

Exploration into Speech (Usage of Conjunction Devices) from the Perspective of Halliday's Cohesion Theory

Based on Donald Trump's Inaugural Speech

Xiuying Zhou^{1,**}

¹ School of Foreign Studies, Anhui Sanlian University, Hefei, Anhui 230601, China

^{**}Corresponding author. Email: daisyzh2882@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Based on cohesive devices in Halliday's Systemic-Functional Grammar, this study intends to analyze conjunctions in Donald Trump's inaugural speech, exploring the function and effect of four conjunction devices in the speech. Research shows that additive function ranks the first, followed by adversative and causal function, while temporal devices seldom appear in the speech. Besides, it is found that in public speaking, it is necessary to use varieties of conjunction devices to produce better communications.

Keywords: Conjunction, Cohesion theory, Inaugural speech.

1. INTRODUCTION

Most presidents of the United States are famous for their excellent speeches, and the politics of speeches in the United States seems to have the nature of "performance" to some degree. The former president Trump has become a topic in academia at home and abroad due to his personal growth and business experiences etc. In recent years, political discourse has become a research concern in critical discourse analysis and political linguistics. The discourse in political discourse is to meet the needs of political activities.

Presently studies on Trump's discourse concern research on Trump discourse style[1] (Wang & Liu, 2017), and research on the narrative style of Trump discourse (Waikar, 2018)[2]; Mc Murry (2018) discusses the uniqueness of Trump's communication style and describes the "weirdness" of his discourse style as "Trumpolect"[3]. Based on Trump's inaugural speech, Zhang Yiwu (2017) explores the conflicts between American political concepts and Trump discourse. However, few studies have focused on political speeches from

cohesion and even less on Trump's inaugural speech. Language cohesion or conjunction devices in particular, are of vital importance to speakers. Based on the cohesion theory in Halliday's systemic-functional grammar, this paper studies the use of four conjunction relations in Trump's inaugural speech of 2017. It explores whether Trump's inaugural speech uses cohesion and conjunction devices cleverly and also effects of language cohesion.

2. STUDIES OF COHESION AND CONJUNCTION

As a sub-system of cohesion in Systemic-Functional Grammar, conjunction words function to connect words to words and paragraphs to paragraphs, which plays a role in political speeches, and helps speakers to clarify their points and helps listeners to unveil the hidden meaning of language.

In the study of discourse analysis, language cohesion is one of the important approaches. Quirk et al. (1972) devote a whole chapter in their grammar book to cohesion relation between sentences and ellipses[4] M.A.K. Halliday, the founder of Systemic Functional Grammar, explored cohesion theory earlier. In 1976, Halliday and his

*Fund: This research is sponsored by the Key Projects of Anhui Provincial Quality Engineering Program in China (2019jyxm0506) and (2018jxtd035).

wife published "English Cohesion" and proposed a relatively complete system of cohesion theory. They believe that the so-called cohesion of language is the "relationship of meaning that forms the text"[5]. Later, in the book "Introduction to Functional Grammar", Halliday focuses on the cohesion devices from the perspective of logical-semantic relations. The publication of the abovementioned books immediately attracted the attention of linguists on the theory of cohesion. Schiffrin called cohesive words "discourse markers" and studied the functions and effects of several common discourse markers from the perspective of discourse analysis[6].

Halliday's systemic-functional grammar provides a new perspective or method for discourse analysis. He divides cohesion into grammatical cohesion and lexical cohesion. The former one includes reference, substitution, ellipsis and conjunction. From the perspective of the logic-semantic relationship, Halliday divides cohesion into three categories: Elaboration, extension, and enhancement. Unlike the other three grammatical cohesion devices, conjunction devices themselves do not have any cohesive meaning but indirectly play a cohesive role through their specific meaning (Halliday, 2001). According to the function or cohesive role in discourse, Halliday & Hason summarised four conjunction types: additive, adversative, causal and temporal (see "Table 1").

Table 1. Types of conjunction

No.	Types of conjunction
1	Additive
2	Adversative
3	Causal
4	Temporal

(Halliday & Hassan, 2001)

Additive conjunctions connect two or more parallel sentences, meaning that there is still information to be added (Halliday & Hason, 2001). Among all additive conjunction words, "and" is the most commonly used one (Quirk et al., 1972). The two sentences connected by "and" often reflect different semantic relations in a specific context. The context where "and" is used is that "the participant shifts from one sentence to another in seemingly complete form and the two sentences are undoubtedly part of the discourse" (Halliday,

1976). The word "and" also has the effect of highlighting something (Quirk, 1972).

Adversative conjunction words follow a situation that is contrary to expectations (Halliday, 2001). This expectation can be inferred from what is being discussed. In adversative relations, "but" is the most frequently used word. Besides, there are also "even though" and so on.

