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The Use of Elaboration in the First Speech of Joe Biden as President of the USA Delivered to the Nation in November 2020

Hasan Isam Aldulaimi

Department of Scholarships & Cultural Relations, University of Technology- Iraq

hasan.i.hasan@uotechnology.edu.iq

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Abstract: Speech is the utterance of thoughts in the form of speech. The first speech by President Joe Biden to the nation in November 2020 reviewed the political, economic, and social realities in the United States during that period. This study examines the application of elaboration as a rhetorical tool in Biden's speech with particular reference to its subtypes, such as apposition and clarification. The study is qualitative in nature in terms of its design, as it is based on the theory of cohesion, formulated by Halliday and Hasan (1976), about the use of conjunctions to enhance the main text in terms of coherence and meaning. The analysis shows that the subtypes of the elaboration breakdown in Biden's speech were 33% expository, 33% resumptive, 22% particularizing, and 12% verificative. Moreover, the use of clarification was more common as compared to the use of apposition, which shows that Biden used clarification to make his speech clear and direct to the audience. The above findings indicate that the strategic application of elaboration can make political speech more persuasive and comprehensible, which fits into the cohesion-based theoretical framework.

Keywords: Conjunctions, Elaboration, Joe Biden, Speech, Apposition.

1. Introduction

Speech is considered one of the communication competences that can impact others. It can have a direct influence on the public because it plays an important role in common society. Correspondingly, this research investigates how conjunctions, especially elaboration, are used in the sense of Joe Biden's first speech as President of the Nation in 2020. The reason for studying this speech is that Joe Biden is in a position of influence, not only in his country of origin but also internationally, and should be examined based on conjunctions. Furthermore, the study of political language is closely linked to language, as (Chilton and Schaffner, 1997) stated that "Policy cannot be conducted without language".

1.1. The Problem of the Research

Whereas the speech of President Joe Biden, which addressed the nation in November 2020, has become a critical topic of sharing on social media, an in-depth study of the degree of its elaboration in the current research is still missing. There is still an evident gap in the analysis of how the president introduced the main problematic areas, the volume and constraints of the elaboration given, and the degree to which the elaboration helped in establishing the trust of

people and accomplishing the persuasive nature of the speech. This is especially an important gap in consideration of the political and social climate of the time of the speech, which is highly unsteady and requires a lot of rhetorical means to influence the general opinion.

In this regard, Hughes and Canel contend that rhetorical elaboration in a political speech in times of crisis presents a key communication strategy for improving persuasion and establishing credibility and trust among political leaders and their citizens. The authors point out that the extent of elaboration, the way it is organized, and the nature of information provided, including examples, data, and explanatory accounts, have a direct impact on how people perceive and react to the political messages. Therefore, the lack of systematic study of elaboration in the State of the Union address made by Biden provides vivid evidence of a research gap and the need to address elaboration patterns, their rhetorical purposes, and how they can be used to fulfill persuasive purposes in the context of the highly complex political and social environment (Hughes and Canel, 2025).

1.2. The Importance of the Research

This study is relevant because it is concerned with a highly significant linguistic-rhetorical phenomenon, namely the use of elaboration in political discourse. This is done by examining the address President Joe Biden gave to the nation in 2020 in a unique political and social setting characterized by domestic division, an epidemic called COVID-19, and general doubt and uncertainty. The study adds to the study of political discourse analysis and applied linguistics because it focuses on the use of linguistic elaboration to clarify issues, build credibility, and enhance the persuasive role of political discourse. Its importance is also attributed to its ability to fill a research gap that is caused by the limited studies that discuss elaboration as a rhetorical strategy that is used with its own purpose and is used as a single independent rhetorical strategy in American presidential speeches, especially in situations where the presidential transition takes place.

In addition, the study has significant practical usefulness as it suggests an analytical model that can also be used to study other political discourses not only in the American context but also in a variety of political contexts. The model can help researchers and scholars learn more about how the levels of elaboration intertwine with the rhetorical context and how they affect the audiences. Moreover, the research serves the learning purpose of language, media, and political science students by identifying the practical use of detail in creating useful political speech that can make issues clearer and reassure people. Therefore, this opinion is consistent with Chilton, who states that linguistic elaboration in political discourses can serve as a strategic rhetorical tool that allows political actors to make sense of complicated situations, to create credibility, and to influence the way the audience interprets the situation, especially in a situation that is characterized by social and political instability (Chilton, 2004).

