

A Grammatical Reference Analysis of Bobby Mook's "FOMO" TED Talk

Yuneth Johanna Pane ¹

yunethjohanna@gmail.com

Jenifer Helena Madiuw ²

jenifermadiuw@gmail.com

Gian Jelastha Latumahina ³

gianlatumahina69@gmail.com

¹²³ *Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris, FKIP, Universitas Pattimura*

Abstract

This study examines the strategic use of grammatical reference devices, including personal, demonstrative, and comparative references, in Bobby Mook's "FOMO" TED Talk. The analysis aims to elucidate how these linguistic mechanisms contribute to the overall communicative impact and persuasiveness of influential public discourse. Employing a qualitative methodology, the researcher systematically identifies and analyzes the referential patterns present in the talk's transcript. The findings reveal that Mook leveraged personal pronouns to foster audience engagement and a sense of shared experience, demonstrative references to direct attention to key narrative elements, and comparative references to highlight the nuances of the fear of missing out phenomenon. The synergistic interplay of these referential devices enabled Mook to craft a compelling, coherent, and emotionally resonant presentation that resonated with the TED Talk audience. The discussion situates these findings within the broader context of contemporary research on grammatical cohesion and its role in influential public discourse. Suggestions for future research include expanding the analytical framework to a wider corpus of TED Talks, integrating multimodal analysis, and exploring the application of the methodology to other genres of impactful spoken and written communication.

Keywords: *Grammatical Cohesion, Reference, TED Talk, Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), Discourse Analysis*

Introduction

The study of language and communication is a fundamental aspect of human interaction and understanding. Linguistics, as the scientific discipline dedicated to the analysis of language, encompasses both micro-level examinations of linguistic structures as well as macro-level explorations of language use in context. One such area of linguistic inquiry is discourse analysis, which focuses on the cohesive and coherent properties of text and speech.

A key component of discourse cohesion is the system of grammatical reference, as outlined by Halliday and Hasan (1976). Reference devices, including personal pronouns, demonstratives, and comparative expressions, serve to establish connections and unify the flow of a

communicative text. The strategic deployment of such referential elements can significantly impact the overall effectiveness and persuasiveness of a speaker's or writer's message.

The current study seeks to analyze the usage of grammatical reference within the context of a popular TED Talk presentation on the phenomenon of "FOMO" (Fear of Missing Out) delivered by Bobby Mook in 2014. This video, which has garnered over 300,000 views on YouTube, provides a unique opportunity to investigate how referential mechanisms are employed to convey the complexities of this contemporary psychosocial experience.

Existing literature on grammatical cohesion has examined reference patterns in various genres, from song lyrics (Santoso, 2012) to literary works (Imran et al., 2015). However, the application of such analytical frameworks to the persuasive discourse of TED Talks remains underexplored. This research aims to address this gap by providing a detailed examination of personal, demonstrative, and comparative references used by Mook to enhance the communicative impact of his talk on the fear of missing out.

Literature Review

Grammatical Cohesion and Reference

Cohesion, as defined by Halliday and Hasan (1976), refers to the semantic and structural connections that serve to unify a text and establish its coherence. Within the broader domain of cohesion, the concept of grammatical reference holds particular significance. Reference is a type of cohesive device that allows speakers and writers to point to specific entities, whether persons, objects, locations, or ideas, that have been previously introduced or are implicitly understood within the discourse context.

Halliday (1976) further delineated three primary categories of referential cohesion: personal reference, demonstrative reference, and comparative reference. Personal reference involves the use of pronouns (e.g., I, you, he, she, it, they) to indicate participants in the communicative act. Demonstrative reference, on the other hand, utilizes spatial and temporal deictic expressions (e.g., this, that, here, there, now, then) to verbally "point" to elements within or outside the text. Comparative reference, in contrast, establishes cohesive ties through the use of expressions that signal similarity, difference, or degree (e.g., same, similar, other, different).

The strategic deployment of these referential devices can have a significant impact on the clarity, emphasis, and emotional resonance of a communicative text. Pronouns, for instance, can foster a sense of intimacy and involvement by drawing the audience into the speaker's or writer's perspective. Demonstratives can direct attention to specific entities, helping to structure the

informational flow. Comparatives, in turn, can highlight salient contrasts, encourage deeper reflection, and facilitate the construction of meaning. Collectively, the judicious use of grammatical reference contributes to the overall coherence and effectiveness of a discourse.

Reference in Discourse and Communication

The role of grammatical reference in discourse and communication has been the subject of extensive scholarly investigation. Santoso's (2012) study of reference patterns in song lyrics, for example, revealed how personal, demonstrative, and comparative referents were strategically employed to convey a range of meanings and emotions. Similarly, Imran et al. (2015) found that personal pronouns in a novel functioned not only to indicate participants but also to establish different narrative perspectives and levels of involvement.

