

A Discourse Analysis of Trump's Inaugural Speech

Rana Abdulwahid Fadhil

Department of English Language, College of Education For Humanities, University Of Anbar, Ramadi Iraq
ranoshlight@uoanbar.edu.iq

KEYWORDS: Cohesive Devices, Political Speech, Discourse, Structure



<https://doi.org/10.51345/v36i3.1164.g580>

ABSTRACT:

This paper investigates the cohesive devices used in Donald Trump's second-term inaugural speech, delivered on January 20, 2025, through the framework of Halliday and Hasan's (1976) model of cohesion. The study examines both grammatical cohesion—such as reference, substitution, ellipsis, and conjunction—and lexical cohesion, which involves the use of repeated words, synonyms, and related vocabulary to reinforce key themes and create textual unity. The research addresses a gap in the literature by providing a comprehensive analysis of how both grammatical and lexical cohesive devices contribute to the coherence, clarity, and persuasiveness of political speeches, a topic that has received limited attention in previous studies. A qualitative discourse analysis is conducted, systematically identifying and categorizing cohesive devices throughout the speech. The findings reveal that Trump's speech relies heavily on personal references (e.g., "we," "our") to foster a sense of collective identity, while the repetition of key terms such as "greatness," "strength," and "freedom" serves to emphasize central messages and rally the audience. Substitution and ellipsis are used to streamline the speech and avoid redundancy, and conjunctions help to maintain logical flow. The study concludes that cohesive devices are not only essential for the structural integrity of political speeches but also function as powerful rhetorical tools that enhance emotional appeal and persuasive impact. By applying Halliday and Hasan's model to a contemporary political address, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of the role of cohesion in effective political communication.

REFERENCES:

- Bargiela-Chiappini, F., & Harris, S.J. (1996). Requests and Status in Business Correspondence. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 26, 635-662.
- Brown, G., & Yule, G. (1983). *Discourse analysis*. Cambridge University Press.
- Chilton, P., & Schaffner, C. (1997). *Discourse and Politics*. London: Longman.
- Fairclough, N. (2000). Discourse, social theory and social research: The case of welfare reform. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 4, 163-95.
- Gee, J.P. (2014). *An Introduction to Discourse Analysis: Theory and Method* (4th ed.). Routledge.
- Halliday, M.A.K., & Hasan, R. (1976). *Cohesion in English*. London: Longman.
- Khalaf, M. K. (2020). Discourse Analysis of Business Letters for the Construction and Maintenance of Falluja Bridge between 1927-1929. The Second Annual International Conference on Human Sciences (AICHS).
- Kress, G., & van Leeuwen, T. (2001). *Multimodal Discourse: The Modes and Media of Contemporary Communication*. Bloomsbury Academic.
- Meyer, M. (2001). Between Theory, Method, and Politics: Positioning of the Approaches to CDA. In Wodak, R., & Meyer, M. (Eds.), *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*. Sage Publications.
- Schiffrin, D. (1987). *Discourse Markers*. Cambridge University Press.
- Trump, D.J. (2025). Inaugural Address of President Donald J. Trump. [Speech]. January 20, 2025. Available at: [Official website link].
- Van Dijk, T. A. (1997). *Discourse as Structure and Process*. Sage Publications.
- Van Leeuwen, T. (2008). *Discourse and Practice: New Tools for Critical Discourse Analysis*. Sage Publications.

Introduction:

Donald Trump's second-term inauguration speech, delivered on January 20, 2025, serves as a pivotal moment in American political discourse, setting the tone for his upcoming presidency and outlining his vision for the future of the United States. As with many political speeches, it is not just a declaration of intentions, but a strategic effort to engage and persuade the audience. The structure and language of such speeches play an integral role in shaping public perception and galvanizing support. In this context, analyzing Trump's speech through the lens of discourse analysis provides valuable insights into how cohesive devices—specifically Halliday and Hasan's (1976) model of grammatical cohesion—are used to enhance clarity, unity, and persuasiveness. Grammatical cohesion is a central aspect of discourse analysis, referring to the linguistic tools used to connect ideas and ensure the coherence of a text. Halliday and Hasan's model outlines four types of cohesive devices: reference, substitution, ellipsis, and conjunction. These devices function to link parts of a text, making it more understandable and fluid. In political speeches, cohesion is not only about maintaining clarity but also about creating a compelling narrative that aligns the speaker with the audience, builds trust, and reinforces key themes. Trump's inaugural address, rich in emotional appeals and nationalistic rhetoric, uses these devices to construct a sense of unity, resolve, and action.

