is implicitly understood rather than explicitly stated. Bezuidenhout (2018) emphasizes that presuppositions are enriched by context, as meaning is dynamically constructed through the interaction of linguistic cues, situational context, and audience interpretation. In movies, such as Disney's *Tangled*, presupposition functions not only through dialogue but also through characters' actions, expressions, and relationships. These presupposed meanings guide the audience's understanding of motives, emotions, and moral lessons embedded within the story.

Several previous studies have explored the use of presuppositions in various films, showing how it contributes to narrative coherence and character development. Caniago (2022), in her research titled *An Analysis of Presupposition Used in Fatherhood Movie: Pragmatics Approach*, identified several types of presuppositions, such as existential, structural, and factive presuppositions. The findings revealed that presuppositions enrich the emotional and relational aspects of dialogue, allowing the audience to infer deeper



meanings about family and personal struggle. Caniago's work highlights how presupposition serves as a mechanism through which emotional depth and implied meanings are conveyed in filmic communication.

Similarly, Umar, Hartati, and Febrianto (2019) conducted a study entitled *A Pragmatic Analysis of Presupposition Found in The Conjuring Movie*, which examined presuppositions within the horror genre. Their findings indicated that existential and structural presuppositions were dominant, serving to create suspense and foreshadow events. These presuppositions provided interpretive clues that helped audiences anticipate unseen events and understand the underlying fear and tension. The study demonstrated that presuppositions are not limited to linguistic forms but operate contextually as interpretive cues that shape the viewer's psychological and emotional engagement with the narrative.

Asmawanti (2019), in her study *An Analysis of Presupposition Used in the Movie "Crazy Rich Asians"* by Kevin Kwan, examined how presuppositions contribute to the portrayal of cultural and social dynamics. She found that presuppositions reflected implicit cultural assumptions and class-related values. Through these unstated meanings, characters' beliefs, relationships, and societal roles were made more understandable to the audience. This demonstrates that presupposition, as an interpretive mechanism, not only clarifies linguistic meaning but also reveals cultural and contextual dimensions that underlie communication in film.

From these studies, it can be seen that presuppositions serve multiple functions in film discourse. They provide coherence, convey implicit meaning, and assist viewers in interpreting characters' thoughts and motivations. However, most previous research has focused on live-action genres such as drama, horror, and romantic comedy. There remains limited investigation into how presupposition functions within animated narrative cinema, where visual storytelling and dialogue work together to create rich interpretive contexts.

In Disney's *Tangled*, presupposition operates at the intersection of language, interpretation, and visual narrative. Characters such as Rapunzel and Flynn Rider communicate through both spoken utterances and situational cues, allowing viewers to infer meanings that go beyond words. By examining presupposition as an interpretive mechanism in *Tangled*, this study seeks to uncover how implicit assumptions and contextual cues contribute to meaning-making, character development, and audience



interpretation. The analysis highlights presupposition as an interpretative and pragmatic device that strengthens the narrative meaning within cinematic storytelling.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative approach because it focused on human communication and interpretation. The data were presented in narrative form to explore and understand meaning through words and context. Although the study was primarily qualitative, a small amount of numerical data was included to help readers understand the frequency and distribution of presupposition types found in the movie. The combination of qualitative description and minimal quantitative support provided a clearer representation of the results and strengthened the interpretation of the findings.

The data collection methods used in this research included observation, note-taking, and data reduction. The researcher watched the movie *Tangled* attentively and took detailed notes on utterances that contained potential presuppositions. Each identified example was organized into a classification table to make the data easier to manage and analyze. This process allowed the researcher to record the presupposed meanings along with the situational and contextual elements that supported interpretation.

During the analysis process, the researcher rewatched the entire movie *Tangled* to gain a deeper understanding of each scene and its context. Afterward, the researcher obtained the film transcript from an online source and converted it into a text file (.txt) to be processed using NVivo 12, a qualitative data analysis software. The transcript was examined to identify the six types of presupposition proposed by Yule (1996): existential, factive, lexical, structural, non-factive, and counter-factual presuppositions. Each instance was highlighted and categorized according to its linguistic indicator. After the data were identified, the researcher described and interpreted each example using Microsoft Word, providing contextual explanations and interpretations of the meaning of each presupposition in relation to the film's dialogue and narrative. Through this descriptive analysis, the study aimed to reveal how presuppositions functioned as interpretive mechanisms in the movie *Tangled*, shaping the audience's understanding of the characters and the development of the storyline.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The study found a total of 40 instances of presupposition, consisting of 18 examples of existential presupposition, 1 example of factive presupposition, 1 example of non-factive presupposition, 5 examples of lexical presupposition, 10 examples of structural presupposition, and 5 examples of counterfactual presupposition. To simplify understanding, the writer has organized the data into the following table:

**Table 1. Table Table Data Finding**

No.	Presupposition	Frequency
1.	Existential	18
2.	Factive	1
3.	Non-factive	1
4.	Lexical	5
5.	Structural	10
6.	Counter-factual	5
	<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>

As in table 1, among the six categories, the highest score is existential presupposition with 18 data found. Existential presuppositions are often used because they are a way to assume that something exists, and the speaker wants to convey that the information is true, moreover, to indicate ownership.