Causal conjunction is used to connect two sentences of cause and effect. The most common cohesive devices for causality are "because", "so" and "therefore", which are also very important in presidential speeches. Temporal conjunction refers to the temporal relation between two adjacent sentences, indicating that one sentence follows another (Halliday, 2001). It expresses the sequence of two sentences, which can either indicate the sequence of time or logical sequence. Maintaining the integrity of the specifications

3. APPLICATION OF CONJUNCTION IN TRUMP'S INAUGURAL SPEECH

All these four conjunction types are used in Trump's inaugural speech. The frequency of using various conjunctions are calculated and summarized in the following table for further exploration.

Table 2. Four types of conjunction in Trump's Inaugural Speech

Conjunction	Additive	Adversative	Causal	Temporal
Frequency	70	22	5	13

Data in the "Table 2" present the number of four types of conjunctions used in the speech. By analyzing and comparing the usage of four conjunctions, we can find that additive devices are most frequently used in Trump's speech, which is almost twice as much as the other three types of conjunctions, followed by adversative devices and then temporal devices. Causal devices are the least frequently used in Trump's speech.

3.1 Additive Conjunction

Additive conjunction words usually connect parallel sentences, meaning that there is still

information to be added. In Trump's inaugural speech, the word "and" accounts for 94% of all four types of conjunction words. Therefore, this paper will first analyse the application of "and" in the speech. Unlike other conjunction words, the word "and" has many different meanings in the inaugural speech. The context where "and" is used is that "participants shift from one sentence to another completely, and two sentences are undoubtedly part of the text" (Halliday, 1976).

Example 1:

*We've defended other nation's borders ...; **And** spent trillions of dollars o.... We've made other countries rich ... has disappeared over the horizon. ...But that is the past. **And** now we are looking only to the future.*

In this part, Trump argues that all American people have defended other nations in the first sentence. While in the second sentence, he shifts to another topic of "spent trillions of dollars overseas", so he starts the second sentence with the conjunction word "and", which enables the topic of "defending nation" to shift to the topic of "spending trillions of dollars overseas" naturally and smoothly. In the last two sentences, Trump concludes that all that is the past, so he starts the last sentence with "that" to mean a subject shift from "all that" to "we", calling on American people to be confident and look to the future again. The frequent usage of "and" presents the implied additive relation and makes the speech more orderly and logical.

Here it indicates an obvious additive relation where subject change means the change of topic and focus. The use of two "and" in the above three sentences makes Trump's speech more logical and orderly. "And" also has the effect of highlighting (Quirk, 1972). Likewise, in the following example, Trump uses "and" to emphasize his point.

Example 2:

*We will build new roads, **and** highways, **and** bridges, **and** airports, **and** tunnels, **and** railways We will get ... **and** back to work — rebuilding our country with American hands **and** American labor. We will follow two simple rules: Buy American **and** Hire American.*

In the first sentence of this paragraph, as the objects of the verb "build", the words "highways", "bridges", "airports", and "tunnels" do not require four "and" to conjunct between them. However, Trump uses the conjunction "and" between each

noun of the four to express his strong determination and prominent attitude. He stresses his determination to increase investment in infrastructure construction. He decides to carry out various policies to benefit the American people to make the audience have confidence in the future of the United States.

In the last two sentences, Trump states, "rebuild our country with American hands and American labor" and "buy American and hire American". The former "and" is used to connect "American hands" and "American labor", while the latter connects "buy American" and "hire American". In this way, Trump stresses the role of meaning expressed after the word "and". It shows that Trump is most concerned about the economic policy of the United States. The United States is the world's number one economic power. However, in recent years, with slow economic growth and low employment, economic issues of the United States have increasingly become the focus of public attention.

As for other additive conjunctions, Trump also uses "or" to introduce a different result because the previously mentioned situation does not apply to the latter, such as in example 3 and example 4.

Example 3:

*Because today we are not merely transferring power from one Administration to another, **or** from one party to another — but we are transferring power from Washington, D.C. and giving it*

Example 4:

And whether a child is born in the urban sprawl of Detroit or the windswept plains of Nebraska, they look up at the same night sky....

In example 3, Trump mentions "we are not merely transferring power from one Administration to another, or from one party to another", in which the conjunction word "or" indicates that Trump will learn from the lessons of the Obama Administration and change the public's dissatisfaction with the Obama Administration to confidence in Trump Administration. In example 4, when discussing justice and equality, Trump stresses that "whether a child is born in the urban sprawl of Detroit or the windswept plains of Nebraska, they look up at the same night sky", which implies that Trump will be committed to solving the problem of racial discrimination.

3.2 Adversative Conjunction

In adversative relation, adversative conjunctions are used to introduce an unexpected situation. In Trump's inaugural speech, "but" is the most frequently used conjunction.

