



## COHESION AS A MARKER OF STYLE IN CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE'S *TINY WONDERS*: A CASE STUDY

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Article Received:30/05/2020

Article Accepted: 27/06/2020

Published online:30/06/2020

DOI: [10.33329/rjelal.8.2.273](https://doi.org/10.33329/rjelal.8.2.273)

### Abstract

Cohesion is a semantic relation of a text which is realized structurally. As explained by Halliday and Hasan (1976) in their significant work *Cohesion in English*. In this paper, it has been attempted to show that cohesion can be taken as an indicator of an author's style, as further implied by Leech and Short (1981). The text examined, for cohesion, in this paper is a short essay *Tiny Wonders* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, a famous Nigerian woman novelist. The analysis of the selected text reveals that C N Adichie prefers grammatical cohesion to lexical cohesion in her selected essay *Tiny Wonders* as also in her well-known novels like *Purple Hibiscus* (2004) and *Americanah* (2013). Her preference for grammatical cohesion resembles that of Henry James, a well-known American-British novelist. As he was a realist and a modernist, one can say Adichie also is a realist and a modernist writer on the basis of her predilection for grammatical cohesion.

Keywords: Lexical Cohesion, Grammatical Cohesion, Reference, Conjunction, Reiteration, Collocation

### Introduction

M. A. K. Halliday and R. Hasan jointly published an insightful work *Cohesion in English* (1976). In this work, the authors proposed the notion of cohesion to capture the texture or the unity in a text. Halliday (1962, 1966) develops the concepts of cohesion for a linguistic study of literary texts. Cohesion is a 'syntagmatic relation and in so far as it is grammatical, it is partly accounted for by structure (Halliday, 1962:304). That is, cohesion is brought about not only by certain structural relations, but also by certain non-structured grammatical relations such as anaphore, the personal pronouns and personal possessives and words like 'such', 'so', 'there', and 'then'. Cohesion by lexical items is called lexical cohesion. Halliday

maintains, 'lexical cohesion in its clearest form is carried by two or more occurrences, in close proximity of the same lexical item, or of items paradigmatically related in the sense that they may belong to the same lexical set. For example, in a passage by Leslie Stephen one paragraph ends 'I took leave, and turned to the ascent of the peak'; the next paragraph begins, 'the climb is perfectly easy'. Thus, in the new paragraph the first lexical item 'climb' coheres with 'ascent'; later occur 'mountain' and 'submit' cohering with 'peak'.

Hasan (1964), following Halliday's notion of cohesion (Halliday 1962), recognizes under cohesion some linguistic features in the works of two contemporary prose writers. These features mainly belong to structural cohesion. Under major

cohesion, Hasan discusses certain structural grammatical features while under minor cohesion she deals with lexical cohesion.

Hasan (1986) distinguishes between the internal and external features responsible for the organization of text. Only the internal features of textuality are referred to as cohesion. That is, she restricts in a text. She examines the cohesive devices 'reference' and 'substitution'.

Hasan (Chatman 1971) adds 'ellipsis' and 'logical connectives' to 'reference' and 'substitution' and thus recognizes four grammatical 'cohesive-tie-types'. In this paper she also deals with some aspects of lexical organization relevant to cohesion in the context of its implication for literary studies. Examining the linguistically relevant feature of cohesion in W.B. Yeats poem "The Old Men Admiring Themselves in Water", Hasan (1971) introduces the notion of 'instantial equivalence' for the study of literary texts. In addition to repetition of lexical items, she distinguishes four types of cohesive relation, under lexical cohesion, in which the selection of lexical types are varied and different or otherwise. She illustrates them with examples from Yeats poem as follows:

1. Synonymy e.g. , drop away, drift away
2. Antonymy e.g. , twisted, beautiful
3. Hyponymy e.g., tree, thorn-tree or Hand, claws
4. Morphological Relationship e.g., beauty – beautiful, sail - sailor

