



Grammatical Cohesion in Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton's 2016 First American Presidential Debate

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ABSTRACT

Cohesion and coherence are necessary requirements for the realisation of appropriate meaning and communicative effectiveness in texts. Several linguistic studies on political discourse have employed sociolinguistic, pragmatic and stylistic tools to investigate mainly political speeches and not debates. Moreover, from the extensive literature reviewed, little attention has been paid to the examination of cohesion in political debates. Therefore, this study examined the use of grammatical cohesion in the 2016 first American presidential debate of Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton. The cohesive tools of reference, ellipsis, conjunction, used in the debates were considered with respect to their frequency and communicative effectiveness. The study adopted mixed-method research design, 8 questions and responses were purposively selected from 12 questions and responses of the 2016 first presidential debate. The choice of 8 questions and answers was to avoid analytical overkill, ensure equity in topics treated and achieve unbiased conclusion of cohesive usage. The study applied theoretical framework of Halliday and Hasan's Cohesion in English (1984) to investigate cohesive tools. Simple percentage was used to account for the frequency of the tools and their implications. Findings revealed the preponderant use of reference, followed by conjunction and ellipsis. The grammatical cohesive devices that were mainly used in the selected debate were reference, conjunction, ellipsis. The reference 81.3%, conjunction 14.6%, ellipsis was 4.1%, and substitution

was 0%. The total number of grammatical cohesive devices used by Donald Trump was 27 (56.2%) while that of Hillary was 21 (43.8%). Both of them have reference cohesive type as the highest. The study concluded that the selected presidential debate has a plethora of cohesive devices to enhance the coherence of the arguments in order to achieve a high level of communicative efficacy. The study recommended that political leaders and debate organisers should involve linguists in future political debates.

Keywords: Grammatical cohesion, Communicative efficacy, Debate, Reference

Introduction

Language is an essential quality of human beings used as a mutually acceptable and recognizable means to convey information as well as express attitudes and reactions. Humans have survived because they could clearly communicate and understand each other. With language, human beings express ideas and desires and organize their thoughts. Thus, it plays a major role in the survival of man as logically and reasonably as possible. This implies that for effective communication, every utterance made has to be meaningful in relation to the rest of the individual sentences in that same utterance.

The aspect of linguistic study that focuses on the meaning of sentences or sentence units in relation to the rest of the other sentences or the rest of a text is cohesion. Every language has an acceptable grammar with which it operates, because grammar constitutes the acceptable rules of using a language. An important factor in the grammar of any language is cohesion which refers to the 'supra-sentential connections' beyond the sentence connections through syntactic devices (Syal and Jindal, 2010:133). Therefore, it is not enough to obey the syntactic rules of combining words or morphemes to form meaningful sentences, but to link the sentences together in a logical manner that will make the meaning of one sentence depend on the elements of another sentence within a text to form a meaningful unit referred to as a text. Consequently, cohesion can be considered as an aspect of grammar that relates with the different units of a text as semantic.

The concept of cohesion is sometimes confused with coherence, but they are two different phenomena in discourse studies. While cohesion refers to how texts are held together lexically and grammatically, coherence on the other hand refers to the kind of unity of ideas that arise from the connectedness of the text based on the use of cohesive tools (Osisanwo 2000, p. 28). In other words, the unity of a text (coherence) can be achieved through the use of cohesive devices to render a text a unified meaningful entity. For a text to be coherent, it needs linguistic ties that hold amongst sentences either across or within, through the use of cohesive tools. According to Castro (2004):

Cohesion explains how meaning is constructed based on the semantic

relations that are motivated between and among the lexical and grammatical items in a text (Halliday and Hassan, 1976). Cohesion distinguishes texts from non- texts and enables readers or listeners to establish relevance between what was said, is being said, and will be said, through the appropriate use of the necessary lexical and grammatical cohesive devices. Cohesion occurs when the semantic interpretation of some linguistic element in the discourse depends on another (p. 4).

For Halliday and Hasan (1976) “cohesion is the foundation upon which the edifice of coherence is built and is an essential feature of a text if it is judged to be coherent”(p. 4). Language usage in political debates constitutes a crucial aspect of political practices in which success or failure of any political office holder does not only depend on how good or bad his policies, political ideologies and programmes are. Rather, it equally, to a large extent, depends on his ability to manipulate the resources of language at his disposal to carry the people along with the government programmes and the process of governance.

