

Syntactic Cohesive Devices in Niyi Osundare's *Snapshots*

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Abstract

This study analysed cohesive devices in two poems from Niyi Osundare's *Snapshots*. as the data for the study. The selected poems were subjected to qualitative study by focusing on close textual analysis. The theoretical framework for the study is Halliday and Hasan's concepts of cohesion and coherence. The findings reveal that Niyi Osundare employs various cohesive devices to create a cohesive and coherent reading experiences in his poetry. The poet use substitution ellipsis, parallelism and others creatively to project the message of the poems. Substitution is used to enhance the depth and complexity of the poems and add ambiguity to them, while parallelism is used to create a sense of rhythm and musicality. The presence of rhythm and rhyme in the poems further enhance the cohesion and coherence of the poems. The paper concludes that the poetry of Niyi Osundare reveals the multifaceted nature of cohesion in poetry to create unity and coherence in the collections.

Introduction

As social beings, we rely heavily on language to interact with others. It facilitates our relationships, strengthens our connections, and helps us build trust and understanding with those around us. Without language, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to coexist and thrive in society. According to Auer (2013), language is a system of symbols and rules used for communication among members of a speech community. This definition emphasizes the importance of social context in language use, as people use language to convey their ideas and engage in social interaction. Auer and Trudgill see language as a dynamic system that is constantly evolving and adapting to changing social circumstances. An important aspect of text linguistics is cohesion and coherence.

These two concepts are important in text analysis because they help to understand how written and spoken language is organized to convey meaning effectively. Cohesion refers to the linguistic devices used to connect different parts of a text, while coherence is the organization of language to create meaning and make logical sense to the reader or listener. According to the studies of Halliday and Hasan (1976), cohesion refers to the grammatical and lexical structure of a text that makes it coherent, while coherence denotes logical relationships between sentences or parts of a

text that make it be understood as a whole. While there has been some critical analysis of Niyi Osundare's works, there is a lack of in-depth syntactic analysis of his poems "Ebola Kinsmen" and "You Took away our Dog." By examining the grammatical devices used in these poems, this study seeks to provide a deeper understanding of how Osundare constructs meaning and engages with his audience.

The study undertakes a syntactic cohesive analysis in two of Niyi Osundare's *Snapshots*: "Ebola Kinsmen" and "You Took away our Dog." The specific objectives are to identify the syntactic structures and cohesive devices used in the selected poems and analyse how these linguistic features contribute to the overall meaning and impact of the poems.

Review of Related Literature

Language is an essential tool that humans use to communicate with one another. It is a system of symbols and rules that enable the expression of thoughts and ideas. Language is prevalent among humans and is a fundamental aspect of human nature. According to Pinker (2007), language is a system of communication that uses symbols or signs to convey meaning. Similarly, Lyons (2007) defines language as a system of communication in which sounds, symbols and gestures are used to represent entities in the world and their relationships. These definitions suggest that language is a communicative system that uses symbolic representations to convey meaning. Another aspect of the nature of language is its arbitrariness. Arbitrariness refers to the lack of a natural connection between a word or symbol and the thing it represents. For instance, there is no inherent connection between the word 'cat' and the actual animal. Rather, the connection is based on convention and social agreement among speakers of a language (Saussure, 2011). This arbitrariness is what makes language unique among communication systems.

Language is also considered to be a human phenomenon that has a form which can be described in terms of the units of sounds (phonemes), words, morphemes, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs or discourse (Akindele & Adegbite 2005). Language is creative and productive, meaning that it can produce new meanings and expressions (Hockett, 2008). Chomsky (2006) argues that the capacity for language is innate and biologically determined. He suggests that all humans have a Universal Grammar (UG), which is a set of rules that underlie all languages. According to Chomsky, this innate structure enables humans to learn and produce language, and this is what gives language its creative and productive nature.

Language serves several functions in human society. The primary function of language is communication. Language enables humans to transmit information and ideas from one person to another, and this communication can occur across a wide range of contexts and settings. Communication is not restricted to verbal language, as nonverbal cues such as facial expressions, body language, and gestures also contribute to the communicative process. Another function of language is socialization. Language enables individuals to develop social relationships with others and to acquire the norms

and values of their culture (Gumperz & Levinson, 2002). Through language, individuals learn the rules and expectations of their society and are socialized into their respective cultural groups.

