
RESEARCH ARTICLE

Unpacking Implicative and Aspectual Predicates: Iraqi Students' Strategies of Interpreting Presupposition

Hiba Ibrahim Mohammed¹ ✉ and Abbas Lutfi Hussien²

^{1,2}Mustansiriyah University, College of Arts, Iraq

Corresponding Author: Hiba Ibrahim Mohammed, **E-mail:** ibraheemhiba1@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The present paper is an attempt to identify how Iraqi students pragmatically approach the presupposition of the two triggers: *implicative predicates* and *aspectual predicates*. It also intends to specify which strategies they utilize to do so, making out the causes behind their failure in arriving at the appropriate presuppositions. The subjects of the test are fifty Iraqi EFL university students in the fourth-year, Dept. of English, College of Arts, Mustansiriyah University, during the academic year 2021-2022. A diagnostic test is administered to the subjects to identify their pragma-linguistic abilities in providing suitable answers. The study concludes that the students find more difficulty in providing the presuppositions concerning implicative predicates than aspectual predicates. Elaborately, most of the students show a higher appeal in adopting resolution than accommodation and rejection strategies. Furthermore, the pragma-linguistic failure is linked to the fact that students are unable to connect grammatical knowledge to pragmatic knowledge to arrive at the intended meaning of the two triggers.

KEYWORDS

Implicative predicates, aspectual predicates, strategies, presupposition, triggers

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1. Introduction

Today, studying presuppositions involves conducting crucial interdisciplinary research. On the one hand, one should be aware of realizing the triggered utterances linguistically and pragmatically. These triggered assumptions that s/he takes them for granted must be completely sustained between him/her and the hearer. On the other hand, common ground and shared knowledge are necessary requirements in order to communicate successfully without expecting presuppositions failure. Schwarz (2019, p.84) expounds that presuppositions "convey certain information which is typically assumed to already be taken for granted by the discourse participants". In accordance with Griffiths (2006, p.143), the presupposition is the shared background assumptions that are taken for granted when we communicate. He (ibid, 83) elucidates that mutual awareness of fiction and pretenses, ideologies, national stereotypes, and so on are what communication depends on. These are false for many individuals. Pragmatically, presuppositions are important because they are necessary to the construction of the related speech.

To pinpoint the strategies followed by Iraqi EFL students in deciphering presuppositions of the two triggers, the researchers adopt the following steps. First, they introduce the expressive definition of presupposition triggers and their potential presupposition, focusing on implicative predicates and aspectual predicates. Second, they construct a diagnostic test of six items involving the students' interpretations of the presupposition utterances. Third, they collect the sheets of the tests to analyze the pragmatolinguistic strategies utilized by the students in interpreting presupposition. Furthermore, they try to identify the strategies followed by the subjects and specify the difficulty in their performance of the pragmatic interpretations of these two triggers. Finally, they endeavor to find the reasons and causes behind students' presupposition failure.

2. Presupposition Triggers

There are several structures that have been linked to presupposition. These lexical structures have been constructed and isolated by linguistics, referred to as "presupposition triggers". Potts (2014, p.5) names 'triggers' as reflecting claims that these items correlate with the presence of specific presuppositions. Yule (1996, p.27) names these triggers as 'indicators of potential presupposition', which can be trusted by the speakers toward the context. Additionally, Saeed (2003, p. 97) expounds that other types of presupposition are produced by particular words or constructions. Elaborately, Geurts (1999, p.85) classifies these structures into three main types:

i- Existential (definite descriptions);

ii- **Lexical** (implicative and factive verbs, change of state verbs and verbs of judging, counterfactual verbs, conventional items, and iterative);

iii- **Structural** (cleft construction, Wh-questions, adverbial and comparative constructions, and counterfactual conditional and non-restrictive clauses).

The triggers adopted in this paper are only those known as *implicative* and *change of state verbs*

3. Implicative Predicates

A specific class of presupposition triggers is called implicative verbs, which was first introduced by Lauri Karttunen (1971, p.343). According to him, the presupposition of implicative verbs is tentatively some kind of sufficient and essential prerequisite for the occurrence represented by complement clauses. In utterances including other presentation triggers, for example, factive verbs, their presupposed content is shared among all the verbs that fall into that category. An utterance whose trigger is factive verb presupposes the truth of its complement. Consider:

1. *John knows that the incident happened.*
2. *John doesn't know that the incident happened.*
3. *The incident happened.*

In the above examples, utterances (1) and (2) presuppose (3). The interpretation is quite different with implicative verbs. An utterance whose trigger is an implicative verb as a predicate obligates the speaker to an implied proposition that consists of a compliment, negation of the main clause does not project over the negation. In other words, this connection cannot be considered a presupposition of implicative verbs:

4. *John managed to stop the evil sorcerer.*
5. *John didn't manage to stop the evil sorcerer.*
6. *John stopped the evil sorcerer's plan.*

Looking at the above examples, (4) implies the truth of (6), while (5) does not.