Cohesion is a linguistic process through which sentences are linked together to make a text. It refers to the various connections or links between the linguistic structures in a text. As a result, it serves as a means of interpreting the structure of a language use, and helps to evaluate the integration of a text (Idowu, 2016, p. 31). Idowu (2016) likens cohesion to a building as is made of blocks or bricks, so are texts formed with sentences. According to her, these sentences are connected to form texts through various strategies which in the case of a building may be nails, screws or adhesives, but for texts, the binding agents referred to as cohesive devices may not be as visible. The cohesive strategies include all the linguistic methods by which sentences are connected to one another (p. 32) to form a single meaningful unit of discourse.

As a ‘supra-sentential’ form of connection, cohesion is required to make a text meaningful, especially in view of the variety of ideas and intentions expressed in different forms of public discourse such as lectures, sermons, political campaigns or speeches, and debates. Of all these forms of public discourse, while they all can be read from prepared texts verbatim or combined with spontaneous delivery, only the political debates involve solely spontaneous delivery in the answering of questions by debate moderators. As a result, an investigation of the use of cohesive devices to aid the achievement of supra- sentential connection that is capable of making a debate session, a semantically grammatical unit is necessary. Typically, a political discourse addresses varied issues ranging from social, economic, educational, health, media, judicial to religion. This unique nature of the political discourse requires that such texts produced, must involve some processes that employ the use of linguistic connectives such as the tools of cohesion for the linking together of sentences expressing a wide range of ideas into a meaning single unit.

Statement of the Problem

In order to achieve a high level of communicative efficacy in any linguistic event or text it is paramount to have mutual understanding and cooperation between the debaters on one hand and the interviewers on the other hand. Cohesion and coherence are necessary requirements for the realisation of semantic unity in texts of varied themes and concerns in order to achieve communicative effectiveness. In view of the multidimensional nature of the political discourse especially in political debates which demands responses to different issues on various aspects of a nation's life and political aspirants' manifestos, thus, the political aspirants are faced with the challenge of unifying their thoughts and discussions on varied issues raised by the moderators and electorate. Consequently, there is a need to investigate the utilization of cohesive devices to ensure coherence or semantic unity of the different ideas in the responses to the numerous wide range of concerns of the debate. This is particularly important to enhance the communicative efficacy of the cohesive tools as supra sentential connectors. This study therefore focuses on the use of grammatical cohesive devices in the 2016 first American presidential debate of Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton.

Types of Grammatical Cohesion

Grammatical cohesion can also be referred to as syntactic or structural connective devices. This is because they are made up of structural items such as auxiliaries, prepositions, pronouns, demonstratives, determiners, and articles. In function, they are reflected as reference, substitution, ellipsis, and conjunction.

Reference

Reference is a grammatical cohesive device in a text that can only be interpreted with reference either to some other parts of the text or to the world experienced by the sender and the receiver of the text.

Substitution

Halliday and Hasan (1984) defined substitution in simplest terms as “the replacement of one item by another. It is a relation between linguistic items, such as words or phrases and a relation on the lexico-grammatical level, the level of grammar and vocabulary, or linguistic form” (p. 88). The principle distinguishing reference from substitution is reasonably clear. Substitution is a relation between linguistic items, such as words or phrases; whereas reference is a relation between meanings. In terms of the linguistic system, reference is a relation on the semantic level. It is a relation within the text. A substitute is a sort of counter which is used in place of the repetition of a particular item. For example, in

(1) Her **phone case** is weak. I have a stronger **one**.

(2) You already **know**? Everybody **does**.

'One' and 'does' are both substitutes: 'one' substitutes for phone case, and 'does' for know. It is possible to replace 'one' by phone case and 'does' by know. Thus, as a general rule, the substituted item must have the same structure for it substitutes. Since substitution is a grammatical relation, a relation in the wording rather than in the meaning, the different types of substitution are defined grammatically rather than semantically. The criterion is the grammatical function of the substitute items; they may function as a noun, as a verb or as a clause. To these, correspond the three types of substitution: nominal, verbal and clausal.