She says that members of different macro-sets of lexical items are related in the above four ways. The term macro-set is only referred to but not explained. She adds that both "the repetition of a given lexical type and the possibility of relatable macro-set formation, are relevant to the lexical cohesion of a text" (p. 318). It is here, for identifying the relation between a lexical type and its macro-set that employs the notion of 'instantial equivalence'. By 'instantial equivalence' she means "the relating of two (or more) unrelated types or macro-sets by establishing either an identity or similarity between the members; tis identity or similarity is instantial in

that it is valid only for that one particular text and not true of the items under consideration under all circumstances..." (p. 318). She gives the following examples to illustrate this point.

i. Identity:

e.g. Time is two modes. The one is an effortless perception... The other's memory, a sense of shuffle, folds and coils ... (from Golding's 'Free Fall')

ii. Similarity:

e.g. she walks in beauty, like the night (from Byron's she walks in beauty)

Thus, according to Hasan, an instantially equivalent set is a "complex symbol in the code of the text" and is based on lexical—grammatical considerations.

Halliday and Hasan (1976) present a detailed treatment of cohesion in English. Parts of this book were first published as "Grammatical cohesion in spoken and written English, part I" written entirely by Hasan (1968) and the last two chapters were written entirely by Halliday the authors distinguish text as a 'semantic unit', not of form but of meaning. 'Texture' is the name given to the property of unity which keeps the sentences in a text hanging together. This unity or texture is provided by cohesive relationships existing between the sentences in the text. A single instance of cohesion is called a 'tie'. Cohesion, being a semantic concept, refers to the relations of meaning that exist in the text. Hence, it enables the interpretation of some element in the text in terms of another element. This is a relation of presupposition. In other words, when there is cohesion between two elements, one of them presupposes the other.

They do not seem to consider any structural unit above the sentence. They declare:

"The concept of cohesion is set up to account for relations in discourse, but in a rather different way, without the implication that there is some structural unit that is above the sentence." (p. 10)

They doubt whether, in such higher units as paragraph or topic unit, it is possible to generalize structural relationships as in the case of the

sentence. Thus, cohesion is concerned with inter-sentential relationships. The authors distinguish the following five types of cohesion in English:

1. Reference
2. Substitution
3. Ellipsis
4. Conjunction
5. Lexical Cohesion

What is common to all cohesive devices is that they indicate that the information regarding one item is to be retrieved from elsewhere in the neighbourhood.

These five cohesive types may be summarized as follows.

#### 1. References

In reference "information to be retained is the referential meaning, the identity of the particular thing or class or things that is being referred to, and the cohesion lies in the continuity of reference, whereby the same thing enters into discourse a second time" (p. 31). Reference can be exophoric (i.e. situational) and endophoric (i.e. textual). Endophoric reference can be anaphoric (i.e. to the preceding text) and cataphoric (i.e. to the following text). In English, endophoric reference is made possible by the use of personal and demonstrative pronouns, possessive adjectives, articles, adverbs and comparatives. For example in the following line:

Three blind mice, three blind mice

See how they run; See how they run:

'they' in the second line means not merely 'three blind mice' but 'the same blind mice that we have been talking about' (p. 31).

#### 2. Substitution:

Substitution "is a relation in the wording rather than in the meaning". It is "a relation between linguistic items such as words or phrases". Reference "is a relation on the semantic level whereas substitution is a relation on the lexico-grammatical level, the level of grammar and vocabulary or

linguistic 'form' (p. 89). Substitution, unlike reference, is a verbal relation and it is essentially confined to the text. The majority of instances of substitution are endophoric and within endophoric they are anaphoric (p. 90.) substitution may be 'normal', 'verbal' or 'clausal'.

#### 3. Ellipsis:

Ellipsis is 'substitution by zero'.

e.g. Joan brought some carnations and

Catherine some sweet peas. (p. 143)

Here, the second clause means 'Catherine brought some sweet peas'. Where there is ellipsis, there is presupposition in the structure, that something is to be supplied or 'understood'. Ellipsis may be 'nominal', 'verbal', 'clausal' or 'lexical'

#### 4. Conjunction:

Conjunction is not simply an anaphoric relation. Substitution and ellipsis are grammatical and therefore purely textual relations while reference is a semantic relation. Conjunction is also a different type of semantic relation. It is "a specification of the way in which what is to follow is systematically connected to what has gone before" (p. 227).