Geurts (1999, p.85) expounds that at the lexical presupposition level, two meanings are appeared in saying someone "managed" to do something; the verb "managed" has asserted and presupposed meaning. When a person succeeds in doing something, this carries the asserted meaning, but when s/he "tried" to do something, this carries presupposed meaning. Conventionally, "managed" is interpreted in two ways asserting "succeeded" and "presupposing "tried".

The polarity of inference in an implicative statement reverses with negation in the matrix clause, whereas factive verbs preserve the truth of their complements under negation, which is how implicatives can be distinguished from factive verbs like *know* and *regret* that also imply the truth of their complements (Nadathur, 2015, p.2).

4. Aspectual Predicates

Presuppositions can also be triggered by aspectual predicates. These are verbs whose lexical meanings suggest a change in status; hence they assume that a particular condition of things once existed but did not any longer (Levinson, 1983, p. 182). Thus, they are called "aspectual verbs" or "implicative verbs". Saeed (2003, p.99) states that these verbs have a kind of switch presupposition that the new state is both described and is presupposed not to have held prior to the change. The verb *die*, for instance, denotes the end of a life of a certain living entity and therefore presupposes that the subject of the verb was alive before. Such verbs include *stop*, *begin*, *continue*, *start*, *finish*, *carry on*, *cease*, *take*, *leave*, *enter*, *come*, *go*, and *arrive*.

For Archer et al.'s (2012, p. 30), aspectual predicates (Change of state verbs) involve a change shift of the kind of behaviors or states.

- Mary has **stopped** revising
 - » *Mary has revised previously*

In the light of the example, "Mary stopped, or she did not stop revising," presupposes that Mary had been revised previously. This means that the utterance presupposes something that had happened.

5. Methodology

This paper is conducted by using a qualitative descriptive approach followed by a quantitative approach. A test is constructed in accordance with the aims of the paper. It is utilized to specify what strategies EFL university students utilize in providing suitable presuppositional interpretations. The test involves six items; for each item, students are asked to give more than one interpretation for the concerned presupposition. The students' appropriate interpretations of the implicative predicates and aspectual predicates triggers will indicate that they consider the trigger and understand the intended presuppositions of these verbs.

Huang's (2017) classification of presupposition triggers is exploited in order to construct the test items. For the elicitation of the types of presuppositions used by the students, Domaneschi's (2016) model of presupposition strategies are also made use of, as shown in figure (1).

6. Model of Analysis

As stated above, two sub-models: Huang's (2017) account of presuppositions triggers followed by Domaneschi's (2016) strategies, will be utilized to account for the student's interpretations of presupposition.

6.1 Huang's Presupposition Triggers:

Levinson argues (1983, p.179) that a presupposition trigger is a construction or item that denotes the existence of presupposition. Based on Huang's (2017, p. 87) classification, triggers are categorized into nine main kinds:

(a) Definite descriptions:

The king of Hungary is/isn't bald (presupposes that there is a king in Hungary).

(b) Factive predicates:

- Cognitive factives My friend *knew/didn't know* that Egypt is in Africa (presupposes that Egypt is in Africa).
- Emotive factives

Joe *regrets/doesn't regret* telling his wife the truth (presupposes that Joe has said the truth to his wife).

(c) (Aspectual predicates)

My father has *stopped/hasn't stopped* smoking (presupposes that my father was smoking before).

(d) Iteratives

- Iterative verbs
Jessica *returned/didn't return* to Paris (presupposes that he was in Paris before).
- Iterative adverbs
He had an accident *again* (presupposes that he had an accident before).

(e) Implicative predicates

He *managed/did not manage* to finish his homework (presupposes that he tried to finish his homework).

(f) Temporal clauses.

After booking his ticket, he flew/did not fly to New York (presupposing that he booked his tickets).