Example 5:

*For too long, a small group in our nation's Capital has reaped the rewards of government **while** the people have borne the cost. Washington flourished — **but** the people did not share in its wealth. Politicians prospered — **but** the jobs left, and the factories closed. The establishment protected itself, **but** not the citizens of our country.*

In the first sentence of Example 5, "a small group in our nation's capital has reaped the rewards of government while the people have borne the cost", Trump uses the adversative conjunction "while" to express his dissatisfaction and disappointment that a small number of groups have reached the rewards for which the people have borne the cost.

In the latter three sentences, the adversative conjunction "but" is used three times. The expressions of "Washington flowed", "politics promoted", and "the establishment protected itself" give the audience the impression that Washington is booming. Politicians are moving towards prosperity, so the expected result should be that the American people can get corresponding returns. However, the appearance of a "but" disappoints the American people. The expressions after "but" are full of criticism and condemnation, showing that Trump will learn from the lessons of the Obama administration and resolutely safeguard the interests of ordinary American people to obtain their support.

3.3 Causal Conjunction

Causal relation words are used to connect two sentences. The most common cohesive words related to causal relation are "because", "for", and "so". In Trump's inaugural speech, there are fewer causal conjunction words, but with good effect.

Example 6:

*That all changes — starting ..., **because** this moment is your moment: it belongs to you. This is your day. This is your celebration.*

In example 6, the causal conjunction "because" is used to introduce a causal relation sentence. The

first clause, "That all changes — starting right here, and right," presents the result, and then the latter part introduced by the causal device "because" to point out the reason. The inverted structure applied in this causal relation suggests that Trump intends to stress the importance of the reason. Trump's purpose is to make the American people notice that the new government he formed is different from the former Obama administration. He stressed that it is in the interests of the country and the people that he was elected president. This tone will give people a more profound impression.

3.4 Temporal Conjunction

Temporal relation refers to the sequential relationship between two adjacent sentences indicating the priority in time or logic. In Trump's inaugural speech, he uses temporal conjunctions such as "now", "then", and "finally".

Example 7:

*The wealth of our middle class has been ripped from their homes and **then** redistributed across the entire world. **But** that is the past. And **now** we are looking only to the future. We assembled here **today** are issuing a..., and in every hall of power.*

In the first sentence of this paragraph, Trump mentions that "The wealth of our middle class has been ripped and **then** redistributed across the entire world," in which "then" indicates the sequence in time and also indicates an adversative relation together with the word "and". By using the conjunction word "then", Trump expresses his sympathy towards the American people of the middle class to obtain their supports.

4. CONCLUSION

In his inaugural speech, Trump's political viewpoints can be effectively expressed through coherent and appealing speech that requires explicit cohesive devices. Trump naturally adopts four conjunction words to make his speech coherent, fluent and appealing, which helps the audience to grasp the conveyed meaning. Meanwhile, the use of conjunction words can highlight the speaker's position and help Trump gain supports from the American people.

Trump's inaugural speech made full use of various conjunctions to effectively elaborate his political views, which was clear and convincing. Based on Halliday's classifications of conjunction types, this paper analyzes Trump's inaugural speech

through examples and data analysis to deepen the understanding of spoken discourse and verify the practicability of systemic-functional grammar theory.

Therefore, in public speaking, it is necessary to use various conjunctions in a speech and sometimes, it is more effective. Cohesion theory of conjunction words helps us to explore the hidden information in the discourse. It shows how the speakers convey their views to the audience through the choice of language, which provides a new approach to the interpretation of political discourse.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

This paper is independently completed by Xiuying Zhou.

REFERENCES

- [1] Wang, Y. & Liu H. Is Trump always rambling like a fourth-grade student? An analysis of stylistic features of Donald Trump's political discourse during the 2016 election [J]. *Discourse & Society*, 2018(3): 299-323.
- [2] Waikar, P. Reading islamophobia in hegemonic neoliberalism through a discourse analysis of Donald Trump's narratives [J]. *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 2018 (2): 153-178.
- [3] Mcmurry A. Trumpolect: Donald Trump's distinctive discourse and its functions [A]. In Kowalski J. (ed.). *Reading Donald Trump: The Evolving American Presidency* [C]. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019:33-56.
- [4] Quirk, R. et. al. (1972). *A grammar of contemporary English*. London: Longman Group Ltd.
- [5] Halliday, M.A.K. & Hasan, R. *Cohesion in English* [M]. Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 2001:4.
- [6] Schiffrin, D. (2007). *Discourse markers*. Beijing: World Publishing Corporation, 2007.
- [7] CBS NEWS. 2017 Donald Trump inauguration speech transcript [OL]. (2017-01-20) [(2017-01-20)] <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/transcript-of-trump-inauguration-speech-full-text/>