Types of Substitution

Nominal Substitution

The substitute one/ ones always functions as Head of a nominal group, and can substitute only for an item which is itself Head of a nominal group. The two nominal groups need not have the same function in the clause; either may have any function that is open to a nominal group. The substitute may differ from the presupposed item in number. "Same" can be used as a nominal substitute when it is typically accompanied by "the". It is not like "one", which presupposes only the noun head, "the same" presupposes an entire nominal group including any modifying elements, except such are explicitly repudiated. For example,

John: *I have two sheets of paper for the class test*

Daniel: *I have the same*

Ellipsis

Similar to substitution, ellipsis, is the omission of words, groups or clauses (referred to by Halliday and Hasan as 'substitution by zero'). This means sentences, clauses, whose structure presupposes an antecedent, which fills in the gap of missing information. We are referring specifically to sentences, clauses whose structure is such as to presuppose some preceding item, which then serves as the source of the missing information. An elliptical item is one which as it were leaves specific structural slots to be filled from elsewhere. For example,

Daniel ate a plate of rice and Deborah a plate of beans.

The structure of the second clause is Subject and Complement. The structure normally appears only in clauses in which at least one element, the Predicator, is presupposed, to be supplied from the preceding clause. There is no possible alternative interpretation here; the second clause can be interpreted only as "Deborah ate a plate of beans. If the linguistic item has been mentioned earlier before it is omitted, we have an anaphoric type of ellipsis. That is, the omitted item is referring backward to its referent earlier mentioned.

Conjunction

Simanjoran. (2010) says the following about conjunctions:

Conjunction is rather different in nature from the other cohesive relations. Conjunctive elements are cohesive not in themselves but indirectly, by virtue of their specific meanings; they are not primarily devices for reaching out into the preceding (or following) text, but they express certain meanings which presuppose the presence of other components in the discourse (p. 16).

With conjunction, we move into a different type of semantic relation, one which is no longer any kind of a search instruction, but a specification of the way in which what is to follow is systematically connected to what has gone before. Conjunction is the term used to describe the cohesive tie between clauses or sections of text in such a way as to demonstrate a meaningful relationship between them. It is also possible to perceive this process as the linking of ideas, events or other phenomena. This linking or joining is achieved by the use of conjunctive adjuncts, which are sometimes called cohesive conjunctives (for example, then, for this reason, on the other hand). These are words or expressions that have two textual functions: they indicate conjunction and at the same time usually indicate the type of relationship that operates between the elements being joined. Halliday and Hasan, (1976, p. 238) handle conjunctive adjuncts under four main headings: additive, adversative, causal and temporal.

Objective of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine the use of grammatical cohesion in the 2016 first American presidential debate of Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton. The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. identify grammatical cohesive devices that are employed in the 2016 first American presidential debate of Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton;
2. discover the dominant type of cohesive devices in the 2016 first American presidential debate of Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton and
3. compare the grammatical cohesive devices used by Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton in the 2016 first American presidential debate.

Research Questions

1. What are the grammatical cohesive devices that are employed in the 2016 first American presidential debate of Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton?
2. What are the dominant grammatical cohesive devices in the 2016 first American presidential debate of Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton?
3. How do the grammatical cohesive devices used by Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton in the 2016 first American presidential debate differ?

Methodology

The study adopted the secondary method of data collection in gathering the 2016 first presidential debate of Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton in the United States. The transcripts of the 2016 first Presidential Debate of Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton were downloaded and printed on line. In addition, the video of the debate was played and listened to several times by the researcher to confirm some missing information.

Sample Size Determination

The total populations were the responses of Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton to twelve (12) questions out of which responses to eight (8) questions were selected. The choice of 8 questions and answers from the debate was to avoid analytical overkill, ensure equity in topics treated and achieve unbiased conclusion of cohesive usage

Method of Data Analysis

This study focused on the 2016 first presidential debate of Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton. It analysed grammatical cohesion in the debate that held in 2016, before the presidential election in the United States. Halliday and Hassan`s model of cohesion was used to identify grammatical cohesive devices of reference, substitution, ellipsis and conjunction.

