Cohesion in *A Spell of Good Things* by Ayọ̀bámi Adébáyọ̀

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Abstract. This study investigates the role of cohesion in Ayọ̀bámi Adébáyọ̀'s A Spell of Good Things, using Halliday and Hasan's theory of cohesion as a framework. The research aims to analyse how lexical and referential cohesion contribute to the narrative coherence and thematic expression in the novel. Cohesion, a key linguistic mechanism, is explored through various devices, including repetition, synonymy, collocation, and reference, which link different parts of the text and reinforce key themes such as poverty, political corruption, and social inequality. The study highlights the distinction between cohesion and coherence, noting that while cohesion ensures structural unity, coherence is achieved through the reader's interpretation of the text. Through a detailed textual analysis, the research demonstrates how Adébáyọ̀ employs cohesive devices to maintain the narrative flow, deepen character development, and engage readers emotionally. Lexical cohesion, particularly through thematic repetition of words like "school fees," "poverty," and "hunger," effectively anchors the narrative in the socio-political realities of contemporary Nigeria. Referential cohesion, achieved through the use of pronouns, demonstratives, and proper nouns, facilitates smooth transitions between characters and events, ensuring that readers remain engaged and oriented throughout the narrative. The findings suggest that cohesive devices are not only essential for textual organisation but also significantly contribute to the novel's emotional depth and socio-political critique. The research contributes to the field of discourse analysis by highlighting the significance of cohesion in African literature and providing insights into the linguistic strategies that influence reader experience and meaning construction in Nigerian fiction.

Keywords: Cohesion; Referential cohesion; Lexical cohesion; Narrative coherence; Thematic expression; Nigerian literature.

INTRODUCTION

Background of the study. Cohesiveness is a crucial aspect in making any literary text easy to understand, coherent, and easy to follow. It serves as a highly critical linguistic tool that facilitates the concise expression of ideas and connects different parts of a text in a logical manner [1]. By properly employing lexical and referential elements, authors can create cohesive stories and make reading easier for readers to understand. Ayòbámi Adébáyò's novel A Spell of Good Things [2] is a contemporary Nigerian novel that tastefully blends issues such as poverty, political corruption, and gender roles into its narrative. This study aims to analyse the cohesion strategies used in the novel and discuss how Adébáyò makes the novel meaningful and coherent, particularly through the theory of cohesion [3].

Both cohesion and coherence are required for interpreting spoken and written discourse. A text is cohesive insofar as its elements are meaningfully connected, enabling ideas to unfold in a logical manner [4]. Coherence, on the other hand, pertains to the extent to which the text makes sense in general, depending on how logical it is in its development and context [5]. Cohesion provides language devices for building coherence, allowing words, sentences, and paragraphs to be connected in a structured manner. The author [5] notes that lexical repetition, substitution, and reference are among the devices used to fill meaning gaps and facilitate easy continuation for foreaders without breaks [5].

Authors [3] classify cohesion into two major types: grammatical cohesion and lexical cohesion. Grammatical cohesion involves devices such as reference, ellipsis, substitution, and conjunctions to ensure that discourse is on a continuous and unbroken path [3]. Lexical cohesion involves repetition, synonyms, superordinates, collocations, and general words, all of which contribute towards semantic coherence [7]. Such cohesive devices not only improve the readability of a text; they also contribute to its style, as they enable authors to build themes and emphasise key ideas in a successful way [8]. In A Spell of Good Things, Adébáyò uses both cohesion types to produce a good and coherent narrative.

Cohesion plays a crucial role in determining the reader's interpretation and the meaning they derive from the text. Authors [3] observe that cohesion is a semantic characteristic, indicating that different elements of language are combined in a text. The author [9] thinks that a text will only be coherent if it is logically understandable to the reader. Lexical cohesion can bind a text together, but it does not always guarantee coherence. The author [9] goes on to clarify that a text with little lexical cohesion can be well-organised, and that excessive use of lexical cohesion alone never necessarily makes a text comprehensible. In Adébáyò's novel, the relationship between cohesion and coherence is apparent because she employs various cohesive techniques to depict realistic interactions between society and characters.

Cohesion is especially critical in literature as it serves to underpin character development, plot development, and the reinforcement of themes. The author [10] notes that cohesion helps to combine several different storylines into one, enabling different parts of the story to stay connected and understandable. In A Spell of Good Things, this is evident in the way recurring linguistic features and allusions guide readers through the complex lives of the characters. The text's vocabulary reflects larger social and political issues, showing how cohesion affects not only the form of a text but also its implied meaning [11].

Aside from structure, cohesion also affects the way readers engage with and understand a text. The author [12] explains how a text with cohesion enhances readability, enabling audiences to comprehend complex arguments or narratives with ease [12]. Adébáyò uses cohesion in A Spell of Good Things to achieve affective depth, so that the perspectives of characters and the problems of society are highlighted and realised. The use of devices such as anaphoric and cataphoric references, word repetition, and conjunctions makes the story logically connected, highly fluent, and engaging [13].

To conclude, cohesion is crucial in the construction, reading, and appreciation of texts. With the use of lexical and grammatical cohesive devices, A Spell of Good Things provides a good example of how language use creates narrative coherence. This study aims to shed light on the use of cohesion in Nigerian fiction, enabling the expression of narrative and theme. The results will be added to the general debate on textual cohesion and its applicability in modern literary analysis, with a greater emphasis on the importance of linguistics in narrative form interpretation [14].

Statement of the Problem. Academic focus on Nigerian literature has primarily been on issues of

theme, characterisation, and socio-political narrative, with comparatively little attention given to linguistic coherence. Although cohesion is a constituent of text organisation and meaning creation, academic studies on the role of cohesion in Nigerian fiction are scarce. Most linguistic research on African literature has focused on stylistics, discourse methods, or syntactic structures, without examining how lexical and referential cohesion collaborate to create narrative coherence.

Past studies on cohesion have primarily been conducted in other language contexts. Authors [3] developed a model for analysing language cohesion, but they did not work with literary works, particularly African fiction. The author [4] developed cohesion and coherence for discourse analysis, targeting conversational interaction rather than narrative structures [4]. The author [13] examined lexical cohesion in English discourse but restricted his results to non-literary discourse. In the Nigerian context, the author [15] analysed grammatical cohesion in certain Nigerian prose but did not extend the research to lexical cohesion or referential relations in recent Nigerian novels. Similarly, the author [16] conducted a discourse analysis of Nigerian fiction, focusing on ideological perspectives rather than structural cohesion.

A vast research gap remains regarding the utilisation of cohesion theories in recent Nigerian literature. Much of the scholarship on African fiction has overlooked the intricate manner in which cohesion patterns contribute to the meaning, readability, and interest of modern narratives. This research study aims to bridge a gap in the literature by exploring lexical and referential cohesion in Ayọ̀bámi Adébáyọ̀'s A Spell of Good Things. Grounded in cohesion theory [3], this study examines how various cohesive devices contribute to the narrative flow, ensure smooth coherence, and impact readers' interpretations of the text.

This study aims to provide new insights into linguistic cohesion in Nigerian literature, while also contributing to the broader fields of discourse analysis and literary linguistics. At the same time, it aims to deepen our understanding of how Nigerian authors today employ strategic cohesion devices to organise their narratives and thereby contribute to linguistic scholarship on African literature.

This study aims to:

1) Identify and describe the lexical cohesion devices used in A Spell of Good Things.

2) Identify and describe the referential cohesion devices used in A Spell of Good Things.