(g) Cleft sentences

I was/wasn't Marconi who invented the radio (presuppose that someone invented radio).

(h) Counterfactual conditionals

If I were as fast as Usain Bolt, I could/couldn't win the London Olympics (presupposes that I am not as fast as Usain Bolt).

(i) Quantifiers

I have written to every governor at school (presupposes that there are governors at school).

6.2 Domaneschi's Presupposition Strategies

Based on Domaneschi (2016, p.102), when a hearer interprets and encounters utterances with presupposition triggers, s/he will follow one or more of the three strategies:

a. Resolution: indicates the proposition in an utterance as common ground.

b. Accommodation: means accepting presupposition as the proposition that is demanded by the trigger but is not common ground. Drawing upon the work of Stalnaker (1976), the term *accommodation* is used to describe the process whereby an utterance felicitously presupposes information that is not taken for granted in the context. Accommodation may repair misalignment between speaker and hearer that is due to the fact that the hearer does not possess information that is known to the speaker and relevant to the current discourse.

c. Rejection: In the third strategy, the hearer rejects the trigger and therefore does not regard what is common ground as a presupposition of the trigger. In other words, the third strategy is to ignore the trigger. Hearers often manage to adopt resolution first since it is a default strategy. When hearers cannot adopt the resolution strategy, they select accommodation or rejection. This means that resolution is the basic strategy and others are secondary ones.