For example, time sequence can act as a cohesive agent and such a relation is an instance of conjunction. It appears that, what Halliday and Hasan call conjunction involves logical relations between propositions expressed by sentences. They distinguish four types of conjunction:

- i. Additive
- ii. Adversative
- iii. Causal
- iv. Temporal

These are illustrated in the following examples:

e.g. For the whole day he climbed up the steep mountainside, almost without stepping.

a) And in all this time he met no one. (additive)

b) Yet he was hardly aware if being tired. (adversative)

c) So by night time the valley was far below him.  
(Causal)

d) Then , as dusk fell, he sat down to rest. (temporal)

Here, the words 'and', 'yet', 'so' and 'then' are taken as typifying these four types of conjunctive relations. However the authors maintain that this classification is not a rigid one and each of these four types is divided further into subtypes in terms of external or internal conjunction. External conjunction depends on the relation between the process of communication and external phenomena (i.e. within the text) while internal conjunction is determined by relation between the text and the communication situation.

#### 5. Lexical Cohesion:

Lexical Cohesion is "the cohesive effect achieved by the selection of vocabulary" (p. 274). Under lexical cohesion, the authors distinguish two major types:

- i. Reiteration
- ii. Collocation

i) Reiteration involves 'the class of General Nouns' like people, person, creature, thing, stuff which can be used as pre-words. There general nouns stand on the border between lexical cohesion (i.e. reiteration) and grammatical cohesion (i.e. reference). This border, according to Halliday and Hasan, is by no means clear cut.

Reiteration may be expressed in four ways:

- a) Repetition of the same word.
  - b) Synonym or near synonym
  - c) Superordinate
  - d) General word
- ii) Collocation "is achieved through the association of lexical items that regularly co-occur." (p. 284) According to Halliday and Hasan, this is the most problematic part of lexical cohesion because this may involve either mutually exclusive categories (e.g. boy : girl) or some lexical relations (e.g. climb ... ascent; disease ... illness etc.) or super-ordinates

(e.g. elm ... trees, boy .. child) or antonyms (e.g. like ... hate) or some ordered series such as Tuesday, Thursday, dollar-cent, etc. However, they say that the recognition of collocation is made on the basis of native speakers' common sense (p. 270). In conclusion, Holliday and Hasan observe, that a full interpretation of lexical cohesion "would require further differentiation on both these counts."<sup>1</sup>

Cohesion is a property of a literary as well as non-literary text. For instance Gutwinsky made a study of cohesion in literary texts with a special reference to passages drawn from Henry James and Earnest Hemingway (Gutwinsky: 1976). His findings show that Henry James preferred grammatical cohesion while Hemingway's option was more favourable to lexical cohesion.

Some scholars studied the relation between cohesion (textual linking) and coherence (contextual linking) in relation to language learning/teaching. Some concluded that the two phenomenon are independent while others argued that they are mutually interactive in certain texts.

In this paper it is assumed that cohesion is a marker of style that can be found either in literary or non-literary texts. To prove this point, a short essay by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, *Tiny Wonders* has been selected for the analysis of cohesion. She was born in 1977 in Abba, in Nigeria. Adichie started writing as a school student and published novels and short stories, working as a teaching assistant in Johns Hopkins University from where she graduated in 2004. Her novels include *Purple Hibiscus* (2004), *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2007) and *Americanah* (2013) along with a number of short stories and general essays. *Tiny Wonders* is an essay written by Adichie in 2003 and published in the American literary magazine *Speakeasy*. She has received several awards for her oeuvre.

This essay describes the author's experience when she came back to her native country, Nigeria (the University town of Nsukka) from America during Christmas vacation. One of her father's colleagues professor 'E', professor of

<sup>1</sup> \*the summary of cohesion above is taken from A. Subbarao, (1982, pp. 85-97)

Botany, passed away and she visits late Prof. 'E's' residence on the university campus along with her father.