3) Evaluate the effectiveness of these cohesive devices in conveying the novelist's intention.

METHODOLOGY

This research adopts the qualitative research approach with textual analysis being the dominant methodology to analyse the use of lexical and referential cohesion in A Spell of Good Things. This research aims to systematically examine the role of cohesive devices in the novel, contributing to an understanding of narrative structure and meaning.

The collection of data begins with the original text itself, which was read online on December 30, 2024. Portions from this text that are relevant and clearly illustrate instances of lexical and referential cohesion will be suitably selected for more detailed examination. These passages form the foundation for the analysis, allowing for a focused examination of the linguistic features involved.

In the analysis of data, the theory of cohesion [3] serves as a theoretical framework [3]. These passages will be categorised based on the types of cohesion they represent, with an emphasis on lexical and referential relations. This theoretical framework will enable a systematic and advanced analysis of how the text becomes connected and coherent.

Finally, the research will discuss these findings within the broader context of the novel's narrative flow and overall cohesiveness. Through an exploration of how cohesion contributes to the generation of meaning, the research aims to uncover how language affects readers' interpretation and engagement with the story.

Through the combination of rigorous data gathering and theory-guided analysis, the research aims to provide a comprehensive linguistic analysis of cohesion in A Spell of Good Things, making substantial contributions to the knowledge of narrative strategies in contemporary Nigerian literature.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research draws on the theory of cohesion [3] as its theoretical foundation, a framework that remains one of the most influential in discourse analysis and stylistics. The theory explains cohesion as the set of language mechanisms that create semantic ties within a text, allowing it to function as a cohesive, communicative unit. Halliday and Hasan's differentiation between grammatical cohesion (reference, substitution, ellipsis, and conjunction) and lexical cohesion (reiteration and collocation) provides a structural approach to examining textual cohesion. Their contribution had a profound and lasting impact on language study, particularly in the examination of how meaning is constructed across sentences and beyond the level of grammar.

The theory's roots are drawn from systemic functional linguistics (SFL), where language is conceptualised as a meaning-making resource in social contexts. The authors [3] proposed that cohesion is a semantic concept that contributes to the texture of a piece of text, explaining how a piece of language becomes a text rather than a string of sentences. Texture, they argue, is created by cohesive bonds, such as the repetition of key words or the use of referential pronouns to connect one part of the discourse to another. These concepts were later developed by [18] in her theory of cohesive harmony, where she emphasised the interconnection between lexical chains in a network of semantic relations that maintains textual coherence.

Over the decades, their theory has been widely employed and developed by subsequent linguists. For example, the author [13] further developed the theory, with an emphasis on the functional and narrative significance of lexical cohesion within texts. Later, the author also claims that lexical priming is not only a stylistic device but also a cognitive pattern based on usage and experience with language. His statement that lexical items form networks of expectation in the reader's mind aligns with the aims of this research in analysing narrative development and semantic layering in literary texts.

Current scholarship also supports and revises Halliday and Hasan's model. Scholarships such as Adegbite and Fairclough demonstrate their usefulness for analysing formal and creative writing. Adegbite's analysis of Nigerian prose fiction reiterates the cohesion relations, primarily referential and lexical, in the formation of narrative continuity and thematic coherence. Similarly, Fairclough applies the cohesion model in critical discourse analysis to demonstrate how cohesive factors construct ideologies and power relations in texts.

Additionally, the flexibility of Halliday and Hasan's theory of cohesion makes it particularly well-suited for literary study. In narrative, like Ayòbámi Adébáyò's A Spell of Good Things, cohesive means like pronominal reference, lexical recurrence, and thematic clustering, like the recurring group of "poverty," "need," and "hunger", are involved in more than a stylistic purpose. They make a basic functional contribution to the build-up of the emotional mood, anchoring the setting, and guiding readers' understanding throughout the narrative. As the author identifies, cohesion facilitates the structuring of discourse in a way that optimally addresses the reader's cognitive processes, enhancing comprehension through the reflection of actual relationships within the text and promoting coherence in general. This form-cognitive sense is the secret to engaging readers deeply with the challenging literary issues.

Halliday and Hasan's theory, therefore, is a persuasive instrument of analysis which mediates between form and meaning in interpretation. It offers the dual benefit of providing overtly explicit structural insights and the potential for rich, nuanced readings of cohesive texture. Such sustained use across a range of disciplines, from stylistics and pedagogy to discourse analysis, is testimony to its suitability in dismantling the semantic continuity Ayòbámi Adébáyò instils in her novel. Grounding this work in their theory not only renders the analysis solid on theory but also sets it up to disclose systemically the subtle layers of meaning instilled through cohesive ties. From this perspective, the study will then be in a position to explore how options in language contribute to both the text's formal structure and its interpretive depth, ultimately enhancing our understanding of narrative coherence in contemporary Nigerian literature.

Definition and Types of Lexical Cohesion. Lexical cohesion, a term originally used by [3], refers to the cohesive effects of the systematic selection and connection of words in a text. It is one of the fundamental means through which a discourse becomes coherent and cohesive so that readers may perceive the text as an organised and mean-

ingful whole. This type of cohesion results from semantic relationships among lexical items, which combine to create recognisable patterns and are part of what Halliday and Hasan term the "texture" of a text —the delicate net of relations underlying its cohesion and interdependence. Lexical cohesion typically falls into two broad categories: reiteration, which involves the repetition of words or synonyms, and collocation, which refers to the tendency of certain words to occur together in a specific semantic field. These cohesive associations, working together, are responsible for ensuring continuity in the discourse and for effectively ingraining thematic details in the narrative process [17].

Reiteration includes direct repetition, synonymy, superordinates (hypernyms), and general words concerning the same item or concept. For example, in the sentence "The boy picked up a stick. The stick broke," the recurrence of "stick" demonstrates reiteration. Collocation, by contrast, involves the use of words that conventionally co-occur or are semantically related within a given context, such as "knife" and "cut," or "doctor" and "hospital" [3].

Authors [18] also extended the concept by categorising lexical relations into subtypes such as hyponymy (e.g., "rose" as a hyponym of "flower"), meronymy (e.g., "wheel" as part of "car"), antonymy (e.g., "hot" and "cold"), and naming relations representing hierarchical or oppositional structures of meaning. These lexical relationships make discourse coherent and interpretable by providing semantic continuity between clauses, sentences, or even paragraphs. This extension of lexical cohesion into these subtypes has enabled linguists to research how lexical selection contributes not only to the flow and readability of texts but also to their semantic density. Reiteration, as noted in [19], remains the most frequent lexical device in expository and academic texts, followed by collocation and synonymy, which attests the applicability of Halliday and Hasan's model even in modern scholarly contexts.

The usefulness of lexical cohesion in narrative texts has been acknowledged by a range of current scholars, particularly in stylistics and discourse analysis. The author [13] argues in his research on narrative discourse that lexical repetition is responsible for establishing narrative continuity, emphasis, and emotional resonance. Repeated patterns of lexical items such as "poverty,

lack, hunger, despair" not only emphasise thematic concerns but also establish structural coherence between chapters or sections of a novel. In A Spell of Good Things, this is evidenced in the recurring semantic field associated with impoverishment and disillusionment, particularly in the life of Ẹniọlá, for whom a life of poverty and politicisation is foregrounded through lexical chains that enhance the reader's emotive response and theme recognition [13].