### Existential presupposition

This type assumes the existence of a person, object, or entity mentioned in the utterance. The presence of a definite noun phrase and possessive forms implies that what is referenced is real, identifiable, and already known within the discourse. This type of presupposition helps the audience recognize key elements in the story and understand the narrative setting and characters' interactions. The following are some representative data from the five data sets that have been found:

#### *Data 1*

Flynn: (narrates) Gothel broke into the castle and stole the child. Just like that... gone. The Kingdom searched and searched, but they could not find the Princess. For deep within the forest, in a hidden tower, Gothel raised the child as her own.

This sentence is classified as an existential presupposition because it uses noun phrases that point to a specific item. "The castle" supposes that Gothel sneaked into the palace of a kingdom called Corona, located in the center of an island, and stole a princess named Rapunzel from King Frederic and Queen Arianna.

## Data 2

Flynn: (narrates) Gothel broke into the castle and stole the child. Just like that... gone. The Kingdom searched and searched, but they could not find the Princess. For deep within the forest, in a hidden tower, Gothel raised the child as her own.

The phrase "in a hidden tower" belongs to the existential presupposition because it uses definite noun phrases, thus viewers/readers who did not know, will realize that there is a hidden tower as one of the settings in the story. The next phrase, "Gothel raised the child as her own" belongs to the existential presupposition because of the use of possessive forms. This clause implies that actually "the child" or the princess is not Gothel's biological child, but she stole it from the castle when everyone was asleep.

### Factive presupposition

Factive presuppositions arise from expressions or verbs (such as 'know', 'regret', 'realize', etc.) that presuppose the truth of a proposition. The information conveyed is presented as an established fact rather than a debatable claim. In this research, the writer found 1 example that belongs to the type of factive presupposition. The datum can be seen below:

Flynn: (Clears throat) You know, I can't help but notice, you seem a little at war with yourself, here.

The word "notice" and "seem" belong to the factive presupposition because it supposes that obviously "she is really at war with herself" in the sense that Rapunzel is in a dilemma, whether she should be happy or afraid of disappointing her mother (Gothel) for deciding to get out of the tower.

### Non-factive presupposition

This type includes information that is assumed within the discourse but not asserted as factual, triggered by non-factive verbs such as 'dream', 'imagine, and 'pretend' that describe unreal situations in the story. In this research, the writer found 1 example that belongs to the type of non-factive presupposition. The datum can be seen below:

Rapunzel: Put him down! Okay, I don't know where I am, and I need him to take me to see the lanterns, because I've been dreaming about them my entire life. Find your humanity! Haven't any of you ever had a dream?!

The word "dream" belongs to the non-factive presupposition because it supposes that something is not right. "I have been dreaming about them my entire life" means that Rapunzel has been dreaming of it (to see the lantern by herself) all the time and it has yet

to happen. It shows the character's desires, expectations, or hypothetical scenarios, giving insight into their inner thoughts.

### **Lexical presupposition**

This type arises from certain word choices that inherently imply additional information that is not explicitly stated. The meaning of the chosen words (such as 'managed', 'stop', 'start', 'again', and 'were') indicates that the previous condition or event no longer applies. The following are some representative data from the five data sets that have been found:

#### ***Data 1***

Rapunzel: NO! You were wrong about the world! And you were wrong about me! And I will never let you use my hair AGAIN!

The phrase "you were" belongs to the lexical presupposition because the past sentence signals a prior condition or event. The sentence "You were wrong" means that Rapunzel once believed that her mother (Gothel) was right about everything and about her, but now she is not.

#### ***Data 2***

Rapunzel: NO! You were wrong about the world! And you were wrong about me! And I will never let you use my hair AGAIN!

The phrase "again" also belongs to the lexical presupposition because it implies that it used to happen but not anymore. The sentence "I will never let you use my hair AGAIN!" means that she used to lend the power of her hair willingly, but now she no longer wants to.