1.3. Objectives

1. Discuss the use of elaboration in the 2020 State of the Union speech of President Joe Biden.
2. Establish the degree of elaboration in the speech on a quantitative and qualitative basis.
3. Identify the rhetorical roles of detail, especially the explanatory and persuasive roles of detail.
4. Trace the rhetorical and linguistic strategies of presentation of elaboration by Biden.
5. Show how elaboration helps in the creation of credibility and the establishment of trust between the speaker and the listeners.

6. Relate the application of elaboration to the political and social environment where the speech was being spoken.

7. Offer an analytical paradigm, which can be applied to other political speeches in the future.

1.4. Previous Studies

Previous studies on grammatical cohesion and the use of conjunctions in political speech have formed a clear basis for the linguistic analysis of political speeches. Halliday and Hasan (1976) were among the first and most prominent researchers in this area, as they presented the theory of cohesion in English. In their work, conjunctions were found to be one of the most important forms of cohesion and were divided into additive, adversative, causal, and temporal. The framework has been used extensively in discourse and text analysis research, especially with regard to studying the process of elaboration and expansion of ideas in spoken and written texts.

Based on this theoretical premise, Halliday and Hasan (1989) went further to describe the interplay of language, context, and text, as the functional use of conjunctions to structure meaning and preserve the continuity of the text. Their article revealed that additive conjunctions are instrumental in expounding ideas, particularly in oral communication, where repetition and elaboration are commonly used to ensure that the listeners understand.

Using Critical Discourse Analysis, Fairclough (1995) used the linguistic aspects, such as conjunctions, as a way of exploring how the linguistic structures are employed to create a correspondence of power and ideological value. Fairclough presented the idea that cohesive devices are not only grammatical instruments but also tools of political persuasion that can influence people. This view has served to affect subsequent studies in the analysis of political speeches.

In a more direct concern of political language, Beard (2000) discussed the linguistic features of political speech and texts, and she noted that in most cases, politicians use additive and elaborative conjunctions to support the most important messages and keep people interested. The research by Beard emphasized that repetition and elaboration are the necessary rhetorical strategies in political communication.

The cohesion theory has been applied in several empirical studies that specifically analyzed political speeches. Pratiwi and Kurniawan (2018) examined the use of cohesive devices in political speeches and discovered that the frequent grammatical cohesive devices used are conjunctions. They discovered that additive conjunctions were widely used to elaborate on arguments and give clarification, which led to the overall coherence of the speeches.

Moreover, in their study on the topic of the Use of Conjunction: Elaboration Used in Donald Trump Speech, Febru Setimaji et al. (2019) have examined a speech delivered by Donald Trump during his first year in 2018, specifically how he has used conjunction (elaboration) in his speech. The findings indicate that the highest percentage of the subtypes of conjunction: elaboration and its meaning that Donald Trump employed in his speech is Expository 60%, exemplifying 8%, Particulization 8%, Corrective 8%, Verificative 8%, and Resumptive 8%. In addition, there is more usage of appositive than clarification in the speech of President Donald Trump.

Safitri and Rosa (2020) have also performed a narrower study and examined grammatical cohesion in the inaugural speech of Donald Trump. Through the Halliday and Hasan framework, their research study has found that additive conjunctions were the most common form of conjunction that was employed in the speech. The researchers concluded that elaboration and repetition were overly used to stress political promises and ideological positions by Trump, and the speaking style was direct and persuasive.

On a wider discourse basis, Al-Hindawi and Alkhazaali (2016) have conducted a critical discourse analysis on political speeches. They showed that conjunctions and especially additive ones are significant devices that help to organize arguments and support ideological stands. The authors asserted that elaborative conjunctions are commonly used to make political speeches persuasive.

In a similar manner, Wang (2010) has provided a critical discourse analysis involving the study of political speeches and has highlighted the role of the use of cohesive devices in ensuring the unity of the text and coherence of ideas. Wang discovered that conjunctions play a significant part in the logical progress of political rhetoric and assist the speakers to develop their point of view in a way that expounds to a majority.

In general, the existing literature suggests that the use of conjunctions (in particular, additive and elaborative) is important in the realization of grammatical cohesion and textual coherence in political speeches. Nevertheless, although some works have investigated the use of cohesion in the speeches of Donald Trump, little has been done on conjunctions of elaboration as a clear-cut category.