Lexical cohesion also enables the foregrounding of contrasts and parallels within narratives. This is attained through antonymic and collocational pairings that encode opposition or similarity among characters and situations. For example, the lexical contrast between "hope" and "despair" or "silence" and "protest" may encode character relationships and thematic tension [13]. The research [15] highlights how such mechanisms are employed in Nigerian literary prose to represent socio-political dualities, particularly between classes, generations, or ideological groups. Similarly, the author [11] notes that lexical choices in literary texts both convey and carry ideological burdens. Lexical cohesion, within the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), is thus a powerful window through which social narratives and power dynamics embedded in word choices can be uncovered. This method focuses on how authors use cohesive language to not only build textual coherence but also to express, albeit subtly, cultural and ideological positions.

Also crucial to making a text more readable and interpretively coherent is lexical cohesion. Following the author [20], lexical devices hold the secret to understanding how readers negotiate meaning, especially in complex or multi-layered texts. Her research demonstrates that repetition and semantically related lexical items serve as cognitive anchors, enabling readers to navigate through complex lines and abstract ideas. This is particularly true of African fiction, where multilingual elements and cultural idioms enrich the narrative texture but also pose challenges of comprehension. In A Spell of Good Things, Adébáyọ̀'s deliberate use of Yoruba-inflected lexical fields such as "ẹbí" (family), "ẹ̀kọ́" (education), and "àṣà" (culture/tradition) does more than graft the narrative culturally; it also creates cohesive bonds that bind together seamlessly the novel's urban and rural spaces, providing continuity across its multicolored narrative landscapes.

Ongoing research continues to consolidate the contribution of lexical cohesion to the construction of meaning and emotional impact. For example, authors [21] found that lexical cohesion, particularly through culture-bound and idiomatic collocations, provides rhetorical power and persuasive clarity to fictional and non-fictional texts. Her examination of Indonesian literary prose demonstrated how these collocations are instrumental in meaning construction and determining emotional tone, highlighting the overall applicability of lexical cohesion to narrative coherence and readers' interest. This supports the view that collocation-based cohesion is especially effective in narrative discourse, where setting, tone, and mood must converge through word choice [21].

It is also important to distinguish between coherence and cohesion, as reiterated by [22]. While cohesion is employed to describe the linguistic elements that hold together chunks of a text, coherence is reserved for the interpretive and logical meaning that the reader derives. A text may be cohesive but not coherent, especially if the cohesive devices are used inappropriately or excessively. Therefore, lexical cohesion must be both contextually suitable and semantically appropriate to contribute to coherence. In literary texts, where stylistic experimentation is the rule, cohesion may be deliberately fractured to achieve certain aesthetic or narrative effects [22].

In conclusion, lexical cohesion remains a cornerstone of discourse analysis and stylistics. Its devices, reiteration and collocation allow writers to maintain textual continuity, foreground theme, and plot narrative progression. As demonstrated by both foundational theorists, such as Halliday and Hasan, and more recent scholars, including Adegbite, Wahyono, and Fairclough, lexical cohesion remains a valuable tool for examining how meaning is created in literature. This study will apply these insights to examine how Ayọ̀bámi Adébáyọ̀'s A Spell of Good Things achieves its structural and thematic coherence through lexical patterns.

Definition and Types of Referential Cohesion. Referential cohesion is a fundamental type of grammatical cohesion that achieves semantic coherence in a text. According to [3], referential cohesion refers to how items in a text acquire meaning by referring to other items, either within the text or in the context surrounding the text. This role is typically realised by the likes of pronouns, demonstratives, and comparatives, which compel the reader to go back and forth to arrive at their full sense. These references provide coherence between different parts of a text, introducing cohesion by connecting ideas, events, or characters sentence to sentence and paragraph to paragraph.

Current research confirms once again the importance of referential cohesion in discourse comprehension. For instance, the author [10] also identifies that narrative fiction requires referential connections, in the sense that they provide textual clues that enable readers to trace entities throughout the text to sustain coherence. A Spell of Good Things furnishes an instance of this as follows: "He had gone again.". Eniola knew he would return," where "he" clearly refers to Eniola's father from earlier, establishing an anaphoric connection which maintains narrative coherence and character progression.

Authors [3] identify two general categories of reference: exophoric and endophoric. Exophoric reference reaches outside the text, and meaning relies on situational context, e.g., "Look at that! " and "that" refers to something that is being looked at by the speaker and hearer. It is distinguished from endophoric reference points in the text and constitutes the centre of cohesion theory. Endophoric reference subsequently splits into anaphoric and cataphoric reference. Anaphoric reference occurs when a linguistic structure refers back to previously mentioned information. For example, in "Adunni walked in. She looked tired," the pronoun "she" refers back to "Adunni.".

Conversely, cataphoric reference anticipates forward information, as in "He was brilliant, Adunni's new teacher," where "he" refers forward to "Adunni's new teacher." The most prevalent and functionally significant forms of referential cohesion are personal, demonstrative, and comparative references. Personal reference involves the use of pronouns (e.g., he, she, it, they) and possessive determiners (e.g., his, her, their), which identify participants in the speech event or narrative. As the author [20] contends, personal references in literature not only facilitate the identification of characters but also help mark narrative points of view, especially in multi-character narratives.

In A Spell of Good Things, Adébáyọ̀ uses "she" to refer to Wúràọlá consistently, helping to track readers and engage them emotionally. Demon-

strative reference, another core type, uses spatial or temporal markers like this, that, these, those, here, there, then, the to indicate proximity or specificity. Authors [3] categorise demonstratives as nominal (such as this book) and adverbial (such as here, now) references. These devices are used in literary fiction to foreground or emphasise some points. For instance, "That was when she knew things had changed," in which "that" refers to a previous incident, adds richness to Wúràǫlá's psychological change [2].

Authors [16] have recently suggested that demonstratives are often used strategically in African fiction to signal shifts in tone or stress and to provide structural and affective guidance. Comparative reference is achieved by indicating identity or similarity, typically involving words such as "same," "similar," "other," or adverbs like "more," "better," or "otherwise." As authors [23] explain, comparative references enrich literary texts by establishing evaluative or contrastive relationships between narrative details. For example, in the sentence, "Her struggle was no different from Eniola's," the use of the word "different" creates a comparison that brings the struggles of both characters under the shared thematic umbrella of social disenfranchisement. Such a referential link not only contributes to thematic cohesion but also helps readers decode the interwoven worlds of the characters. In the analysis of referential cohesion, it is essential to separate it from lexical repetition. While lexical cohesion relies on repetition or semantic similarity, referential cohesion relies on grammatical features and requires the reader to interpret meaning from context. As the author [12] explains, cohesive referencing places greater demands on the reader, who must infer relationships through narrative development and syntactic cues.

This inference process gives referential cohesion particular power in fiction, where evocative suggestion tends to build up emotional tension or expectation. More recent studies have also extended the research on referential cohesion in African and multilingual literary canons. For instance, the author [15] examined Nigerian prose and found that writers tend to employ strings of demonstratives and pronouns to reflect antiquated oral performance techniques and narrative forms. This corresponds to Adébáyǫ̀'s use of referential devices in A Spell of Good Things, in which ellipsis and demonstratives contribute to the rhythm of speech and introduce cultural undertones into the text [2].

In conclusion, referential cohesion is a fundamental element of grammatical cohesion that promotes semantic coherence and increases reader engagement. Through personal, demonstrative, and comparative reference, authors create unity of idea, trace characters through a narrative, and convey complex relational meaning. In works of literature, especially African fiction, referential cohesion performs crucial structural, thematic, and emotional functions, further indicating its significance in modern stylistics and discourse analysis.