Data Analysis

References in the 2016 first American Presidential Debate of Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton

References dominate the wealth of cohesive tools employed by Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton in the debate to empower and amplify the comprehension level(s) of the hearers. Though occasionally used as appositives when utilized personally or demonstratively, the utilization of references in the debates can be estimated as at about 80 % compared to the use of conjunctions, substitutions and ellipses. References are language tools that enable a listener/ reader to identify people, places or things. When the referents are not specifically labeled, they can be identified through deictic or pointing expressions such as 'you', 'he', 'she', 'I (person deixis)', 'here', 'there' (place deixis), 'this', 'that', 'today' (time deixis). According to Yule (2002), these various forms of deictic expression can be categorized as personal references when pointing to a person and demonstrative or comparative, when pointing to places, things or people to show different relationships amongst the referents (p.130).

Personal References in the 2016 first American Presidential Debate of Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton

The large use of the personal reference cohesive tie in its various dimensions to achieve interactive and integrative purposes in the debate is indispensable. It constitutes about 90% of the total use of references in the responses of

Donald Trump and Hilary Clinton in the debate. The personal pronouns are used to reflect the different interpersonal relationships that exist between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton (the two aspirants) and the audience in the debate. The personal references especially the plural forms such as 'we' are also necessary for uniting the highly heterogeneous audience in terms of their backgrounds, social and financial status and challenges. For example in Excerpt A1, the different roles of the reference ties in achieving cohesion can be explicated. The reference 'our' in 'our jobs are fleeing the country' shows particular commitment to win the heart of electorate. The third person plural pronoun 'they' refers back to 'our jobs', 'our country'. The use of 'you' to refer to the audience is peculiar to debates and quite significant to the accuracy of the target audience. The use of 'you' is specifically personal and can be adopted for efficacy in communication. It is more cohesive when the reference is endophoric, than when it is exophoric.

In many other forms of public speech the speaker may use 'you' occasionally, to the audience in an attempt to personalize any part of the discourse. Or else, the more distant personal pronouns such as 'someone', 'one' and 'somebody' or, the third person singular pronouns ('he' or 'she') are used most often. The nine instances of the first person plural pronoun 'we' refer to Donald Trump and the audience in the quoted utterances. The inclusion of such utterances generally gives credence to the topic being discussed as well as level of cordiality between Donald Trump and the audience. Another type of personal reference which is not only integrative but also cohesive is the first person plural pronoun 'us' (in the objective form) and, our (in the possessive form). The use of possessive pronoun 'our' (four instances) and the first person plural pronoun 'us' (in the objective form) is an attempt by the speaker to identifying with the audience with regard to their achievement and challenges. In addition, the use of the first person pronouns ('I' and 'we'), generally produce more forceful active sentences than the passive forms which are less communicative. The use of the following references 'we', I, 'you', 'my' contributes to the textual unity of the text 'We' in (In excerpt A2) in 'We are going to do it by having the wealthy pay their fares and close the corporate loop-holes'; 'I, 'you', 'my' (in excerpt A3) 'My tax cut is the biggest since Ronald Reagan, I am going to cut regulation, you are going to regulate business out of existence, my obligation right now is to do well for myself, my family, my employees for my company'.

The various instances of personal reference relations have bridged the social distance and formality that is common to the more formal public discourses thereby empowering the speaker to convince the audience on the plans he has for them if elected. The use of personal references 'mine', you, our, she and her in the debate creates textual unity and its understanding.

Demonstrative References in the 2016 first American Presidential Debate of Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton

The political debate employs demonstrative references to reflect the physical contexts, which in turn interpret the implications of the demonstratives by summarizing points enumerated earlier in the excerpt through substitution and generalization. Consequently, majority of the demonstrative references used in the Excerpts A7 and A8 are endophoric. 'These' as a demonstrative reference is used anaphorically to refer to companies that are leaving America for other countries to do their business. Also, 'that' as a demonstrative reference refers to the special interests of the politicians who own the companies and want them to leave the United States for other countries. The demonstrative reference 'this' refers to Russia as a suspect country who hacked into the Websites of America to steal information from them. 'That' in excerpt A8 refers anaphorically to 'basic ability' that is needed for a person who wants to be the American president while 'this' refers to the 2016 general election.

