



Original article

## A Pragma-Semiotic Analysis of Donald Trump's 2025 UN General Assembly Speech

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### ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on the pragmatics of presupposition in Donald Trump's 2025 United Nations (UN) General Assembly address. It adopts George Yule's (1996) framework of presupposition triggers as the primary pragmatic model and integrates it with Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) social semiotic model of representational, interactive and compositional meaning as the overall model of analysis. This paper addresses that gap through a pragma-semiotic analysis of Trump's address. Presuppositions, understood as implicit assumptions presented as given by the speaker, are shown to operate as key strategies for influencing meaning formation and pre-structuring the audience's response. The findings indicate that presuppositions are not only persuasive mechanisms that portray controversial stances as backgrounded and unquestionable, but also semiotic resources that shape the overall design of the speech. In this way, the address emerges as heavily reliant on presuppositional and semiotic framing to reinforce ideological accounts through implicit rather than explicit reasoning.

**Keywords:** : presupposition, pragmatics, political discourse, persuasion, social semiotics, Kress and van Leeuwen

## تحليل براغماتي-سيمائي لخطاب دونالد ترامب أمام الجمعية العامة للأمم المتحدة لعام 2025

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### لمستخلص

يركز هذا البحث على تداوليات الافتراض المسبق في خطاب دونالد ترامب أمام الجمعية العامة للأمم المتحدة لعام 2025. ويتبنى إطار يول (1996) لأنماط محفزات الافتراض المسبق بوصفه النموذج التداولي الرئيس، ويُدمجه مع النموذج السيميائي الاجتماعي لكريس وفان ليووين (2006) لمعاني التمثيل والتفاعل والتركيب بوصفه الإطار العام للتحليل. ويعالج البحث هذه الفجوة من خلال تحليل براغماتي-سيمائي لخطاب ترامب. وتُهم الافتراضات المسبقة هنا بوصفها مسلمات ضمنية يقدمها المتكلم على أنها معطاة سلفاً، ويُظهر التحليل أنها تعمل بوصفها استراتيجيات أساسية في التأثير في تشكل المعنى وتوجيه استجابة الجمهور مسبقاً. وتشير النتائج إلى أن الافتراضات المسبقة لا تعدّ مجرد آليات إقناع تُظهر المواقف الخلافية على أنها خلفية مسلّم بها وغير قابلة للنقاش، بل تُستثمر أيضاً موارد سيميائية تسهم في تشكيل التصميم العام للخطاب. وبهذا يتبدى الخطاب معتمداً اعتماداً كبيراً على التأطير الافتراضي والسيميائي في ترسيخ السرديات الأيديولوجية عبر الاستدلال الضمني لا عبر التعليل الصريح.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** الافتراض المسبق، التداولية، الخطاب السياسي، الإقناع، السيميائيات الاجتماعية، كريس وفان ليووين.

### 1. Introduction

Political speeches, particularly those delivered on international platforms such as the United Nations, are shaped by highly strategic linguistic and semiotic choices that go well beyond their explicit propositional content. Among these choices, presupposition plays a central pragmatic role in framing discourse by embedding background assumptions that are seldom questioned yet strongly influence interpretation (Yule, 1996). Unlike overt claims that openly invite agreement or disagreement, presuppositions operate beneath the surface of communication, shaping what is treated as shared knowledge between speaker and audience. From a pragma-semiotic perspective, such implicit strategies do not merely manage interaction; they also function as semiotic resources that contribute to the overall design of the text and to the construction of ideological meanings.

Donald Trump's 2025 United Nations General Assembly speech offers a particularly salient site for a pragma-semiotic analysis of presupposition in political discourse. As a former and returning president, Trump's rhetorical style has been widely noted for its populist tone, confrontational framing, and reliance on implicit persuasive strategies (Charteris-Black, 2018; Wodak, 2021). In the context of heightened international tension, his 2025 UN address provides rich material for examining how presuppositions are mobilised to build ideological positions, assert authority, and delimit the interpretive space available to global audiences. At the same time, the speech can be read as a semiotic artefact whose representational choices, interactional positioning, and compositional organisation contribute to the naturalisation of specific political narratives.

