

**A Syntactic Study of Tautology in Talk Shows****Key words: Tautology, talk show, syntax.****Inst.May Tahseen Hameed****English Department, College of Education for Humanities****University of Diyala****maytahseen14@gmail.com****Inst.Hind Tahseen Hameed****English Department, College of Education for Humanities****University of Diyala****hindtahseen.en@gmail.com****Abstract**

Tautology is a statement that is necessarily true in every situation. In this statement one says the same thing twice .It is uninformative by itself ,but it becomes meaningful in context ,example "war is war" .The study aims at investigating syntactic tautologies in talk shows .It tries to find out if such constructions are used in programmes as a kind of discourse text .It also aims to find out which kind is most prominent .The analysis is based on Ward and Hirschberg (1991)and Autenrieth's (1997) general account for the construction of tautological expressions .The study comes with the conclusion that tautology are used in talk shows ,and that equative is most used among other forms.

**Introduction**

Tautology is used in prepositional or predicate logic and truth values. It is always a true compound statement not dependent on the parts of its truth value. An example of this: If Aristotle is human, then Aristotle is human. In some logical theories tautologies are considered redundant and not informative, but their wide use in different discourses and manifolds syntactic kinds prove their meaningfulness in most conditions.

Speakers repeat an item in a tautological expression to emphasize some kind of informative and aesthetic features built in the repeated item, or in some cases to make it easier to move from one idea to another smoothly and more effectively. Such expressions show a specific attitude as mentioned by Wierzbicka (1991:397).

Tautology appears when information contained in an argument of a predication contains the information included in the predication (Leech ,1981:148). In tautology, the predicate of the tautological statement does not tell unknown information about the subject. "War is war" still informative, the predicate (war)is connected to something more than the subject (war). Ward and Hirschberg (1991:510) set for a fact denoting that the tautological utterances may have different syntactic forms among languages ,but this didn't generate any language –independent characteristics of their interpretation , so like any other linguistic phenomena tautology is universal .They introduce (a general

account)of the interpretation of tautological utterances and their interpretation depends on English and other languages they relate tautological utterances to the maxim of Quantity and Relevance the same as Autenrieth (1997:19) with a different explanation concerning Relevance.

The statement “Bachelors are bachelors” means that “it is common for all bachelors”, so in this sense they are predictive in nature and not non – informative and conventional as Levinson’s “Radical Pragmatics” or Wierzbicka’s “Radical Semantics” assume as Meibauer(2008:439) and Walchli(2005:98) mention.

Although there are different approaches to tautology, all of them agree that there is a connection in one way or another with implicatures. Grice considers them as a specific kind of conversational implicature, (Grice ,1975:52). Tautology occurs when there is a violation of the maxim of quantity his interpretation is universal. Although Wierzbicka (1987:96) insists that tautology is a language – specific, attitudinal phenomenon and she rejects Grice ‘s universalist approach, her claim was proven to be wrong and weak.

According to Lyons (2005:151;Sinder,2015:611)tautologies are “logic truths “like, prepositions their truth is determined by their meaning. Tautology is used as a means for persuasion in any culture, professional speakers, politicians, writers permit themselves to borrow them in their language. The use of a tautological utterances is to emphasize some idea or to highlight poetic features to what is spoken, they repeat the words to give effective communication to reinforce meaning.

Logically the statement “It will rain today or it will not” is a tautology because it is true by its logical concept and it contains all probabilities due to its essential structure, i.e. even if one does not know what the statement really means, he can conclude it must be true, and they are meaningful because “Language is equivalent of the world” as stated by linguists among them is Heidegger (in Thinher,1997:81).

