

# A Study Of Cohesive Devices In Selected Nigerian Newspapers: Leadership (*Hausa*) And The Sun

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**Abstract**— A reader may find it difficult to fully comprehend a text from difficulties in understanding the way writers creatively use cohesive devices to encode their messages and intentions in their works. Tying up of sentences and paragraphs together to form coherence in texts is solely achieved through effective use of the cohesive markers. Cohesion is described as a functional category under Systemic Functional Linguistics used in language description (see Halliday & Matthiessen 2014, pp. 602-655). The aim of this paper is to exemplify how cohesive devices of language are manifested in the editorials of *Leadership Hausa* and *Saturday Sun*. The objectives of the study are: (i) to identify cohesive devices in the editorials of the two newspapers; (ii) to examine the types of cohesive markers in the two texts and how they were used to encode messages by the writers. The study employed descriptive and analytical methods through identification, description and interpretation of the data for the research. Among the findings of the study were that: (i) there were 44 cohesive ties in the two texts and that *Saturday Sun* contained 27 while *Leadership Hausa* had 17; (ii) the margin of 10 cohesive ties between the *Saturday Sun* and *Leadership Hausa* was perhaps due to difference in languages used - English and Hausa as well as due to the variation in the topics of discourse; (iii) Reference, substitution, conjunction/transitional words were prominently used by *Saturday Sun* compared to *Leadership Hausa*; however, *Leadership Hausa* used various figures of speech while *Saturday Sun* had none. From the research, it can be concluded systemic functional approach to the study of cohesion under Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar appears effective in dissecting non-literary texts such as newspapers and magazines to promote reader's comprehension of such texts.

**Keywords**— Cohesion, ties, editorial, newspaper, language metafunction, SFL, description

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Language is always realised by varying number of utterances in sentences. Such language may be written or spoken. Cohesion appears to be the adhesive or glue that holds words together. If an essay is cohesive, it sticks together sentence to sentence as well as paragraph to paragraph. Tying up sentences together is done using language elements known as cohesive devices (or connective devices). Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) describe cohesion as a functional category under Systemic Functional Linguistics (henceforth SFL) which is used in language description. Understanding of cohesion in language therefore, facilitates comprehension of literary and non-literary texts.

This paper attempts a study of cohesive devices in the Nigerian media discourse. It specifically looks at the editorials of *The Sun Newspaper* of Saturday, the 9<sup>th</sup> of March 2013 and the weekly edition of *Leadership Hausa* of 30<sup>th</sup> October to 6<sup>th</sup> November, 2012. The choice of these newspapers is based on the observed usage of various cohesive markers by editors of the

two papers which calls for scholarly attention to further illuminate how understanding of cohesion enhances text comprehension. The two editions of the papers also contain topical national issues in Nigeria worthy of study in view of their impact on the Nigerian populace. In Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) scheme, meaning comes from three language metafunctions, the ideational (the argument or point of text) the interpersonal (i.e. relationship between the writer and the audience) and the textual function (which refers to the choice of language including words or sentences). A text according to Barbara (1986) derives its thematic unity from all of the above i.e. from interdependent realisation of ideational, interpersonal and textual function. Such unity in the view of this work, depends on how a writer is able to put their ideas together using cohesive devices. Halliday and Hassan (1976) contend that the main thing that determines whether or not a set of sentences constitute a text depends on the relationship within and between the sentences which form the text. Such relationship creates what the two linguists refer to as texture. Texture

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here means the quality of a text which establishes its wholeness and unity rather than meaning. This study is going to investigate the extent to which Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) concept of cohesion (cohesive devices) can be used to examine cohesion using editorials of *Saturday Sun* and *Leadership Hausa* newspapers as a case study.

The choice of the papers and their editorials was based on various cohesive devices observed in them after a careful perusal of the contents of the papers. The papers were also selected for the review based on topical issues of public interest presented in the editorials using the various cohesive markers by the writers to communicate their messages to the reader. The topics are "The Proposed Federal Road Authority" and the other (in the Hausa version of the *Leadership* newspaper) *Batun ra'ayin jama'a kan gyaran kundin tsarin mulki* which translates to "Public Opinion on the Proposed Constitution Review".