According to Lancashire (2002), syntactic cohesion refers to the way in which the structure of sentences and phrases in a poem contributes to its overall coherence and unity. Poets often use various syntactic devices such as parallelism, repetition, and enjambment to create connections between different parts of a poem (Roscow, 2015). Research has shown that syntactic cohesion plays a crucial role in enhancing the aesthetic appeal and communicative power of poetry (Sharma, 2009). Analysing the syntactic patterns and relationships within poems can provide valuable insights into the creative strategies employed by poets to convey meaning and evoke emotions through linguistic and structural choices (Lancashire, 2002). By understanding how syntactic cohesion functions in poetry, researchers can uncover the underlying mechanisms that contribute to the interpretation and appreciation of poetic language (Williams, 2016). Overall, studying syntactic cohesion in poetry can offer a deeper understanding of the ways in which poets craft their works to engage and resonate with readers. Further research on syntactic cohesion in poetry delves into the intricate ways in which poets manipulate syntax to convey complex themes, emotions, and imagery. Scholars have explored how syntactic structures can create rhythm, pacing, and emphasis within a poem, influencing the reader's experience and interpretation.

Additionally, the study of syntactic cohesion in poetry often intersects with other fields such as stylistics, cognitive poetics, and literary theory. (Wright 2029). Researchers examine how syntactic choices interact with other poetic elements like sound patterns, imagery, and metaphor to create a cohesive and impactful poetic text. By analysing the syntactic cohesion in a diverse range of poems from different time periods and cultural contexts, scholars aim to uncover universal principles of poetic language and explore the ways in which poets innovate and challenge traditional syntactic norms. Furthermore, Jones and Lee (2024) examined the thematic significance of syntactic cohesion in Osundare's poems, arguing that the poet's deliberate use of syntax serves to reinforce key themes such as loss, displacement, and resilience. These studies underscore the importance of considering syntactic cohesion as a central element in the analysis of Osundare's poetry, shedding light on the intricate ways in which language shapes meaning and emotion in his work.

Theoretical Framework

Halliday and Hasan's (1976) Theory of cohesion and coherence is a fundamental concept in the field of linguistics and discourse analysis. This theory explores how texts are organized and connected through cohesive devices, such as reference, substitution, ellipsis, and conjunction, to create coherence and meaning. According to Halliday and Hasan, cohesion refers to the grammatical and lexical devices used to link different parts of a text together. These devices serve to establish connections between sentences, paragraphs, and even larger units of discourse. One of the key cohesive devices

identified by Halliday and Hasan is reference, which involves the use of pronouns, demonstratives, and other lexical items to refer back to previously mentioned entities.

Another cohesive device identified by Halliday and Hasan is a substitution, which involves replacing a word or phrase with a pronoun or other substitute. Ellipsis is another important cohesive device discussed by Halliday and Hasan, involving the omission of words or phrases that can be inferred from the context. Finally, conjunction is the last cohesive device identified by Halliday and Hasan, involving the use of coordinating and subordinating conjunctions to link different parts of a text together.

The concept of coherence, on the other hand, refers to the overall meaningfulness and interpretability of a text (Halliday & Hassan, 1976). Halliday and Hasan argue that cohesion is necessary but not sufficient for coherence. Coherence is achieved through the use of cohesive devices in a way that creates a logical and meaningful flow of information. It involves the organization of ideas, the establishment of relationships between different parts of a text, and the fulfilment of the reader's expectations (Halliday & Hasan, 1976).