Moving beyond literary and artistic domains, researchers have also explored the use of referential cohesion in other communicative contexts. Warid, Hodairiyah, and Lail (2022) examined reference devices in academic texts, noting how they contributed to the coherence and logical flow of scholarly arguments. Kaloeti et al. (2021) and Aisafitri and Yusrifah (2020), meanwhile, investigated the role of reference in the analysis of psychological phenomena, such as the fear of missing out (FOMO), highlighting how referential expressions could be used to personalize and contextualize complex intrapersonal experiences.

The versatility and multifunctionality of grammatical reference have been well documented across various genres and discursive settings. However, the application of these analytical frameworks to the domain of influential public speeches, such as TED Talks, remains an underexplored area of research. The current study aims to address this gap by examining the use of personal, demonstrative, and comparative references in the "FOMO" TED Talk delivered by Bobby Mook, with the goal of elucidating how speakers leverage these linguistic resources to enhance the communicative impact of their presentations.

Method

This research employed a qualitative methodology to investigate the use of grammatical reference in Bobby Mook's "FOMO" TED Talk. According to Mackey and Gass (2005), qualitative research relied on the collection and analysis of primarily textual data rather than numerical or statistical information. The primary data source for this study was the transcript of the "FOMO" TED Talk, obtained from the official TED Talks website, which served as the foundation for an in-depth analysis of the referential devices used by the speaker.

To conduct the analysis, the researcher systematically reviewed the transcript to identify instances of personal, demonstrative, and comparative references. Each reference was categorized according to its type and the specific linguistic element used (e.g., personal pronoun, demonstrative adjective, comparative adverb). Additionally, quantitative data, such as the frequency of each reference type, were compiled to support the qualitative observations.

The analysis focused on how the identified referential devices contributed to the overall coherence and communicative impact of Mook's presentation. Special attention was given to the ways in which personal, demonstrative, and comparative references engaged the audience, emphasized key ideas, and conveyed the complexities of the fear of missing out phenomenon.

The findings of this analysis were presented and discussed descriptively, with illustrative examples from the transcript to support the researcher's interpretations. The goal was to elucidate the strategic use of grammatical references as a means of enhancing the persuasiveness and effectiveness of influential public discourse, as exemplified by the "FOMO" TED Talk.

Findings

Personal References

The extensive use of personal pronouns by Mook in the "FOMO" TED Talk transcript served to foster a sense of intimacy and involvement with the audience. The speaker frequently employed first-person singular pronouns such as "I" and "my" to share his own experiences and perspectives, inviting the listeners to view the topic through his lens. This personalization of the narrative helped to establish Mook as a relatable, trustworthy, and authoritative figure on the subject of the fear of missing out.

In addition to the first-person references, Mook made extensive use of second-person pronouns, particularly "you" and "your." By directly addressing the audience in this manner, the speaker was able to draw the listeners into the described scenarios, encouraging them to imagine themselves in the same situations and emotional states. This strategy of audience engagement through personal reference enhanced the immediacy and relevance of the FOMO concept, allowing the audience to better relate to the complex psychological experiences being conveyed.

Demonstrative References

Mook's strategic deployment of demonstrative references played a crucial role in directing the audience's attention to specific elements within the narrative and constructing vivid, immersive scenarios. Through the use of deictic expressions such as "this," "that," "here," and "there," the

speaker was able to verbally "point" to relevant entities, objects, and actions, guiding the listeners' focus and facilitating their comprehension of the presented information.

For instance, in the statement "You're curled up in bed. Book, open in your hands," the demonstrative reference "Book, open in your hands" served to draw the audience's attention to a specific element within the described scene, effectively situating them within the depicted moment. Similarly, the use of demonstratives in phrases like "Then, as you turn the page..." and "A friend texts you a video" established a sense of temporal and spatial grounding, allowing the listeners to mentally visualize and follow the unfolding of events. By leveraging demonstrative references in this manner, Mook was able to create vivid and engaging narratives that captured the audience's imagination and facilitated their understanding of the FOMO phenomenon.

Comparative References

In addition to the strategic use of personal and demonstrative references, the "FOMO" TED Talk transcript also included several instances of comparative references, which Mook employed to highlight meaningful contrasts and nuances related to the fear of missing out. By juxtaposing different concepts and experiences, the speaker was able to invite deeper reflection and a more nuanced understanding of the complexities underlying this contemporary psychosocial issue.