The aim of this paper is therefore, to exemplify how cohesive devices of language are manifested in the editorials of *Leadership Hausa* and *Saturday Sun* newspapers. The aim would be achieved through the following objectives which are: (i) to identify cohesive devices in the editorials of the two newspapers; (ii) to examine the types of cohesive markers in the two texts and how they were used to encode messages by the writers.

## 2.1 Concept of Cohesion

According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) and Dijk (1985), cohesion is related with the surface making of coherence which signifies the ties between sentences and point being made by a writer. In other words, cohesion refers to the grammatical and lexical links within a text or sentence that hold a text together and give it meaning. It is related to the broader concept of coherence. Widdowson (2000) defines cohesion in terms of distinction that is drawn between the illocutionary act and the proposition. In the view of Widdowson, proposition when linked together, form a text while illocutionary acts, when related to each other create different kinds of "discourse". Cohesion from the inputs of Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) as well as Halliday and Hasan (1976), is the grammatical and lexical linking within a text or sentence that exhibits wholeness of the text and gives it meaning.

## 2.2 Cohesive Devices

Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) identify five general categories of cohesive devices that create cohesion and coherence in texts: reference, ellipsis, substitution, lexical cohesion and conjunction.

Some examples of cohesion

a. Ahmed bought a new car

b. He put it in the garage.

The second sentence above contains anaphoric reference 'He' and 'It' when the writer does not want to repeat names *Ahmed* and *Car*. Anaphoric reference occurs when the referent has

appeared at an earlier point in the text. Cataphoric reference as cited in Sajo (2019, p.60) is the opposite of the anaphoric reference. It occurs when the referent has not yet appeared, but will be provided subsequently. This means, something is introduced at the beginning before it is identified. The following sentences are examples of cataphoric reference as cited in Sajo (2019, p.60) and Schubert (2008, p. 33):

i. Here comes the new head student... it's Ahmad Abbas!

In the above example, the identity of the referent "Ahmad Abbas" is presented at the end of the sentence.

ii. There it is, my so much admired watch.

Ellipsis is another cohesive device which can happen when after a specific mention of a statement, a word or words are omitted. Note the following conversational examples:

c. where are you going?

d. To the market.

The full form of c's reply would be 'I am going to the market'.

Another example of cohesion is substitution. Under substitution, a word is not omitted as in ellipsis, but substituted for another.

Example:

e. 'What colour of car do you like?'

f. 'I would like the red one'

'One' here replaces the noun 'car'

Other cohesive devices include conjunction (use of words such as 'and, but, if etc), transitional words (however, therefore, in addition, also, but, moreover etc).

Grammatical cohesion: This refers to logical and structural rules which govern the composition of clauses, phrases and words in any given natural language. According to Beaugrande and Dressler (2000), arguments within a text have to be connected logically to enable the reader or hearer produce cohesion.

## 2.3 The Editorial

Editorial is a special writing by a newspaper or magazine on topical issues in the society aimed at leading public opinion. According to Encarta Dictionaries, editorial refers to an article in a newspaper or magazine that expresses the opinion of its editor or publisher. Ashipu (2012) says editorial is a writing that seeks to inform and lead the public opinion by interpreting current news and pointing out its significance. Mass Communication Talk (2011) explains that explains that an editorial is a journalistic essay which either attempts to inform or explain, persuade or convince or stimulate insight on an entertaining or humorous issue. From the aforementioned, it can be said that an editorial should be informative, current and factual.

An editorial on a particular issue should take side of the argument, that is to say it must stand on one side of the argument. It is usually confined to a specific column known as the editorial column on a newspaper or magazine.

