

Lexical Cohesion in English Public Speeches ——Taking the Queen’s Christmas Broadcast as Example

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Abstract

Cohesion, as one of the most important components of a text, contributes a lot to the coherence of a text. Cohesive relations include grammatical and lexical cohesion. Lexical cohesion is considered the most important one in various means. This paper aims at investigating how lexical cohesion is used in the Queen’s Christmas Broadcast by analyzing five samples from 2011 to 2015. The results reveal that among the five lexical cohesive devices, repetition occurs the most frequently while superordinate is the least used. On the one hand, repetition can make the focal point of the speech stand out so that the audience can easily understand. On the other hand, repetition of certain words or phrases makes the context connect more closely and coherently, thus the whole speech will be more compact and well-organized. The study of lexical cohesion of English speeches can also offer some significance to pedagogical field.

Key words: lexical cohesion; English public speech; frequency

1. Introduction

In the past few decades, discourse analysis has been a study field that arouses great interest of linguists. As a multi-disciplinary field of study, it covers both written and spoken materials. Abundant attempts have also been made to reveal and understand the factors that accompany the process of text comprehension and production. Coherence and cohesion, as a vital aspect of research, has received outstanding attention in both theoretical studies and empirical investigations. Most studies are researched from the perspective of the relationship between cohesion and coherence, but few focus on these two aspects in spoken discourse. Different from the studies analyzing various cohesive devices, such as reference, ellipsis and substitution, this paper studies lexical cohesion in the Queen's Christmas Broadcast from 2011 to 2015. Generally speaking, the Queen's speech on Christmas has been a tradition and aroused the whole world's attention. By delivering the public speech on the special festival, the Queen clarifies her opinions on the important events in the past year and inspires people to look into the future with hope and passion. In every year's broadcast, to present a perfect speech requires a strict logic thinking, well-knit organization, careful use of language and skillful presentation. Thus, to study the language, more precisely, the vocabulary used in these world-known speeches as well as how these lexical factors help to organize the text is of great help for us. Therefore, the paper intends to figure out what and how lexical cohesion is used in the Queen's Christmas Broadcast by analyzing the Queen's speeches from 2011 to 2015.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Discourse Analysis

Discourse is a vague concept. Different linguists give different definitions due to their various theories and analytical purposes. Harris (1952) thinks of discourse as connected speech. Pike (1954) believes discourse is a product of human mutual behavior under social cultural context. Brown and Yule (1983) look on discourse as a process. Van Dijk (1977) indicates that discourse includes three dimensions: language use, thought transmission and communication in social context. He also distinguishes simple discourse from complex one. Huang Guowen (2001) perceives discourse from two angles. At a structural level, discourse is a unit of language above the sentence. If viewed from function, it is language in use. To sum up, discourse is stretch of language perceived to be meaningful, unified, and purposive.

According to *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Applied Linguistics* (1988), discourse analysis is the study of how stretches of language used in communication assume meaning, purpose and unity for their users: the quality of coherence. The study of discourse analysis is a flourishing area of linguistic study and is recognized as making a valuable contribution to our understanding of how language works. In the past three decades, discourse analysis has been studied from the following six approaches: 1) Halliday & Hasan (1976-1989): cohesion analysis; 2) Lautamatti (1987): topical structure analysis; 3) Swales (1990): genre analysis; 4) Mann & Thompson (1986-1988): relational proposition analysis; 5) Kintsch & Van Dijk (1978): propositional analysis; 6) Kaplan (1966-1987): contrastive rhetoric. Our study is to figure out how lexical cohesion is used in the Queen's Christmas speaking as well as how lexical cohesion helps to organize the speech. Therefore, Halliday and Hason's cohesion analysis will be introduced in detail.

Halliday and Hasan's work (1976) is regarded as the "most comprehensive description and analysis" of the text forming properties of cohesion (Nunan, 1993). For Halliday and Hasan, cohesion is the principal

factor in the creation of a coherent text. The principal purpose of Halliday and Hasan's study is to investigate the resources that English has for creating texture. They claim that texture is provided by instances of cohesive relation between two items in the text, and they call the occurrence of a pair of cohesively related items a tie. They classified the ties into 5 categories: reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction and lexical cohesion. From the angle of lexical cohesion, the author analyzes the written discourse of the Queen's Christmas broadcast in order to figure out how cohesion is important to textual coherence and how the two are related to each other.