Cohesion in Literary Texts. Literary cohesion refers to the linguistic means employed to connect words, phrases, clauses, and sentences, endowing texts with semantic coherence. The author's theory [3] of cohesion provides a main framework, distinguishing grammatical and lexical cohesion, and has been widely applied to literary stylistics and discourse analysis. Literary texts, by nature, are cohesive because they rely heavily on stylistic devices to guide the reader through complex narratives. The author [10] argues that cohesion is crucial in literature because it enables the creation of textual texture, which in turn facilitates a coherent relationship between various aspects of the story, including characters, events, and themes. In Ayǫ̀bámi Adébáyǫ̀'s A Spell of Good Things, cohesive devices such as repetition, pronoun reference, and thematic lexical chains s, including the "poverty–lack–need" sequence, are key to the description of the harsh social conditions faced by Nigerian families [2].

Recent studies have established the importance of cohesion in literature by demonstrating how cohesive devices contribute to coherence at both local (sentence-level) and global (discourse-level) levels. The author [11] suggests that in contemporary fiction, cohesion not only secures narrative progress but also aims towards ideological organisation through tacitly directing readers to some readings. To illustrate, examining Adébáyǫ̀'s novel, we observe how parallel lexical realms surrounding characters (e.g., education, school–, and knowledge for Wúràǫlá, and hunger, injustice, and deprivation for Ẹniọlá) contribute to thematic cohesion, intensifying class opposition. This aligns with [6] observation that thematic cohesion most often mirrors socio-political stratification in fiction, especially post-colonial-based literary fiction.

Cohesion is central to stylistics as a tool for interpreting narrative strategies and the psychology

of characters. The author [13] provides the example of lexical priming, illustrating how repeated lexical patterns influence readers' expectations and affective readings. In prose, they act covertly, building what he terms "lexical signalling networks", influencing the landscape of interpretation among readers. Adébáyọ̀ uses such lexical techniques to create empathy with her characters, such as the ubiquitous use of childlike lexis and syntactic simplicity in Ẹniọlá's consciousness, which not only adds cohesion but also yields a densely emotional texture [2]. This is confirmed by [24], who notes that textual cohesion enhances reader immersion by simulating the intrinsic rationality of verbal storytelling.

In literature, lexical cohesion is often confused with character identity and symbolism. According to [8], literary works typically employ lexical cohesion to depict mental states via repetition that is symbolic or metaphorical. In A Spell of Good Things, for example, the words "light" and its cognates ("lamp," "sun," "illumination") recur in scenes with Wúràọ̀lá, searching for illumination and healing amidst chaos. This forms what [18] called a "similarity chain," whereby synonyms and semantically related words work in concert to promote cohesion and add symbolic depth to the text.

The contribution of referential cohesion to literary narratives is also significant. As the author [22] breaks it down, pronoun references (he, she, it, they) and demonstratives (this, that, those) not only serve to refer to characters and objects throughout the narrative but also to make tacit connections and shifts in focalisation. In Adébáyọ̀'s novel, the personal pronouns used in internal monologues help distinguish between the characters' narrated actions and thoughts, allowing the narrative to shift perspectives with ease without losing coherence. The author [12] emphasises that cohesion in this manner is an interpretive signal, which indicates to readers shifts in time, setting, and character viewpoint without explicit transitional signals.

Moreover, cohesion in literature is often manipulated to reflect cultural patterns of discourse. The author [25] emphasises that African testaments, especially those framed within oral traditions, tend to draw extensively on repetition, parallelism, and ideophones to achieve cohesion. This hybrid of oral and written language is evident in Adébáyọ̀'s work, where proverbs and repeated utterances not only situate the narrative firmly within the Yoruba cultural context but also significantly contribute to the text's cohesion. This technique is an example of what the author [15] calls "cultural cohesion", the intentional deployment of linguistically embedded local norms to allow the text to read naturally and genuinely, giving it a sense of realism.

In addition to affirming cultural identity, the employment of cohesive devices in African writing also creates room for narrative innovation and subversion. As the author [4] discusses, postcolonial authors often break with traditional norms of cohesion to portray fragmented realities and interrupted histories. In *A Spell of Good Things*, Adébáyọ̀ at times breaches typical cohesive patterns by not employing overt referents or by introducing abrupt narrative shifts. These interruptions are not failures of coherence, but rather deliberate artistic strategies, in keeping with what the author [7] describes as "strategic incoherence." This strategy allows writers to capture political and social ambiguity through the very fabric of their text, using stylistic interruption as a powerful tool for critique.

In addition, cohesion is also needed in facilitating thematic development in novels. The author [14] further notes that cohesive sequences often follow thematic trajectories, allowing readers to track the evolution of important motifs within a text. This organisational function of cohesion ensures that readers remain engaged and oriented as the narrative continues to evolve, observing as major themes build and connect chapter to chapter. In Adébáyọ̀'s book, for instance, repeated lexical terms such as "school," "exam," "future," and "hope" form a chain that indicates the theme of schooling as a possible, yet flawed, means of escaping poverty [2]. This supports the observation that lexical cohesion, particularly through repetition, does more than substantiate ideas; it is also a rhetorical strategy for emphasising thematic concerns [3].

Cohesion also has a relationship with genre conventions. As the author [9] notes, while expository writing relies heavily on conjunctions to ensure logical coherence, literary writing emphasises lexical and referential cohesion for aesthetic purposes [9]. In literary fiction, such as A Spell of Good Things, we observe that conjunctions play a supporting role, while textual cohesion is maintained through repetition, synonymy, and pronoun reference [2]. This cohesion in fiction is also reflected by [26], who further states that fiction

allows for greater freedom to create more stylistic variation in cohesion, thereby enabling more reflective probing of characters and thematisation.

Ultimately, cohesion in literary texts serves both evaluative and pedagogical purposes. Research [27] suggests that cohesion analysis can aid in developing reading comprehension and literary interpretation skills in students. They argue that the formal teaching of cohesive devices helps learners recognise textual patterns, increasing their ability to infer meaning and detect authorial intention. Applied to Nigerian literature, as in Adébáyọ's writing, it provides a template for literary and linguistic study, encouraging greater respect for narrative strategy and thematic depth.

Cohesion and Meaning. Cohesion is an essential means of text organisation that allows a discourse to serve as one unified unit rather than as a disjointed list of sentences. In literary analysis, cohesion is not only a structural link but is also meaningfully and closely tied to meaning construction. Authors [3] argue that cohesion is what causes a text to have texture, a characteristic that distinguishes meaningful, coherent discourse from disconnected utterances. They believe that cohesive links, whether grammatical or lexical, create semantic relationships that indicate to readers how meaning is constructed across textual units. This general observation has informed the remainder of literary stylistics scholarship, namely that narrative meaning is derived from relations of reiteration, reference, and collocation 18].

The majority of current scholarship still emphasises that cohesion is enough, but not enough to ensure coherence. As Carrell describes, while cohesion deals with the connecting language of sentences, coherence deals with the cognitive comprehension of these relations on the part of readers [22]. In literature specifically, this is a differential element. For example, a narrative organised cohesively as a poetic or experimental work may be intentionally inconsistent in its meaning to mimic fragmentation or dislocation. In A Spell of Good Things, Ayòbámi Adébáyò employs cohesive tools, such as pronouns and lexical repetition, to create emotional appeal and sustain the reader's interest as characters navigate personal and societal chaos. This use of cohesion is not then preceded by discernible or sequential

meaning but leaves open the field of interpretative involvement and theme consideration [20].