Despite substantial work on presupposition in pragmatics and on ideology in social semiotics and critical discourse studies, relatively little attention has been paid to how presuppositional pragmatics and social semiotics can be combined in the analysis of contemporary high-stakes political speeches. Existing studies often either focus on presupposition as a pragmatic phenomenon in isolation or treat political texts semiotically without a detailed account of presuppositional framing. This gap is

clearly observable in relation to Trump's 2025 UN address, where numerous presuppositions appear to naturalise controversial claims, yet no systematic pragma-semiotic study of these strategies exists. The problem, therefore, is to determine how presuppositions in this speech function both pragmatically and semiotically to influence international audiences and support particular ideological stances without the need for explicit argumentation.

The primary aim of this study is to conduct a pragma-semiotic analysis of the presuppositions embedded in Trump's 2025 UN General Assembly speech, drawing on Yule's (1996) typology of presupposition triggers and Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) social semiotic model of representational, interactive and compositional meaning. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Identify the types of presupposition present in the speech (existential, factive, lexical, structural, non-factive, and counterfactual) in accordance with Yule's (1996) framework.
2. Examine how these presuppositions function pragmatically to frame political claims and shape audience interpretation, and how they map onto Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) categories of representational, interactive and compositional meaning.
3. Evaluate the extent to which presuppositions operate as pragma-semiotic persuasive devices by presenting contested information as backgrounded, semiotically naturalised, and effectively unquestionable.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Pragmatics as a Framework for Political Discourse**

Nouri and Abbas (2025, p.4) mentions that language is "a key determinant of comprehending individuals' cultures globally". Pragmatics, which is the study of meaning in context, is an effective tool for analysing political language. In contrast to semantics, which is concerned with literal meaning, pragmatics examines how speakers employ language to achieve communicative goals, negotiate or construct relationships, and influence interpretation (Thomas, 2013; Yule, 1996). In political discourse, speeches frequently rely on pragmatic resources such as implicature, deixis and presupposition to manage audience expectations, legitimate particular courses of action and justify ideological stances (Chilton, 2004; van Dijk, 2008). As Thomas (2013) notes, pragmatics enables the analyst to uncover how implicit meanings are used to guide interpretation, a critical issue in political settings where persuasion is often carried out in the background rather than through explicit argumentation. From this perspective, pragmatic analysis offers a powerful framework for revealing how ostensibly descriptive statements in political speeches encode evaluative and ideological positions in subtle, context-dependent ways (Fairclough, 1995; Wilson, 1990).

### **2.2 Presupposition in Pragmatics**

One of the most important pragmatic phenomena is presupposition which is defined as information which is presumed to be true or assumed by the speaker and listener (Yule, 1996). Presupposition is "a piece of information or a proposition whose truth is taken for granted in the utterance of a sentence. Its main function is to act as a precondition of some sort for the appropriate use of that sentence" (Huang, 2014, p.85). Individuals essentially must indicate their goal indirectly via the use of assumption. Such matter becomes vital in the production and comprehension of the speaker's message (Rashid & Addai, 2023). The important feature of presuppositions compared to other

pragmatic instruments is that they will not be affected by negation: despite the negation of a statement, its presuppositional component may still be preserved. This renders presuppositions especially useful in political speech where controversial propositions can be made in the form of background information as opposed to controversial propositions (Levinson, 1983).

### **2.3 Yule's (1996) Typology of Presuppositions**

George Yule's (1996) typology remains one of the most widely applied models for analyzing presuppositions. His framework identifies six distinct types, each triggered by specific linguistic markers.

#### **2.3.1. Existential Presupposition**

Existential presuppositions presuppose the existence of some entity, typically introduced by definite noun phrases, possessives, or proper names (Yule, 1996). In a simple sentence such as "*The president's cabinet met yesterday*", the utterance presupposes that there is a president and there is a cabinet. Similarly, an example like "*My brother has stopped travelling to New York*" presupposes that the speaker has a brother and that he used to travel to New York (Yule, 1996). Through such structures, entities are introduced as already existing and unproblematic.

In political discourse, existential presuppositions often work to normalise particular social and political actors. For instance, references to "*our allies in the region*", "*these terrorists*", or "*the threats facing our nation*" presuppose that such allies, terrorists, and threats straightforwardly exist and are identifiable, without the speaker needing to justify or define them. As Fairclough (2015) notes in his critical discourse analysis of political and economic texts, the repeated use of definite terms like "*the market*", "*the international community*", or "*the war on terror*" helps to naturalise these constructions as real and self-evident entities. In this way, existential presuppositions contribute to making categories such as *terrorists*, *allies*, and *threats* appear natural and taken for granted in political language, thereby entrenching them as "real" without any requirement to explicitly demonstrate their existence or legitimacy.