The essay consists of 86 sentences divided into 17 paragraphs. By and large, Adichie employs both Grammatical and Lexical cohesion. Within

Grammatical cohesion, she has employed Reference and Conjunction to the exclusion of Substitution and Ellipsis. The following tables present the analysis of items of cohesive ties in Grammatical and Lexical Cohesion, in the selected text.

Table 1: Grammatical Cohesion (*Tiny Wonders*)

Sentence Number	Reference	Conjunction
1	The, the, the, his	And
2	I, He, I, I, the	That, because, how
3	I, I, I, now, I, the	Though, that, because, and
4	I, now, I, the	And
5	The, the, my, my, my	And
6	Us	--
7	The	--
8	Them	And
9	The, we, our, I, our, the, the, the, the, my	--
10	Our, my, it, the, us, the, the, the, the, the, my, the, the, the	And
11	A, I, my	--
12	A, this, I, a, your, a, your, the, the, my	--
13	I, my	--
14	I, a, he, his	And
15	I, the, his	Who
16	I, my, me	That
17	I, you, I, my, he, he, I	Although, that
18	We, the, I, the	As, that
19	The, the	And
20	A, a, the, the	But
21	The, the, the	Or, that
22	I, a	And
23	They, the	--
24	A, a	When
25	Each, a, each, they, the	And, and
26	We, we, the, we	When
27	A, a, a	--
28	It, a	--
29	The, my	--

30	He his	--
31	He, me, the	--
32	I, a, he	--
33	I, the	--
34	I	--
35	The, the, their, the, I	Why, why
36	The, we, her	And, and
37	Her	--
38	I, her, a, she, the	--
39	She, my, him, the, the, the, the	When, who, when
40	I	--
41	I, her, me, she, her, her	And, then, how, and
42	They, the, she, them, her	Even though
43	He	And
44	She, the, we, she, the	And, then
45	It	--
46	You, a, their, that	But
47	The, the, each, them	And
48	I, her, the, her, the	When, when
49	I, her, them, her, them, they	--
50	She, him, the, he, the, the, their	And,
51	The, my, I, our, the, their, we, an, everyone	And. When, and, and
52	Our, the	Or
53	The, it	Or, and
54	The, we, I, the	When, and, and
55	The, I, the, I, he, me	When, and
56	A	--
57	I, the, a	--
58	Us, I, the, their, the	As, that, and
59	Them, I, my, nothing, the	Even though, Even though
60	These, the, my	That
61	I, he, them	--
62	I, him	--

63	I, him, his, I	And
64	I, his, his, a, a	That, that
65	His, me, a, my, a	--
66	He, the	--
67	He	--
68	He, we, him	--
69	I, the, the, the	That, that, and
70	Me, an, it, a	And
71	The	--
72	They, the	And
73	My, the	--
74	I, the, they	That, because
75	A, I, my	--
76	It, I, it. I, them, I, the	Because, and
77	I, nobody	That
78	I, the	And
79	Our, I, the	And
80	It, my	--
81	I, a, an, my	That
82	I, I, a, my, a	That
83	I, the	That
84	I, the, the	That
85	I, a, the, me, the	Who, who
86	I, I, the, I, I, it, it	If, and

Table 2 : Lexical Cohesion (*Tiny Wonders*)

Sentence Number	Reiteration	Collocation
1	---	---
2	Sorry, sorry	---
3	Potholes, bumpy roads	---
4	Stranger, unused	---
5	Hurtle, honking	---
6	Roadside, bumpy roads	---
7	---	White-tan, dust and wind
8	Roadside	---
9	Sheded – not as lush	---