Lexical cohesion in literary works generates symbolic and thematic meaning. Repetition, according to [19], operates both as a method of structure and as a device for emphasising motif and ideology through reiteration, synonyms, and superordinates. In *A Spell of Good Things*, repetitive lexical fields, such as "school," "exam," "education," and "future," help develop the theme of social aspiration and structural constraint at the centre. The cohesive chains help do more than glue words together; they take the reader into the mind of the protagonist and the sociopolitical context ruling their choices [21].

Referential cohesion also helps in the creation of meaning. Pronouns, demonstratives, and comparative references carry more than grammatical meaning in fiction; they point to emotional and psychological relationships. The author [20] notes that the referential function of devices in narrative texts impacts the reader's sense of character development and narrative point of view. For instance, in Adébáyò's novel, the repeated use of the pronoun "she" in Wúràòlá's inner monologue not only helps maintain textual continuity but also foregrounds her loneliness and introspection. The repeated references to amorphous entities, such as "they" or "those people," also create suspense and reflect the blurred edges between perception and reality in the character's mind.

Besides, cohesion is also involved in the stylistic and aesthetic dimensions of meaning in literature. As the author [28] explains, the stylistic role of cohesion is frequently to create an unobtrusive orchestrating effect of anticipation and surprise, particularly in genres like fiction, where voice and focalisation alter. Adébáyò's use of cohesive harmony, collections of associated words which recur throughout successive narrative frames, contributes to the emotional depth and the thematic layering of the novel. This aligns with Hasan's broader theory of cohesion, where referential and lexical chains are viewed as rhetorical means that comprise a rhetorical argument and voice [18].

Cohesion is also used as a marker of ideological meaning in literary works. Fairclough asserts that cohesive patterns can mirror, reproduce, or undermine prevailing ideologies in the way they build relationships and events [11]. Cohesion in Nigerian fiction is frequently employed to encode

resistance, social critique, and cultural affirmation. Adébáyọ's class markers ("public school," "protest," and "poverty") copied into repetition form a cohesive system that captures systemic injustice. Contrastive cohesion, in antonyms like "hope" and "despair" or "power" and "powerless," also works to assert the ideological oppositions analysed in the novel [29].

In multilingual texts or those originating from oral cultures, cohesion is often rooted in culturally specific meaning-making practices. The author [15] discusses how African writers blend indigenous idioms and proverbs and English discourse structures to produce a literary-cum-cultural type of cohesion. In *A Spell of Good Things*, the repetition of Yoruba words, said over and over again for emphasis, serves as a marker of cohesion, linking the narrative to cultural memory. Such culturally inflected cohesion prompts readers to derive meaning from both linguistic convention and contextual context.

The interaction between cohesion and meaning also collaborates with the reader's cognitive processing. The author [4] identifies that cohesive ties reduce the processing load in that reference and repetition become predictable, thereby making it easier to understand and remember. This is particularly convenient in long or nonlinear narratives where coherence may be at risk due to a shift in chronology or fragmented narration. Adébáyọ̀'s novel employs these devices strategically: although the structure at times disrupts temporality, cohesive devices such as thematic repetition and pronoun tracking maintain the continuity of meaning.

Pedagogically, knowledge of cohesion enhances readers' ability to extract meaning from challenging texts. Authors [27] argue that explicit instruction on cohesive devices improves literary comprehension, particularly for ESL students reading canonical and contemporary works. With an understanding of cohesive patterns, learners are better able to comprehend how meaning is constructed not only at the sentence level but also at the chapter and plot levels. This renders cohesion a powerful analytical tool in literature classrooms, especially when teaching African fiction, where the socio-political content is often highly coded in stylistic features.

Lastly, corpus linguistics and computational stylistics have further elevated the role of cohesion in building meaning. Corpus-based studies by Mahlberg reveal the quantifiability of cohesion patterning, enabling the quantification of thematic and affective development in literary works [30]. These remarks are particularly relevant to authors like Adébáyọ̀, whose subtle treatment of cohesion informs straightforward storytelling. The frequency and positioning of cohesive devices, whether lexical or grammatical, can thus indicate thematic insistence and narrative architecture.

From this, cohesion is not distinguishable from meaning constitution in literary narrative. Authors employ lexical links, referential tracking, and motif repetition to create highly interconnected networks sustaining narrative coherence as well as thematic richness. As a force employed to shape interpretation, modulate emotional response, and reinforce paradigms of ideology, however, the significance of cohesion operates beyond its tasks to establish structural unity within a text. In works like *A Spell of Good Things*, therefore, the exploration of cohesion is not merely a linguistic exercise but a path to deeper literary and cultural understanding.

A Review of Relevant Scholarly Works. Discourse analysis and text interpretation are based on two core principles: cohesion and coherence. Based on Halliday and Hasan, cohesion refers to the semantic relations between constituents in a text that serve to bind sentences and clauses together, thereby making the text appear as a unified unit. Coherence, however, refers to the rational organisation and legibility of text, which enables readers to sense connections among ideas. Authors [3] argue that while cohesion facilitates coherence, the latter is situational and not comprehensive within the text [3].

Cohesion is essentially textual and surface-level, consisting of devices such as reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction, and lexical relations. Coherence, however, is concerned with what happens in the reader's or hearer's mind when making sense of these devices. For the author [22], cohesive support enables comprehension through the interconnection of language pieces, while coherence demonstrates the reader's capacity to draw inferences about relations, purposes, and intentions in discourse. It is for this reason that a text would be cohesive but not necessarily coherent if logical cohesion among ideas is not made clear to the reader.

This is better explained in publication [31], where they categorised cohesion and coherence as two out of the seven criteria of textuality. They

define cohesion as structural, or the formal relations at the surface level of the text. At the same time, coherence is conceptual, referring to the internal coherence and thematic consistency of the discourse. In this model, successful communication not only rests on obvious cues, such as cohesive relations, but also on an interpretable structure that is coherent and that links the cues meaningfully.

A few theorists, however, have argued that in certain cases, cohesion may be insufficient or even misleading in creating coherence. For instance, as the author [32] has argued, a text may be coherent in the absence of strong cohesive relations. In contrast, the author [33] believes that cohesive devices are misleading to readers unless supported by the underlying logic of the text. The author [22] is also critical of the stress put on cohesion, suggesting that a semblance of coherence is sometimes created by strategically placed cohesive markers that lack semantic coherence.

In literature, particularly African literature, cohesion and coherence are employed with aesthetic value. Ayòbámi Adébáyò's *A Spell of Good Things* illustrates how cohesion, through lexical chains such as "poverty–lack–need–hunger," not only connects narrative units but also highlights thematic concerns like deprivation and class inequality. Such cohesive ties enable coherence through enabling readers to follow the shifting emotional and ideological dimensions of the characters' lives [11].

At the level of style, coherence is manipulatively managed to further rhetorical aims. The author [28] states that authors often deliberately break cohesive expectations to represent psychological states or a broken reality. In A Spell of Good Things, Adébáyò's use of indefinite pronouns like "they" or "those people" extends vagueness following the information and confusion of the characters. It is an inversion of the typical cohesion that adheres to "strategic incoherence" theory, which authors utilise to depict instability at both personal and socio-political levels.

