



Grammatical and Lexical Cohesion in Charlie Chaplin's "The Great Dictator" Speech: A Quantitative Content Analysis

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Abstract

This quantitative content analysis examines grammatical and lexical cohesion in Charlie Chaplin's final speech from *The Great Dictator* (1940), applying Halliday and Hasan's (1976) framework. Analysis of the 1,200-word transcript reveals reference (78.82%, $n=67$) as the dominant grammatical device, followed by repetition (67.30%, $n=35$) in lexical cohesion. Personal pronouns ("I," "we," "you") create intimacy and solidarity, while lexical reiteration ("men," "greed") builds rhetorical urgency. Findings offer EFL pedagogical insights for teaching discourse cohesion in multicultural Indonesian classrooms.

Keywords: *Cohesion Analysis; Grammatical Cohesion; Lexical Cohesion; Discourse Analysis; Charlie Chaplin; EFL Pedagogy; Quantitative Content Analysis*

1. Introduction

Humans, as social beings, rely on language to communicate ideas, emotions, and opinions. Speech serves as a primary medium for direct expression, often to audiences, yet it features less dense organization and more interactive elements than written language (Brown & Yule, 1983).

Effective speech requires coherence (contextual linkage of clauses) and cohesion (semantic ties between elements), where interpretation of one part depends on another (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). Cohesion manifests through grammatical (reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction) and lexical (reiteration, collocation) devices, creating textual unity.

This study analyzes grammatical and lexical cohesion in Charlie Chaplin's iconic final speech from *The Great Dictator* (1940)—a persuasive English monologue impersonating Adolf Hitler. As a landmark anti-fascist address delivered during WWII, it exemplifies how cohesive devices sustain rhetorical impact across paragraphs, offering insights for EFL discourse analysis.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Grammatical Cohesion

Halliday and Hasan (1976) identify four main types of grammatical cohesion: reference, substitution, ellipsis, and conjunction. Each creates textual ties through grammatical structure rather than lexical repetition.

a. Reference

Reference signals retrieval via personal (I, they), demonstrative (this, there), and comparative (same, other) words (Halliday & Hasan, 1976).

b. Substitution

Substitution replaces elements with one (nominal), do (verbal), or so (clausal) (Halliday & Hasan, 1976).

c. Ellipsis

Ellipsis omits recoverable elements, including nominal, verbal, and clausal types (Halliday & Hasan, 1976).

d. Conjunction

Conjunctions link clauses logically: additive (and), adversative (but), causal (because), and temporal (then, whenever) (Halliday & Hasan, 1976).

2.2 Lexical Cohesion

Halliday and Hasan (1976) categorized lexical cohesion into reiteration and collocation. Reiteration involves semantic fields through repetition, synonyms, antonyms, and superordinates/subordinates; collocation refers to lexical patterning beyond these ties.

a. Repetition

Repetition occurs when the same lexical item recurs, creating semantic links (Halliday & Hasan, 1976).

b. Synonyms

Synonyms are lexical items with closely related meanings that substitute for one another. Example: "Weeping is crying because of a lost friendship," where "weeping" and "crying" function synonymously.

c. Antonyms

Antonyms link words through oppositional meanings. Example: "fast" versus "slow" in "Bugatti Chiron is fast on the straight but slow on the corner."

d. Metonymy

Metonymy substitutes a related entity for the intended referent. Example: "faces" for "people" in "there were so many familiar faces today."

e. Hypernyms (Superordinates)

Hypernyms denote broader categories encompassing specific terms. Example: "color" (hypernym) for "blue" (hyponym).

f. Hyponyms (Subordinates)

Hyponyms are specific instances within a broader category. Example: "table" as a hyponym of "furniture."

3. Method

3.1 Research Design

This study employed quantitative content analysis to systematically examine grammatical and lexical cohesion in Charlie Chaplin's speech from *The Great Dictator*. This method combines structured coding with frequency counts and percentages (Halliday & Hasan, 1976; Krippendorff, 2018). Inter-coder reliability was 92% through double-coding of 20% sample.

3.2 Data Source

Data comprised Chaplin's utterances from the film's final speech, sourced from the official Charlie Chaplin website (<https://www.charliechaplin.com/en/articles/29-the-final-speech-from-the-great-dictator>).

3.3 Data Collection and Processing

Data collection proceeded in four steps: (1) reading the transcript to identify relevant terms; (2) noting instances of cohesive devices; (3) categorizing and marking them (via brackets or underlining); and (4) verifying matches against Halliday and Hasan's (1976) cohesion framework.

4. Results

Table 1. Grammatical Cohesive Devices

Device	Frequency	Percentage
Reference	67	78.82%
Ellipsis	9	10.58%
Substitution	0	0%
Conjunction	9	10.58%
Total	85	100%

Table 2. Lexical Cohesive Devices

Device	Frequency	Percentage
Repetition	35	67.30%
Synonyms	4	7.69%
Antonyms	2	3.84%
Metonyms	0	0%
Hypernyms	0	0%
Hyponyms	2	3.84%
Collocation	9	17.30%
Total	52	100%

Reference dominates grammatical cohesion (78.82%); repetition leads lexical cohesion (67.30%).

5. Discussion

Personal references ("I," "we," "you") create speaker-audience intimacy and collective solidarity, essential for persuasive discourse. Repetition of "men," "misery," "greed" establishes lexical chains reinforcing thematic urgency (Halliday & Hasan, 1976).

These patterns suggest EFL applications: reference chains improve student speech coherence; lexical repetition builds rhetorical impact—relevant for Indonesian multicultural classrooms practicing code-switching akin to Chaplin's inclusive pronouns.

6. Conclusion

Analysis reveals reference (78.82%) and repetition (67.30%) as dominant cohesive devices in Chaplin's speech. Personal pronouns foster intimacy; lexical reiteration creates urgency. Findings inform EFL pedagogy, enhancing discourse teaching in multicultural contexts. Ethical Statement: No human participants; public domain film transcript analyzed.

References

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