## 2.4 Theoretical Framework

This study is based on Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014) concept of cohesion as a textual metafunction of language under SFL (see Jeffries & McIntyre 2010, p. 84). The theory explains that cohesion is categorised into two - lexical and grammatical. Lexical cohesion refers to the use of the same, similar or related words in successive sentences while grammatical cohesion involves reference, conjunction and ellipsis. Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) emphasise that cohesion is a semantic relation but it is realised through the lexico-grammatical system.

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## 3 Data Presentation and Analysis

In this section, the paper presents the data on cohesion as well as analysis and discussion of the findings from the study of the newspapers - *Saturday Sun* of 9<sup>th</sup> March, 2013 and *Leadership Hausa* of 30<sup>th</sup> November-6<sup>th</sup> December, 2012. They are labelled as text 1 and text 2 respectively. In the data presentation, sentences in the editorials are numbered for easy identification of the cohesive markers under study and subsequent analysis, discussion and findings. The first text has the editorial titled "The proposed Federal Road Authority" while that text of two is *Batun Ra'ayin Jama'a kan Gyaran Kundin Tsarin Mulki*.

### 3.1 Text 1 (*The Sun*)

#### "The proposed Federal Road Authority"

As a result of the ongoing road sector reforms, the Federal Government is proposing the setting up of Federal Road Authority (FRA) that is billed to take over the professional management of roads infrastructure nationwide. (1)

According to the Minister of Works, Mr. Mike Onolememen, the new road maintenance agency will be empowered to carry out all forms of road management practices in the country including road design, construction, rehabilitation and maintenance (2).

The minister also said that road maintenance, which currently is the duty of Federal Roads Maintenance Agency (FERMA) would, in line with the proposed scheme, be under a department in the FRA (3).

Onolememen also explained that FERMA was established in 1996 as a stop-gap measure after successive administrations in the country failed to adopt the road reforms recommendations proposed by stakeholders (4).

We welcome the coming on board of the new road maintenance agency which, going by the minister's explanation, has wider work scope than FERMA (5).

We think that with the enlarged schedule of duties, the new agency will shoulder effectively the duty of maintaining all federal roads in the country, which has proved a daunting task for FERMA (6).

It is expected that the change from FERMA to FRA will not merely amount to a change of nomenclature but one that would truly transform the culture of road maintenance in the country. (7)

During colonial rule a little after independence, Nigeria had an efficient public road maintenance system that ensured the health of all roads in the country. (8)

Nigeria needs a working road maintenance agency that will cater for 35,000- kilometre network of federal roads. (9)

Since the advent of oil boom, that aspect of our road culture has been jettisoned hence most Nigerians roads are hardly maintained. (10)

The coming of FERMA, though a temporary measure, has not significantly helped the situation as major Nigerian highways remain death-traps with wild grasses by their sides; thus obfuscating vision for road users. (11)

Let government deeply think before jumping into the new initiative. (12)

In the first place, government should ascertain why FERMA has not been effective in carrying out its responsibilities. (13)

It should also do a study on why most Nigerian roads have low life span and why they cave in soon after construction. (14)

The roads constructed during the colonial rule and some years after independence were stronger and far better than the ones we have now. (15)

Government should also be mindful of the Steve Oronsaye's committee recommendation on rationalisation of government ministries, departments and agencies. (16)

Over time, it has been discovered that it is not the number of agencies that is the problem. (17)

The bottom line is to ensure that the existing agencies are adequately equipped to carry out their duties. (18)

In this wise, we urge the government to ensure that the FRA is programmed to work so that it will not be a stop-gap measure like its predecessor. (19)

The FRA should be given the necessary backup like manpower, equipment and resources that will make it succeed. (20)

As the FRA is coming on board soon, let there be a demarcation between policy formulation and policy implementation in the Works Ministry. (21)

For efficiency, let the Ministry of Works be solely responsible for policy formulation while the FRA will be there to implement the policies. (22)

For the country to have well maintained roads, the states and the local governments must, of necessity, cue into this road maintenance unit. (23)

Some states currently have a semblance of such but the problem is that they are not working. (24)

