

**AN EXAMINATION OF COHESION AS A DISCOURSE STYLISTICS STRATEGY
IN CHINUA ACHEBE'S *THINGS FALL APART* AND FLORA NWAPA'S *EFURU***

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ABSTRACT: *While much of the critiques on Achebe and Nwapa's works over years have concentrated on their content and meaning. Thus, the present one is concerned with their form how they have applied elements of cohesion to arrive at their divergent meanings and opinions. The paper examines cohesion as a stylistics strategy employed in Achebe's Things Fall Apart and Flora Nwapa's Efurú. Stylistics is the study of the linguistic features of a literary text such phonological, lexical, syntactical features which directly affects the meaning of an utterance or a text and the study of style is aims at identifying linguistic variations which include cohesive devices. The aim of the paper is to identify and describe how Achebe and Nwapa uses cohesive devices to foreground the meaning in the novels under study. This is qualitative research, and since it is a study of cohesion as a stylistic feature, the paper adopts a descriptive approach. The paper adopts Halliday and Hasan's model of cohesion within Systemic Functional Grammar which sees cohesion as Semantic relations as a theoretical framework; The study concludes that cohesion is an indispensable linguistic device necessary in making a text convey the intended meaning to its readers.*

KEYWORDS: examination, cohesion, discourse stylistics strategy, Chinua Achebe Things Fall Apart, Flora Nwapa's Efurú

INTRODUCTION

Cohesion as a discourse strategy in critical analyses of texts in stylistics. It attempts to use Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Flora Nwapa's *Efurú* for this critical analysis. The aim is to see how both texts were able to communicate sense and meaning through the conscious application of cohesive tools. The analyst based his study on Halliday and Hasan's model of cohesion using it as his framework.

Cohesion in Systemic Functional Grammar

Cohesion is a discourse concept in Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar who has also partnered other linguist such as Hassan to develop the concept. For instance, Haalliday and Hassan () regard cohesion as a semantic relation; It refers to relations of meaning that exist within the text and define it. Cohesion is the linguistic resource that is struted to form ideas

and make meaning. In other words, cohesion is grammatical and lexical devices that are used in tying up a text or discourse to encode meaning to the recipient of that message. These devices include, reference, substitution, ellipses and conjunction. Hence, this study has adopted this model because it has resources that are used to establish relationship within the text. (Anonymous, 16)

The concept of cohesion has been used alongside coherence, and many sometimes confuse it with coherence and most times end up mixing up the two ideas. The term was derived from a Latin word *coheasio* which means *cling together*. (McArthur,162). He noted that in Linguistics, it is the language form used to indicate Semantic relations between elements in a discourse. Cohesion can be defined as “the property that distinguishes a sequence of sentence that form a discourse from a random sequence of sentences. It is a service of lexical and grammatical and relations which provides links between the various part of a text”. (Anonymous, I). Wang and Gao (2014) also agree that Cohesion and coherence are two hard distinguished linguistic terms in discourse analysis. According to the, Halliday and Hasan (1976) take the view that the primary determinant of whether sets of sentences do or do not constitute a text depends on cohesive relationships within and between the sentences, which create texture. Cohesion can hold segments of a text together, making it a semantic edifice.

Ossisanwo in Idowu sees “cohesion as a language tool for interpreting a discourse as well as a means by which a text functions as single units” (392). Yule defines it as “the connective ties that exist within a text”. (Anonymous, 41). In a similar manner, Mathews considers “Cohesion as syntactic unit which are not interpreted by elements that do not belong to them”. He stated that words are generally cohesive that is; they are not interpreted by other words or elements that belong to other words. Butler, observes that Halliday and Hasan’s (1976) refers to “cohesion as belonging to the system of a language and not simply something arising outside concerned with, for example the subject matter by the text”. (162). Accordingly, it has been described as “a formal curve that creates relationship between sentences and phrases. These formal links enable the writer to hang stretches of language together and create unity” (Coke, 162).

