

Cohesive Features in the Nigerian National Anthem

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Abstract

This paper is a study of cohesive features in the Nigerian national anthem with a view to identifying the predominant types and their communicative implications. This is crucial in order to have a deeper understanding of how the cohesive elements impinge on meaning and allow a smooth flow of information. It utilized extracts from the lyric of 'Nigeria we hail thee' for analysis and employed aspects of the taxonomy of cohesive relationship provided by Halliday and Hasan (1994) to establish the relationship within the text. The findings show a variety of cohesive devices used to foreground important ideas in the anthem such as: substitution, lexical reiteration, personal reference, anaphora, cataphora etc. These features engender emphasis and clarity of information, logical and sequential ordering of messages so that the text connects as a structural whole. Additionally, the language is laconic and focuses on promotion of justice, peace and unity. This demonstrates that lexical choices in the anthem are not merely ornamental but crucial for thematic articulation. The study concludes that by analyzing the cohesive elements of the anthem, we gain a profound knowledge of its linguistic effectiveness in conveying messages of shared historical consciousness that strengthen national unity. This study will extend the perspective on how cohesive devices are deployed in culturally impactful texts and enrich the linguistic repertoire of musical discourse in Nigeria.

Keywords: Nigeria, cohesive features, new national anthem, text and discourse, meaning

Introduction

A national anthem is a musical composition that is officially approved by the government of a country through an Act of parliament. It reflects the history, cultures, struggles of a nation and its citizens and also serves as an expression of national identity. (Pambudi, 2018) defined anthems as "musical performances that celebrate, commemorate, or express loyalty and solidarity to a person, place, or idea". Kellen (2003:166) described an anthem as "the words that must always be sung, that have always been sung whose words and tune seem like permanent signs thereby making entities like nations appear permanent". Singing the national anthem has a great psychological effect on the people and evokes a sense of solidarity in them. In order to accentuate its importance, some etiquettes are usually observed while singing or listening to it such as; standing up, putting one's right hand palm on the heart, removing ones headwear etc. In essence, rendition of a country's national anthem by the citizens is regarded as an act of patriotism and solidarity.

In May, 2024 the federal lawmakers introduced and passed the bill of a new national anthem, 'Nigeria, we hail thee' in less than a week and was assented to by

President Bola Tinubu on May 29, 2024. It replaced 'Arise, O Compatriot' written by Benedict Odiase, a retired Nigerian police officer. The defunct anthem had been in use since 1978 when it was introduced by the military regime headed by General Olusegun Obasanjo. It should be noted that the new anthem is not an entirely new lyric, it was written over sixty years ago by Lillian Jean Williams, a British expatriate who lived in Nigeria and was first introduced in 1960 after Nigeria gained independence from Great Britain. It is however a disquieting paradox that an anthem written by a British expatriate has now replaced the one composed by a Nigerian. This action generated widespread criticism particularly about how the law was hastily passed without much public input. Many Nigerians expressed their displeasure on the social media and vowed not to sing the new national anthem. Prominent among them was Dr. Obiageli Ezekwesili, a former education minister and presidential aspirant who remarked on her X handle that adopting a colonial national anthem that has pejorative words like "native land" and "tribes" is demeaning. Furthermore, some Nigerians believe that changing the national anthem was a diversionary tactic devised by government to shift our gaze from the fundamental problems inflicted on us as a people. However, apologists of government argued that it was wrong for a democratic country to have adopted an anthem introduced by military dictators whose content does not reflect existing reality in the country. Consequently, a reversion to the new national anthem which did not emanate from the military is a rational decision.

This paper basically identifies the predominant cohesive devices and their communicative implications in the new national anthem. This is crucial in order to have a deeper understanding of how the cohesive elements impinge on meaning and allow a smooth flow of information. The lyric of 'Nigeria we hail thee' was utilized for analysis and aspects of the taxonomy of cohesive relationship provided by Halliday and Hasan (1994) to establish the relationship within the text formed the theoretical anchorage.

Cohesion is a linguistic device which helps to create unity of text and discourse. In contrast to grammatical cohesion, lexical cohesion is the cohesive effect achieved by the selection of vocabulary (Halliday, 1994:274). It is created when a speaker's / writer's voluntary or involuntary choice of certain lexical items are in some ways connected to each other. It enables coherence and clarity, ensuring that a piece of text impacts its audience effectively. Lexical cohesion is, therefore, a crucial concept in understanding the interconnectedness and flow of language within a text. In the context of the new national anthem, "Nigeria, we hail thee" analyzing the lexical cohesion can provide valuable insights into the thematic coherence and overall effectiveness of the anthem.