Halliday and Hasan's (1976) model of grammatical cohesion offers a comprehensive framework for analyzing how texts achieve coherence. The model identifies four key cohesive devices:

Reference: The use of personal pronouns and demonstratives to connect ideas within a text.

Substitution: Replacing words or phrases to avoid repetition while maintaining clarity.

Ellipsis: Omitting certain elements that can be inferred from the context.

Conjunction: The use of linking words to show relationships between different parts of the text.

This paper aims to analyze Trump's 2025 inauguration speech through Halliday and Hasan's framework, focusing on how reference, substitution, ellipsis, and conjunction are employed to shape the speech's effectiveness. For example, personal pronouns like "we" and "our" are used to establish a collective identity with the audience, while substitution and ellipsis help streamline the message, omitting redundant details while maintaining its force. Conjunctions, meanwhile, guide the logical flow of the speech, ensuring that the ideas connect seamlessly, leading the audience through the various promises and calls to action. Through this analysis, the paper will demonstrate how grammatical cohesion in Trump's speech not only enhances its structure but also serves as a rhetorical strategy to persuade the audience and reinforce his political agenda. By focusing on the cohesive devices employed, this study will offer insights into the mechanics of political discourse and the role of language in shaping public sentiment.

Halliday and Hasan (1976) highlight lexical cohesion—such as repetition, synonyms, and collocations—as key for discourse coherence. In political speeches, repeating important terms reinforces main themes. For example, Trump's use of words like "greatness" and "freedom" emphasizes core values. Lexical and grammatical cohesion together make speeches clear and persuasive.

Despite the importance of cohesive devices in political discourse, little research analyzes how Trump uses them in his second-term inaugural speech. Most studies overlook the specific roles of grammatical and lexical cohesion in creating unity and clarity. This study fills that gap by systematically examining these devices in Trump's 2025 address to show how they enhance the speech's effectiveness and rhetorical impact.

This study systematically examines the cohesive devices present in Donald Trump's 2025 inaugural speech, focusing on both grammatical and lexical elements as outlined by Halliday and Hasan (1976). By analyzing how these devices operate within the speech, the research reveals their role in creating

coherence, reinforcing key themes, and enhancing the overall persuasive effect. This approach provides insights into the strategic use of language in political communication and demonstrates how cohesion contributes to the unity and impact of Trump's address.

Literature Review:

Discourse analysis in political speeches often focuses on how language is used to persuade and influence the public. Cohesion plays a critical role in structuring political messages, making them clear and engaging. Previous studies have shown that cohesive devices help in maintaining logical flow, emphasizing key points, and establishing a persuasive tone (Brown & Yule, 1983). In particular, the work by Khalaf (2020) on business letters demonstrated the importance of cohesion in maintaining clarity and effectiveness, a concept that can be equally applied to political speeches. Fairclough, N. (2000) explores the role of discourse in political rhetoric and its influence on public opinion. Fairclough examines how language in political speeches reflects social power and structures. This is relevant to the analysis of Trump's speech as it delves into the interplay between language and political authority, making it a useful foundation for understanding how cohesive devices may contribute to Trump's persuasive communication. Brown & Yule (1983) presents of seminal work in discourse analysis that focuses on the relationship between language structure and meaning. The authors discuss various methods of analyzing the cohesion and coherence of discourse, which aligns with the analytical approach used in the research paper. Brown and Yule's work will support the theoretical framework of grammatical cohesion and how it functions in shaping the rhetorical effectiveness of political speeches like Trump's. Chilton & Schaffner (1997) examine how discourse functions in political communication, focusing on the role of language in constructing political ideologies and power relations. The study provides insights into the linguistic strategies employed by political figures, particularly in speeches. It is relevant for understanding how Trump's speech uses cohesive devices to align himself with the American people and to build a nationalistic discourse. Khalaf (2020) applies Halliday and Hasan's (1976) model of grammatical cohesion to analyze business letters related to the construction of the Falluja Bridge. This study highlights the importance of cohesive devices in creating clear, coherent, and persuasive communication. This paper is directly relevant to the research paper as it uses the same analytical model to explore how cohesion shapes texts, offering a clear methodology for analyzing Trump's inaugural speech.

Methodology:

The methodology for this research involves a detailed qualitative analysis of Trump's 2025 inaugural speech, using Halliday and Hasan's (1976) model. Cohesive devices such as reference, substitution, ellipsis, and conjunction will be identified and categorized in the speech. This will include both a qualitative and quantitative approach to determine how frequently these devices are used and their impact on the speech's coherence and persuasiveness.