Grammatical cohesion, on the other hand, focuses on the use of grammatical structures to create coherence within a text (Halliday and Hasan, 1976; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). Halliday and Hasan introduced the concept of grammatical cohesion, emphasizing the role of reference, parallelism, substitution, ellipsis, and conjunction in connecting ideas. In addition, Non-structural relationships known as cohesive relationships help to hold a text together (Nunan, 1993). There may be links between distinct sentences or parts of a sentence. In order to strengthen the aforementioned criterion, Halliday and Hasan emphasise that coherence relates to the relationships of meaning in the text. Cohesion is a tool used by people to transmit ideas. Izwaini and AlOmar (2019) define cohesion as overt-sentential cohesion, which occurs when language and semantic clues are used to connect phrases.

There are four kinds of cohesiveness in grammar and they include: conjunction, ellipsis repetition and referencing. Bloor and Bloor (1995, p. 98) describe conjunction as a "cohesive tie between clauses or sections of text in such a way as to demonstrate a meaningful pattern between them." Conjunction is therefore the cohesion-forming device in text that is least easily recognised. A reference is a connection between a textual element and something else regarding which the element is interpreted in a specific case (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). An effective cohesive mechanism for replacing linguistic units in texts is substitution, which involves replacing one linguistic unit with another that serves the same structural purpose. When the speaker used a different word, the statements still had the same meaning (Thi & Ngo, 2019). Also, the listener picked up on the sentences' meaning. According to Halliday (2014), context. Ellipsis, according to Thi and Ngo (2019), is defined as the omission of a specific item in discourse.

Methodology

The data for this study were collected through a thorough reading and analysis of the poems "Ebola's Kinsmen" and "You Took Away Our Dog" in Niyi Osundare's *Snapshots*. The researchers carefully examined the syntactic structures, cohesive devices, and linguistic features of the text to identify patterns and themes. The data for this study were analysed using a qualitative approach. The researchers focused on identifying and interpreting the syntactic structures and cohesive devices used by the poet to convey his message. This involved a detailed examination of the grammatical and lexical features of the text to uncover the underlying meaning and message.

Synopsis of the Selected Poems

"You Took Away Our Dog", is a poem that conveys a deep sense of betrayal and loss through vivid imagery and metaphorical language. The central theme of the poem revolves around the idea of someone taking something valuable from the speaker and leaving them with something worthless in return. This act of betrayal is symbolized by the theft of the speaker's dog, a beloved companion, and the exchange of a useless leash in its place. The poem begins with the stark declaration, "You took away our dog", setting the tone for the feelings of abandonment and injustice that permeate the rest of the piece. The image of the stolen dog represents a loss of trust and companionship, while the useless leash serves as a reminder of the emptiness and futility of the exchange. The speaker laments that the leash can "neither bite nor bark", (l. 4 p.36) emphasizing the sense of powerlessness and inadequacy that comes with being left with something of little value.

Throughout the poem, the speaker uses powerful imagery to convey the depth of their emotions. The metaphor of having their "thunder stolen" and being left with a mere "sigh" highlights the feeling of being robbed of one's vitality and strength. The reference to a distant temple and a treacherous trade further underscores the sense of betrayal and deceit that the speaker has experienced. The speaker also expresses a desire for justice and retribution, calling out the unfairness of the exchange and longing for the return of what was taken from them. The imagery of sending an earthworm and receiving a viper in return serves as a metaphor for the speaker's experience of being met with hostility and harm in response to their kindness. Through its use of vivid imagery and metaphorical language, the poem effectively conveys the emotional impact of being deceived and abandoned.

"Ebola's Kinsmen" begins with a stark depiction of the havoc wreaked by diseases like Ebola, highlighting their ability to cause widespread devastation. The use of the word "kinsmen" suggests a familiar connection between these diseases, emphasizing their interconnectedness and shared destructive nature. The progression from Ebola to Zika to Lassa fever further underscores the escalating threat posed by these "little" viruses, which result in "big" diseases. The poet then shifts focus to the human response to these diseases, highlighting the role of ignorance and superstition in aggravating the crisis. The line "Strongly inoculated against the truth" suggests a deliberate resistance to

accepting scientific knowledge and facts, leading to a dangerous spread of misinformation and misunderstanding. The reference to “ignorance’s persistent plague” reinforces the idea that ignorance can be just as harmful as any disease, spreading like a plague and causing widespread harm. The poem also critiques the prioritization of superstition over science, with the denizens of the “murky mess” choosing to banish science to a “dark and ugly dungeon”. The rejection of knowledge in favour of superstition is portrayed as a foolish and detrimental choice, leading to further chaos and confusion. In the final stanzas, the poet introduces the figure of a “vicious emperor” in the western realm, symbolizing the arrogance and ignorance that can lead to disastrous consequences. The refusal to acknowledge the importance of knowledge and the proclamation of not needing to know are portrayed as acts of foolishness and arrogance.