One reason the situation is so is that they were never programmed to work. (25)

Governments at all levels in the country should imbibe the spirit of good maintenance culture common in other lands. (26)

Most of our public utilities are dilapidated because of lack of maintenance culture. (27)

It is high time all Nigerians cultivated the habit of regular maintenance of public infrastructure. (28)

### 3.2 Text 2 (Leadership Hausa)

#### **BATUN RA'AYIN JAMA'A KAN GYRAN KUNDIN TSARIN MULKI**

*Kimanin makwanni uku da suka gabata, Majalisar Dokoki ta Kasa ta gudanar da tarukan jin ra'ayoyin 'yan Nijeriya kan gyarrakin da za'ayi wa kundin tsarin mulkin kasar nan, inda aka gudanar da tarukan a mazabun wakilan al'umma da ke Majalisar. (1)*

*Taron dai shi ne irinsa na farko a tarihin kasar nan, wanda ko babu komai, za a iya yabawa majalisar bisa wanan yunkuri na shigo da jama'a cikin aikin neman wa Nijeriya mafita. (2)*

*Bugu da kari, membobin majalisar sun yi kokarin fassara sassan da aka ware domin yin tambayoyi kan su ta yadda mutane za su game abin da ake nufi cikin harshensu. (3)*

*To, amma duk da wannan namijin kokari za a iya cewa akwai matsaloli cikin lamarin, wadanda ya kamata majalisar ta sake la'akari da su. (4)*

*Da farko dai, tarukan sun zo a kurarren lokaci ta yadda tsakanin tazarar lokacin da aka bayar daga sanarwar zuwa ranar da aka gudanar da taron, yawa-yawan 'yan Nijeriya ba su da masaniya da wayewar da za ta iya taimaka mu su wajen bayar da tasu gudumuwar. (5)*

*Rashin isasshen lokacin ya haifar da takaitar ayyukan wayar da kai da ya kamata a yi wa jama'a, domin su fahimci ainihin bayanar da ake son tantancewa kafin su bayyaba ra'ayoyinsu. (6)*

*Haka nana kuma ana iya cewa yini guda da aka bayar na jin ra'ayin, ya yi karanci yadda har kowacce al'umma za ta iya tsefe bayananta kuma ta bayar da cikakken bayanin ra'ayinta kan kowacce dara a cikin adarori fiye da 40 da ake son jin ra'ayin 'yan kasar a kansu. (7)*

*Ta yiwu wani ya ce, ai majalisa ba ta da isassun kudin da za ta dauki tsawon lokaci tana aikin wayar da kai da kuma dibar kwanaki tana daukar nauyin gudanar da tarukan ba, sabanin bangaren zartarwa. (8)*

*To, amma a nan tun da dai aiki ne na 'yan kasa, shin me ya sa majalisar ba za ta bayar da kudiri ga sashen zartarwar ba ne wanda zai umarci sashen da ya dauki nauyin dukkan abin da ake da bukatar kashewa. (9)*

*Maganar dai guda daya ce, ita ce kuma ta halasta wa bangaren zartarwar don kada ya je yayi gaban kansa ba tare da amincewar majalisa ba. (10)*

*Da zarar majalisa ta amince da duk abinda za a kashe, to babu wata tangarda a ciki kuma kenan. (11)*

*Rashin shiga sako da lunguna na ko ina a mazabu don ji [sic] ra'ayoyin jama'ar shi ma wani cikasko ne da taron ya gamu da shi. (12)*

*Sha'anin tabarbarewar tsaro da a yanzu kasar ke fama da ita, musamman a yankin Arewa, wani abu ne wanda ya hana mutane fita ko isa wuraren da ake bayyana ra'ayoyin. (13)*

*Rahotanni sun nuna cewa, jami'an tsaro sun hana mutane da dama kaiwa ga wasu daga cikin dakunan tarukan saboda dalilan tsaro. (14)*