#### **2.3.2. Factive Presupposition**

Factive presuppositions are triggered by verbs and constructions that imply the truth of the embedded proposition. Verbs such as *realise*, *know*, *regret*, *be aware* and related adjectives or predicates typically assume the factuality of what follows (Yule, 1996). For instance, an utterance of the form "*The minister regrets that the negotiations failed*" presupposes that the negotiations did in fact fail, just as a sentence like "*We know that the economy is in crisis*" presupposes that the economy is in crisis. In such cases, the truth of the embedded clause is not presented as open to discussion; it is treated as already established.

In political discourse, this factive pattern is frequently used to turn controversial or evaluative claims into what appear to be shared, taken-for-granted truths. Van Dijk (1997), for example, notes that constructions such as "*we all know that our country is under threat*" or "*everyone realises that these policies have failed*" present highly debatable propositions—about threat, failure, or responsibility—as if they were common knowledge. Thus, when a politician states "*We realise that our country is threatened*", the statement presupposes the reality of the threat and shifts the argumentative burden away from proving that the country is threatened to discussing what should

be done about it. In this way, factive presuppositions function as powerful pragmatic devices that naturalise contested political assertions as factual background, reducing the space for disagreement.

### **2.3.3. Lexical Presuppositions**

Lexical presuppositions occur when certain verbs carry implicit assumptions about prior states or events. Verbs such as *stop*, *continue*, *begin*, *return*, and *manage* presuppose that an action or state was already in progress before the point indicated in the utterance (Yule, 1996). For example, “*They stopped negotiating*” presupposes that negotiations had been taking place, just as “*She returned to the committee*” presupposes that she had been a member of the committee before, and “*They managed to reach an agreement*” presupposes that reaching an agreement was difficult or uncertain.

In political discourse, such lexical triggers are frequently used to frame current policies as corrective responses to an already established negative situation. Phrases like “*We ended decades of failure*” presuppose that there were decades of failure, while statements such as “*We have begun rebuilding our nation*” presuppose that the nation was previously in a state of decline (Cap, 2017). In this way, lexical presuppositions allow politicians to smuggle in evaluative judgements about the past—failure, crisis, neglect—while presenting their own actions as necessary, restorative measures, without having to explicitly argue for the accuracy of those background characterisations.

### **2.3.4 Structural Presuppositions**

Structural presuppositions are embedded in syntactic constructions, particularly wh-questions and certain clause structures, which take the truth of an embedded proposition for granted. For instance, “*Where did you meet him?*” presupposes that a meeting took place, and typical examples discussed in pragmatic accounts such as Yule (1996) include questions like “*When did he leave?*”, which presupposes that he left, or “*How did she manage to solve the problem?*”, which presupposes that the problem was solved. In political rhetoric, structural presuppositions are often used strategically to guide audiences toward a particular conclusion without stating it directly. A question such as “*Why has the UN failed to act?*” presupposes both that the UN has a duty to act and that it has failed in that duty, just as formulations of the type “*How long will our citizens continue to suffer?*” presuppose that citizens are already suffering (Wodak, 2021). In this way, structural presuppositions use the form of the question or clause structure to smuggle in contentious evaluations as if they were already established facts, narrowing the space for alternative interpretations.

### **2.3.5. Non-factive Presuppositions**

Non-factive presuppositions are triggered by verbs such as *dream*, *imagine*, *pretend*, and *wish*, which presuppose that the embedded proposition is not true (Yule, 1996). Thus, an utterance like “*He pretended to be a doctor*” presupposes that he was not a doctor, just as “*She only imagined that she was safe*” presupposes that she was not in fact safe, and “*They wished they had influence in the negotiations*” presupposes that *\*they did not actually have such influence*. In political discourse, non-factive triggers frequently appear in dismissive or delegitimising rhetoric. Phrases such as “*They pretend to care about justice*” presuppose that opponents do not in reality care about justice, while formulations like “*Some leaders imagine that they are defending democracy*” presuppose that those leaders are not truly defending it.