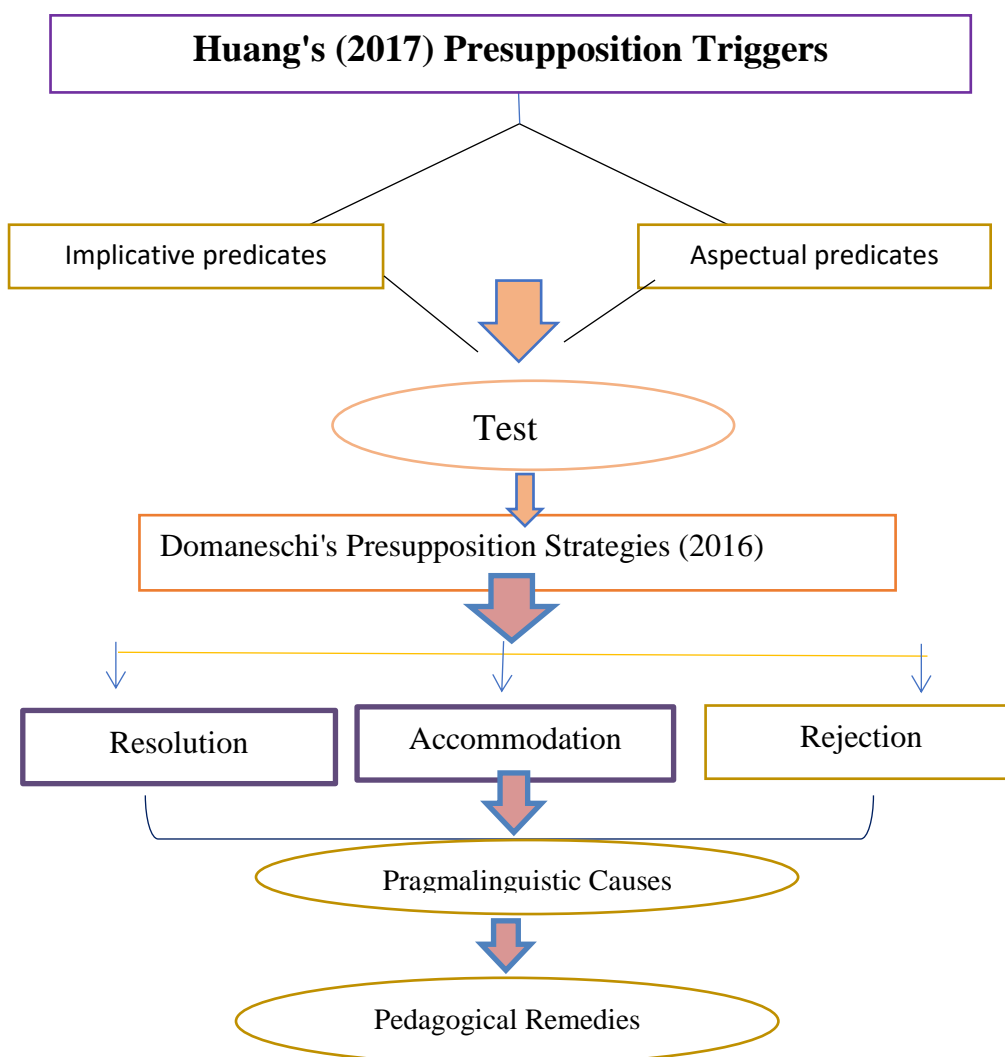


Figure (1) Modal of Analysis

7. Data Analysis

This section describes the subjects' responses to the given (6) items of the test as they attempt to give suitable presuppositions by utilizing various pragmatic strategies. The presupposition of the implicative predicates followed by the aspectual predicates is identified. Each type of this trigger is composed of three various utterances, which are presented in the following analysis.

7.1 Implicative Predicates

Item 1: *He managed to stop in time*

Regarding the first item analysis, only (26), i.e.(52%) EFL students have succeeded in giving the right response, i.e., producing suitable presuppositions. The utterance presupposes that "*He tried to stop in time*". The failure could be owing to the fact the students have misunderstood the utterance given; thus, they produce inappropriate presuppositions. Strategically, 13(26%) of them employ the resolution strategy, 8(16%) of them follow the accommodation strategy, and 5(10%) choose the rejection strategy.

Item 2: *The UN brings about peace*

The utterance presupposes that "*The UN is responsible for peace keeping*" and "*The UN fulfills the peace*". In terms of suitable presuppositions answers, this kind of utterance scores the lowest rate among other items; it records (30%) as only (15) out of (50) students answered this item appropriately. This failure may be due to the students' unfamiliarity with the use of the verb "*bring*" of implicative verbs trigger; or perhaps they have misunderstood the situation given, and consequently, they give unfitting presuppositions. Pragmatically, 3(6%) of them employ the resolution strategy, (6, 12%) of them follow the accommodation strategy, whereas 6(12%) choose to follow the rejection strategy.

Item 3: *Hala forgot to close the door.*

The utterance presupposes that "*The door is open*" and "*Hala intended to close the door*". The analysis of this item revealed that 34(68%) of the students are able to give appropriate presuppositions. Most of the students employ the resolution strategy as 19(38%) of them follow this strategy, (8/16%) of them employ the second strategy, which is accommodation, and (7/14%) of them choose the rejection strategy. Table(1) below explains the responses' scores.

Table 1: Students' Strategies of Implicative Predicates

Trigger	Item No.	Per. of Correct Responses	Per. of Incorrect Responses	Resolution	Accommodation	Rejection	No Strategy
Implicative verbs	1	52%	48%	26%	16%	10%	48%
	2	30%	70%	6%	12%	12%	70%
	3	68%	32%	38%	16%	14%	32%
Total Av. perc.		50%	50%	23.3%	%14.7	12%	50%

7.1.1 Discussion

A look at the table (1) above discloses the students' responses concerning the implicative verbs and the presupposition strategies they employed. What is presupposed by the utterances that carry implicative verbs is not represented lexically. For example, "*He managed to stop in time*" and "*The UN brings about peace*", as in items (1 and 2) give their presuppositions through the presence of the verbs "*manage*" and "*bring*" that carry the meaning of (*tried to*) and (*succeed in*). This indicates that implicit information is conveyed by the use of implicative verbs when someone manages to do something. The analysis of this trigger shows that students tend to adopt a resolution strategy; When the student encounters implicative verbs, s/he attempts to adopt a strategy that adjusts the function of the whole utterance parts and the implicit information structures, which are basic information. Thus, the student follows the resolution strategy since they have no information about the verb "*forgot*" as in item (3). They regard the shared knowledge between the speakers and the hearer. For a more precise explanation, item (3) elucidates that the agent (*Hala*) forgot to do something; therefore, (19) of the students adopt the resolution strategy.

7.2 Aspectual Predicates

Item 4: *Judy started smoking cigars.*

Regarding the first item, two presuppositions can be deduced from the above sentence. It can be presupposed that "*She was not smoking before*" and "*She used not to smoke a cigar*". Here, the subjects who responded to this utterance correctly are (41) students,

constituting (82%). The students' correct answers in interpreting the presupposition are attributed to the realization of the change of state verb "start". Pragmatically, most students tend to the first strategy, which is a resolution when they identify the presupposition in the utterance as common ground. The utterance scores 21(42%) for the resolution strategy, 13(26%) for the accommodation and 7(14%) for the rejection.