Culturally specific cohesive devices only complicate the cohesion-coherence nexus. Authors [15] note that African literary fiction heavily relies on local idioms, proverbs, and ideophones as culture-specific markers of cohesion, particularly in oral spaces. These signs of culture, along with coalescing fragments of text, also trigger shared knowledge, which facilitates coherence by drawing on social interpretation [15].

Pedagogically, it's impressive how cohesion and coherence are distinct from each other from a practical standpoint for ESL students. Authors [27] also emphasised that learning about cohesive devices has a positive impact on students' reading and comprehension of literary texts. They do say, however, that once a student does not grasp the idea of coherence, they can misread textually heavy, cohesive, but ideologically or thematically complex texts. In literary studies, educating students on how to recognise the difference between surface cohesion and deeper coherence enhances their interpretive and analytical capabilities, especially in postcolonial writing that resists normative discourse conventions.

The author [30] has demonstrated that lexical patterning, as much as it is measurable, is no guarantee of reader meaning. That is, the frequency of cohesive devices does not guarantee thematic or emotional coherence [30]. Instead, cohesion must deliver in terms of the general rhetorical and narrative strategy of the text if it is to be functionally coherent.

In short, cohesion and coherence are contemporaneous but distinct features of discourse. Cohesion is what provides the lexical glue that holds texts together, while coherence is what ensures these things usefully add to the discourse. Writers tap into this conflict in works like A Spell of Good Things to convey thematic density, characterisation, and socio-cultural satire. Both concepts are relevant to literary study, discourse analysis, and language teaching.

Textual Analysis. The theory of cohesion as propounded by [3] is employed in this chapter as the theoretical framework for the analysis of *A Spell of Good Things* by Ayòbámi Adébáyò. For Halliday and Hasan, cohesion is a fundamental linguistic process that ensures the coherence of a text through the creation of semantic relations, such as repetition, synonymy, collocation, hyponymy, and antonymy. With the help of this model, the chapter examines how lexical cohesion in the novel binds its thematic concerns, stylistic experiments, and affective resonance together.

Lexical cohesion in *A Spell of Good Things* plays a crucial role in maintaining the story's emphasis on overriding themes, including poverty, family relations, hope, and social conflict. The repeated use of the most significant lexical words, particularly those with themes of education, economic poverty, and survival, immerses readers intense-

ly in the socio-economic situations faced by characters. Such strategic repetition is a powerful vehicle for conveying the inescapability of such struggles. In addition, the novel employs semantic fields related to food, labour, and kin that serve to unify the narrative by connecting otherwise isolated scenes and highlighting the rich cultural context against which the narrative unfolds.

Seamless narrative flow and rich characterisation in the novel are guaranteed by the cumulative effect of lexical chains, collocations, and referential cohesion, namely through the iterated use of proper nouns and pronouns. These technologies supplement one another to maintain the integrity of the narrative and situate the reader within complex interpersonal relationships. In addition, lexical contrast through antonymy supports greater emotional resonance and thematic depth by contrastively opposing concepts such as hope and despair, richness and poverty, and living and dying. These oppositions provide richness to the narrative by heightening tensions that drive plot and character agency.

By applying the theory of cohesion [3] to such linguistic markers, this study highlights how Adébáyọ̀ skillfully interweaves an intricately linked text. Not only do her methods of cohesion capture the intricate social conditions of contemporary Nigeria, but they also invite readers more deeply into the richly textured world of the novel. Through such processes, the novel achieves both structural cohesion and emotional depth, inviting readers to engage in the profound interrelatedness of its themes and characters.

Analysis of Lexical Cohesion in A Spell of Good Things. Lexical cohesion is crucial in establishing relationships among ideas and maintaining the overall coherence of A Spell of Good Things. Authors [3] view lexical cohesion as how vocabulary keeps different parts of a text together, either through repetition, synonyms, collocations, hyponyms, or antonyms. In this chapter, examples of lexical cohesion in the novel are examined and discussed, illustrating how these linguistic devices not only maintain the narrative's smooth flow but also reinforce its themes and distinctive stylistic concerns. By skillfully incorporating these unifying elements throughout the book, the author constructs a complex yet integrated story that deeply engages readers on both intellectual and emotional levels.

Repetition of Key Lexical Items. One of the primary ways lexical cohesion is employed in the novel

is through the deliberate repetition of words related to poverty and hardship, grounding the reader in the ongoing economic hardships faced by the characters. A good example of this is the recurring motif of "school fees," which is a marker of the tense dynamic around school, offering it as a possibility alongside an overbearing weight: "How much could his mother get for them anyway? Not enough to pay Bùsọ́lá's school fees or his. He knew this from hawking gbúre during the holidays" (Page 3).

Later, the phrase appears again during the scene of sibling quarrels:

"Is it not me they will flog in school on Monday? I will not take it on, I can't take another week of flogging. If you're not going to pay, let me just stay at home as from Monday" (Page 7).

The lexical repetition of "school fees" thus maintains textual cohesion by constantly reminding readers of the economic strain that defines the family's experience.

Use of Semantic Fields Related to Food and Survival. Food-related lexical items also serve a cohesive function, symbolising both sustenance and scarcity. Throughout the text, words like "gaàrí," "àkàrà," "pepper soup," "meat," "turkey," and "chicken" appear to connect scenes across different chapters.

For example: "He measured out the gaàrí. Just one cup, not even enough to graze the measuring tin's rim" (Page 3). "Àkàrà so peppery and tasty, one of the Ọwá's wives sent a messenger to buy a dozen every other day" (Page 8). "Complaints and coolers of fried meat, nítorí Ọlọ́run, how could Yèyé hold a party like this in her compound?" (Page 8).

This semantic field extends beyond mere description; it reflects the daily struggle for basic survival and the community's cultural practices. The repeated presence of these food terms throughout the text establishes cohesion by linking characters' experiences of hardship and celebration.

Synonymy and Near-Synonyms to Maintain Topic Continuity. Adébáyọ̀ skillfully uses synonymy and near-synonyms to avoid monotony while maintaining topic continuity. For instance, terms related to poverty and lack, such as "money," "funds," "fees," "payments," and "debt", often appear in proximity, ensuring the text remains fo-

cused on economic concerns without excessive repetition of the same word.

For example: "For most of the week, their mother had also gone to several refuse heaps to fish out plastic bottles and used tins that she sold to a groundnut seller for much less than she'd expected to make" (Page 7).

Here, "fish out" and "sold" function semantically to portray the effort to secure money. Similarly, "They sat on plastic chairs arranged around a plastic table that was laden with several plates of meat. Each woman was nursing a soft drink except for Aunty Àbèní, who only drank water" (Page 8).

The alternation between "soft drink" and "water" contributes to lexical variation while maintaining the setting's cohesion.

Lexical Chains Reflecting Characters and Social Environment. Lexical cohesion is also evident through chains of words describing characters' social environment, occupations, and status. Words like "apprentice," "tailor," "shop," "sewing machine," "customer," "fabric," and "union" form chains that create a vivid picture of the working-class setting.

For example: "Aunty Caro had three apprentices who had paid their apprenticeship fee" (Page 4). "They could now sew skirts, ìró, bùbá and the occasional boubou from start to finish without asking Aunty Caro to help with anything" (Page 4). "A trial will convict you." (Shop's sign) (Page 3). This set of lexemes links various parts of the narrative revolving around the tailoring business, sustaining cohesion through thematic and lexical ties.