The above definitions have shown that cohesion is the tie that exists between sentences, phrases and clauses. These definitions were based on Halliday and Hasan’s Model of cohesion. Hence, we define cohesion according to them, “as the ways in which the components of the surface text (in terms of the actual words spoken or written), are mutually connected in a sequence, based on grammatical forms and conventions. The various cohesive relations can be either grammatical or lexical in nature. The grammatical cohesive relations are realized by references, conjunctions, ellipses, substitutions, while the lexical forms of relation are realized by vocabulary through reiteration and collocation. The instances of cohesive relations are called ties” (Qtd in Idowu, 392). It can also be described as “a Semantic concept that refers to meaning relations within a text that enhances the coherence of a text. If a text is cohesive when the interpretation contain elements in the text relies on the meaning of another element in the same text”. (Idowu, 391-2).

Types of Cohesion

There are two types of cohesion. These are linguistic and pragmatic cohesion. While the former extracts its meaning within its context of discourse, the latter deduces or extracts meaning outside the context of study. The examples below will suffice. A sentence such “Mr Timibofa is a student of University of Uyo” expresses the linguistics presupposition that the man in

question is in the University of Uyo to study but the same sentence has a pragmatic presupposition that he wants a degree to have economic power.

The two examples have shown that Linguistic and Pragmatic cohesion are distinct. However, both are meaning relations. As said earlier we have Linguistic and Pragmatic cohesions. Linguistic cohesion is divided into reference, ellipses substitution and conjunction while the latter has reiteration and collocation as it forms.

Reference: This is a back or forward reference to something already talked about or yet to be discussed. We have endophora and exophora as its types. Edophora still has anaphora and cataphora. The former is a back reference while the later a forward reference. Exophora is a reference to non specific person or entity. Example, This paper is meant for everybody and somebody must listen. Other forms of reference include Demonstratives, personal references and comparatives. Demonstrative reference keeps track of information through location using proximity references like, this, these. etc. While personal reference keep tracks of functions of the participants using personal pronouns such as *he, him, she, her* and possessives such as *mine, his, her* etc. **comparative reference** keeps track of identity and similarity through indirect reference using such terms as *same, equal similar, better, more* and adverbs like *so, such, more so, otherwise, similarly*, etc.

Other cohesive devices are ellipsis, substitution and conjunction. An ellipsis is the deliberate omission of certain words and clauses that are known to the discourse participants. Ellipsis may be nominal (which occurs when nouns are elided), verbal (which take place when verbs are elided) or clausal where a whole clause is elided. On the other hand, substitution is the replacement of elided words. Substitution itself could be nominal, verbal and clausal. Finally, **conjunctions**, which are either coordinating or subordinating, help to put the text together to form a whole.

Beyond these cohesive devices is a category of transition markers that are extremely import for cohesion and cohesion to be achieved. There are four types of transition markers namely additives, adversatives, causal and temporal. Words and phrases such as furthermore, additionally, though, although, consequently, as a result, because, until, then, at the same time, etc, belong to one or the other of these transition markers. Sometimes, they are called conjunctions.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Textual Analysis

Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Flora Nwanpa's *Efuru* would not have painted a vivid pre-colonial and colonial presence and activities in Africa as well captured the clash of cultures were it not for the conscious utilization of cohesive devices. Although the former wrote during that era, such images would not have been clear for people to see, feel and touch in the text if words were just brought together without linkers and connectors. It is against this background that this study attempts to examine these novelists' deployment of cohesion as a strategy in bringing harmony within words and general intelligibility.

Discourse Stylistics Devices in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*

First, reference, instances of anaphoric references abound in *Things Fall Apart*. The novelist deliberate use of these tools goes to show his involvement and concern for his society. In chapter one he applies the third person pronoun *he* to indicate this concern:

...As a young man of eighteen *he* had brought honour to his village by throwing Amalize the cat (Achebe, 3). The pronoun *he* here refers to Okonkwo. Achebe has used it to draw the reader's attention again to his character Okonkwo, not only that but to align himself with him who has achieve much at a very young age and perhaps also to confirm what he may have heard about him and agree with. The *he* is used to identify with the character of Okonkwo. Hence, *he* has used it as a pointer to show how the young African has attained this height at this age.