The rationale that led the researcher to use this title is that the researcher has not discovered prior studies regarding the use of elaboration in the first speech of Joe Biden as the President of the USA. It is a new study rather than a long study because it utilizes a new sample (Joe Biden) and a speech that has not been researched by other scholars. Also, the researcher believes that the selection of the given topic is based on the speech of Joe Biden as a president because it is regarded to be one of the most impressive speech of the president made to the country in November 2020, so the researcher is also interested in examining the speech of President Joe Biden, especially in elaboration use in his first speech as a president to the country in November 2020. Moreover, the research has its foundation in the descriptive-analytical approach, which is based on the description of the speech given by Biden and the analysis of its linguistic and rhetorical features, with emphasis on the so-called phenomenon of elaboration and the means of attaining the purpose of the speech.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Speech

Speech is a human activity that moves from group to group without assigning any limits, because it is a purely historical heritage of a group and the product of a long-term social use (Sapir, 1921).

Communication in which people share the same mental and physical states is called speaking (Richard, 2008). Tarigan stated that speaking is the process of organizing words and phrases to be communicated verbally. The definition of a "speech" is an explanation given by the speaker to the audience, sometimes with many objectives in mind (Tarigan, 1986).

Since ancient times, speech has been a powerful and significant tool for influencing people. Throughout the speech, the speaker makes at least one implicit or explicit proposal. Speaking in public has more power to sway listeners' opinions than writing in a variety of contexts. The functional grammar of the sentences allows for an analysis of the words utilized as spoken words in the speech.

Language features that provide meaning other than forms alone are called functional grammar. Language is expressed in a variety of written and spoken forms. When functional grammar is used, the grammatical relationship between written and spoken tasks will be shown when the individual clauses and sentences have grammatical relations.

2.2. Conjunctions

Conjunction plays an important and vital role and part in communication. It can serve as a connector between clauses and other clauses. It is described as a grammatical word that can connect two words or phrases in the same category. The conjunction refers to the existence of connections between elements of speech or expressions of text. Malmkjaer stated that a conjunction is considered an indeclinable part of speech that connects other parts of speech, in company with which it has significance, by classifying their meaning or relations (Malmkjaer, 2008). According to (Leung, 2008), conjunctions have been studied under various labels and have drawn much attention from various scholars in the field of English/Linguistics over time. (Halliday and Hasan, 2007) treat them as “linguistic devices that create cohesion”, while (Sanders and Maat, 2006) describe them as a “semantic relation that is explicitly marked”. Additionally, conjunctions create bigger grammatical units by combining a group of grammatical functions. Ramlan (Ramlan, 1985) claims that conjunctions are words that connect words, phrases, and sentences. We employ conjunctions in our day-to-day conversations. Both written and spoken conjunctions can be employed. Enumerating every single thing that serves as an English conjunctive is an extremely difficult task. Three broad categories may be used to group these grammatical connections: conjunction, ellipsis/substitution, and reference. The researcher uses and focuses on conjunction as the primary subject of the research objectives.

This is the reason that encourages the researcher to use the Halliday scheme to categorize conjunctive connections; Halliday has provided the researcher with a thorough theory regarding the categorization and use of conjunctions in everyday speech with a greater degree of comprehension. Hence, (Halliday, 2014) divides conjunctions into three categories: elaborating, enhancing, and extending.

Based on conjunction analysis, elaborating can be classified into two categories:

1- Apposition

Such elaboration implies of repeating or re-expressing elements, either through an example or a statement of exposition. For example:

a- Exemplifying: The food at the restaurant is a mouthwatering one, yet it is somehow too expensive. I do say you might find better elsewhere. The sentence before it is restated with the word “**I mean**”.

b- Exposure: He had finally made his dream job in a high-profile law firm after years of dedication and hard work, and did not allow office politics or personal disappointments to interfere with his career ambitions and thus remained focused on his long-term goals despite all the roadblocks that he had to face along the way. The sentence in question has the word “**That is**” used to explain the sentence before it.

2- Clarification

This form of elaboration means reinstating, summarizing, making it more accurate, or clarifying the discourse objectives more rather than simply restating the elaborated part. E.g. In the experiment, the observed increase in temperature was a little less than the one predicted. There is, however, a narrowing of the difference between the two as we move to high temperatures, which indicates that the two are more aligned.