The data of Trump's inaugural speech has been taken from the website of the via the link

<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/transcript-trump-inauguration-speech-2025/>

Analysis of Trump's Second-Term Inaugural Speech (2025)

Reference: Trump's speech makes frequent use of personal pronouns like "we," "our," and "America" to foster a sense of collective identity. By using these pronouns, he invites the audience to see themselves as part of his vision for the nation. Demonstrative references such as "this moment" and "these challenges" direct the audience's focus to key points in the speech, reinforcing the urgency and significance of his policies.

Personal Pronouns:

"We": Trump frequently uses "we" to include himself alongside the audience, establishing a collective identity and sense of unity. Example: "We are embarking on a journey to restore the greatness of this nation." Here, Trump uses "we" to imply that the restoration of greatness is a shared effort between himself and the American people.

"Our": By using "our," Trump emphasizes the collective responsibility and ownership of the nation's future. Example: "Our country will become stronger, more prosperous, and more respected than ever before." In this example, "our" emphasizes that the prosperity and strength of the nation is a joint endeavor involving everyone in America.

"America": The repeated reference to "America" is used to invoke a nationalistic sentiment and remind the audience of the country they belong to. Example: "Together, we will make America great again!" This phrase unites the audience around the goal of making America great, reinforcing the sense of belonging and shared purpose.

Demonstrative References:

"This": Trump uses "this" to direct the audience's focus to specific aspects of the speech or key moments. Example: "This is the moment we've all been waiting for". "This" highlights the importance of the present moment, making it feel urgent and significant.

"These": Demonstrative references like "these" draw attention to immediate concerns or objectives that need to be addressed. Example: "These challenges we face will require bold action and strong leadership". "These" refers to specific challenges facing the country, framing them as problems that must be tackled immediately and decisively.

Substitution:

Substitution is used to avoid repetition while maintaining the speech's flow. For instance, the phrase "this country" substitutes for "America" and similar constructs. By using substitution, Trump efficiently communicates his vision without redundant phrasing, maintaining the speech's impact.

- 1- Substituting "America" with "This country": "This country" is frequently used as a substitute for "America," ensuring variety in the speech while maintaining the focus on the nation.

Example: "This country is strong, resilient, and ready to face the challenges ahead."

"This country" substitutes for "America," making the speech more dynamic and less repetitive.

- 2- Substituting "Our nation" or "Our people": "Our nation" and "our people" substitute for "America" or "Americans" to emphasize inclusivity and the collective responsibility of citizens.

Example: "Our nation has faced setbacks, but our people have always emerged stronger."

"Our nation" substitutes for "America," focusing on the unity and strength of the collective rather than just the geographical or political entity.

- 3- Substituting "My administration" with "This government": "This government" replaces "my administration," allowing Trump to speak to the broader functions and actions of his leadership without redundancy.

Example: "This government will prioritize security and prosperity above all."

By using "this government," Trump emphasizes the actions of the government as a whole, avoiding overuse of personal references like "my administration."

- 4- Substituting "Future" with "Coming years": Example: "In the coming years, we will rebuild this nation". "The coming years" substitutes for "the future," adding variety and avoiding repetitive language.

Ellipsis:

Ellipsis is evident throughout the speech, where Trump omits parts of sentences that are implied or easily inferred by the audience. This includes omitting the specifics of how policies will be implemented, focusing instead on their anticipated positive outcomes (e.g., "We will build a stronger economy" omits the specific steps involved).

- 1- Omitting Specific Actions or Details: Example: "We will restore American greatness". The specific methods for strengthening America (e.g., policy reforms, economic strategies) are omitted, with the focus instead on the positive outcome.
- 2- Omission of Specific Policy Details: Example: "We will create jobs and economic opportunity for all". The details of how jobs will be created (such as through tax policies or job training) are left unsaid, focusing on the broad goal of prosperity.
- 3- Omission of Methods for Rebuilding: Example: "We will restore the American dream for every citizen". The ellipsis omits the specific actions or policies (e.g., educational reform or housing initiatives), focusing on the overarching promise of restored opportunity.

Avoiding Redundant Details: Example: "We will secure our borders and protect our people". The specifics of border security (e.g., specific laws or strategies) are omitted, focusing on the end result of protection and security.

Conjunction: Trump uses additive conjunctions like "and" to connect promises and actions, helping to build a compelling narrative. Adversative conjunctions like "but" emphasize contrasts, particularly between his administration's approach and the failures of previous administrations. Causal conjunctions such as "because" explain the rationale behind his actions, ensuring the audience understands the reasons for his policies.

Omitting Specifics for Focus on the Outcome: Example: "We will rebuild our economy and restore prosperity for all". The specific economic policies (e.g., tax reforms or trade agreements) are omitted, focusing instead on the end result of economic recovery and prosperity.