2.2 Cohesion and Coherence

Cohesion and coherence are two important terms in discourse analysis. Halliday and Hasan (1976) and some other researchers (Van Dijk, 1977) hold that the concept of cohesion is a semantic one and not syntactic. In 1964, for the first time, Halliday divided cohesion into grammatical and lexical cohesion. In 1976, *Cohesion in English* by Halliday and Hasan was published in London. It marked the establishment of cohesive theory.

Coherence is a concept which is still not fully understood for its complexity. But it is acknowledged that coherence has established itself as a key concept in discourse and text analysis. Van Dijk (1972), Halliday and Hasan (1976) and others have provided linguistic analyses of the notion of coherence. Hasan (1984) defines coherence as the property of "unity", of "hanging together". Compared with cohesion, coherence as a proper noun emerged much later than cohesion. It was Widdowson (1973) who first put forward this pair of terms. In order to differ contextualized corpus from decontextualized corpus, Widdowson brought forward five pairs of terms, one pair of them were cohesion and coherence. Thus we can see that cohesion and coherence as a pair of terms did not appear at the same time, the former being earlier than the latter.

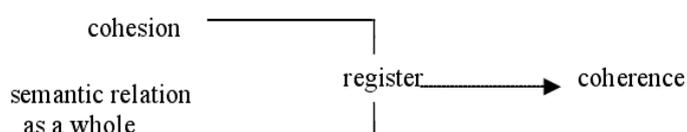
As for the relation between cohesion and coherence, different linguists have different views.

Halliday and Hasan (1976) believe that cohesion is a necessary though not a sufficient condition for the creation of text. Cohesion is necessary and plays an important part in creating a coherent text. But Halliday also admits that cohesion can't fully guarantee coherence of text.

However, other linguists have different ideas on the relation between cohesion and coherence. Enkvist (1978) provided a convincing example of the inadequacy of cohesive ties across sentences as a basis of guaranteeing "textness" showing that cohesion is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for constituting a text.

Some linguists, such as Brown and Yule (1983), believe that there is no certain relation between these two.

The author comparatively agrees with the opinion of Zhang Delu (2001) who developed a figure to illustrate the relation of cohesion and coherence:



They believe that coherence is realized by three interrelated aspects: cohesion, semantic relation as a whole and register. It is clear to see that in their view there is certain relation between cohesion and coherence.

2.3 Lexical Cohesion

Linguistic theory of lexical cohesion was first presented by Halliday and Hasan in their classic *Cohesion in English*. Lexical cohesion is one of the five types of cohesion detailed therein, and its contribution to the meaning of text is provided by the continuity of lexical meaning created by the different groups of related words that run through a text (Halliday & Hasan, 1976).

Halliday and Hasan (1976) classify lexical cohesion into two main groups – reiteration and collocation. Reiteration is a form of lexical cohesion which involves the repetition of lexical items, at one end of the scale; the use of a general word to refer back to a lexical and of a item, at the other end of the scale; and a number of things in between– the use of a synonym, near-synonyms, or superordinate (Halliday & Hasan 1976). They use this table to explain them more clearly.

| | | |
|---|-------------|-------------------------|
| 1 | Reiteration | |
| | a | Same word (repetition) |
| | b | Synonym or near-synonym |
| | c | Superordinate |
| | d | General word |
| 2 | collocation | |

As far as collocation is concerned, it doesn't simply mean the lexical cohesion between pairs of words but over a succession of a number of nearby related words spanning a topical unit of the text, and these sequences of related words are called lexical chains. There is a distance relation between each word in the chain and the words co-occur within a given span. Lexical chains do not stop at sentence boundaries; they can connect the adjacent words or even the entire text.

In 1984, Halliday revised his classification of lexical cohesion. There are altogether four types: repetition, synonymy/antonymy, hyponymy/meronymy and collocation (Hu Zhuanglin, 2008). In this paper, the revised version of lexical cohesion is applied in analyzing the Queen's Christmas Broadcast.

3 Research Methodology

3.1 Research Questions

- (1) What kind of lexical cohesion is used in the Queen's speech?
- (2) How does lexical cohesion contribute to the coherence of the whole discourse?

3.2 Research Subject

The Queen's Christmas Broadcast is selected as the research subject of this paper. As the representative of the royal household, the queen's speech is praised highly for its elegant style, diversified topics and strong appeal. Therefore, studying how the speech is organized and what kind of linguistic knowledge is involved in it is of great importance and value.