As Boeynaems et al. (2017) observe in their discussion of persuasive and conspiratorial political communication, such non-factive constructions subtly undermine the credibility and moral standing

of opponents without requiring the speaker to engage in explicit, evidence-based confrontation. In this way, non-factive presuppositions function as powerful insinuating tools, allowing politicians to characterise rival actors' motives and actions as insincere, deluded or illegitimate while presenting these negative evaluations as if they were already given and uncontroversial.

### **2.3.6. Counterfactual presuppositions**

Counterfactual presuppositions arise in conditional constructions that explicitly present a hypothetical situation but presuppose the opposite in reality. A typical pattern is the *if-would* structure, as in "*If I were rich, I would travel the world*", which presupposes that the speaker is not rich (Yule, 1996). Similar everyday examples include "*If we had listened to the experts, this crisis could have been avoided*", presupposing that we did not listen to the experts and the crisis was not avoided, or "*If she had been honest, there would have been no scandal*", presupposing that she was not honest and *a scandal did occur*. In political rhetoric, counterfactuals are often employed to dramatise hypothetical peril or to legitimise policy choices by constructing imagined alternatives as disastrous.

As Charteris-Black (2018) notes in his analysis of political rhetoric and metaphor, constructions such as "*Without our leadership, the global economy would have collapsed*" or "*If we had not taken decisive action, our borders would now be overrun*" presuppose that leadership and decisive action did in fact occur and that economic collapse or loss of control was the only plausible alternative. In this way, counterfactual presuppositions work to portray the speaker's actions as both necessary and successful, while presenting alternative courses of action as unthinkable or catastrophically irresponsible.

## **2.4 Presupposition in Political Discourse**

The political discourse is a rich area where the analysis of presuppositions can be performed because in many cases, politicians have to make controversial policies sound like they are a matter-of-course. Van Dijk (1997) suggests that presuppositions play a role in reproduction of ideology because they incorporate assumptions within a discourse. As Fairclough (2015) underlines, the point of presupposition is used to make political declarations sound natural, such that they do not appear controversial but, instead, seem indisputable. By so doing, presuppositions are instruments of implicit persuasion, that which constitutes common ground between speaker and hearer.

Presuppositions have diplomatic weight in the context of international politics. Leaders can restrict the possibilities of acceptable possibilities of interpretation and reactions by global audiences by assuming some facts of geopolitical reality, including the validity of alliances, the prevalence of threats, or the inescapability of national priorities. This predetermines presupposition as a particularly tactical tool in the speeches made at the United Nations, where different international actors are invited to speak at the same time.

## **2.5 Semiotics**

### **2.5.1. Semiotics: An Overview**

Semiotics is the study of signs and how they create meaning in society (Chandler, 2017; Eco, 1976). Early semioticians such as Saussure (1983) described the sign as a link between a form (the signifier) and a concept (the signified). Peirce (1955), on the other hand, proposed a three-part model, in which a sign relates to an object through an interpretant, and he distinguished between icons, indices and

symbols. Later, Barthes (1977) showed that signs work on more than one level: they have a basic, denotative meaning and a higher-level, connotative or ideological meaning, which he called myth. Over time, semiotics has moved towards a social semiotic view. From this perspective, signs are seen as resources that people use to make meaning in specific social and cultural contexts (Hodge & Kress, 1988; van Leeuwen, 2005). Halliday (1978, 1994) describes language itself as a “social semiotic” because linguistic choices are shaped by social relationships, institutions and power. In political discourse, this means that choices of words, labels, metaphors and even visual elements are never neutral. Instead, they help to build particular images of events, actors and problems. Semiotics, therefore, offers a broad framework for understanding how political texts construct and naturalise certain views of reality.

### **2.5.2. Kress and van Leeuwen’s (2006) model**

Within social semiotics, Kress and van Leeuwen (1996, 2006) developed a well-known model for analysing visual and multimodal communication. Their approach is based on Halliday’s idea that texts realise three main types of meaning, or metafunctions (Halliday, 1978, 1994). Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) rename these as *representational*, *interactive* and *compositional* meaning. First, representational meaning is about what is shown or talked about: the participants (e.g., countries, leaders), the actions (e.g., protecting, attacking) and the circumstances (e.g., in crisis, at war). Second, interactive meaning is about the relationship between producer and audience: how the speaker or image-maker positions the viewer, invites agreement, creates distance or claims authority. Third, compositional meaning concerns how the whole text is arranged: which elements are given more emphasis, how information is ordered, and how different parts are connected or separated.

