
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Incitement in Selected News Reports: A Discourse Study

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| ABSTRACT

Incitement has become a prominent discursive phenomenon in contemporary media discourse, particularly within political and conflict-related news reporting. News texts often employ linguistic strategies that implicitly or explicitly encourage hostility, violence, or unlawful actions against individuals or groups. This study investigates incitement as a discourse phenomenon through the analysis of selected English news reports, focusing specifically on the cohesive mechanisms that contribute to the construction and circulation of inciting meanings. Adopting Halliday and Hasan's (1976, 1985) model of cohesion, the study examines both grammatical cohesion (reference, substitution, ellipsis, and conjunction) and lexical cohesion (repetition and collocation). Three news reports containing instances of incitement were purposively selected based on explicit thematic relevance. The qualitative discourse analysis identifies how cohesive ties function to connect propositions, reinforce ideological stances, and guide reader interpretation toward particular evaluative positions. The findings reveal that conjunctions and references are the most frequently used grammatical cohesive devices, serving to logically sequence arguments and maintain textual continuity. Lexical cohesion, especially repetition and politically loaded collocations, plays a crucial role in intensifying inciting messages. Although ellipsis and substitution occur less frequently, they still contribute to textual economy and coherence. Overall, the selected reports demonstrate a high level of cohesion and coherence, enabling incitement to be communicated effectively and persuasively. The study contributes to discourse analysis and media studies by highlighting the linguistic mechanisms through which incitement is embedded in news discourse. It is hoped that the findings will be beneficial for postgraduate students and researchers interested in critical discourse analysis, media linguistics, and the study of ideological language use.

| KEYWORDS

Incitement, Discourse Analysis, Cohesion, News Reports, Media Language

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

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1. Introduction

Incitement refers to the act of encouraging or persuading individuals or groups to commit unlawful, violent, or harmful actions. In many legal and political contexts, incitement is regarded as a serious offense due to its potential to generate real-world harm. In contemporary media discourse, incitement frequently appears in political news reports, conflict narratives, and ideological debates, where language is strategically employed to influence public opinion and behavior.

News reports often contain linguistic cues that implicitly or explicitly legitimize violence, hostility, or aggression against perceived opponents. This study focuses on incitement as a discourse phenomenon and investigates how it is linguistically constructed through cohesive mechanisms in English news reports. By examining grammatical and

lexical cohesion, the study aims to reveal how textual connectivity contributes to the effectiveness and clarity of inciting discourse.

2. Related Works

2.1 Discourse Analysis

Discourse Analysis is the examination of discourse in relation to its linguistic components, including grammatical, semantic, and phonological aspects, as well as aspects that go beyond language itself [Aronoff and Rees-Miller, 2023]. Discourse analysts may examine several linguistic elements to explore how the context influences and is influenced by a specific language structure [Biber et al., 2007].

Zellig Harris first proposed this field in 1952. The topic is approached from several angles, encompassing multiple definitions spanning across fields such as linguistics, sociology, philosophy, and other disciplines. According to Link [Cook, 1989], discourse analysis is a concept that is established and supported by institutions. It refers to the way speech influences and strengthens actions, hence exerting power. From his perspective, speech is regarded as a form of social knowledge that views individuals as agents of acts that, in turn, reflect the community as a whole, thereby exerting influence. According to Stubbs [Crystal, 2006], discourse can be described in two ways. In a structural criterion, it refers to language that goes beyond the phrase or clause. In a functional criterion, it refers to language use, where the context plays a crucial role. According to Fairclough et al. (1997), discourse analysis is fundamentally the examination of language as it is employed. Hence, it is a significant misconception to confine the analysis solely to linguistic structures, as conventional studies primarily emphasise the isolated examination of grammatical aspects within an abstract language system, disregarding the intended purpose and practical function for which these structures are intended to serve in human affairs.

2.2 The Text

Since essay writing requires dealing with writing coherent and cohesive pieces of text, it is important to know what constitutes a text. "The word text is used in linguistics to refer to any passage, spoken or written, of whatever length, that does form a unified whole" [Gee, 1999]. Halliday and Hasan [1976] say that the difference between a text and a sentence is that the text is an actual use of language, while the sentence is an abstract unit of linguistic analysis.

Halliday and Hasan [1976] define a text as the language generated by the addresser, who is the first-person party involved in the communication process. The linguistic trail refers to the presence of language patterns in the speech or writing of the individual who is speaking or writing from their own perspective.