3.3 Data Collection

The author first downloads the Queen's Christmas Broadcast from 2011 to 2015 from the Internet. Altogether 5 speeches have been collected with about 3500 words. Each speech is read carefully and every lexical cohesive device is marked by the author. Then the data is carefully classified according to Halliday's taxonomy of lexical cohesion and a detailed analysis is presented in the following chapter.

3.4 Data Analysis

With careful data collection and analysis, the author concludes the lexical cohesive devices in the Queen's Christmas Broadcast from 2011 to 2015 and the detailed information as well as analysis and explanation will be presented in Chapter 4.

4 Analysis of Lexical Cohesion in the Queen's Christmas Broadcast

4.1 A Sample Analysis: the Queen's Christmas Broadcast in 2015

To make the whole analysis more clear, before going deep into studying the frequency and regulation, it is essential to how different lexical cohesive devices are applied in one certain sample, and then to analyze how these devices are used in other samples. The sample we are going to analyze here is the Queen's Christmas Broadcast in 2015. The Queen's Christmas Broadcast is delivered annually to conclude the event in the past year and to encourage and inspire people in the coming new year. The following part will be an analysis of the lexical cohesive devices used in this speech to see how lexical cohesion helps to make the whole discourse coherent.

4.1.1 Repetition

Repetition is the repeated use of words, an idiom or a sentence. Whether in Chinese or English speaking, repetition, which is often combined with the device of parallelism, contributes closely to the texture. However, in the Queen's Christmas Broadcast, there are few repetitions of clauses or sentences. The reason for this is that parallelism is usually used in public speeches, such as campaign speeches and inaugural speeches, which are emphatic and forceful in order to successfully appeal to the emotion of the audience. The Queen's speech aims to warm people at that special festival, therefore, the repetition of clauses and sentences are not found in the Queen's speech. But there are a lot of repetitions of words.

For example, in 2015 Christmas Broadcast, the whole speech is around the topic of "Christmas tree". The word "tree", therefore, appears many times without doubt. The Queen's speech is also a conclusion for the past year. Thus the Queen would sketch what the royal family has done. So, words like "meet" and "meeting" are often seen. Repetition of words also emphasizes the writer or the speaker's thought or expressing their feelings. For instance, the word "thankful" is usually mentioned in this speech, which corresponds to the spirit of Christmas.

4.1.2 Synonymy/antonymy

Synonymy refers to cohesion between words which have the same or nearly the same meaning. These words are combined in the same text because they have same or similar logical concepts. They supplement each other in meaning, not only acting as ligaments of the text but also helping to improve its expressive

force. The following is taken from the Queen's Christmas Broadcast in 2015:

*“There are millions of people lighting **candles of hope** in our world today. Christmas is a good time to be thankful for them, and for all that brings **light** to our lives.”*

In this instance, light here means the same with candles of hope, which both represent hope. These two expressions share the same meaning, thus make the latter sentence more cohesive with the former one.

On the contrary, antonymy can achieve the effect of great contrast and thus give prominence to the meaning which they express and strengthen the expressive force. Usually, in political speaking, antonym is the deliberate arrangement of contrasting words or ideas in balanced structural forms to achieve force and emphasis. But in Christmas speaking, antonymy is not commonly used due to its genre. Antonymy appears in this speech four times and among them, twice are old sayings quoted by the Queen.

(1) *The **light** shines in the **darkness**, and the darkness has not overcome it.*

(2) *It is better to **light a candle** than curse the **darkness**.*

In these two sentences, “light” and “darkness” are two contrast notions that represent two different conditions, one referring to hope while the other meaning desperation. The Queen quoted these two sayings to ignite the light of hope for people.

4.1.3 Hyponymy/meronymy (Superordinate)

The specific lexical cohesive device hyponymy or meronymy can also be called superordinate from a general point of view, which corresponds to the inclusion of one class in another. This lexical cohesive device is less used in the Queen's speech in 2015, but we can still find a few examples.

(1) *Despite being displaced and persecuted throughout his short life, Christ's **unchanging message** was not one of revenge or violence but simply **that we should love one another**.*

(2) *It (the Christmas tree) has **five hundred lightbulbs** and is enjoyed not just by people of all faiths, and of none. At the very top sits **a bright star**, to represent the Star of Bethlehem.*

In the first example, the phrase “unchanging message” and the following “that we should love one another” form a kind of inclusion relationship: “we should love one another” is the explanation to “unchanging message”. Similarly, in the second instance, “five hundred lightbulbs” and “a bright star” are part of the Christmas tree, which is also of inclusion relationship.