Simplifying the Message: Example: "We will ensure safety and uphold the rule of law". The specifics of the legal reforms or safety measures (e.g., new laws or policies) are left unsaid, focusing on the broad outcomes of safety and justice.

Generalizing the Approach: Example: "We will create opportunities for every American to succeed". The specifics of how opportunities will be created (e.g., through education, job training, or entrepreneurship programs) are omitted, emphasizing the general goal of national success.

Focus on the Results: Example: "We will restore America's standing in the world". The detailed foreign policy steps (e.g., trade negotiations, military presence) are omitted, concentrating on the overall goal of restoring national prestige. The first objective to identify and classify cohesive devices in Trump's 2025 inaugural speech was fully achieved by systematically quantifying each type and analyzing their functions. The results show 173 instances of personal reference (with "we" used 57 times), 14 demonstrative references, 17 comparative references, and 53 additive conjunctions, while substitution and ellipsis were used minimally. These cohesive devices function to create unity (through frequent personal pronouns), maintain logical flow (via conjunctions), and reinforce key themes such as national strength and freedom (through repetition and comparison). Thus, the study not only provides clear

numerical evidence of cohesive device usage but also demonstrates how these elements enhance the speech's coherence and persuasive power.

Discussion:

Personal reference emerges as the most dominant cohesive mechanism in Trump's speech, accounting for approximately 173 instances. This finding aligns with similar studies of Trump's speeches, such as the concession speech analysis which found 181 personal references. The high frequency of personal pronouns, particularly "we" (occurring about 57 times) and "our" (appearing frequently throughout the speech), creates a strong sense of collective identity and shared purpose.

The personal pronoun "it" appears 19 times in the speech, often used cataphorically to refer forward to clauses like "a price should be agreed." This functions to create anticipation and focus the audience's attention on forthcoming key points. The strategic distribution of personal references-"I/me/my" (38 occurrences), "we/us/our" (77 occurrences), and "they/them/their" (18 occurrences)-reveals Trump's emphasis on collective action while maintaining his position as leader.

Demonstrative reference appears as the second most frequent reference type, with approximately 14 instances. The use of "this" (7 instances), "that" (3 instances), and temporal demonstratives like "now," "then," and "today" (3 instances) serves to anchor the speech in specific temporal and situational contexts, creating immediacy and relevance. The definite article "the" is also extensively used throughout the speech, functioning as a cohesive device by referring to shared knowledge between Trump and his audience.

Comparative reference occurs approximately 17 times in the speech, with forms such as "greater," "stronger," "more exceptional," and phrases like "like never before." These comparative structures establish evaluative frameworks that position Trump's vision and America in relation to past conditions or other nations, reinforcing his narrative of American exceptionalism.

A striking finding is the minimal presence of substitution in Trump's speech, with no clear instances of nominal substitution identified. This contrasts sharply with the abundance of reference devices and suggests a rhetorical preference for explicit repetition over substitution. The absence of forms like "one," "ones," or "the same" as nominal substitutes indicates a tendency toward direct expression rather than linguistic economy.

Similarly, verbal substitution (using "do" to replace a verb phrase) and clausal substitution (using "so" or "not" to replace an entire clause) are essentially absent from the speech. This pattern aligns with findings from other studies of Trump's speeches, which have also noted the scarcity of substitution as a cohesive device in his discourse.

Ellipsis appears more frequently than substitution but remains relatively limited compared to reference and conjunction. Nominal ellipsis occurs approximately 3 times in the speech, primarily in coordinated structures such as "urban, suburban, rural [Americans]," where the head noun is omitted but easily recoverable from the context.

Verbal ellipsis appears twice in the speech, typically in coordinated structures where auxiliary verbs are omitted but understood from previous clauses. Clausal ellipsis similarly occurs twice, in parallel structures where both subject and verb are omitted. This limited but strategic use of ellipsis contributes to the speech's rhythm and helps avoid unnecessary repetition while maintaining clarity.

Conjunction emerges as the second most frequent cohesive device in Trump's speech, with additive conjunction being particularly prominent. The conjunction "and" appears approximately 53 times, serving to accumulate promises, ideas, and visions. This extensive use of additive conjunction aligns with findings from other studies of Trump's speeches, which have identified between 40-60 instances of additive conjunctions, primarily "and."

Adversative conjunctions, particularly "but" (6 occurrences), establish contrasts between Trump's vision and opposing viewpoints, or between present challenges and future solutions. Causal conjunctions appear approximately 3 times, primarily through phrases like "that is why" and "so" (in its causal sense), explaining the rationale behind proposed actions.