Achebe also uses the pronoun "his" beyond tie. In the text, he uses it to show his empathy for the character of Okonkwo and his father the self-made man who has attain this height without any form of inheritance from his father, Onoka: "He did not inherit a barn from his father"(TFA, 13). Likewise, where he said: "...Okonkwo was still a boy his father, Onoka...(TFA,13). The use of the word "his" here again, serves an identical role. The novelist seems to identify with these two characters, one for his self-struggle while the latter for his failure despite several attempts to swing into lime light.

The novelist also shows his commitment to society and African tradition through certain cohesive devices. In the last chapter, the use of the first person plural pronoun "we cannot bury him...(TFA,156)... "we shall pay your men to do it..."(TFA,165). This is used to show how degrading the action of Okonkwo's to African Culture. He therefore, joins his people to condemn it. Okonkwo finally hangs himself on a tree, seeing that things have fallen apart. This act contradicts his person, hence, Achebe despite his love for the character, detest this act by joining his people to bury him traditionally, hence, the usage of the pronoun "We." This reaffirms the view that, writers do not bring strings of utterances hang together but to perform semantic functions. Nwogu posits that: "As a cohesive strategy in the text is not just to make sentences hang together, it serves to structure the discourse by limiting the topic the topic of discourse to particular segments of the text"(Quotd in Chioma,119).

Again, the cataphoric reference *I* used in chapter one is unique: ...But *I* think you ought to break it,' replied Okoye, passing back the disc''. (Things Fall Apart, 4). The first person pronoun *I* here cataphorically points forwards to Okoye that is yet to be discussed. Achebe has used this device to distance the personality of the two characters. The pronoun *I* here is also used to show the hidden intension of Okoye which we are yet to unravel. In order words the novelist used the *I* to show the hidden agenda of the character that; he has not actually come to play but demand for his money hence, he uses the word *I* to distance himself from the Lazy Onoka whose antics tilts towards informality which calls for earlier formality of their discourse to indicate that it is not business as usual but that he(*I*) has come for a very serious assignment. It is clear also that the novelist has allowed the character speak himself, to distance himself from the discourse. This is so because he wants the reader to hear from the character. In a way he wants the readers to see how Onoka's poverty has distanced himself from his friend. It then means Achebe is sending a signal to readers that laziness should be discouraged and by extension lauding it clear to western readers that laziness is not encouraged in Africa as some foreign books have claimed. E.g. Joys Cary's Mister Johnson were mister, an African is portrayed as a slave and a simpleton and being lazy. This no doubt, demonstrates his social commitment as he noted: 'My own assessment is that the role of the writer is not a rigid

position and depends to some extent on the state of health of his or her society. In other words, if a society is ill the writer has a responsibility to point it out..." (Cited in Aboh, 179).

Accordingly, Achebe also employs conjunctions to link up his text. Instances of conjunctions abound in the text as seen below: ...- the oracle of the Hills *and* the Caves...(TFA,10) ... And two days later he returned home with a lad of fifteen *and* a young virgin... (TFA,10). The coordinate conjunction "and" used by the novelist helps to tie up those ideas to show that they are inter twain. Achebe makes the reader to understand that these two oracles mentioned work in partnership which therefore reveals their union. He portrays them as oracles that are bonded and not divided. Likewise the "and" in the second excerpt is also used to reveal that the lad and the young girl were given to serve same purpose, because they were given out on same account- as sacrificial lamb to appease the gods and to cleanse the land. The use of the comparative *but* below attracts attention as well: *but* this particular night was dark and silent. ...An in all the nine villages of Umuofia a town crier with his ogeke asked everyman to be present tomorrow morning...(TFA,8). *But* here is used by the novelist to differentiate every other night from this particular one. Achebe uses this to indicate that indeed some foul plays may have taken place somewhere which of course has further mark the difference.

Furthermore, his deliberate deployment of the elliptic device in the very opening chapter presupposes the urgency in his message: "Okonkwo was well known throughout the nine villages and () even beyond" (TFA, 3). Achebe's omission of the phrase "was well known" reveals the weighty nature of his message which must be told fast. This further justifies an African proverb which holds that, one who is answering the call of nature does not accept pleasantries. This no doubt shows that, Achebe has a divine message from the gods which must be delivered without delay, the message of foreign encroachment brought by the gods to the novelist at the time of weaving. There are many other instances of ellipses in the text as seen in chapter two: "Okonkwo had just blown out the palm-oil lamp and () stretched himself..."(TFA,8) but this few will suffice. These all goes to prove the pressing nature of the message.