The use of this lexical cohesive device makes the whole texture more logical, developing from general to specific, and makes it easier for the audience to follow the speaker's train of thought.

4.1.4 Collocation

Different from the above mentioned lexical cohesive devices, collocation is a cohesive device from the text-bound relation, that is, some items tend to occur in the same semantic environment. When we talk about some topic in a text, certain words tend to co-occur while it is not possible for others to occur. Because of their semantic relationship, there is no doubt that they contribute to the creation of text. We can find several examples in the Queen's Christmas Broadcast in 2015.

(1) *One cause for thankfulness this summer was marking seventy years since the end of the Second World War. On VJ Day, we honored the **remaining veterans** of that terrible conflict in the Far East, as well as remembering **the thousands who never returned**.*

(2) *Although it is not an easy message to follow, we shouldn't be **discouraged**; rather, it **inspires** us to try harder: to be thankful for the people who bring **love and happiness** into our own lives, and to look for ways of spreading that love to others, whenever and wherever we can.*

In the first instance, “remaining veterans” and “the thousands who never returned” form a collocation bond, which consists of the veterans who are still alive and those who passed away.

Similarly, in the second example, collocation bond is also set up between a complementary pair, that is, “love and happiness”. What’s more, although “discourage” and “inspire” is a pair of antonyms, they are as well indicate the lexical cohesive device of collocation.

Collocation bonds may be set up between the vocabularies which occur in the same semantic field. The words of a semantic field are not synonymous, but they are joined together by a common semantic feature. For example:

*The **customary decorations** have changed little in the years since that picture of **Victoria and Albert's tree** first appeared, although of course **electric lights** have replaced the candles.*

In this example, “customary decoration”, “Victoria and Albert’s tree” and “electric lights” have the same semantic meaning and all remind people of Christmas, therefore, they belong to collocation as well.

4.2 Frequencies of Different Lexical Cohesive Devices in the Queen’s Christmas Broadcast in 2015

In the former part, we have illustrated clearly how these different lexical cohesive devices are used in the Queen’s Christmas Broadcast in 2015 (see Table 1). Frequencies of different lexical cohesive devices in this speech are also calculated (Figure 1).

From the histogram, we can easily see the difference of frequencies of different lexical cohesive device in the Queen’s Christmas Broadcast in 2015: the device of repetition is most frequently used; collocation ranks the second and the last one is superordinate. As for their percentages, from the above pie chart, it is not difficult for us to find that repetition occupies the most, and the followings are collocation, antonymy, synonymy and superordinate in descending order. Obviously, superordinate is the least used lexical cohesive device in this speech.

Since we can get a clear idea about the arrangement of different lexical cohesive devices in the Queen’s 2015 Christmas Broadcast by the histogram and the table, we cannot help wondering whether it is true with the Queen’s previous Christmas speeches and what the reasons are for the differences.

4.3 Frequencies and Functions of Different Lexical Cohesive Devices in all the samples: results and analysis

Due to the limitation of time and energy, the author only chose altogether 5 samples of the Queen’s Christmas Broadcast from 2011 to 2015. Although the samples may be not large enough, we can still have some findings from careful calculation and analysis. All the samples are downloaded from the website <http://www.royal.gov.uk/>, which is the official website of British monarchy. The average length of the selected data is around 700 words per speech.

Following the same procedures as shown in the previous part, after meticulous judging and taking notes of cohesive devices from the five written discourses of the Queen’s Christmas Broadcast, we can thus get the total amount of each cohesive device and their contrasts are made into the following histograms (Figure 2).

As it can be seen from the above histogram, among the five lexical cohesive devices in five speeches delivered by the Queen, repetition occurs 125 times in total, and 25 times in average which proves to be the most in the Queen's recent five Christmas Broadcast while synonymy secures the second place with 39 times in total and 8 in average; collocation occurs almost the same with synonymy. Antonymy occurs 18 times in total and 4 in average. Superordinate takes the least occurrence with 14 times in total and 3 in average. Now, we will take a look at the percentages of different lexical cohesive devices in these five speeches (Table 2).