Item 5. Joan began teasing her husband.

The analysis of this item elucidates that more than half of the students have answered correctly, i.e., 34(68%) of the students give the correct presuppositions. Different presuppositions may arise from this item: "Joan hadn't been teasing her husband " and "She began to tease her husband". Schematically, the students apply diverse strategies for producing the presupposition interpretations. The utterance scores were 13(26%) for the resolution strategy, 12(24%) for the accommodation, and 4 (8%) for the rejection.

Item 6: The babies stopped crying.

Two presuppositions can be found in this item. It can be presupposed that "The babies were crying", "They used to cry", and "The babies are not crying any more". This item scores the highest rate among other questions as it records (94%); 47 students have made the right answer. Students' guessing and knowing the right presupposition may be owing to the use of the verb "stopped". In item number (6), 27 (54%) of the subject prefer to follow the resolution, as 14(%28) of them decide to select the accommodation and 6(12%) choose the rejection strategy.

7.2.1 Discussion

Concerning the interpretation of the second trigger, *aspectual predicates*, verbs like *start*, *begin*, and *stop* are called Change of State Verbs or "aspectual verbs". They are types of lexical presupposition. Table (2) reveals that the resolution strategy has the highest percentage since it amounts (to 44%). It has been noticed that if an utterance has items expressing **new** information, in addition to a presupposition trigger as in aspectual predicates, the hearer is likely to adopt a resolution strategy. For example, in item (4), "Judy started smoking cigars", (21) of the students adopt a resolution strategy for this sentence. Some of the outstanding interpretations, like "Judy didn't used to smoke before ", and "Judy became a smoker," indicate that the students realize that there is already shared information between the speaker and the listener. Thus, they recognize the message behind the use of items like (*started*) as the trigger point and (*Judy*) as the focus point.

For analyzing item (5), it can be seen that the percentages of resolution and accommodation strategies are almost equal. 12 of the students tend to follow the accommodation strategy, unlike the previous item. In their presuppositions, different interpretations can be analyzed. For instance, some of the responses that adopt the accommodation are: "Joan have a husband ", "the husband is being teased", and "Joan is a married woman". They indicate that the students realize that is not any common ground between the speaker and the hearer. They give more attention to other items rather than regarding the triggering point of the verb "*began*". This can be rephrased as an exchange from resolution strategy to accommodation (to regard the information of the whole utterance except for the focus point (teasing her husband) and the verb (*begin*)). This means that accommodation takes place when the hearer creates an ad-hoc common ground presupposition.

Item number (6) scores the highest rate as it records (94%). The students guessing and knowing the right presuppositions may be owing to the use of the verb as a change of state verb. In their interpretations, 27 of the students choose to follow the resolution strategy when they identify information in the sentence as that of common ground. For instance, some presupposition interpretations are " the babies are no longer crying " and "the babies are quiet now". The verb "*stop*" is realized by the students as it is logically necessary that the babies cry at some point prior to the time of the utterance. This means that the students give attention to the triggering point (*stopped*) in addition to the focus item (*the babies*). This gives a realization that there is strong shared information; therefore, students adopt the strategy of resolution

Table 2: Students' Strategies of Aspectual Predicates

Trigger	Item No.	Per. of Correct Responses	Per. of Incorrect Responses	Resolution	Accommodation	Rejection	No Strategy
Aspectual Predicates	4	82%	18%	42%	26%	14%	18%
	5	68%	32%	36%	24%	8%	32%
	6	94%	6%	54%	28%	12%	6%
Total Av. perc.		%81.3	18.6%	44%	26%	11%	18.6%

8. Causes behind Pragmalinguistic Failure

Students are given the skills to apply language in real-world settings through pragmatic knowledge. However, due to a variety of specific factors that result in a presupposition failure, Iraqi EFL students mostly struggle while attempting to resolve issues pertaining to the implementation and realization of the pragmatic interpretations of presupposition. Generally speaking, the failure to give appropriate pragmatic interpretations of presupposition is attributed to the lack of linguistic knowledge (syntax, semantics, and pragmatics) and, thus, to pragmalinguistic failure. This lack makes the students give inappropriate and awkward interpretations. For instance, incorrect use of tenses, the verb to be, articles, and other grammatical constructions show a lack of linguistic proficiency. As a result, answers are meaningless and nonsensical. In other words, when presenting their responses, the students primarily use specific improper syntactic elements, which are ascribed to their inappropriate linguistic use. However, being close to grammar and linguistic materials, pragmalinguistic failure can be remedied, yet sociopragmatic failure is a thorny issue to be dealt with in the classroom environment and to be tracked pedagogically since sociopragmatic is very much concerned with appropriate social behavior.