The primary objective of this study is to identify and analyze the cohesive elements in the new national anthem, 'Nigeria we hail thee' and discuss the quality of well-formedness in text that gives it an internal unity to achieve a smooth flow of information. This is vital in order to have a deeper understanding of its content and how meaning is enabled. By analyzing the cohesive features of the anthem, we gain a profound knowledge of its linguistic effectiveness in conveying messages of shared historical consciousness that strengthen national unity. Several studies have been

conducted on cohesion in text and discourse from different perspectives but this research is significant primarily because it delves into the intricacies of the anthem's content and structure thereby extending the perspective on how cohesive devices are deployed in culturally impactful texts. This study is driven by these salient research questions: What is cohesion? What cohesive features are present in the new national anthem? How do these devices contribute to the overall meaning and impact of the anthem? What implications do these findings hold for establishing a collective national identity?

The paper is structured to first provide a background to the study and then review extant studies on cohesion. This is followed by a detailed theoretical anchorage, data presentation and analysis. The discussion will interpret these findings in light of existing theories and implications for national unity. Finally, the conclusion will summarize the primary findings and reflect on the importance of cohesion in the new national anthem while offering recommendations for future research.

Extant Studies

A fairly large literature abound on cohesion from different perspectives particularly as it relates to song lyrics where the musicality of language complements its semantic richness. Appropriate use of cohesive devices contributes significantly to the thematic depth and emotional resonance of a text, facilitating a more profound connection with the audience. Hoey (1991:3) defined cohesion as “the way certain words or grammatical features of a sentence can connect that sentence to its predecessors (and successors) in a text.” Cohesive devices are the single phrases or words that primarily make a text connect as a structural and unified whole.

Several scholarly works have demonstrated the importance of cohesive devices in signaling relations between parts of texts (McCarthy, 1991; Daramola, 1996; Martin, 2001; Eggins, 2004), and how they operate like threads woven to stitch texts together (Carter, 2001). They give texts texture and render them as harmonious unit and not a patch work of unrelated sentences or utterances (Halliday and Hasan, 1976; Halliday and Hasan, 1989). Consequently, these text forming elements allow texts to appear as semantic units in which ideas connect one another smoothly for ease of comprehension. Oyeyemi, A. S. (2018) studied the old Nigeria’s national anthem with the aim of exploring its linguistic elements for optimal understanding. It was carried out within the framework of grouping, prominence and cohesion stipulated in an Integrated Theory of Text Linguistics (ITTLL) adopted by Awoyale (1991). The research showed that each line of the old Nigeria’s national anthem has a relatively emphatic focus promoting and encouraging nationhood. Also, being a genre of poetry the national anthem is characterised by few words expressing inexhaustible meanings. It also established that the structure and functions of language intermingle in a multifaceted context of communication. Klutse and Israel (2024) examined the linguistic interplay in selected universities’ anthems in Ghana. It focused on the linguistic features of anthems of selected public universities in Ghana and their alignment with the institutions’ mission statements. It adopted Searle’s (1969) and Austin’s (1975) Speech Act Theory and through textual analytical design, unravelled the linguistic patterns, semantic nuances,

and hidden meanings within the anthems. The findings revealed that anthems of universities serve as a beacon of hope and education, promoting unity and commitment among their members.

Bankole. and Oyebanji (2022) carried out a lexico-semantic analysis of anthems of selected universities in Ekiti State, Nigeria. It examined the use of language and their meanings using Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics for its emphasis on language use in relation to context. The study revealed that rich but simple lexical items help in the basic comprehension and memorization of the lyrics in the anthem. Lexical devices such as repetition, synonymy, tactical deployment of nouns, verbs, adjectives and metaphors also foreground important ideas in the anthems. Mwinwelle, Adukpo and Mwinwelle (2020) researched how lexical cohesion is used in selected Ghanaian universities' anthems. Four Ghanaian public universities' anthems were used as corpus data and lexical cohesion theory developed by Halliday and Hassan (1976) formed the theoretical underpinning. The findings revealed that repetition and collocation were predominantly used to make the anthems lyrical. In addition, a variety of devices such as synonymy, antonymy and superordination were used to achieve effects such as directness, emphasis and rhythmical flow.

Putri and Sumiati (2022) analyzed the grammatical and lexical devices in nine Coldplay's song lyrics in the Ghost Stories album using Halliday and Hasan (1976) lexical cohesion theory. The study applied a qualitative methodological approach and the findings showed a variety of grammatical cohesive devices such as: reference, substitution, ellipsis and conjunction as the dominant types while the lexical cohesive devices found are repetition, synonyms and antonyms. The basic function of the usage of the cohesive devices is to express and emphasize the song writer's message. Rihi and Wardhana (2022) analyzed the grammatical cohesion of Jack Ma's speech text "Believe in your dreams" in order to identify and explain the types of reference in the speech. The study used descriptive qualitative approach as the methodological leaning and Halliday and Hasan's grammatical cohesion as theoretical anchorage. The findings showed that there are 36 utterances which consist of 30 personal references and 6 demonstrative references. The study concluded that the references are primarily used to enhance cohesion and deeper understanding of the text.