*Zargin da ake yi wa wasu gwamnoni na bi ta bayan gida su sauya sakamakon ra'ayin jama'ar daga hunnun yaransu 'yan majalisar ta dokoki, shi ma wani cikasko ne wanda idan ya tabbata zai iya hana kwalliya ta biya kudin sabulu, matuƙar majalisa da mabobinta ba su yi taka-tsantsan ba. (15)*

*A karshe muna yabawa majalisa bisa tunanin shigo da talakawa cikin tsarin da ta yi, to amma muna kira a gare ta da ta yi la'akari da matsalolin da aka samu wajen nazartar ra'ayin mafi yawan 'yan Najeriya a yayin da ta je yanke hukunchin karshe. (16)*

### 3.3 Analysis (text 1)

Total number of sentences in the editorial: 28

Total number of identified paragraphs from the text of the editorial: 11

In sentence 2, the preposition "according to" is a lexical cohesion attributing to the Minister of Works who is the source of information in the first sentence.

In sentence 3, there is repetition of the key term in "the minister" which is a lexical cohesion. In sentence 4, there is a cohesive device "also" which is a conjunction (under transition category of cohesion) which emphasises on additional information on the subject matter road maintenance. Sentence 5 contains personal pronoun "we" a cohesive device of reference representing the writer. Sentence 6 contains similar reference cohesion using the personal pronoun "we", which is a repetition of the writer's identity in the editorial. It also contains "but" which is a pause in an effort to tell the reader that the change is aimed at real transformation of the roads. Sentence 7 contains a grammatical word "but", a conjunction which introduces a statement in the second part of the sentence that disagrees with what has just been said. Sentence 8 begins with a prepositional phrase "during colonial rule", a grammatical cohesion indicating a particular period in history, i.e. comparing the past and present. Sentence 9 starts with the proper noun "Nigeria", which is a synonym of the Federal Government as used in sentence 1. Sentence 10 begins with

another cohesive device “since”, an adverb that indicates the beginning of the situation of badly maintained roads in Nigeria (during the oil boom). Sentence 11 contains a conjunction “as”, a cohesive device of comparison between two parts of the sentence. Sentence 12 contains preposition “before” a cohesive device which is used in the sentence to indicate sequence of action, one preceding the other. Sentence 13 begins with enumeration using a prepositional phrase “In the first place”.

Sentence 14 starts with a pronoun “it”, a cohesive device denoting government. The sentence contains another grammatical item, an adverb “also” which was used repeatedly to indicate addition, emphasis or contrast; the sentence also has a pronoun “they” a reference cohesion which stands for the Nigerian roads. Sentence 15 contains “ones” a cohesive device of substitution. It replaces roads; this is to avoid repetition of the common noun roads. Sentence 16 contains verb phrase “mindful of” which signifies a word of caution from the author, hence a grammatical cohesion.

Sentence 17 starts with prepositional phrase “overtime” a grammatical cohesion denoting since, long ago or throughout the time. Sentence 18 starts with a noun phrase “The bottom line is” which connects the preceding sentence with this. The author is, in other words saying “the most important thing to note”. Sentence 19 contains pronoun “we” which functions as a cohesive device of reference representing the author. In sentence 21, there is a conjunction “but” used to show contrast. Sentence 22 starts with enumeration as seen in the adjectival phrase “one reason”, it also contains a personal pronoun “they” referring to the states. Sentence 23 starts with recommendation or a suggestion to governments at all levels. The sentence also contains a grammatical element “into”, a preposition connecting the second part of the sentence “this road maintenance unit”.

Sentence 24 contains an adverbial clause of reason “because of lack of maintenance” an indication of grammatical cohesion. The editorial ends with an emphatic appeal to all Nigerians on the need to cultivate regular maintenance of public roads.

### 3.4 Analysis (Text 2: Leadership Hausa)

Total number of sentences: 16

Total number of (identified) paragraphs from the text of the editorial: 9

Sentence 2 begins with reference cohesion of the noun *taron* in the repeated form as mentioned in the first sentence; it also has substitution *irinsa*.