Clarification can be classified into seven categories:

a- Corrective: We can use words like *at least*, *to be more precise*, *however*, and *rather*.

b- Distractive: The following words can be used: *by the way*, *as it happens*, *by chance*, and *incidentally*.

c- Dismissive: In this subtype of clarification, we can use words such as *in any case*, *anyway*, and *leaving that side*.

d- Particularizing: *In particular* and *especially* are the most used words in this type.

e- Resumptive: This subtype of clarification contains words like *to resume*, *as I was saying*, and *I said*.

f- Summarative: Words like *in short*, *in brief*, *briefly*, and *to sum up* are the most used words in this subtype.

g- Verificative: In this subtype, words like *actually*, *truly*, *indeed*, and *in fact* are mostly used.

Based on conjunction analysis, extending can be classified into two categories:

a- Addition: It gives further explanation for sentences that contain adversative, negative, and/or positive words. Examples of conjunctions are: Also, Nor, Furthermore, Moreover.

b- Variation: it gives some 1- alternatives or types. 2- subtractive except, and 3- Replace: instead.

Based on conjunction analysis, enhancement can be classified into four categories:

a- Spatio- Temporal: Place references can be used in conjunction with here and there, spatial adverbs like nearby and behind, and phrases that combine a place noun or adverb with a reference item in a text. For example, anywhere else, in the same place. Here, spatial relations are being used as text-creating cohesive devices.

b- Manner: Cohesion is achieved through the manner of the conjunctives, which is first attained either through comparison or reference to the mean. For example: otherwise.

c- Causal Conditional: The role of causality holds significant importance as a cohesive agent. While certain expressions denote general causation, others are more specifically linked to reason, purpose, or result.

d- Matter: The concept many descriptions of matter have to do with spatial metaphor, and include concepts like ground, point, field, which are given more sense when linked with particular reference objects.

2.2. The Semantic Use of Conjunction

Conjunctions can be described as words that connect clauses, phrases, or sentences and mark the semantic relationship between them. They play a crucial role in the establishment of cohesion, which is the linguistic process holding ideas together in a piece of writing (Schlepperell, 1996). The same conjunctions not only serve to show logical connections between various discourse units, but also determine discourse development direction and objective.

A conjunction may exist between words, phrases, clauses, or even sentences, but its use is not bound to the simple connection. As an example, coordinate conjunctions like and, but, and or go beyond structural conjunctions. According to Lang (1991), the fact that the English conjunctions

are extremely frequent and simple does not imply that they cannot express more complex relationships between the states of affairs expressed in the conjunct. And is especially flexible: it places few semantic and syntactic restrictions, has no inherent meaning, and is very susceptible to interpretation by its context. As an example, take the following sentence:

“His wife is in the hospital, and he is seeing another woman”.

In this case, the conjunction is more than a structural element that unites the two clauses; it carries an emotional implication, either of surprise or of moral disapproval on the side of the speaker (Kitis, 2000). The example shows that conjunctions can have a semantic and pragmatic role in discourse.

2.3. The Importance of Conjunctions

In verbal and written communication, conjunctions play a significant role since they keep the conversation going and help define the connection between concepts (Siddiqui, 2014). They enable speakers and writers to join clauses and sentences in a cohesive way so that the readers or listeners perceive the logical, temporal, or causal relationship in discourse. That is, conjunction is an important means of creating coherent and understandable texts.

The correct use of conjunctions makes communication as well as rhetoric more effective. They can also be used to connect ideas without breaking sentences, complex thoughts to be expressed, and in creative writing (Leung, 2005). According to McLauri and Steffenson (1980), conjunctions serve as referent points, which serve to bring out logical connection among propositions. When it comes to oral communication, such relations are usually defined by the context, whereas in written speech, conjunctions play a crucial role in indicating the desired relationship between ideas, and their utilization and omission may cause improper interpretation or neglect of the connections between ideas by the reader.

Therefore, conjunctions play not just a role in cohesion in the text itself, but also help the readers understand the text as a whole. According to Halliday and Hasan (1976), conjunctions are an important linguistic tool that can be used to express ideas and pass information because they clarify the relationships that exist between various discourse elements.

3. Methodology

1- The research approach:

The present study is grounded in the descriptive-analytical approach, grounded on the description of Biden's speech and the analysis of the linguistic and rhetorical elements of the speech, such phenomena as elaboration, and the way to fulfill the purpose of the speech.

2- Analytical tool:

The present study uses discourse analysis as its main instrument, namely:

- a- The analysis of the linguistic structure.
- b- A study of rhetorical strategies.
- c- Improving the analysis of fine details.
- d- Discovering the rhetorical information that illustrates the use of detail.