### **Structural presupposition**

Structural presuppositions are triggered by specific syntactic patterns. Certain question forms, embedded clauses, or grammatical structures imply background assumptions that the speaker treats as given. It can be seen in the use of Wh-question construction, which is the information after Wh-question is already known to be the case. The following are some representative data from the ten data sets that have been found:

#### ***Data 1***

Flynn: Why on earth would I want your hair? Look, I was being chased, I saw a tower, I climbed it, end of story.

The interrogative word "why" belongs to the structural presupposition because this is included in the Wh-question form; it shows that the speaker is revealing the real information. The context in this conversation is that Flynn wonders why Rapunzel thinks

he wants her (magical) hair, when he does not know anything about the power of Rapunzel's long hair.

### *Data 2*

Stabbington Brothers: Fair trade. A crown, for the girl with the magic hair.  
How much do you think someone will pay to stay young and healthy forever?

This question sentence is included in the structural presupposition because of the use of grammatical structure (interrogative sentence); this shows that the speaker reveals hidden information in the form of a question. In the context of this dialogue, the Stabbington Brothers ask this question to play on Rapunzel's emotions when they separate her from Flynn. "How much do you think someone will pay to stay young and healthy forever?" implies that there is a person who will really do it and that person is actually Gothel, she was the person who traded the stolen crown to the Stabbington Brothers in order to get the benefit of Rapunzel's magic hair back.

### **Counter-factual presupposition**

Counterfactual presuppositions convey assumptions about situations contrary to reality. It often appears in if-clause constructions; they refer to hypothetical or imagined conditions and imply that the presupposed situation did not actually occur. It highlights alternative scenarios or hypothetical outcomes, showing characters' reasoning and potential consequences. The following are some representative data from the five data sets that have been found:

### *Data 1*

Flynn: Probably be best if we avoid ruffians and thugs, though.

The use of if-clause in this sentence indicates that the speaker supposes something else should happen instead of what they are facing at that moment. Because, Flynn and Rapunzel have already met with ruffians and thugs, therefore Flynn said otherwise.

### *Data 2*

Flynn: She's growing it out, is that blood on your moustache? Goldie, look at this, look at all the blood on his moustache. Good sir, that's a lot of blood. Hey, you don't look so good, Blondie. Maybe we should get you home. Call it a day. Probably better off. This is a five-star joint after all. And if you can't handle this place, well maybe you should be back in your tower.

This clause is classified as a counter-factual presupposition because it uses an if-clause structure, which implies that what the speaker says is a fact, but the speaker uses a presupposition for a condition that could happen if they did the opposite.

The context is that Flynn, who has successfully escaped with Rapunzel from the tower, takes her to a rather strange place called “The Snuggly Duckling”. Once there, the people in the place pay close attention to Rapunzel, they seem to be amazed and touch Rapunzel's hair because it is the first time they have seen a human with blonde hair that long. Afterwards, Flynn said that if Rapunzel could not handle the situation in this place, then she should just go back to the tower. Meanwhile, Rapunzel, who was very excited to get out of the tower to see the lanterns that were flown on the night of her birthday, could not possibly return to the tower before what she wanted was realized. Consequently, she tried her best to adapt and accept the situation in that strange place.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis conducted in this study, a total of 40 presupposition instances were identified in the Tangled movie script. These instances were categorized into six types proposed by Yule (1996), consisting of 18 existential presuppositions, 1 factive presupposition, 1 non-factive presupposition, 5 lexical presuppositions, 10 structural presuppositions, and 5 counter-factual presuppositions. Among these categories, existential presupposition emerged as the most dominant type. This dominance indicates that assumptions related to the existence of entities and possession play a significant role in shaping meaning and guiding audience interpretation throughout the film.

The findings demonstrate that presuppositions do not merely function as linguistic forms but serve as interpretative mechanisms that support narrative structure and character development. Existential presuppositions, for example, help establish the world-building and shared background knowledge necessary for understanding the storyline. Meanwhile, structural and counter-factual presuppositions contribute to the revelation of implicit information, character intentions, and alternative realities within the narrative. Less frequent types, such as factive and non-factive presuppositions, also reveal key emotional and psychological dimensions of the characters, providing insight into certainty, belief, and imagination.

Overall, this study concludes that presuppositions contribute significantly to the interpretive richness of the film by conveying implied meanings that are not explicitly

stated in the dialogue. Through presupposition, the film engages the audience in meaning-making processes, strengthens narrative coherence, and enhances the emotional and thematic depth of storytelling. Therefore, presupposition plays a crucial role in shaping how audiences construct understanding and connect with filmic narratives.

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