In excerpt A1, Hillary Clinton used demonstrate references 'that' when she was responding to the question on how to create jobs' that means jobs, we need jobs in infrastructure, I want to see more companies do profit- sharing.' She used the person pronoun 'I' to show her commitment to the audience the use of 'that' create texture for the text. Also , in excerpt A4, the use of demonstrative reference by Donald Trump 'this country' was effective because he was trying to convince the audience about the kind of quality of president the America needed. In addition "this' is used in Excerpt A7 by Hillary Clinton when she expressed her concern about the hackers into United State websites' The most recent and troubling of these has been Russia, there is no doubt that Russia has used cyber attacks against all kinds of organizations in our country, and I am deeply concerned about this'. 'This' is also used by Donald Trump 'this is a great land, we are going to make great deal, we are going to have strong border'. The use of the demonstrative references creates texture for the text and reflects communicative efficacy of the speakers.

And once **you** say **you** `re going to have **tax** them coming in, and our politicians never do this, **because** they have **special interests** and the **special interests** want **thesecompanies** to leave, **because in** may cases, they own the **companies.We** have to **stop them** from **leaving** and **that** `s a big factor. (Excerpt A7 by Donald Trump)

The most recent and **troubling** of **these** has been Russia there `s no doubt **now** that Russia has used **cyber attacks** against all kinds of organizations in our country, and I am deeply concerned about **this**. (Excerpt A7 by Hillary Clinton)

Donald Trump: I want to help all **our allies**, but **we** are losing billions and billions of dollars, we cannot be **the policemen of the world**. We cannot **protect countries all over the world** when they're not paying us what we need. And she doesn't have that, because she's got no business ability. And sadly, doesn't have **that**. All of the things she's talking about could have taken care of during the last 10 years, let's say while she had great power and if she ever wins **this** race, they won't be taken care. (Excerpt A8)

Conjunctions in the 2016 first American Presidential Debate of Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton

The use of the different forms of conjunctions to meaningfully link ideas together and show different semantic relationships between them is consequential to the creation of texture in political debate texts. We have the use of coordinating and subordinating conjunctions in the political debates either as a binder or linker. The use of enumerative conjunct 'first' at the beginning of Excerpt A2 contributes to the texture of the text because the speaker is making an attempt to a list of what should be done to retain companies that are leaving the United States. The first thing is to prevent the companies from leaving America. The use of 'And' at the beginning of the third sentence is another step to be taken, so the use of coordinating conjunction 'and' is highly effective for textual unity. In addition, 'But' as a contrast coordinating conjunction gives the next step, that is, if a company insisting on leaving the United States for other countries and produces goods and exports them to America, such a company will be taxed. Furthermore, the coordinating conjunction 'And' at the beginning of sentence five also contributes to the texture of the text because after the first three steps, companies will no more leave America. The use of subordinating conjunction 'because' in the penultimate sentence of Excerpt A2 also contributes to textual unity and understanding of the utterances of the speaker. Politicians will never take those steps enumerated because in most cases they are the owner of such companies.

Also, the use of the three enumerative conjuncts 'first', 'second' and 'third' in Excerpt A2 contributes to the texture of the text and its comprehension. The three enumerative conjuncts give the audience three possible reasons of Donald Trump for withholding his tax returns. The use of coordinating conjunction 'but' in the debate to show contrast is highly effective and aided textual unity 'We need a Supreme Court that is going to uphold the second amendments, but the second amendment which is under siege'. He believes in appointing judges that will uphold the second amendment, but his opponent is not in favour of the second amendment. The use of coordinating conjunction 'and' in the debate creates texture for the text and helps its comprehension 'They can do the attack and make it a sneak attack and after the attack is made inform the American public that we have knocked out the leaders, we have a tremendous success'. Two ideas are coordinated in the utterance above, a

sneaky attack on Mosul plus making the success of the attack public to the Americans.

Donald trump: The **First** thing you do is don't let the jobs **leave**. The **companies** are **leaving**. **And** what **you** do is you say, fine, you want to go to Mexico or some other country, good luck. We wish you a lot of luck. **But** if you think you're going to make your air-conditioners or carries or your cookies or whatever you make and bring them into our country without **tax system** you're wrong. **And** once **you** say **you**'re going to have **tax** them coming in, and our politicians never do this, **because** they have **special interests** and the **special interests** want **thesecompanies** to leave, **because** in may cases, they own the **companies**. We have to **stop them** from **leaving** and that's a big factor. (Excerpt A2)