Although this model was first developed for images, many scholars have applied it to multimodal and verbal texts, including political discourse (Jewitt, 2009; Machin & Mayr, 2012). In this study, Kress and van Leeuwen’s (2006) model is used as the semiotic framework. After presuppositions are identified and classified using Yule’s (1996) typology, they are examined in terms of how they contribute to:

- the representational construction of political actors and processes,
- the interactive positioning of Trump and his international audience, and
- the compositional organisation and salience of key themes in the speech.

### **2.6 Some Previous Studies on Presupposition in Political Communication**

An increasing literature has discussed presupposition in political addresses. As an example, in legitimizing military interventions, Cap (2017) examines presuppositions and discovered that presuppositions are widely applied to frame conflict as inevitable. Another study by Boeynaems et al. (2017) examined the topic of political metaphors and presuppositions of populist rhetoric and proved how they influence the perception of crisis and leadership. Further to Trump, Wodak (2021) mentioned that his rhetoric often contains the usage of backgrounded assumptions to avoid a rational discussion, instead, being based on affective framing.

The studies that have been done specific to the political style of Trump depict that he is highly dependent on implicit meaning. Charteris-Black (2018) discussed Trump and metaphor and

framing, highlighting the way that his rhetoric breaks down complicated political facts into compelling stories. Although these studies show the relevance of Trump to generalized rhetorical strategies, little research has been conducted specifically in the area of presupposition as a pragmatic process in his speeches. The systematic focus on his 2025 address has not yet been a feature of the study of previous UN speeches, where his general inclination has been observed to postulate dominance of the U.S. in terms of presumed assumptions regarding the international order (Musolff, 2019).

Despite presupposition being identified as a key component of political discourse (Fairclough, 2015; van Dijk, 1997; Yule, 1996), very little research has been done in applying a typological analysis to the most recent address delivered by Trump at the UN. Lack of such research leaves questions unanswered regarding the manner in which such presuppositions operate in high-stakes international rhetoric in order to naturalize ideological positions and deafen other ideological views. Filling this gap, the paper relates the framework by Yule (1996) to the 2025 UN speech by Trump and tries to offer an understanding of how the presuppositions are implemented as the strategy of framing and persuasion in the realm of global political speech.

### **3. Methodology**

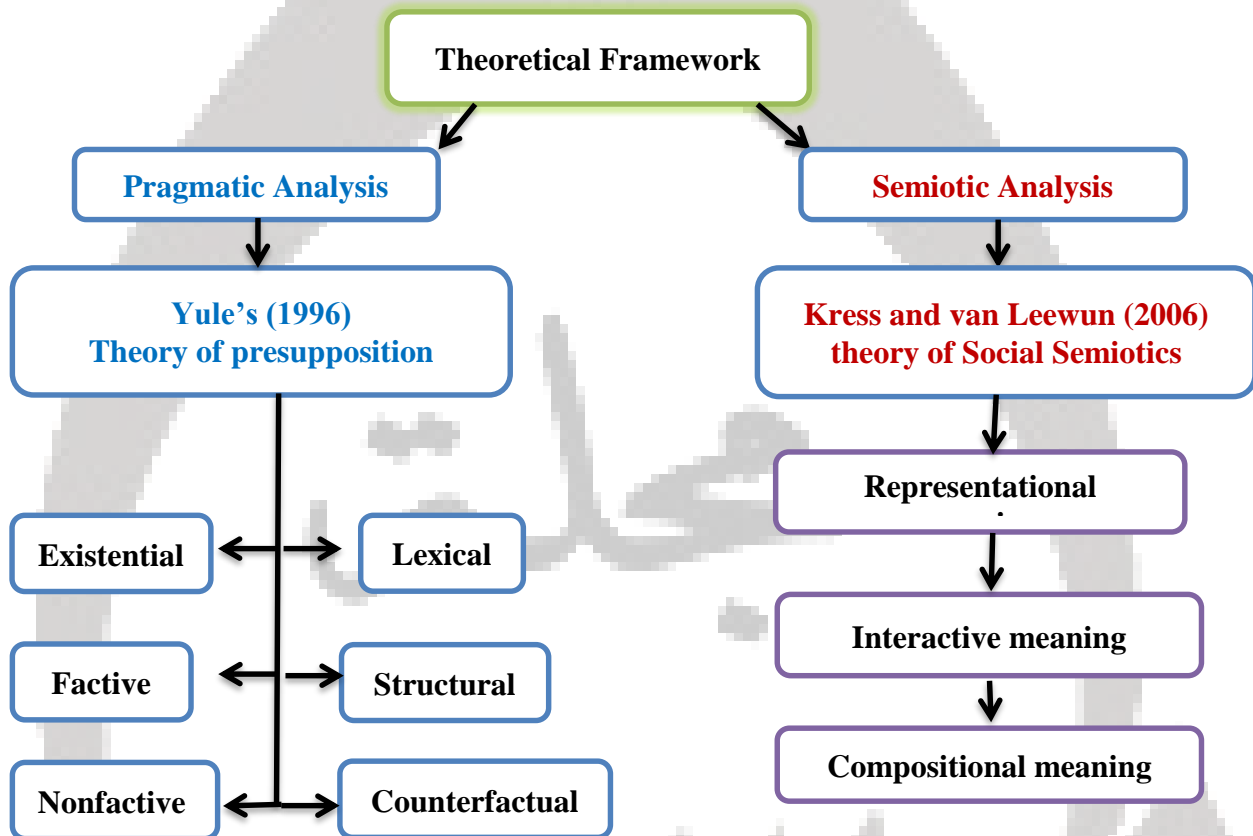
This study adopts a qualitative research design to investigate how presuppositions function pragmatically and semiotically in Donald Trump's 2025 United Nations General Assembly speech. Qualitative research, understood as "a form of systematic empirical inquiry into meaning" (Shank, 2002, p. 5), is appropriate because the aim is to describe and interpret implicit meanings rather than to measure them statistically.