Sentence 3 contains object pronoun *sun*, a reference cohesion referring to the subject of the first sentence ‘*yan majalisar dokoki* (the legislature).

Sentence 4 starts with an emphatic statement in rhetorical form *Bugu da Jari* a transitional word meaning “also”. Sentence 5 contains *amma*, a conjunction; it also has a lexical cohesion presented in rhetorical form *namijin jojari* meaning “courage”. Sentence 6 begins with enumeration, *Da farko dai...* i.e. firstly which is another connective device of grammar. Sentence 7 contains a connective device *domin*, a conjunction denoting “in order to”, hence connecting the first clause of the statement with the second. Sentence 8 begins with another device of enumeration *Hakanan kuma*, a grammatical cohesion in the adverbial form. Sentence 9 contains pronoun *ta* in two places, all referring to the main subject *majalisa* or ‘*yan majalisa* (the legislature). Sentence 10 is an interrogative statement, a kind of grammatical cohesion put forward by the author to stress a point. Sentence 11 answers the interrogative statement in the preceding sentence.

In sentence 12 there is a pronoun *shi* referring to the noun *cikas* (an obstacle). Sentence 13 begins with an adjectival phrase *Sha'anin*

*tabarbawarewar tsaro*, a grammatical cohesion. Sentence 14 contains two rhetorical devices connecting various parts of the sentence i.e. *bi ta bayan gida* and *kwalliya ta biya kuɗin sabulu*.

Sentence 15 begins with *A Jarshe* (meaning “lastly”), an enumerating phrase indicating conclusion of the entire editorial. It also contains a conjunction *to amma* (which means “but then”) linking the first clause with the suggestion on the way out.

### 3.5 Discussion and Findings

Next is discussion of cohesion obtained from the two editorials under study. The discussion contains a table showing the frequency of occurrences of the cohesive types as part of the findings of the study.

**Table on distribution of cohesive devices in the selected editorials**

Types	Text 1	Text 2	Total	Percentage %
Reference	7	4	11	25
Lexical	8	7	15	34
Substitution	3	1	4	9
Ellipsis	0	0	0	0
Conjunction/ Transitional words	9	5	14	32
Ties	27	17	44	100

As the table (above) indicates, a total of 44 ties were identified in the two editorials studied. Tie here refers to the sum total of all grammatical elements (lexical or grammatical) that bring sentences together. The table indicates that of the five types of cohesive devices, four were used to bind sentences together in the two editorials. From the table, the study gathers that text 1 (*Saturday Sun*) has 27 cohesive ties higher than *Leadership Hausa* which has 17. The difference in the number between the two papers may be as a result of the variation in language as one was written in English, the other in Hausa, a vernacular language. Variation of the topic of discourse in the editorials of the papers may also be another reason for the difference in the number of cohesive ties.

It can also be noticed that only ellipsis was not used in any of the two editorials analysed. It also showed that the authors of the two editorials mostly used lexical and transitional cohesions in joining sentences together. This is followed by reference cohesion. It was also noticed that the *Saturday Sun* (text 1) contains statements mostly in the literal form while the second text (in Hausa) featured a number of figurative expressions (rhetorical devices of language) used as cohesive devices in the form of grammatical cohesion.

The analysis reveals that reference, conjunctions/transitional words and lexical cohesions are the major forms of cohesive devices used to join sentences together in the two editorials studied. Such devices have helped in conveying the messages in the texts in the manner they were used. Ellipsis was not used at all in the two editorials. This may be a mere coinci-

dence. The writers seem not to use such cohesive device as a matter of choice hence, opted for others to achieve the objective of message delivery. From the study, absence of the ellipsis did not affect the texture.

#### 4 Conclusion

From the research, it can be said that study of cohesion under Halliday's SFL appears effective in dissecting non-literary texts such as newspapers and magazines to promote reader's comprehension of such texts. It can therefore be concluded that functional approach to the study of cohesion is necessary to promote better understanding of cohesion in texts.

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