### **The Model of the Analysis**

The model of the analysis is based on two approaches: Autenrieth (1997) who observes that the predicative form of the second (NP is NP) is relevant to the communicative meaning of the statement .In this sense what is important is not the lexical meaning of “bachelor”, “unmarried adult “but the common sense knowledge that is typically connected with bachelors, the characteristics of bachelors to be added, like being unable to be handsome, etc. The form of the second NP as she states is relevant to the communicative meaning of the statement. According to her, the predicative structure of tautologies makes them informative, therefore, there is no role to the maxim of Quantity. In her analysis

like Ward and Hirschberg (1991) she emphasizes on the role of the maxim of Relevance.

The second approach is that of Ward and Hirschberg (1991) who differentiate between disjunctions, conditionals, equatives, subordinate sentences, and relative sentences as the main kinds of tautological constructions.

These approaches are called “A new Gricean Approach”. They go to the radical pragmatic perspective, they put up the interpretation of a tautological utterance overcoming the problem proposed previously by the radical pragmatic framework, Ward and Hirschberg (1991:511).

The main kinds of tautological expressions are as stated below:

- 1-Equative: a is a, e.g. war is war, a win is a win, when men were men.
- 2- Conditional: if p (then p): e.g. if she does it, she does it, if they are awake, they are awake.
- 3- Subordinate Conjunction: when p, p; because p. e. g. when she gets angry, she gets angry; I get nervous because I get nervous.
- 4- Relative sentences: whatever p, p; p what p, e.g. whatever will come, will come, I do what I do.
- 5- Disjunctions: (either) or not p, e.g. either they'll do it or they won't.
- 6- Coordination: a is a and b is b e.g. work is work and holiday is holiday.

The syntactic construction attributes to the meaning of statements and utterances, so it has an important role in our interpretation of what is to be heard or read. The model used in analysis is overwhelming and it solves the problems that appear in other pragmatic theories.

### **The Corpus Data**

The analysis of media communication and discourse has owned attention among linguistics. What characterizes the talk show is a conversation started by the program host. Sometimes there are listeners as participants in the topic under discussion which may be of different genres: politics, sports, arts or recent issues.

The corpus data of this paper is from different wide world famous talk shows like The Oprah Winfrey show, Late Late show, Saturday Night Show, Dr Phil, David Letterman Show, Ellen Show, and The Daily Show. More than 80 episodes were under study from different seasons, and demonstrating different topics some of them are interviews with actors and singers, some are with clergymen, doctors, politicians, sport people, and other celebrities.

## The Analysis

For the limitation of space some samples from talk shows was chosen:  
E.g. (1) From Saturday Night live -15-episode season 34,

Box step is a box step...

This is a syntactic tautological construction of the form (a is a) an equative which seems to give nothing to our mutual beliefs in general, but it adds nothing to our specific mutual beliefs about Box Step. If we say that X is involved in the cooperative principles. Using the maxim of Quantity and Relation, X has uttered as much as he truthfully can what is relevant about “a”.

David Letterman is hosting the famous Neil Patrick, he is talking here about an event that happened during his singing on a big stage. He means that, there is nothing you can expect of that where you expect out of that because a Box Step is where you expect to stand .

X might have uttered “a is b “and that can apply to our mutual belief about “a” .X chose not to say such an alternative by doing this X implies that these alternatives are irrelevant for the aim of the exchange.

E.g.(2) episode 16 season 34 2009 with Alec Baldwin  
Valentine’s day special. Valentine’s day.

This is an equation that indicates that a valentine’s day is like the same prototype of a valentine’s day .Such distinction is made among members of a specified class ,Ward and Hirschberg(1991:514).

E.g.(3) Episode 5 with Taylor Swift (2009):

I am already looking that way already and that only way I am looking.

This is a coordination of the form (a is a and b is b ).

E.g. (4) Late Show 18 Episode:

Either get in or get out...

It is a disjunction meaning that (they) may come inside the play or go out and he can do nothing about it. According to the model of the analysis disjunctive tautological utterances can be used to transmit that alternative disjuncts are irrelevant. As (Green,1973:232;Benczes,2014:1) mention it is an explicit marking of mutual exclusivity so it gives emphasis to this analysis.