The table is the depiction of the percentage of each device of the total amount of devices being used in the five recent speeches from the Queen. As can be seen, repetition appears the most with an occupation of 53.6% of the total devices. Synonymy secures the second place with an occupation of 16.7% of the total devices and collocation ranks the third with the percentage of 15.8. Antonymy takes an occupation of 7.73% on the fourth place. Superordinate is the least used device among the five devices with an occupation of 6.01%.

4.4 Possible Reasons for the Different Frequencies of Lexical Devices in the Queen's Christmas Broadcast from 2011 to 2015

From Table 3 and Figure 3, we can see that repetition is the most frequently used device in the 5 written discourses of the Queen's Christmas Broadcast from 2011 to 2015, with collocation, synonymy, antonymy and superordinate being used in a descending manner.

As the most frequently used lexical cohesive device, repetition occupies more than half among the five devices. As we have mentioned before, the Queen's Christmas Broadcast is different from other political speeches which need more reason and passion. Christmas Broadcast tends to be more like a warm talk near the fireplace, giving the audience encouragement, hope and inspiration. Although lacking powerful parallelism, repetition still occurs most in the Queen's speech. By using repetition, it is easy for the audience to catch the point of the speech. For example, in the 2015 Christmas Broadcast, the whole discourse is developed around "Christmas tree". Therefore, in this speech, the phrase "Christmas tree" is repeated many times. On the one hand, repetition can make the focal point of the speech stand out so that the audience can easily to understand. On the other hand, repetition of certain words or phrases makes the context connect more closely and coherent, thus the whole speech will be more compact and well-organized.

However, sometimes we use expressions with similar meaning to substitute one word. For example in the 2013's Christmas Broadcast, "happiness" and "joy" are both used. The use of synonymy avoids the simplification of word choosing and increases the readability of the context.

Collocation occupies similar percentage with synonymy. Appropriate use of collocation can smoothly connect the context and make the speech more coherent. In the Queen's speech, there are expressions like "big and small" and "men and women", all of which belong to collocation. This lexical device includes both synonymy and antonymy, so it has a more general range.

Although the use of synonymy ranks second, there are few frequencies of the use of antonymy, the reason for which may be that the genre of the Queen's speech does not require much contrast of certain phenomenon, compared with political speeches.

Superordinate, taking the least occupation among the five devices, is not often used in the Queen's speech. The reason for that may be this device is to some degree more complex and difficult to handle. Or the genre of the speech has certain restriction for the use of superordinate.

5. Conclusions

5.1 Major Findings and Limitations

In this paper, the study of employment of lexical cohesive devices in the written discourse of the Queen's Christmas Broadcast was conducted. By using cohesive devices frequency, the author analyzed the distribution of different lexical cohesive devices in 5 Christmas speeches delivered by the Queen and found that among the five lexical cohesive devices, repetition proved to be the most frequently used in the written discourses of the Queen's Christmas Broadcast with the other devices ranking in a decreasing manner: synonymy, collocation, antonymy, and superordinate.

As for the significance of this study, there are some achievements to be mentioned: The principal novelty of this empirical study is that it examines the application of lexical cohesion in a special register – the Queen's Christmas Broadcast that has not been tested empirically so far. By making calculation of each lexical cohesive device, the frequencies of these devices are found and some possible reasons for the results are given.

However, there are still some limitations of this study due to many practical reasons. First, the classification of lexical cohesion made by Halliday is not convincing enough, especially the definition of collocation. There are some overlaps between collocation and synonymy and antonymy, which may cause inaccuracy of the data. But it is still obvious to see that there is regularity in using lexical cohesive devices. Second, the number of the sample selected is not big enough. Only the recent five year's Christmas Broadcast are chosen as the research subject because time is limited. If opportunities are provided, more deep researches can be done in this direction.

5.2 Pedagogical Implications

Making speeches in a particular circumstance is a prevalent phenomenon in modern society. Thus, learning to make speeches is quite essential for people living in such a society. In this paper, the distribution of different lexical cohesive devices in the Queen's Christmas Broadcast has been presented. Although students won't make speeches in such situations, we can learn to analyze the speaker's intention and emphasis behind these easily understandable dictions, and then understand the style of English speeches. Getting students more familiarized with these expressions will enable the students to read or write English speaking in a clear and logic way, thus improving efficiency in making speeches.

First, through understanding the application of lexical cohesion and the distribution of different lexical cohesive devices in English public speaking, the skill of writing professional speeches may be improved.