The data comprise five textual extracts purposively selected from the official transcript of Trump's 2025 UN address (Roll Call Factbase, 2025). The transcript was obtained from the officially published version of the speech and cross-checked with reputable international news sources to ensure accuracy. The extracts were chosen because they contain a high density of presuppositional triggers and represent the main thematic and argumentative patterns of the speech.

Analytically, the study follows a pragma-semiotic model combining Yule's (1996) typology of presupposition triggers with Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) social semiotic framework. First, all presuppositional triggers in the five extracts are identified and classified as existential, factive, lexical, structural, non-factive or counterfactual. Second, these presuppositions are interpreted through Kress and van Leeuwen's notions of representational, interactive and compositional meaning, in order to show how they contribute to the construction of political actors and processes, the positioning of speaker and audience, and the organisation of key themes. In this way, presuppositions are treated both as pragmatic devices and as semiotic resources that help frame arguments, support ideological accounts and shape audience reception.

Figure 1

Theoretical framework of the study adapted from [Yule (1996) and Kress & van Leeuwen (2006)]



#### 4.Data Analysis and Discussions

In this part, the focus is on how Donald Trump used presuppositions in his 2025 United Nations speech using Yule's (1996) model and Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) semiotically. Five excerpts from the speech are examined to show the different types of presuppositions and how they work. The goal is to see how these hidden assumptions shape Trump's message and influence how the audience understands it.

##### Excerpt 1

"This is indeed the Golden Age of America." (Roll Call Factba.se, 2025)

##### *pragmatic analysis:*

This expression is an existential presupposition, which is aroused by the term Golden Age. Yule (1996) elaborates that existential presuppositions do not claim that things do not exist or that times do not exist but presuppose through existing things or time. In this case, Trump assumes that there are periods of greatness in history and that the current time is such an age. The pragmatic impact is

to put the present state of the United States in perspective as something better and the national success as something apparent and inherently associated with his governance.

***semiotic analysis:***

The clause “*This is indeed the Golden Age of America*” can be analysed semiotically using three types of meaning. Representationally, it is a relational clause that equates the present (this) with the Golden Age of America, invoking a cultural myth of a peak, ideal period and recasting the current moment as historically exceptional. Interactively, the lack of any phrase like “I think” and the use of indeed present the claim as certain and already shared, positioning the audience as expected to agree. Compositionally, the sentence moves from the vague deictic this to the climactic phrase the Golden Age of America in final position, giving that label maximum emphasis and turning it into a concise ideological slogan.