In light of the above, Hoey examines the function of cohesion as a system of language. He opines that as a system of analysis, cohesion enables us to explain how the cohesive resources organize text and offer a new perspective on the way on the way we store and process language that is of some relevance to language teachers and applied linguists, as well as to theoretical and descriptive linguists (Quoted in Sharndama, 157). In total, cohesion gives the artist ample opportunity to weave his work together meaningfully. It enables him organize his work and applies such artistic skills to offer varieties of meanings in a text.

Writing on the semantic relevance of cohesion Yule further stressed that cohesive link established within a text gives some further insight into how writers structure what they want to say and may help to judge whether something is well written or not (emphases mine)(Sharndama,162). The position of Yule is that, cohesive resources adds and broadens the content of text and extends meanings beyond its contextual application.

In the same vein, the reiterative repetition of the word Okonkwo by the novelist at regular intervals has also enhanced its unity. Not only has it unified the text to wholeness but semantically suggest the centrality of the character and his role in the text. No wonder, Achebe has mentioned this character severally in the text. He does so to keep the name fresh and sharp in the minds of the audience.

More so, Achebe makes use of certain reiterative words like adjective *great* and the adverb *greatest*: ...’The man was one of the greatest men in Umuofia...’(TFA,165).

...Amalinze was the great wrestler... (TFA,3).The writer utilizes this word to re-emphasize the greatness of the main character whose fame according to him spread like fire. He has also used it to reveal the power and strength of Amalinze before he was beaten by Okonkwo. Similarly the word *Cat* is used in place of Amalinze as a Metaphor for his wrestling prowess and track record which Okonkwo breaks. Also the word *Agbala* is used most times interchangeably with woman, laziness and the name of a god in the text. These lexical choices are deliberate to place serious emphases their relevance to the discourse.

There are also several instances of deictic references through the definite article. It manifestation in chapter five as “the earth goddess and the source of all fertility... (29)... “The feast of the New Yam...” (29)” among other chapters stresses the relevance of the earth goddess among other gods. The definite article goes to differentiate her from other similar gods like her. The novelist identifies with the personality of the earth goddess in terms of her sanctity and fertility. In like manner, using the definite article to describe the Yam festival by Achebe also juxtaposes it from others. It brings to mind that, indeed there are other Festivals of similar kind celebrated within and the area but this stands out. The use of the “the” is also used to indicate respect and homage for this particular festival in discourse. Achebe is demonstrating his homage and respects for African culture in totality, hence his show of familiarity with it. And of course, the use of the demonstrative, “this man” in the last chapter stills point to indicate the greatness of Okonkwo. Achebe deploys it consciously to conclude that, though he died dishonorably, He died a great man, if not the greatest of that time.

Discourse Stylistic Strategies in Nwapa’s *Efuru*

The verbal substitutions device utilized by Flora Nwapa in her novel is deliberate. She deploys them to easily pass her message of female domination and oppression in African society: “They talked about a number of things, () their life and () their happiness” (*Efuru*, 7). The verbal phrase “they talked about” has been substituted by “their” “and” “their” which would have been repeated repeatedly in the sentence. This deliberate application signals the urgency of Nwapa’s message that she wants to deliver in a hurry. In the same vein, she wants the message delivered actively and not in redundancy or passiveness hence, her substitution of “their” “and” “their” for “they talked about” which will compromise the effectiveness and seriousness of her subject matter.

Another striking device in the text is ellipsis; Nwapa uses this strategy to fuse her meaning: “The man should come and () fulfill the customs of our people and () marry her” (*Efuru*, 8). This device projects the novelist eagerness release her long suppressed message. Here Nwapa has removed the verbal phrase “the man should” or “should” without replacement to indicate that the subject matter is common to the readers. She has done so as to eradicate strictures and irrelevant details to quickly achieve her motives. Also she used it to reduce masculine presence in the text but rather focus on their flaws which form her central idea. Similarly, she does same in chapter two but here it is a whole clause; which is clausal ellipsis: “They would have paddle a canoe from their town to a tributary of the Great Rivers, and () thence to Agbor” (*Efuru*, 20-21). The clause “They would have paddle” is carefully omitted in the second sentence by the writer to show her level of preparedness and focus.