Second, for the listeners or readers of English speeches, the burden of comprehending public speeches should be reduced if they have knowledge about lexical cohesion applied in these speeches as well as the particular characteristic of certain public speeches.

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Appendix I

Tables and figures (Note: in the following tables and figures, R=repetition, S=synonymy, A=antonymy, SO=superordinate, C=collocation.)

| | | | | | |
|---|----|---|---|---|---|
| The Queen’s Christmas Broadcast in 2015 | R | S | A | S | C |
| | 27 | 3 | 4 | 2 | 7 |
| Total(times) | 43 | | | | |

Table 1 Distribution of lexical cohesive devices in the Queen’s Christmas Broadcast in 2015

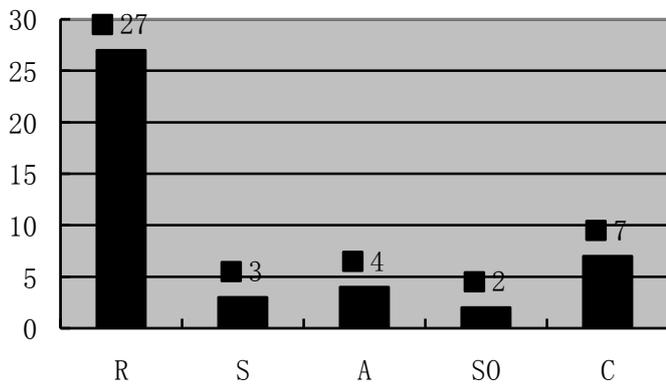


Figure 1 Frequency of lexical cohesive devices in the Queen’s Christmas Broadcast in 2015

| Lexical cohesive devices | R | S | A | SO | C |
|--------------------------|--------|-------|-------|-------|--------|
| Percentage | 62.79% | 6.98% | 9.30% | 4.65% | 16.28% |

Table 2 Percentage of different lexical cohesive devices in the Queen’s Christmas Broadcast in 2015

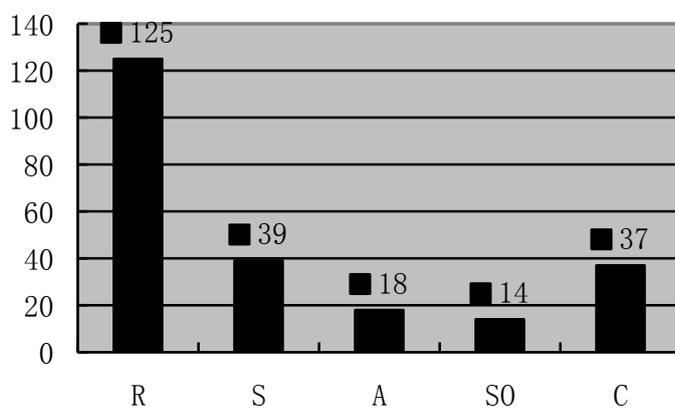


Figure 2 Frequency of different lexical cohesive devices in the Queen’s Christmas Broadcast from 2011 to 2015

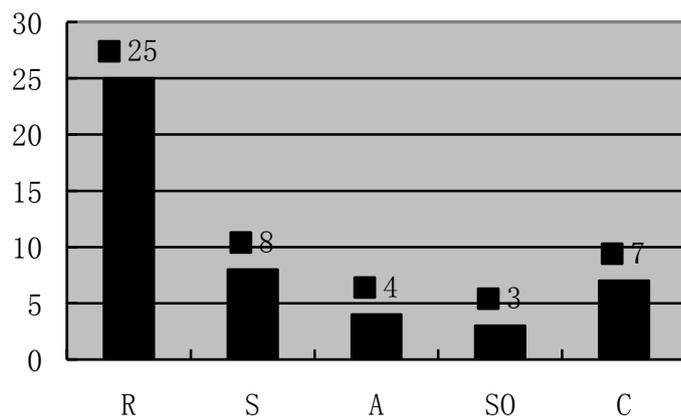


Figure 3 Average frequencies of different lexical cohesive devices in the Queen's Christmas Broadcast from 2011 to 2015

| Lexical cohesive devices | R | S | A | SO | C |
|--------------------------|--------|--------|-------|-------|--------|
| Percentage | 53.65% | 16.74% | 7.73% | 6.01% | 15.88% |

Table 3 Percentage of different lexical cohesive devices in the Queen's Christmas Broadcast from 2011 to 2015