2.3 Cohesion: Basic Notion

Cohesion is a semantic property of a text sticking together in some way; in other words, a cohesive text tends to link its sentences together semantically [Gee, 1999]. We do not use single sentences to convey our ideas when we speak or write. Instead, what comes out are several statements that are connected to one another in some way. The collection of these sentences is referred to as text. Here, the question of how these statements relate to one another emerges. A text must adhere to a certain structure, which is influenced by other requirements beyond those required for an individual sentence. Cohesion, or the links or connections that occur within texts, is a phrase used to characterize some of these elements [Harmer, 2004].

2.4 Types of Cohesion

Cohesion is divided into two categories by Halliday and Hasan [6], namely grammatical and lexical cohesion. The former falls into four groups: conjunction, ellipsis, substitution, and reference. Conversely, there are two categories of lexical cohesion: collocation and repetition.

2.5 Grammatical Cohesion

The grammatical cohesion ties are: reference, substitution, ellipsis, and conjunction.

2.5.1 Reference

Reference is a semantic relation. By means of reference, a word is connected to its pronoun. What makes this specific, coherent kind unique is the particulars of the data that are indicated as being ready for retrieval. When there is a reference, the information that has to be retrieved is the referential meaning, or the identification of the specific object or class of objects being discussed. The continuity of the reference, or the recurrence of the same item in the discourse, is what gives the reference cohesiveness [Gee, 1999]. The use of referring expression is a device for cohesion and economy.

Halliday and Hasan [1976] mention three types of reference, which are discussed as follows:

- i) **Personal:** expressed with personal pronouns (I, he, she, you) and possessives (my, her).
Example: Linda said she would have to take Sophie to the doctor.
- ii) **Demonstrative:** expressed by demonstrative pronouns (this, that, these, those), the definite article (the), and local and temporal adverbs (here, there, then).
- iii) **Comparative:** expressed by adjectives and adverbs of comparison (the same, similar, such, different, other, more, less, first, secondly).

2.5.2 Substitution

Another kind of cohesiveness is produced by replacing a word or set of words that have been used in previous sentences with terms like *do* or *so* [Hudson, 2000]. According to James [1980], substitution is the act or outcome of replacing one item with another in a specific location within a structure.

Because substitution functions at the nominal, verbal, or clausal levels, it is similar to ellipsis, which will be covered in the following section [McCarthy, 1991]. They are comparable in that they both require going back to a previous section of the text. In contrast to substitution, where a specific word refers backward, ellipsis refers backward through a "gap" in the text [Palmer, 1981]. In fact, substitution and ellipsis are so similar that Halliday and Hasan [1976] consider ellipsis "a form of substitution in which the item is replaced by nothing." In substitution, the word used as a replacement means that the noun, verb, or clause being dealt with can be located in the preceding text [Palmer, 1981].

2.5.3 Ellipsis

Ellipsis refers to the intentional removal of grammatically necessary elements that are assumed to be understood from the surrounding context, therefore not requiring explicit mention [McCarthy, 1991]. Or, as Halliday and Hasan [1976] put it, "ellipsis is simply something left unsaid."

For the reader to interpret the omitted part of the sentence, reference must be made elsewhere in the text [Renkema, 1993]. For example, the sentence *James can't speak Spanish, but Liza can* illustrates ellipsis of the verb phrase *speak Spanish* in the second clause [Aronoff and Rees-Miller, 2023].

Ellipsis bears close resemblance to substitution, but differs in that substitution employs an explicit replacement item, such as *one* or *do*, whereas ellipsis leaves the slot empty. Ellipsis can therefore be considered a form of substitution with zero [Gee, 1999]. Ellipsis is often used for economy [Salkie, 1995], though it may also be employed for emphasis [Salkie, 1995].

However, ellipsis is not always permissible. English does not allow object ellipsis with certain verbs, as illustrated by the acceptability of *I understand* but not *I opened* [Trask, 2007].

2.5.4 Conjunction

Conjunction coherence pertains to the usefulness of specific words or phrases, typically employed at the beginning, to demonstrate the semantic or logical connection between the preceding and subsequent material [Widdowson,

2007]. According to Yule [1996], a conjunction refers to an item or a process whose prime concern is to link sentences or other constructions. Halliday and Hasan [1976] itemize five types of cohesive conjunctions:

- i) Additive (and, nor, or, furthermore, similarly, in other words)
- ii) Adversative (yet, but, however, rather, all the same, conversely)
- iii) Causal (so, then, therefore, consequently, as a result, otherwise)
- iv) Temporal (then, next, first, meanwhile, hitherto)
- v) Continuative (now, of course, well, anyway, surely, after all)

2.6 Lexical Cohesion

Lexical cohesion refers to the choice of the same lexical item twice, or selecting two that have a close relationship. Lexical cohesion is mainly concerned with vocabulary selection [Gee, 1999].