Although the present study is not to detect EFL university students' deviation, still taking such grammatical deficiency into account is indispensable. For instance, intralingual errors are one of the most important factors which govern the suitability of the interpretations of presupposition. As a result, the students would be busy interpreting the deviant forms and cannot realize the presupposition of the utterance. The analysis reveals that difficulties in deducing the appropriate presuppositions to particular items stem from linguistic factors as well as pragmatic ones. Instances obtained from the actual data will be introduced in the following items; they are presented as they are, without any corrections. A taxonomy of errors made by EFL university students that result in pragmatic failure should therefore be provided:

1-Errors in the verbs

For examples:

item (4) Judy *smoke* cigars, Judy *have* a cigars -

-item(6) the babies does not *stopped* crying

Errors in the selection of the correct form of the word 2 -

For example, in

) the *babys* are crying (6-item)

3-Errors of verb (to be)

For examples, in

-item (6) the babies *is* crying

-item (4) she *smoking* now

There are non-overt errors when the EFL university students' interpretations of presuppositions are syntactically correct but do not act appropriately as presuppositions. For example, in utterance (1), one of the participant's responses for the item is in item (2), "*There is a UN*". This proves that the participant realizes what a presupposition is, but s/he cannot distinguish the variety of the presupposition triggers function. Some responses indicate that students are far away from the intended presupposition. Furthermore, some of the EFL students repeat the same interpretations to a number of different trigger types because they cannot vary their means to approach their pragmatic ends. This is, of course, due to their limited linguistic knowledge. Others deduce well-formed interpretations of presuppositions, but they are short, for example, "*She smoks*", "*there is UN*". This means that they prefer to avoid writing a lot, even when they realize that the utterance is demanding, perhaps because they want to avoid linguistic errors. The students' inability or failure to interpret the utterances appropriately in certain items may also be because they lack the pragmatic competence which the pragmalinguistic descended from. Thus, a case that enforces the idea that EFL students lack competence in the target language is that there are some students who do not use their own words when interpreting the utterances. They use the same words given in the test to give their interpretations of presupposition, resorting to such a way of resulting in unfitting or unsuitable interpretations. For example, in item (2), "*The UN brings about peace*," it is obvious that most of the students do not understand the meaning of "*bring about*" or they have no idea about the UN when they give interpretations like "*the UN is a government*", or "*the UN is a good party*".

9. Conclusions

With reference to the results obtained in the analysis, the following conclusions are postulated:

1. Most Iraqi EFL university students succeed in approaching the suitable pragmatic interpretations of *implicative predicates* and *aspectual predicates*.

2. Iraqi EFL university students show a higher appeal to employ the *resolution strategy* to detect information found in the utterance associated with the context.

3. Some responses have revealed that some Iraqi EFL university students face difficulties in realizing the presuppositions of implicative verbs and change of state verbs. This is because of their lack of pragmatic competence, which leads them to fail to deduce pragmatic interpretations of presupposition effectively. Consequently, they arrive at presupposition failure. Furthermore, the pragmalinguistic failure is linked to the fact that students are unable to connect grammatical (particularly syntactic) knowledge to pragmatic knowledge to approach the intended interpretations of presupposition.

5.2 Pedagogical Recommendations

In correlation with the above conclusions, the present study recommends that:

- 1- It is crucial to help FFL university students develop awareness for using various types of strategies to drive pragmatic interpretations of presupposition and to put choices that are more appropriate at their disposal. The student's syntactic and pragmatic knowledge should be enhanced and developed by teachers in order to help them produce pragmatically acceptable presupposition utterances through practising these various strategies.
- 2- Consulting grammar books that contain more details and more exercises about presupposition triggers with more practicing for students.
- 3- Providing enough explanation of verb types by the teachers of the Department of English. This might reduce the percentage of errors in producing the appropriate interpretations of presuppositions, especially for implicative predicates and aspectual predicates.

Introducing pragmatics to primary and secondary schools and making it a part of the curriculum is essential to enhance the learner's pragmatic competency. Since communication involves both grammatical and pragmatic skills, teachers should work on developing the pragmatic competence of their students as well.

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