3- The Population

The State of the Union speech delivered by President Joe Biden in 2020 speaks on behalf of the whole population, a closed system of meaning and political context.

4- The research Sample

The sample is the entire text, including all paragraphs, divided into textual units (paragraphs/segments) to examine the levels of elaboration in each section.

5- Data analysis procedure

A. Text Transcription

Extract the full text of the speech and organize it into an analyzable document.

B. Identifying Indicators of Elaboration

For example:

- a- Illustrative examples
- b- Explanation or interpretation
- c- Statistics and figures

C- Coding

Classifying sentences and paragraphs that contain elaboration into specific categories.

D- Analyzing the rhetorical functions in elaboration

Determining whether the elaboration serves to:

- a- Persuade
- b- National Unity
- c- Build Credibility
- d- Explain
- e- Calm Down
- f- Present a Vision for the Future

E- Limitations:

- a- Limiting one speech to a single event and within a specific context.
- b- Adopting qualitative analysis

4. Result and Discussion

4.1. Result

The primary data is the transcription and the full original text of Joe Biden's first speech as President of the USA, delivered on Saturday, November 07, 2020, in Washington.

Table 1. Conjunction: Elaborating, Apposition list

No.	Sentences	Type of Appositive
1.	For <i>that is</i> what America is about: The people.	Expository
2.	And <i>that is</i> what our Administration will be about.	Expository
3.	Now <i>that is</i> what I want the administration to look like	Expository

Table 2. Conjunction: Elaborating, Clarifying list

No.	Sentences	Type of Clarifying
1.	I must admit it, that surprised me: tonight, we are seeing all over this nation, all cities in all parts of the country. <i>Indeed</i> , across the world.	Verificative
2.	<i>As I said</i> many times before, I'm Jill's husband.	Resumptive
3.	And <i>especially</i> for those moments when this campaign was at its lowest, the African American community stood up again for me.	Particularizing
4.	<i>I said</i> from the outset I wanted a campaign that represented America; I think we did that.	Resumptive
5.	I have long talked about the battle for the soul of America	Resumptive
6.	In the last days of the campaign, I've been thinking	Particularizing

	about a hymn that means a lot to me and to my family, <i>particularly</i> my deceased son Beau.	
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4.2. Discussion

Based on the list above, Joe Biden used 4 subtypes of conjunction: Elaboration in his first speech as the President of the USA delivered to the nation on November 7, 2020, in Washington. We can see the table below for the complete summary:

Table 3. Subtype of Elaboration

No.	Subtype of conjunction: Elaboration	Total
1.	Expository	3
2.	Resumptive	3
3.	Particularizing	2
4.	Verificative	1

The above data show us the percentage of subtypes of conjunction: elaboration that Joe Biden used in his speech distributed as follows: 33% Expository, 33% Resumptive, 22% Particularizing, and 12% Verificative. The above results show us that Joe Biden uses expository and resumptive so often. Through the analysis of his speech, Joe Biden usually reiterates, summarizes, improves precision, or provides more clarification about what he wants to share with the audience. According to his speech, he gives the audience many clarifications to make his speech more accurate. The reason for using this technique is to give and clarify to the audience the current condition of the USA today.

5. Conclusion

This study was conducted to explore the types of elaboration in the opening speech by President Joe Biden as the President of the USA. His speech was found to contain two primary forms of elaboration and their subtypes: apposition (expositional) and clarification (particularizing, resumptive, and verificative). It is analyzed that the subtypes distribution is as follows: 33% expository, 33% resumptive, 22% particularizing, and 12% verificative.

On these findings, it can be concluded that Biden uses more clarification than apposition. This indicates that he would rather employ clarification to make his speech more direct and clear to the audience, and the application of apposition is minimized. In order to make political discussions sound more coherent and profound, speakers need to give in-depth descriptions and effectively use the right conjunctions.

Nevertheless, it was found that the analysis had certain limitations. The research has not considered some subtypes of elaboration, including exemplifying, corrective, distractive, dismissive, and summative, since Biden is fond of using direct speech with no phrases of *for example, for instance, or to illustrate*, and he frequently abridges his sentences with such phrases like *in short, briefly, or anyway*. This style is a result of his habit of being accurate and brief when speaking to people.

The researcher advises speakers to endeavor to be precise, clear, and straightforward in giving speeches. Also, this research can be a base to develop research in the future by observing other forms of conjunctions, e.g., extending and enhancing, in the same speech or in other political speeches.

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