1. Reiteration

It is a form of lexical cohesion that involves the repetition of the same word many times, for instance:

The Prime Minister recorded her thanks to the Foreign Secretary. The Prime Minister was most eloquent [Fairclough and Wodak, 1997].

The most direct form of lexical cohesion is simply repeating the same lexical item [Yule, 1996]. However, repetition is not as straightforward as it may seem, as it is only one method of achieving lexical cohesion.

2. Collocation

Collocation is the co-occurrence of associated words that frequently appear together in the same linguistic context, such as *husband–wife* or *man–woman* [Yule, 1996].

3. Methodology

The current section deals with the practical part of the work. It deals with the analysis of the selected speeches and reports of incitement. The report is going to be analyzed according to the model of Halliday and Hassan (1976) in terms of cohesion and coherence as explained in the previous section.

It is crucial to clearly define the criteria for selecting data. The following are the specified criteria:

1. Two excerpts are selected from two reports.
2. The report deliberately focuses on texts that contain instances of incitement.

3.1 Data Analysis

The study authored by ASH OBEL on March 15, 2023, reveals that incitement and antisemitism continue to be widespread in UNRWA schools.

“In one Gazan classroom, middle school boys were encouraged to pursue martyrdom. In December 2022, the class was given a reading comprehension exercise that celebrated a Palestinian firebombing attack on an Israeli bus as a “barbecue party.”

In another example, a map was displayed branded with the name Palestine in an UNRWA school, but the map included undisputed Israeli cities such as Tel Aviv, Beersheba and Haifa as Palestinian cities.

The report said there were 133 UNRWA educators and staff found to have promoted hate and violence on social media, adding that an additional 82 UNRWA teachers and other staff affiliated with 30 schools run by the organization were involved in “drafting, supervising, approving, printing, and distributing hateful content to students.”

UN Watch Director Hillel Neuer said that "around the world, educators who incite hate and violence are removed" from their positions.

"Yet UNRWA, despite proclaiming 'zero tolerance' for incitement, systematically employs preachers of anti-Jewish hate and terrorism. Let us be clear: the problem is not the social media posts, but rather the employment of teachers who preach antisemitism and terrorism," he said.

Neuer called on UNRWA to fulfill its stated zero-tolerance policy and terminate any employees found to have incited racism or murder. He also called for the establishment of an independent investigation into "systemic incitement to antisemitism and terrorism" from UNRWA staff.

Report No.1

The present report is entirely concerned with the different means of grammatical cohesion. In order to identify and cover each linguistic marker used in the text, reference is first examined as outlined in the theoretical background. Reference functions as a cohesive device through which a word is linked to another word or pronoun within the text. In this report, several instances of reference can be identified through the use of demonstrative, personal, and comparative pronouns. For example, the personal pronouns *he* and *their* appear in the final paragraphs, as in the expression *he said*, which demonstrates the use of a personal reference, while *their* is used in the third paragraph to indicate possession. Another example is the object pronoun *us*, all of which require clarity to ensure effective reference. Conjunctions are also frequently employed throughout the report, particularly additive conjunctions such as *and* and adversative conjunctions such as *but*, which are mainly observed in subsequent paragraphs. In addition, the temporal conjunction *then* is used to link ideas sequentially and to convey the writer's intended sense of incitement. Ellipsis, however, is not identified in the text, as no grammatical elements are omitted; instead, the writer explicitly states all details. Substitution is another cohesive device observed in the report, as the writer avoids repetition by interchangeably using terms such as *educators*, *students*, and *boys*. Similarly, the word *class* functions as a substituted form referring to *boys* or *students*. Lexical cohesion is further achieved through repetition and synonymy, particularly with recurring terms such as *Palestine*, *boys*, and *students*. Collocation is also evident in expressions such as *fire bombing attack*, which appears repeatedly and contributes to a sense of intensity. Other collocational patterns, including *anti-Jewish* and *terrorism*, are also present. Overall, the text demonstrates coherence through the effective use of cohesive markers, resulting in semantic clarity and unity, as all paragraphs consistently address a single topic: the encouragement of young men to commit acts of violence or murder.