Mwinwelle, Amoakohene and Agyekum (2020) adopted a qualitative exploratory procedure to conduct a transitivity analysis of process types and their encoded implications in selected Ghanaian university anthems underpinned by the transitivity framework by Halliday and Matthiessen (2014). The data for the study composed of anthems of four main or traditional universities in Ghana. The consensual coding strategy was used to check the validity of the coding process. The results indicated a preponderant use of material processes to spell out the expected actions to be taken by members of the universities to bring about the progress of their institutions. The study concluded that the creation of institutional solidarity was better represented through the analysis of process types in the selected Ghanaian university anthems. The existing studies and the current research are markedly different in two respects; the corpus data which is the new national anthem and the application of Halliday and Hassan's cohesion theory for its analysis.

Theoretical Framework

The analysis of cohesion in texts has been a major issue in the study of discourse and pioneering research in cohesion was carried out by Halliday and Hasan (1976) and thereafter many scholars have attempted to develop, expand and simplify the theory (Brown and Yule, 1989; Bloor and Bloor, 1995; Yule, 1996; Daramola, 1996; Van Dijk, 1997). Cohesion refers to the relation of meaning that exists within text and it is part of the system of language which has the potentials for meaning enhancement. It is conceived to be the quality of well-formedness in text that gives it an internal unity, making it to hang together as a unified whole. Crystal (2008, p. 85) averred that “cohesion is a major concept referring to the surface structural features of an utterance, or text, that link different parts of sentences or large unites of discourse together”. Halliday and Hasan (1976:4) noted that cohesion occurs where the interpretation of some elements in the discourse is dependent on that of another. Carter and McCarthy (1988:206) described lexical cohesion as the coherence of a text formed by the use of repetition, synonyms, antonyms, superordinate / hyponyms, related words and text-structuring words.

Taiwo (2012, p. 208) remarked that meaning relations occur where the interpretation of some elements in the discourse is dependent on that of another and this is achieved through the use of grammatical and lexical elements in order to foster textual connectivity'. Halliday and Hasan (1976, p. 14) argued that cohesion is expressed partly through the grammar and partly through the vocabulary, hence grammatical cohesion and lexical cohesion. “It is necessary to consider that cohesion is a semantic relation but, like all the components of semantic system, it is realized through the lexico-grammatical system. This includes both grammar and vocabulary. Of the cohesive types reference, substitution, and ellipsis are grammatical; lexical cohesion is lexical; and finally conjunction is on the borderline of the two, mainly grammatical, but with a lexical component in it” (Halliday & Hasan 1976. p. 5).

The proper use of cohesive devices marks the difference between well-written text and the one that falls short of it. In cohesion, features like repetition of items as well as complex relations of collocation and structural semantics, sense connection across sentence boundaries are examined. It is possible for a piece of writing to be cohesive without being coherent. Coherence is the hanging together of a text, whereas cohesion is the set of linguistic resources that every language has as part of the textual metafunction for linking one part of a text to another. Every part of a text is therefore both text and context and the ideas in writing should hang together. The present study investigated the pattern of cohesive features in the Nigerian new national anthem identifying the various types and how they impinge on meaning of the text.

Data Presentation and Analysis

The new national anthem has eighteen lines which are divided into three stanzas and arranged symmetrically in six lines. As a genre of poetry, it is written in few words which are pregnant with meanings. The language is laconic and focuses on promotion of justice, peace and unity. The lines are numbered for easy identification and analysis.

Nigerian National Anthem

1 Nigeria we hail thee
 2 Our own dear native land
 3 Though tribes and tongue may differ
 4 In brotherhood we stand
 5 Nigerians all, are proud to serve
 6 Our sovereign Motherland.

7 Our flag shall be a symbol
 8 That truth and justice reign
 9 In peace or battle honour'd,
 10 And this we count as gain,
 11 To hand on to our children
 12 A banner without stain.

13 O God of all creation
 14 Grant this our one request.
 15 Help us to build a nation
 16 Where no man is oppressed
 17 And so with peace and plenty
 18 Nigeria shall be blessed.

The table below shows each of the eighteen lines of the new national anthem and identifies the number of cohesive ties, types and presupposed items. The cohesive features in the text have resulted in the following table of analysis.