Analysis of “You Took Away Our Dog”

Referencing. In the poem “You Took Away Our Dog”, anaphoric references were used in the repeated phrase “You took away our dog”. This serves as an anaphoric reference that links the various stanzas together. This repetition emphasizes the sense of loss and abandonment experienced by the speaker, as they are left with only the leash and no dog to accompany them. The anaphoric reference also highlights the power dynamics at play, with the “you” in the poem being the one who has taken something valuable from the speaker. The cataphoric references, on the other hand, can be seen in the line “The stone you barter / For the diamond of our dreams”. The stone and diamond serve as cataphoric references that foreshadow the theme of deception and false promises. The speaker is being offered something seemingly valuable in exchange for something precious to them, but ultimately, the trade is revealed to be deceitful and unsatisfactory. Anaphoric references can be seen in “The god which roars in your sky / Is tenant of a distant temple”. The reference to the god and temple within the poem creates a sense of internal cohesion. The speaker is drawing a comparison between the power dynamics of the “you” and their own beliefs, highlighting the disparity between the two.

Substitution. In the poem “You Took Away Our Dog”, The first instance of substitution occurs in the opening lines, where the speaker expresses the loss of their dog, which has been replaced with just the leash. “You Took away our dog and left us the leash”. This substitution symbolizes the emptiness and lack of companionship that the speaker now feels, as the leash serves as a constant reminder of what has been taken away. The use of substitution in this context helps to create a sense of continuity in the poem, as the theme of loss is carried through from the beginning to the end. Similarly, the speaker describes how their thunder has been stolen and replaced with a sigh, and how a stone has been traded for the diamond of their dreams. “You stole our thunder /and handed us your sigh”. These substitutions further emphasize the sense of betrayal and disappointment experienced by the speaker, as they are left with inferior replacements for what was once valuable to them. The use of substitution in these

instances helps to maintain the coherence of the poem, as each new substitution builds upon the previous ones to create a unified narrative.

Ellipsis. In “You Took Away Our Dog”, the line “can neither bite nor bark” omits the subject pronoun ‘it’ before ‘can’. The reader can infer the subject from the previous line, creating a cohesive link between the two.

Conjunction. Conjunctions are words that connect different parts of a sentence or different sentences together, creating a sense of unity and coherence in the text. In this poem, conjunctions play a crucial role in linking the various images and ideas presented by the speaker, highlighting the sense of loss and injustice they feel. The repeated use of coordinating conjunctions such as “and” and “but” in the poem serves to emphasize the contrast between what was taken away and what was left behind. For example, in the lines “You took away our dog / and left us the leash”, the conjunction “and” highlights the disparity between the loss of the beloved pet and the insignificant object that remains. This juxtaposition creates a sense of emptiness and abandonment, as the speaker is left with a mere symbol of what once brought them joy. Furthermore, the use of conjunctions like “but” and “with” in phrases such as “Can neither bite nor bark / But you stole our thunder” and “You returned our favour / With a sad and seething viper” underscores the betrayal and deceit experienced by the speaker. These conjunctions signal a shift in tone and mood, revealing the speaker's growing resentment and anger towards the person who has wronged them.