In like manner, Nwapa repeated certain words like “The Great River” in the text to demonstrate the setting and as well to represent survival. The mentioned of it takes one back to the sea which implies that the people’s major means of survival is the river which is farming and fishing. Again, it also stands for reverence, which means a reverence to their gods’ and goddesses habitats. More so the phrase “he is pleasing to me” is used alternately in the text: ...I will marry you. You are pleasing to me... (*Efuru*, 126) and same repetition in the following chapter is deliberate. Nwapa is bringing to bear that *Efuru* makes her choices of husbands by mere eye sight and not with proper thoughtfulness. It implies she marries not because such persons have good characters but simply for outward appearance.

Similarly, her reiterative use of the word, *Efuru* throughout the novel is to strengthen her theme of infertility. More so, it is used so to mark out the centrality of the character to the novel. Nwapa has done this to show that, the character of *Efuru* stands out in the text, hence, her focus on her. In the same vein, the phrase “The woman of the lack” is reiterated. This is also done deliberately to demonstrate her relevance to the plot.

The cataphoric reference to Adizua in the opening chapter by Nwapa is beyond its appearance. As she puts it: “She agreed to marry *him*. But the man had no money for the dowry”(Efuru,7). Nwapa has used this device to first show that, the character in question is not known, hence, the word “him”. It shows how insignificant the character is. Secondly, it is used to indicate how emotional *Efuru* could be. Accordingly, the exophoric reference “...this young man is nobody”(Efuru,9) further suggest her feminist portraiture of the masculine figure in her work. She designed Adizua as one whose credentials are known within the public domain yet *Efuru* wants to settle down with, a no body who cannot afford a dowry. However, his person, she concludes that tradition must be put aside for modernism to set in where women can take their places. Also, the deictic, “*the man*” further reveals that, this man is a loafer and portents that he will expire soon in the memory of *Efuru*. His name is not introduced but instead addressed as “the man”. It also shows how she down plays the portraiture of the male figure in this regard.

More so, the deictic article in the first paragraph “the dowry” presupposes her absolute negligence and disdain for African culture. It reveals her light regard for the idea of dowry, the money paid for a woman’s head in marriage. Nwapa uses the deictic “the” to send a strong signal at the opening of the text to show that, she is out to combat African culture in this work. In her view, dowry is important but should not used to tie down two lovers who have decided to marry. This further manifested in the next sentence. “They were going to proclaim themselves married and *that was that*”(Efuru,7). The assertive or demonstrative pronoun “that” used here presupposes fourthings; first, her disregard for African tradition marriage which demands a marriage between two couples is approved and attended by elders. Secondly, to assert her personality and see her equal to the man, which reechoes her readiness to combat African cultural that has relegated women to the background and seen as subservient beings in African society. Thirdly, to reveal her anger for African culture which she feels has tied her down all these years without a companion. It also presupposes that she would have possibly proposed to a man as it is done in some parts of the world like India. But the African culture bars her from taking such actions. Finally, it shows her ignorant for African culture. *Efuru* did not seem to understand her mission on earth. She is perhaps not aware that, she is chosen maiden to worship *Uhamiri*, the woman of the lake and that; she will remain childless but will be very influential in society. This, she would have known early if a *dibia* was consulted. But she did it late because of her insensitivity to African tradition which she perceives with disdain

and contempt. Had she known, she would not assert ...”that was that” and tried to chase the shadows she calls husband and children.

Finally, her use of “Let day break” repeated is a conscious use of transliteration. She transfers the greeting method of her people directly into the English language which is a clear deviation from the norm. She does so reflect local colouration and to give the reader a clear picture of that age.

CONCLUSION

This paper has examined the concept of cohesion. It has also demonstrated how the two novelists’ use this device as a stylistics strategy to communicate with their audience. The study has also brought to bear the reasons behind their choices. The study concludes that Chinua Achebe and Flora Nwapa’s use of linguistic choices in their works is deliberate as it has made their works stand the test of time.

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