Text No	Data	No of Ties	Cohesive Items	Type	Presupposed Item / Function
1	Nigeria we hail thee	2	we thee	personal reference anaphoric reference	Nigerians Nigeria
2	Our own dear native land	2	our native land	personal reference lexical substitution	Nigerians 'Nigeria' implied
3	Though tribes and tongue may differ	1	though and	adversative conjunction additive conjunction	It expresses contrast It links concepts of similar value
4	In brotherhood we stand	1	we	personal reference	all Nigerians
5	Nigerians all , are proud to serve	1	all	lexical reiteration	For emphasis and clarity

6	Our sovereign Motherland.	2	Our Motherland	personal reference lexical substitution	Nigerians 'Nigeria' implied
7	Our flag shall be a symbol	1	our	personal reference	'Nigerians implied'
8	That truth and justice reign	1	and	additive conjunction	Linking similar concepts
9	In peace or battle honour'd,	1	or	additive conjunction	Linking diametrically opposed concepts
10	And this we count as gain,	2	this we	demonstrative reference personal reference	ref. to line 9 Nigerians implied
11	To hand on to our children	1	our	personal reference	Nigerians implied
12	A banner without stain.	1	A banner	lexical substitution	ref. to line 7 'our flag'
13	O God of all creation	1	all	lexical reiteration	for emphasis and exemplification
14	Grant this our one request.	2	this one request	demonstrative reference cataphoric reference	ref. to 'request' ref. to lines 15&16
15	Help us to build a nation	1	us	personal reference	Nigerians implied
16	Where no man is oppressed	1	where	cataphoric reference	ref. to 'nation' line 15
17	And so with peace and plenty	2	so and	causal conjunction additive conjunction	It shows a cause and effect relation Linking concepts of similar value
18	Nigeria shall be blessed.	1	Nigeria	lexical reiteration	for emphasis

Table 1: Cohesive Analysis of Nigerian National Anthem

Discussion

The most noticeable cohesive ties in the anthem are personal reference, 'we' and 'our'. Nigeria **we** hail thee' [line 1]; '**our** own dear..' [line 2]; '**....we** stand' [line 4]; '**our** sovereign...' [line 6]; '**.....our** flag'[line 7]; '**.....we** count as gain' [line 10]; '**.....to our** children'[line 11]; '**....our** one request' [line 14]; 'help **us** to.....'[line 15]. The use of these ties reinforces the themes of unity, collective responsibility and inclusion in the Nigeria project. It also gives the impression of an egalitarian society where everybody will have equal opportunities. This evokes in the Nigerian a strong sense of national

pride and collective unity which will positively impact various aspects of our lives. It also has a great psychological effect on the people and challenges them to rise to the task of nation building.

Lexical substitution is a prominent cohesive device used in the anthem. Lexical items such as; 'Motherland', 'Native land' are used to refer to Nigeria and 'a banner' to refer to national flag. All of this help to create lexical variety to avoid the monotonous use of a particular word. In addition, the use of 'land' in the configuration is a testament that Nigeria is a sovereign geographical expression. The variety of conjunctions occur initially and medially in the anthem and they effectively boost cohesive bonds among the linguistic items of the lyric. Lexical items such as: 'and', 'or', 'though' are copiously used in the anthem. There are examples of additive conjunction which typically connects two things of equal or near equal value, for example; 'peace and unity', 'tribes and tongues', 'truth and justice'. Adversative conjunction 'though' which expresses contrast is also used. It usually but not always appears at the beginning of a sentence. In the anthem, it appears at the beginning of the line and expresses a surprising fact; 'Though tribes and tongues may differ' [line 3] 'In brotherhood we stand' [line 4]. The sense in line 3 which emphasizes differences in ethnicity and language is completed in line 4 which claims that we are one family in spite of our differences. There is also the use of lexical reiteration in lines 5, 13 and 18 which is typically for emphasis, directness and clarity. Lexical substitution is used in the anthem for variety, exemplification and clarity. Endearing words are copiously used in the anthem such as: 'dear', 'brotherhood', 'our own', 'blessed'. All this emphasizes the spirit of love as the nucleus of our collective strength. Through the use of appropriate connectives and carefully chosen vocabulary, the anthem effectively conveys a message of peace, unity and patriotism. This suggests that lexical choices in the anthem are not merely ornamental but crucial for thematic articulation.

Conclusion

The cohesive elements in the new national anthem allow for logical, clear and sequential ordering of messages so that the text hangs together as a structural and unified whole. They are used to organize the text showing the direction and purpose of information and keep the audience's mind on track regarding the intent of the lyric. By connecting preceding idea to the next, cohesive devices help the listener arrive at a deeper level of interpretation. The cohesive devices used in the text usually hint at the next or subsequent information in the discourse and narrow down the focus of a listener by limiting the options for interpretation. They also create a flow and progression of thought which enhance easy comprehension of message. The cohesive devices used in the text are "configuration of links" which enhances logical transition among the lines of the anthem in order to achieve cohesion. The lexical items are simple and carefully chosen to achieve clarity, directness and rhythmical flow. The systematic use of these features facilitates easy comprehension of the national anthem. Finally, a direction for future research could be a comparative study of the old and new national anthems.

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