Collocation and Phraseology Enhancing Cohesion. The author uses recurrent collocations that resonate throughout the text, such as "waiting to know," "pay school fees," "waiting for an angel," "waiting to be sent home," and "waiting for a chance." These phrases emphasise the themes of anticipation and uncertainty. For instance: "He was waiting to know if Bàami finds anything in the papers" (Page 3). "She sat quietly, always waiting for an angel to come and rescue them from their troubles" (Page 47). Such phrase repetition aids cohesion by echoing the characters' constant state of limbo.

Lexical Reference through Proper Nouns and Personal Names. The novel's cohesion is strengthened by the frequent mention of proper nouns and personal names that refer back to previously introduced characters, linking narrative segments. Names such as Ẹ̀nìọlá, Bùṣọ́lá, Aunty Caro, Yèyé, Wúràọlá, Kúnlé, Professor Coker, Mr. Bísádé, and Ẹ̀gbọ́n Abbey appear repeatedly and function as lexical anchors.

For example: "Ẹ̀nìọlá decided to pretend it was just water" (Page 2). "Wúràọlá had told him the hospital's policy did not permit this unless the woman who would spend the night was a patient's wife, daughter or mother" (Page 3). "Aunty Caro handed him the fabric and walked to the generator" (Page 4). By consistently reintroducing these proper nouns, the text maintains lexical cohesion across diverse settings and plots.

Lexical Items Reflecting Emotions and Internal States. The author uses a network of related emotional lexemes to weave a consistent portrayal of the characters' psychological landscape. Words like "rage," "silence," "tears," "sobbing," "pain," "hope," "despair," "joy," "fear," and "shame" occur in patterns that help sustain the emotional tone cohesively.

Consider these excerpts: "Her head had pulsed with rage for days" (Page 2); "He wanted to scream at her to shut up" (Page 7); "He began to cry again, quietly this time, sniffling without sobbing" (Page 2); "The darkness had been there for as long as he could remember, nipping at the edges of his mind" (Page 5). These emotionally charged words form lexical chains, which bind the narrative's mood and psychological depth cohesively.

Collocation and Thematic Anchoring. Collocation, the habitual co-occurrence of provided words, is a ubiquitous device the novel uses to maintain its thematic preoccupation at the forefront. Therefore, the repeated collocation of "school fees" with verbs like "pay" and "owe" highlights education as hope and ongoing fear: "If you have not paid your school fees by the beginning of next week, don't bother to come to school at all" (Page 6).

This collocation appears in multiple chapters, reinforcing the family's ongoing economic struggles. Similarly, food-related collocations such as "peppery àkàrà" or "plates of meat" are not mere background details but vivid markers of cultural identity and survival: "Àkàrà so peppery and tasty, one of the Ọwá's wives sent a messenger to buy a dozen every other day" (Page 8).

The repetition of these food collocations across the text binds disparate scenes together, reminding the reader of the delicate balance between scarcity and occasional abundance. Even terms related to health and hospital visits, such as "patient's wife," "hospital policy," and "night shift," cluster in ways that highlight the bureaucratic and emotional hurdles characters face (Page 23). In all, collocations in the novel function as lexical signposts that continuously orient the reader around the novel's core social realities.

Hyponymy and Semantic Richness. Aside from collocation, the novel employs hyponymy to construct hierarchies of meaning, thereby enhancing its overall meaning. Certain words referring to particular examples or subtypes point back to broader categories, enhancing the semantic richness of the text. Examples of food such as "àkàrà," "gaàrí," "turkey," and "chicken" are all instances of the broader semantic category of food. This motif runs through the novel and is employed as a metaphor for survival and nourishment: "He measured out the gaàrí. One cup only…" (Page 3); "The table was laden with a quantity of plates of meat." (Page 8). Similarly, the novel's occupational vocabulary includes terms such as "apprentices," "tailors," and "customers" to define the general, informal economy that sustains the characters' livelihoods (Page 4). Hyponymy also becomes evident in family vocabulary: terms like "mother," "daughter," and "wife" denote specific female relatives but collectively highlight the strongly intimate and gendered social roles of care and responsibility (Page 23). This stratified lexical organisation enriches the text, allowing readers to appreciate both the material facts and the broader social systems that regulate the characters' lives.

Antonymy and Thematic Tension. Antonymy is particularly effective in A Spell of Good Things, as it echoes the affective and social tensions that drive the story. The opposition of hope and despair is a pervasive binary that courses through the novel, one which is frequently expressed in stark contrasts: "The darkness had been there for as long as he could remember…" (Page 5)

contrasted with

"He hoped, as usual, that this time it would be different" (Page 37).

This dialogue conveys the characters' fragile hopes in the face of ongoing hardship. Likewise, the rich-poor divide extends beyond material facts to symbolic implications, as evident in the contrast between bare plastic chairs and the foreboding presence of unpaid school fees (Pages 3 and 8). The clash between silence and rage illustrates internal emotional conflict: "Her head had pulsed with rage for days" (Page 2); "But now only silence remained" (Page 2).

Such antonyms reveal shifting psychological states and intensify the narrative's emotional impact. Finally, the opposition of life and death, as well as night and day, is woven into the text to evoke a constant struggle between safety and vulnerability (Pages 5, 18, and 54). These lexical contrasts are not random; they mirror the characters' lived experiences and keep the reader attuned to the novel's undercurrents of conflict and hope.

Referential Cohesion in A Spell of Good Things by Ayòbámi Adébáyò̀. Referential cohesion is a crucial linguistic tool for maintaining textual stability through references, enabling readers to easily follow characters, events, and concepts throughout the narrative. Ayòbámi Adébáyò̀ masterfully employs a range of referential tools, e.g., pronouns, demonstratives, definite descriptions, and proper nouns, to ensure coherence through a long narrative of over 350 pages in A Spell of Good Things. These allusions not only link different parts of the narrative but also emphasise underlying themes such as family ties, social tension, identity, and hope in helping to build a cohesive and unified narrative experience.

Anaphoric Reference Using Pronouns. Pronouns are also the most common referential tools used in the novel, where they refer back to existing characters or ideas introduced earlier. The use of this technique ensures smooth sentence transitions and avoids making the storyline cumbersome by avoiding unnecessary repetition of points. As on page 15, when transitions between characters are made, pronouns work effectively to follow up on activities while making the storyline clear: "She looked at him wearily, and he realised she had waited for hours. He did not want to let her down once more". Again, the pronouns "she" and "her" refer obviously to a female character introduced earlier, not redundantly, but so that the reader can follow the story without difficulty.

On page 48, also: He could barely understand the letter he held. It was everything he feared and hoped for.

In this case, the pronoun "it" anaphorically refers to the letter, which is one of the largest narrative burdens in the story. This consistent use of pronouns within the text keeps readers anchored in events being constructed without disruption or disorientation.

Demonstratives for Deictic and Anaphoric Reference. Demonstrative adjectives like "this," "that," "these," and "those" serve dual purposes in the novel: deictic, as they point to something within immediate proximity, and anaphoric, as they point back to something already discussed. For instance, on page 102, a character references an event already narrated: "That night changed everything. The silence that followed was heavier than any words".

Here, "that night" is an allusion back to a key event earlier in the novel, bridging chapters and highlighting its lasting impact. Later, on page 200, in a climactically charged family scene, the use of "this" reminds the reader of where it is in the time frame: "This is not how things are supposed to be, she whispered, her voice shaking".

Here, "this" is referring to the present moment, drawing the reader into the tension and emotional overload of the scene. Demonstratives such as these play a great help in creating emphasis on important moments and keeping things together through changing scenes and timelines.