**Excerpt 2**

“Four months in a row, the number of illegal aliens admitted and entering our country has been zero.” (Roll Call Factba.se, 2025)

***pragmatic analysis:***

This excerpt demonstrates a lexical presupposition, triggered by the verbs *admitted* and *entering*. Lexical presuppositions assume that an action or state previously occurred. Trump presupposes that illegal immigrants were being admitted and entering in the past, but his administration successfully stopped it. The pragmatic function is to present immigration control as a measurable achievement, framing earlier immigration as a problem already solved under his leadership.

***semiotic analysis:***

The sentence “Four months in a row, the number of illegal aliens admitted and entering our country has been zero” can be read with Kress and van Leeuwen’s three types of meaning. Representationally, it shows people only as a statistic (“the number of illegal aliens”) and uses a very loaded label (“illegal aliens”) that makes them sound dangerous or unwanted, not like individuals. It also presents their complete absence (“has been zero”) as a successful state of affairs. Interactively, the phrase “our country” creates an in-group with the audience and invites them to share the speaker’s view and feel proud of this “achievement.”

The formal, number-based wording makes the sentence sound neutral and factual, which helps the speaker’s position seem objective rather than ideological. Compositionally, the sentence begins with the time frame (“Four months in a row”), builds up the long noun phrase, and then ends on the word “zero”, making that final figure the most salient element. This closing position turns “zero” into a strong, memorable sign of total control and supposed success.

**Excerpt 3**

“It’s too bad that I had to do these things instead of the United Nations doing them — and sadly, in all cases, the United Nations did not even try to help.”(Roll Call Factba.se, 2025)

***pragmatic analysis:***

This is an example of a factive presupposition, triggered by the phrase *did not even try*. Factive presuppositions assume the truth of the complement clause. Here, Trump presupposes that the UN was inactive, embedding this as factual background. The pragmatic effect is to delegitimize the

UN's role while elevating his own actions as necessary substitutes for global governance, reinforcing U.S. indispensability.

***semiotic analysis:***

Representationally, this text sets up a contrast between two actors: "I" as the one who "had to do these things" and "the United Nations" as the actor that "did not even try to help". This represents the speaker as active and responsible, and the UN as passive and negligent. Interactively, evaluative phrases like "too bad" and "sadly" guide the audience's feelings, inviting sympathy for the speaker and disappointment or frustration with the UN. Compositionally, the sentence is structured around a clear opposition: first clause ("I had to do these things instead of the United Nations doing them") followed by the reinforcing second clause ("the United Nations did not even try to help"), with the repetition of "United Nations" and the final phrase "did not even try to help" giving strong emphasis to the UN's alleged failure.

**Excerpt 4**

"What is the purpose of the United Nations?" (Roll Call Factbase, 2025)

***pragmatic analysis:***

This rhetorical question exemplifies a structural presupposition, since wh-questions assume the existence of an answer. According to Yule (1996), structural triggers guide interpretation by embedding assumptions into the discourse. Trump presupposes that the UN has a purpose but simultaneously implies it has failed to fulfill it. Pragmatically, this creates doubt about the organization's legitimacy and effectiveness, directing the audience toward a critical evaluation of the UN.

***semiotic analysis:***

The question "What is the purpose of the United Nations?" can be analysed using Kress and van Leeuwen's three types of meaning. Representationally, it mentions one main actor, "the United Nations", and focuses on its "purpose", suggesting that the organisation should have a clear, defined role. The question form implies that this role is uncertain or in doubt. Interactively, the use of a direct wh-question addresses the audience and invites them to think, but at the same time subtly challenges the UN, as if its purpose is either unclear or not being fulfilled. It positions the speaker as someone who has the right to question the institution and encourages listeners to share this critical stance. Compositionally, the short, simple structure places "the United Nations" at the end of the sentence, giving it emphasis as the key topic under scrutiny. This makes the whole question work like a rhetorical device that casts doubt on the UN's effectiveness rather than neutrally seeking information.

**Excerpt 5**

"Our message is very simple: If you come illegally into the United States, you're going to jail or you're going back to where you came from." (Roll Call Factbase, 2025)

This excerpt is an example of a counterfactual presupposition, triggered by the conditional *if you come illegally*. Counterfactuals assume the opposite of reality or imply a possible but undesirable outcome. Trump presupposes that illegal entry is a reality or ongoing threat, embedding criminalization of migrants as common ground. The pragmatic effect is to reinforce a zero-tolerance immigration stance while precluding more sympathetic perspectives on migration.