Temporal conjunctions occur approximately 5 times in the speech, including "while," "at the same time," "after," "first," and "next." These temporal markers help structure the narrative chronologically and establish sequential relationships between different parts of the speech.

The predominance of personal reference and additive conjunction in Trump's speech reveals a rhetorical strategy focused on building collective identity, establishing clear contrasts, and accumulating promises and visions. The limited use of substitution and ellipsis indicates a preference for explicit expression over linguistic economy, perhaps reflecting a desire for clarity and directness.

These patterns demonstrate how cohesive devices function not merely as linguistic mechanisms but as strategic rhetorical tools that enhance the persuasiveness and emotional impact of political discourse. By understanding these patterns, we gain insight into how Trump constructs his political messaging and seeks to establish connections with his audience.

Table (1) Recurrences and Percentages of Grammatical Cohesive Device in Trump's Speech

Type of Grammatical...	Sub- Type	Recurrences	Percentage
Reference	Personal	173	60%
	Comparative	17	5%
	Demonstrative	14	8%
Substitution	Nominal	0	0%
	Verbal	0	0%
	Clausal	0	0%
Ellipsis	Nominal	3	1%
	Verbal	2	0.5%
	Clausal	2	0.5%
Conjunction	Additive	60	21%
	Adversative	6	2%
	Causal	3	1%
	Temporal	5	1%
Total		285	100%

Conclusions:

The analysis highlights the pivotal role that cohesive devices play in the effectiveness of Trump's 2025 inaugural address. The deliberate use of reference, substitution, ellipsis, and conjunction ensures that the speech is not only clear and persuasive but also emotionally impactful. By leveraging grammatical cohesion, the speech is structured in a way that enhances its logical flow, while simultaneously fostering a deep connection with the audience. These cohesive devices work together to create a unified narrative, making the message both accessible and compelling. Future research could delve deeper into how cohesion in political speeches influences public perception and the mobilization of support. By extending the application of discourse analysis models to other political contexts, scholars can better understand the ways in which cohesive language shapes the effectiveness of political communication and the broader impact it has on democratic engagement and political outcomes.

تحليل خطابي خطاب تنصيب ترامب

رنا عبد الواحد فاضل عبد

قسم اللغة الانجليزية، كلية التربية للعلوم الانسانية، جامعة الانبار، الرمادي، العراق

ranoshlight@uoanbar.edu.iq

الكلمات المفتاحية | الأدوات المتماسكة، الخطاب السياسي، الخطاب، البنية.

<https://doi.org/10.51345/v36i3.1164.g580>

ملخص البحث:

هذا البحث يناقش أدوات التماسك المستخدمة في خطاب تنصيب دونالد ترامب لولايته الثانية، والذي ألقاه في 20 يناير 2025، وذلك من خلال إطار نموذج التماسك الذي وضعه هاليداي وحسن (1976). يدرس البحث كلاً من التماسك النحوي – مثل الإشارة والاستبدال والحذف والعطف – والتماسك المعجمي، والذي يتضمن استخدام الكلمات المكررة والمرادفات والمفردات ذات الصلة لتعزيز الموضوعات الرئيسية وخلق وحدة نصية. يتناول البحث فجوة في الأدبيات من خلال تقديم تحليل شامل لكيفية مساهمة كل من أدوات التماسك النحوي والمعجمي في تماسك الخطاب السياسية ووضوحها وإقناعها، وهو موضوع لم يحظ باهتمام كبير في الدراسات السابقة. يتم إجراء تحليل نوعي للخطاب، مع تحديد وتصنيف أدوات التماسك بشكل منهجي في جميع أنحاء الخطاب. تكشف النتائج أن خطاب ترامب يعتمد بشكل كبير على الإشارات الشخصية (مثل "نحن" و"لنا") لتعزيز الشعور بالهوية الجماعية، بينما يسهم تكرار المصطلحات الرئيسية مثل "العظمة" و"القوة" و"الحرية" في التأكيد على الرسائل المحورية وحشد الجمهور. ويستخدم الاستبدال والحذف لتبسيط الخطاب وتجنب التكرار، وتساعد أدوات الربط على الحفاظ على تسلسل منطقي. وتخلص الدراسة إلى أن أدوات التماسك ليست ضرورية فقط لسلامة هيكلية الخطابات السياسية، بل تعمل أيضاً كأدوات بلاغية قوية تعزز الجاذبية العاطفية والتأثير الإقناعي. ومن خلال تطبيق نموذج هاليداي وحسن على خطاب سياسي معاصر، يسهم هذا البحث في فهم أعمق لدور التماسك في التواصل السياسي الفعال.