E.g. (5) Late Late Show Episode 19

She is doing what she is doing.

It is a headless relative which involves subordinating conjunctions .The form “what p ,p” is employed and alternatives of the form “what p, q “ are neglected ,the utterance means that she is doing what she is doing used to do all the time in such situations .

E.g. (6) The Tonight Show with Jimmy Fallen.

If never happen, never happen.

It is conditional by which a speaker utters such a statement to imply that alternatives of the structure “if p then q “are not related. The speaker means that if the event will not happen so it is not going to happen in any time in the future, and we can’t make it happen.

E.g.(7) The Oprah Winfrey Show Sep. 20 .2002

When I skin dive I skin dive.

A subordinate conjunction “when p, p “. Lady Gaga is telling her host that when she starts her sport of diving she do it to the most, she like to dive.

E.g.(8) The Oprah Winfrey Show 2010

You were what you were.

Jay Leno is using a headless relative telling Oprah that a person acts according to what his inner feelings or character lead him to react, his true self.

E.g.( 9) David Letterman Show 2016 with James Cordon

A good show will be a good show.

This is an equative kind of the form “a will be a”. The utterance means that if one work hard to produce a good program so it is going to be so.

E. g . (10) The Late Show with Stephen Colbert 2016

If it’s gone on a weekend, it’s gone. your trending for six hours and then, gone.

It is a conditional kind. If your efforts were lost so quickly so there is nothing you can do about it.

### The Results

After analyzing the data, the paper comes with the following results, the table below shows the frequency and number of appearance time for each type of the syntactic forms of the tautological utterances according to the classification used in analyzing the data.

Kind of tautological utterances	No. of utterances	percentage
equative	61	40,6%
Subordinate conjunction	16	10,6%
disjunctions	20	13,3%
conditional	14	9,3%
Headless relative	25	16,6%
coordination	14	9,4%
Total	150	100%

As clear from the table equative is the most prominent type then comes headless relative and conditional and coordination come at the end.

## Conclusion

The study represents an analysis of the interpretation of tautological utterances. The model of the analysis is a form of Grician generalized conversational implicature. The study is an integrating of Ward and Hirschberg (1991) that they exclude alternatives and on Autenrieth (1997) who claims that the second NP in a nominal equative is predicative. When a speaker utters a statement he is sure that the hearer will infer the alternatives to the speaker's real statement so he utters a tautological utterance. The hearer is going to infer its meaning in relation to the wider context it was derived from and he can correctly know which meaning is excluded by the speaker. We can conclude that talk shows as one of the forms of discourse does not use tautological utterances frequently. The equative type is the most used one and coordination is the less used. Speakers use tautology to give an emphasis to some idea, or to explain some other intention.

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الكلمات المفتاحية: اطناب، برنامج حوارى، نحو.

## الملخص

الحشو هو عبارة صحيحة لكل موقف. في هذه الحالة فان المرء يقول نفس الشيء مرتين الا ان عبارته غير غنية بالمعلومات في حد ذاتها لكنها تصبح ذات مغزى ضمن السياق، مثل "الحرب هي الحرب". تهدف الدراسة الى التحقق من ظاهرة الحشو والاطناب النحوي في البرامج الحوارية، وتحاول هذه الدراسة معرفة ما اذا كانت تلك التراكيب النحوية يتم تداولها في البرامج الحوارية كونها احد أنواع نصوص الخطاب، كما ويهدف البحث التعرف على النوع الأبرز، سيما و ان التحليل ستمد الى انموذج (وارد و هيرشبيرغ 1991) و(اوتينريث 1997) لتراكيب التعبيرات الاطنابية. جاءت نتيجة الدراسة بان تلك التراكيب تستعمل في البرامج وان صيغة المعادلة هي النوع الأكثر شيوعا.

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