10	Silent-shrieks, playing soccer, childhood-children, balcony-upstairs	Buzz-bees, clucking chickens, sauntered
11	---	---
12	Small, slow town, a quaint univ. town, water-illness, neighbour's-next door, tiny wonders, capture	---
13	---	---
14	Professor-professor	---
15	Professor	---
16	Professor, dad	Died – burial
17	(Died – burial) – condolences	---
18	Faded	---
19	---	Gaping holes, rains-whitewashed
20	Shabbiness, moldy walls, hibiscus	---
21	Zigzag direction	---
22	Ikejiani Avenue-roads	Men-workers, carpenters and plumbers
23	Mango	Mango tree fruits, nudge-sticks
24	Mango	---
25	Eacg man, each, seconds, sticks, tree	---
26	E's	---
27	---	---
28	---	---
29	Register, dad	---
30	---	Writes-pen
31	---	---
32	RIP-rest in perfect peace	---
33	Pen	---
34	Write	---
35	Want	Fading, shrunken tree
36	---	Sorry-grief
37	---	---
38	---	Gash-lipstick-mockery
39	Dad	---
40	---	Church service forward
41	Husband	---
42	Funeral, son	---
43	Condolence register	---



44	Vase	Flowers
45	Dried, dried	---
46	Table	Florist
47	---	Croton-flower, rumpled-papers
48	Dried, flowers	---
49	---	Scent
50	The years	Cry, remember
51	Campus, year	---
52	---	Played
53	Friends, the sun-dark	
54	The years	Raced
55	The years, stones	---
56	Stones, the men	---
57	Dad, tree, mangoes	---
58	Life, continues, father, died	---
59	These men, mangoes, tree, dad	---
60	---	---
61	---	---
62	This seventy-one-year-old man	---
63	---	---
64	---	---
65	---	---
66	---	---
67	---	---
68	The sun	The sun-fall
69	Tree, tired old woman	---
70	---	Bark
71	---	---
72	Bark	---
73	Fruits, sour	---
74	---	---
75	No fruits	Eat, savor sourness
76	---	---
77	---	---
78	---	---
79	---	---
80	Writing	Writing --curved hand
81	---	Cornrows-ribbon
82	Test	---
83	Writing, board	Chalk
84	---	---
85	---	---
86	The board, wipe	---

It can be noted from table-1 that there are totally 408 ties of Grammatical Cohesion in the selected text. On the other hand there are 117 ties of Lexical Cohesion in the same text as shown in table-2. These data indicate that Adichie, the author of *Tiny Wonders*, has a higher predilection for Grammatical Cohesion than Lexical Cohesion. In this respect, she is like the famous American-English novelist and critique, Henry James, who employed Grammatical Cohesion more than Lexical Cohesion as pointed out by Gutwinski in his doctoral thesis.

The essay *Tiny Wonders* analysed above is a non-literary text. Our analysis has revealed that Adichie has a higher predilection for Grammatical Cohesion than Lexical Cohesion. This may be further confirmed by the analysis of the opening paragraphs of her popular novels *Purple Hibiscus* (2004), and *Americanah* (2013) as in tables 3 and 4 respectively below.

Table 3. *Purple Hibiscus*: Ties of Grammatical and Lexical Cohesion

Grammatical Cohesion	Lexical Cohesion
Reference : 24	Reiteration : 7
Conjunction : 05	2.Collocation: 7
Substitutes : 0	---
Ellipsis : 0	---
Total No. of ties: 29	Total No. of ties : 14

Table 4. *Americana* : Ties of Grammatical and Lexical Cohesion

Grammatical Cohesion	Lexical Cohesion
Reference : 40	1.Reiteration : 9
Conjunction : 16	2.Collocation: 6
Substitutes : 0	---
Ellipses : 0	---
Total No. of ties: 56	Total No. of ties : 15

As in the case of *Tiny Wonders*, which is a non-literary text by Adichie, her literary texts i.e. her novels, *Purple Hibiscus* and *Americanah*, also confirm the author's greater preference for Grammatical Cohesion.

In conclusion, we may venture to infer from the above analysis of cohesion in the selected essay, *Tiny Wonders* and two novels, that Adichie, like Henry James may be classified as a realistic and modernistic writer. Writers like Hemingway with their preference for lexical cohesion may be characterized as romantic writers. Of course, these claims are subjective to correction and verification by future researchers on the role of cohesion in literary and non-literary texts.

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