***semiotic analysis:***

The sentence “Our message is very simple: If you come illegally into the United States, you’re going to jail or you’re going back to where you came from.” can be read with Kress and van Leeuwen’s three types of meaning. Representationally, it presents a clear scenario: a conditional process (“If you come illegally into the United States”) followed by two consequences (“you’re going to jail” / “you’re going back to where you came from”). Migrants are represented only as “you” who “come illegally”, and the United States appears as the space that punishes or expels them. Interactively, “our message” creates an in-group (“we” who speak with one voice) and “you” creates an out-group (the targeted migrants). The phrase “very simple” suggests there is no room for debate or misunderstanding, and the direct address “you’re going to jail / you’re going back” sounds like a threat, positioning the speaker as powerful and the addressee as warned. Compositionally, the first short clause (“Our message is very simple:”) works as a framing headline, and the colon introduces the core slogan-like conditional. Ending on “where you came from” reinforces expulsion as the final image, making deterrence and exclusion the most salient takeaway from the statement.

**5. Findings and Discussions**

The analysis of the five excerpts shows that Trump uses different types of presuppositions in a systematic way. Using Yule’s (1996) model, the data include existential, lexical, factive and structural presuppositions, as well as conditional forms that present illegal entry as an already-given problem. In Excerpt 1, “This is indeed the Golden Age of America” presupposes that history has “ages” and that there is such a thing as a “Golden Age”, so the present is treated as a time of peak greatness. In Excerpt 2, verbs like admitted and entering presuppose that “illegal aliens” used to enter before, so the result “zero” can be presented as a clear success. In Excerpt 3, “did not even try to help” presupposes UN inaction; Excerpt 4’s question, “What is the purpose of the United Nations?”, presupposes that the UN should have a clear purpose but suggests that this purpose is not being met. In Excerpt 5, the conditional “If you come illegally...” presupposes that such illegal entry is real or likely and that punishment or expulsion is the normal response.

These presuppositions work as hidden persuasive tools. They do not argue directly; instead, they quietly fix certain ideas as “background facts”: America is in a golden age, migration has been completely controlled, the UN fails to act, and “illegal” migrants deserve jail or deportation.

When we read them with Kress and van Leeuwen’s (2006) model, we see that they also shape meaning semiotically. Representationally, they build stable images of America as successful, migrants as a threat, and the UN as weak. Interactively, pronouns like I, we and you, and phrases like our country and our message, create a strong “us vs. them” division and place Trump at the centre as the decisive actor. Compositionally, key ideas are put in strong positions at the end of clauses (e.g., “the Golden Age of America”, “zero”, “did not even try to help”, “where you came from”), so they become the most memorable parts of the message. Overall, the findings show that presuppositions in this speech act both as pragmatic framing devices and as semiotic resources that help fix a particular ideological view of the United States, migrants and the United Nations.

**6. Conclusion**

This paper set out to show how Donald Trump’s 2025 United Nations General Assembly speech uses presupposition as a key persuasive tool, and how these presuppositions also work semiotically

in the overall design of the text. Using Yule's (1996) typology, the study identified different types of presuppositions—existential, factive, lexical, structural, non-factive and counterfactual—in five selected excerpts. The analysis showed that these background assumptions quietly shape how the speech is understood: they present America as being in a “Golden Age”, migration as a solved or controlled problem, and the United Nations as weak, inactive or unclear in its purpose. Instead of arguing openly for these positions, the speech treats them as if they were already known and accepted, which makes them harder for the audience to question.

At the same time, by applying Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) model, the study showed that presuppositions also help to build the semiotic structure of the speech. Representationally, they create fixed images of key actors: The United States as successful and decisive, Trump as the central problem-solver, migrants as a threatening “other”, and the UN as failing or irrelevant. Interactively, choices of pronouns and evaluative words (such as our message, our country, too bad, very simple) position the audience on Trump's side and push them towards agreement. Compositionally, many of the presupposed meanings are placed at the end of clauses or sentences, turning them into strong, memorable slogans.

Overall, the findings suggest that presupposition in this speech is not a minor detail but a central pragma-semiotic strategy. It allows Trump to guide interpretation, promote a particular ideological view of international order, and avoid direct, detailed argument. The study therefore supports the value of combining pragmatic and semiotic approaches in the analysis of political language, and highlights presupposition as a major tool for shaping what is said, what is silently taken for granted, and how both are made to look natural and “just common sense” in high-stakes international discourse.

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