One such example was Mook's comparison between the experience of "being peaceful in bed" and the impact of FOMO, which he described as making a person feel "inadequate" after seeing their friends enjoying a lively social event. This contrast served to illustrate the profound emotional and psychological shift that can occur when individuals are confronted with the perception of missing out on desirable experiences. Similarly, the speaker's comparative reference to the term "YOLO" (used by the artist Drake) and the concept of "Carpe Diem" prompted the audience to consider the divergent mindsets and implications underlying these seemingly related notions. By strategically employing these comparative devices, Mook was able to encourage the audience to engage in a more nuanced and reflective exploration of the FOMO phenomenon.

Discussion

The findings of this study underscore the pivotal role that grammatical reference devices play in enhancing the communicative impact and persuasiveness of influential public discourse, as exemplified by Bobby Mook's "FOMO" TED Talk. By strategically employing personal, demonstrative, and comparative references, the speaker was able to engage the audience, direct

their attention to key elements, and convey the nuances of the fear of missing out phenomenon in a compelling and emotionally resonant manner.

The prevalence of personal pronouns, such as "I," "my," "you," and "your," served to foster a sense of intimacy and shared experience between Mook and his audience. This personalization of the narrative, as noted by Warid, Hodairiyah, and Lail (2021), helps to establish the speaker as a relatable and trustworthy authority on the subject matter, ultimately enhancing the audience's receptiveness to the presented ideas. The use of second-person pronouns, in particular, directly involved the listeners, inviting them to imagine themselves in the described scenarios and facilitating their ability to relate to the complex psychological experiences associated with FOMO.

Mook's strategic deployment of demonstrative references, such as "this," "that," "here," and "there," played a crucial role in directing the audience's attention to specific narrative elements, as suggested by Halliday and Hasan's (1976) seminal work on cohesion. By verbally "pointing" to relevant entities, objects, and actions, the speaker was able to guide the listeners' focus and construct vivid, immersive scenarios that enhanced their comprehension and engagement with the FOMO concept. This finding aligns with Aisafitri and Yusrifah's (2020) observation that demonstrative references can be employed to personalize and contextualize complex psychological phenomena.

The comparative references utilized by Mook, including the juxtaposition of "being peaceful in bed" with the impact of FOMO, as well as the contrast between FOMO and the notion of "Carpe Diem," invited the audience to engage in a more nuanced and reflective exploration of the topic. As noted by Kaloeti et al. (2021), such comparative devices can be effectively employed to highlight the complexities and emotional dimensions of psychosocial experiences, such as the fear of missing out. By leveraging these comparative references, Mook was able to challenge the audience's preconceptions and encourage a deeper understanding of the FOMO phenomenon.

The synergistic interplay of personal, demonstrative, and comparative references in Mook's TED Talk presentation underscores the strategic and multifaceted nature of grammatical cohesion in influential public discourse. As Elhai et al. (2020) have observed, the judicious use of such referential devices can significantly enhance the persuasiveness, clarity, and emotional resonance of a speaker's message, ultimately contributing to the widespread appeal and impact of TED Talks as a genre of influential public speaking. By systematically analyzing the referential mechanisms employed by Mook, this study provides valuable insights into the linguistic strategies that enable speakers to effectively communicate complex ideas and effectively engage their audiences.

Conclusion and Suggestions

Conclusion

The analysis of Bobby Mook's "FOMO" TED Talk shows how he effectively uses grammatical reference devices to enhance communication and persuasion in public speaking. By looking at personal, demonstrative, and comparative references, the study highlights how speakers can connect with their audiences, emphasize important points, and express the emotional complexities of social issues. Mook's use of personal pronouns like "I," "my," "you," and "your" creates a sense of intimacy and relatability, making him appear trustworthy on the topic of fear of missing out. His use of demonstrative references helps direct the audience's attention to key parts of his narrative, making it easier for them to understand the concept of FOMO. Additionally, his comparative references encourage the audience to think more deeply about the nuances of this experience, challenging their assumptions.

Suggestions

Future research on grammatical references in influential public discourse could take several promising directions based on insights from this study. One approach might involve analyzing a wider range of TED Talk transcripts to see if the referential patterns found in the "FOMO" talk are consistent across different topics and speaker styles, which could reveal genre-specific conventions for effective public speaking. Another avenue could include multimodal analysis to explore how grammatical references in speech interact with visual and gestural elements, providing a more holistic understanding of how speakers create engaging narratives. Additionally, applying the analytical framework used in this study to other genres, such as political speeches or social media content, could enhance our understanding of grammatical cohesion and effective communication strategies. Overall, these suggested research directions highlight the value of linguistic analysis in understanding impactful public discourse, helping both scholars and practitioners improve their communication skills and connect more effectively with their audiences.

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