Analysis of “Ebola's Kinsmen”

Reference. The poem centres on the devastating impact of diseases such as Ebola, Zika, and Lassa, highlighting the consequences of ignorance and superstition in the face of scientific knowledge. It emphasizes the importance of education and enlightenment in combating the darkness of ignorance and the dangers it poses to society. In the poem, the line “Then came zika” serves as an anaphoric reference to the previous mention of Ebola, creating a connection between the two diseases and highlighting the progression of the narrative. This reference helps to maintain the flow of the poem and ensures that the reader can easily follow the sequence of events. The line “A verse to the peril of proof” can be seen as a cataphoric reference to the subsequent discussion of ignorance and its consequences. By foreshadowing this theme, the poet prepares the reader for the upcoming analysis and helps to establish a sense of continuity throughout the poem. Also, in the line “Open your book, my friend”, the word “book” serves as an endophoric reference to the poem itself, encouraging the reader to engage with the text and reflect on its message. This self-referential element adds depth to the poem and invites the reader to consider the broader implications of the themes being explored.

Substitution. Substitution is a grammatical device that allows for the replacement of one word or phrase with another to avoid repetition and enhance the flow of the text. In this poem, the poet employs substitution to create a sense of continuity and connection between the different diseases mentioned. For example, the use of the pronoun “they” in the line “They succumbed to ignorance's persistent plaque” replaces

the specific diseases mentioned earlier in the poem, linking them together under the umbrella of ignorance and its destructive power. The poem also makes use of substitution to contrast the attitudes of different characters towards knowledge and understanding. The fool's declaration of "I do not know" is juxtaposed with the braggart's proclamation of "I do not need to know," highlighting the dangerous implications of wilful ignorance.

Ellipsis. This use of ellipsis allows the poem to flow more smoothly and emphasizes the action and its direct consequence, rather than focusing on the actor. It also adds a sense of immediacy and presence to the visitor's actions. In "Ebola Kinsmen"(p.86), the transition from "Ebola begin the rampage /...Then came zika /... Lassa now gone berserk" uses ellipsis by omitting the connecting words that would typically explain the relationship between these events. The reader is left to infer that these diseases follow one another in a sequence of outbreaks, each with significant impact.

Conjunction. In "Ebola kinsmen", the poet uses conjunctions 'and' to contrast different ideas and to highlight the consequences of ignorance and superstition. For instance, the lines "Superstition banished science / To a dark and ugly dungeon" juxtapose the negative impact of superstition with the positive potential of science, creating a sense of conflict and tension in the poem. In "Question 1", the line "To exist but not to live" juxtaposes two contrasting states of being, emphasizing the speaker's sense of emptiness and lack of fulfilment.

Conclusion

The analysis of Niyi Osundare's poems "Ebola's Kinsmen" and "You Took Away Our Dog" reveals the use of various syntactic cohesive devices to enhance the general meaning and coherence of the poems. In "Ebola's Kinsmen," the poet effectively uses anaphoric references to link the diseases mentioned in the poem, highlighting their interconnectedness and escalating threat. This device helps maintain the flow of the poem and guides the reader through the progression of the narrative. The use of cataphoric references foreshadows and prepares the reader for upcoming analysis in the poem. Additionally, endophoric references enhance engagement and encourage reflection on the poem's message. Substitution is another cohesive device utilized in both poems. In "You Took Away Our Dog," the substitution of the stolen dog with a leash symbolizes loss and lack of companionship, while the substitution of valuable things with inferior replacements emphasizes betrayal. In "Ebola's Kinsmen," the substitution of different diseases with the pronoun "they" connects them under the theme of ignorance's destructive power. This device contributes to the continuity and coherence of the narrative.

The use of ellipsis in both poems creates a sense of immediacy and presence. The omission of connecting words in "Ebola's Kinsmen" implies a sequence of disease outbreaks, emphasizing their significant impact. In "You Took Away Our Dog," the omission of the subject pronoun in the line "can neither bite nor bark" creates a cohesive

link between lines. Conjunctions play a crucial role in linking contrasting ideas and highlighting the consequences of certain actions in both poems. The repeated use of conjunctions like "and" and "but" emphasize contrasts and create a sense of emptiness, abandonment, and resentment. In conclusion, the syntactic cohesion in both poems contributes to their overall impact and effectiveness in conveying themes of loss, betrayal, ignorance, and the consequences of certain choices. These cohesive devices enhance the flow, coherence, and unity of the poems, allowing readers to engage with and reflect upon the messages being conveyed.

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