Report no.2

Myanmar jails two journalists for incitement and spreading false news, employers say

A military court in southern Myeik sentenced Aung Kyaw of the Democratic Voice of Burma (DVB) and Zaw Zaw, a freelance reporter for Mizzima, to two years in prison over their reporting of anti-junta protests, Mizzima and DVB said

Aung Kyaw is the third DVB journalist imprisoned since the military's Feb. 1 overthrow of Aung San Suu Kyi's elected government, which caused nationwide outrage and daily protests, some of which were suppressed by troops using live ammunition.

Mizzima said Zaw Zaw was one of six of its staff arrested since the coup.

DVB and Mizzima are among several news outlets that have had licenses revoked by the junta, which has restricted internet access and banned outside satellite broadcasts in an effort to stifle opposition to its rule.

A spokesman for the military council could not be reached for comment on Wednesday. The junta has said it respects the media but will not tolerate journalists who instigate unrest.

The military has in recent months arrested then deported a Japanese and a Polish journalist and is currently holding two American media workers.

U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman on Wednesday said the United States had pressed the military to release Americans Daniel Fenster and Nathan Maung and that she had raised their arrests with other countries in the region.

The second report also addresses the theme of incitement, as it concerns the arrest of two journalists who were imprisoned for spreading false news. The text of the report is connected through various cohesive markers. In order to identify and analyze each linguistic marker used in the report, grammatical cohesion is examined through the following categories. **Reference** functions as a cohesive device whereby a word or pronoun refers to another entity within the text. In this report, reference is realized through demonstrative pronouns such as *that* and personal pronouns such as *she* and *he*. Personal reference is identified in the final paragraph as well as in the paragraph preceding it, as illustrated in expressions such as *she had...* A prominent example of reference in the report is cataphoric reference, as seen in the sentence *"The junta has said it respects the media but will not tolerate journalists who instigate unrest"*, where the referent is clarified later in the discourse. **A conjunction** is another cohesive marker employed to link ideas throughout the report. The additive conjunction *and* occurs five times, while the adversative conjunction *but* appears twice. In addition, the temporal conjunction *then* is used to establish a sequence of events, contributing to the logical flow of the text. **Ellipsis**, which involves the omission of one or more elements assumed to be recoverable from the context, is identified in the second paragraph of the report, as in the clause *"some of which were suppressed by troops using live ammunition"*. This represents clausal ellipsis, where elements following *which* are omitted to avoid repetition. **Substitution** is also evident as a cohesive device in the text. For example, in the sentence *"Mizzima said Zaw Zaw was one of six of its staff arrested since the coup"*, the word *one* functions as a nominal substitute, replacing a previously mentioned noun. **Lexical cohesion** is achieved through repetition and collocation. Recurrent lexical items such as *reporter*, *journalist*, and *military* reinforce the central theme of the report. Collocation is also observed in expressions such as *United States* and *internet access*, which frequently co-occur in similar contexts. Overall, the report demonstrates coherence, as the effective use of cohesive devices contributes to clarity and meaning, enabling the reader to understand the text as a unified and logically connected whole.

4. Results and Discussion

The major findings that have been reached at can be summarized in the following table:

Table (1) THE RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Cohesive markers	No. of occurrence
Grammatical Cohesion	
1. Ellipsis	2
2. Conjunctions	23
3. Reference	9
4.Substitution	7
Lexical Cohesion	
4. Repetition	7
5. collocation	5
	Total 53:Markers

In analyzing the reports, the whole selected data are successful communicative ones according to the model of Halladay and Hassan (1976). The selected news reports of incitements are fully communicative as they imply a use

of all the cohesive in terms of grammatical and lexical markers. All of these markers assist the reader to reach a full understanding of the text, whether written or spoken.

5. Conclusion

The selected texts are clear examples of incitement, as each report addresses the theme from a different perspective. Although the topics of the reports vary, each text presents incitement through the use of distinct discourse devices, reflecting different strategies of representation and emphasis.

Cohesive markers such as reference, conjunction, and substitution are extensively employed in the selected reports. Among these devices, reference and conjunction occur more frequently than other types of cohesive ties, contributing significantly to the logical flow and connectivity of the texts.

Lexical cohesion is also prominently observed in the English news reports. This is mainly realized through repetition and collocation, which reinforce key ideas and maintain topical continuity throughout the texts.

Overall, the texts discussed in the previous chapter can be regarded as fully cohesive and coherent. They demonstrate linguistic and semantic clarity, as the effective use of cohesive devices ensures unity of meaning and facilitates reader comprehension.

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