Hillary Clinton: So you're got to ask yourself, why won't he release his tax returns? **First**, maybe he is not as rich as he says he is. **Second**, maybe he's not as charitable as he claims to be. **Third**, we don't know all of his business dealings, but we've being told through investigative reporting that he owes \$650 million to **Wall Street** and foreign banks. So if he's **paid zero, that means zero for troops, zero for vat, zero for school or health**. But I think the question is, were he ever to get near the **White House**, what would be those conflicts?. Who does he **owe** money to? Well, he owes the answers to that, and he should provide them. (Excerpt A4)

Ellipsis in the 2016 first American Presidential Debate of Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton

Ellipses are cohesive tools that function similarly as substitutes. As syntactic devices that occur in identical structural environments, ellipses can be nominal, verbal and clausal. In the various instances of the three forms of ellipses, the cohesive tool of omission is similarly useful for avoiding boring repetitions of nominal, clausal and verbal items in an utterance. In the debate, there is the use of ellipsis 'I would not (^)', the full clause will be 'I would not use a personal e- mail account. Both the verbal element 'use' and the complement of the clause 'a personal e- mail account' are elliptical items. The use of the ellipsis contributes to the texture of the text and aids its comprehension.

Table 1: Statistical Representation of Grammatical Cohesive Devices in the 2016 American first presidential debate of Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton

Speaker	Reference	Ellipsis	Conjunction	Substitution	Total	%
Donald Trump	22	2	3	-	27	56.2
Hillary Clinton	17	-	4	-	21	43.8

Source: Researcher’s Computation (2019)

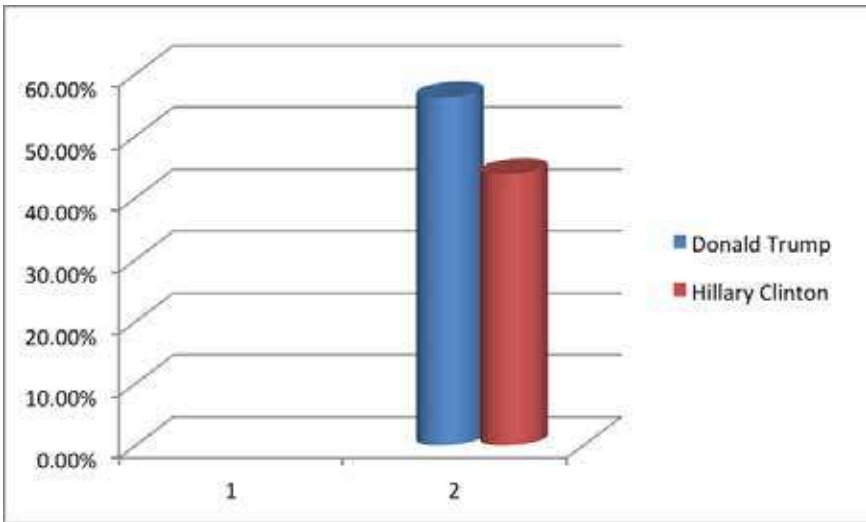


FIGURE 1: Findings on the analysis of grammatical cohesive devices in the 2016 American First Presidential Debate of Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton

Findings on the analysis of grammatical cohesive devices in the 2016 American first presidential debate of Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton

The total number of grammatical cohesive devices used by Donald was 27 (56.2%) while that of Hillary Clinton was 21 (43.8%). Both of them have reference cohesive type as the highest; Donald Trump has 22 (84.5%) while Hillary Clinton has 17 (80.9%). The reference cohesive type is followed by conjunction; Donald Trump has 3 (11.1%) while Hillary Clinton has 4 (19.0%); for ellipsis Donald Trump has 2 (7.4%) while Hillary Clinton has none. The implication is that both Donald Trump and Hillary spoke from first person perspective. Findings revealed the preponderant use of reference, followed by

conjunction, while the lowest was ellipsis.

Conclusion

The study concluded that the selected presidential debate manifested a plethora of grammatical cohesive devices to enhance the coherence of the arguments in order to achieve a high level of communicative efficiency. Reference dominated grammatical cohesive devices used in the debate.

Recommendations

Considering a plethora of both grammatical and lexical cohesive devices used by Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton in the 2016 American first presidential debate to enhance the coherence of their arguments in order to achieve a high level of communicative efficacy, the study recommended that political leaders and debate organisers should involve linguists in future political debates. Those engaging in political debates should be properly tutored or educated to focus on questions that are being asked so as to provide answers to them accordingly.

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