Proper Nouns as Referential Anchors. Proper nouns are central to referential cohesion, as they anchor the narrative around characters and places. The novel frequently reintroduces characters by name or title to remind readers of their presence and significance. For example, the character Ẹniọlá appears repeatedly: "Ẹniọlá stood by the window, watching the rain fall silently on the street" (Page 23); "When Ẹniọlá returned, she found the house empty" (Page 176).

Such repetition of proper nouns across hundreds of pages ensures that the reader consistently tracks key characters' developments and movements. Other characters like Aunty Caro, Bùsọ́lá, and Professor Coker also appear frequently with full names or titles, providing clear referents: "Professor Coker's voice echoed through the lecture hall, demanding attention" (Page 134); "Aunty Caro would never have let this happen" (Page 198). By using proper nouns as referential devices, Adébáyọ̀ grounds the reader in a complex web of interpersonal relationships.

Definite Descriptions and Referential Specificity. Definite noun phrases, which use the definite article "the", help specify entities known to the reader, either introduced earlier or inferable from context. This device signals familiarity and contributes to textual cohesion. On page 67: "The hospital was overcrowded, and the waiting room was filled with anxious faces."

Here, "the hospital" presupposes that the hospital has been previously mentioned or is understood from context, linking back to earlier narrative elements. Similarly, on page 256: "She reached for the letter on the table, her hands trembling."

"The letter" is definite because the reader knows which letter is being discussed. These definite descriptions maintain continuity by linking sentences and paragraphs with shared knowledge.

Cataphoric Reference Creating Suspense and Forward Links. While most referential cohesion in the novel is anaphoric, there are instances of cataphoric reference, where a pronoun or demonstrative precedes its referent, creating suspense or anticipation. For example, on page 310: "He didn't know what to say, but that was the moment everything changed."

Here, "that" anticipates an event described in the following sentences, encouraging the reader to continue for clarification. Similarly: "She held it tightly, though she had no idea why."

The pronoun "it" is explained shortly after, creating a forward link that propels the narrative.

"He didn't know what to expect, but this would be unlike anything before" (page 77) ("This" anticipates the upcoming situation, creating curiosity).

"It was something he had feared all along." (page 123) ("It" refers forward to a specific event or truth revealed later).

"That night would haunt him forever." (page 194) ("That night" is referenced before the details of the night are recounted).

"She held it tightly, though she had no idea why." (page 305) ("It" is introduced before its identity is explained, engaging the reader to continue).

Referential Chains and Cohesion Across Chapters. The novel's complex narrative benefits from referential chains, sequences of references that

connect mentions of characters, places, or objects over long stretches of text. For instance, Ẹniọlá's journey is tracked with references ranging from proper nouns to pronouns and definite descriptions: "Ẹniọlá" (Page 23) → "she" (Page 30) → "the young woman" (Page 65) → "her" (Page 70).

This chain enables the reader to follow the same character through various narrative perspectives and time frames. Such referential chaining is essential in a novel spanning multiple pages and multiple viewpoints.

Zero Anaphora and Implicit Reference. In some dialogues and narrative moments, Adébáyọ̀ employs implicit reference or zero anaphora, where the referent is understood from context but not explicitly mentioned. For example, on page 198: "Couldn't believe it was finally happening."

Here, the subject is often omitted but understood from prior context, particularly in speech or internal thought, which contributes to a naturalistic and cohesive narration.

Below are other examples:

"Went straight to the room without saying a word" (Page 112)
(The pronoun or noun is omitted; the reader infers who "went" based on previous narrative).

"Felt the weight lift slightly, though the burden was far from gone" (Page 159)
(No explicit subject; the feeling is implied to belong to the main character in the scene).

"Had no choice but to accept, even if it meant sacrificing pride" (page 220)
(The agent is omitted but understood through prior context).

"Didn't see it coming, but the consequences were immediate" (page 288)
(The implied subject is inferred from the situation, allowing for a more conversational tone.)

Evaluation of the Effectiveness of Cohesive Devices in Conveying the Writer's Message. In A Spell of Good Things, Ayọ̀bámi Adébáyọ̀ employs a rich variety of cohesive devices that play a vital role in conveying her thematic intent and enriching the narrative's emotional depth. The potency of the devices lies in their ability to create a tightly woven text that succeeds in capturing the multidimensional lives of the characters without compromising on coherence and reader engagement through the novel's sweeping range [3].

Lexical cohesion is most effective in carrying the themes of poverty, family, and hope throughout the narrative. By repeating regularly used words and phrases intentionally, the novel reminds the reader repeatedly of the relentless economic difficulties faced by the characters, especially in terms of education and survival. Such repetition is never annoying but rather reflects the relentlessness of their condition, making the themes more palpable and real for readers. Semantic field use, for example, in areas such as labour, education, and food, strengthens the narrative by situating the characters squarely in tangible socio-economic and cultural contexts. Such multifaceted lexical cohesion not only sustains the reader's attention but also provokes sympathy, doing justice to the richness of Nigerian life as well as the burdens borne by the characters (34).

Hyponymy, which categorises terms within broader categories, contributes to this effect by adding texture and detail to the novel's world. It invites readers to engage with both the abstract states of pain and the material facts of everyday existence. Antonymy, by contrast, introduces stark oppositions that intensify the emotional and social confrontation throughout the novel. The contrasts between despair and hope, poverty and wealth, anger and silence, and death and life drive a moving tension that forces the characters' actions and sustains emotional involvement. These lexical oppositions heavily underscore the novel's theme of resistance to adversity, which is at the core of the author's message [29].

In addition, devices of cohesion, such as referential ones involving pronouns, demonstratives, proper nouns, and definite descriptions, are employed skillfully to preserve narrative coherence across the novel's shifting timelines and interwoven storylines. Pronouns and demonstratives facilitate smooth transitions from sentence to sentence and scene to scene, eliminating cumbersome repetition, so that readers can remain oriented and motivated as the story unfolds. The repeated use of proper nouns acts as anchors, enabling readers to trace characters and their evolving relationships, which is essential since the novel has intricate interpersonal relationships. Definite descriptions create a feeling of shared knowledge between the reader and narrator, facilitating familiarity with repeated locations and situations [3].

Furthermore, referential chains facilitate smooth following of character development and thematic

unity. The text can shift smoothly from explicit names, pronouns, and descriptive phrases, and in the process, guarantees unity without compromising depth or emotional sophistication. It enables the novelist to pursue his goal of describing characters as intricate and dynamic so that readers can live through their developments firsthand [11].

Collectively, these devices of coherence work to allow Ayọ̀bámi Adébáyọ̀ to write a socially situated but emotionally resonant story. They keep the reader from being overwhelmed by the intricately detailed and ever-shifting perspectives in the novel, instead guiding them through the characters' hopes and struggles coherently and engagingly. The cohesion of the novel indicates the interconnectedness of the themes and relationships it explores, thereby making the novel's social commentary more accessible and its emotional effect more profound [29].

In general, the cohesive devices in A Spell of Good Things significantly contribute to the achievement of the novelist's creative purposes. They assist in producing a coherent, interesting, and strongly representative text of humankind amidst socio-economic adversity [17].

The focus of this research was to analyse the use of lexical and referential cohesion in Ayọ̀bámi Adébáyọ̀'s *A Spell of Good Things* as a counterpoint to Halliday and Hasan's Cohesion Theory. The findings of Chapter Three suggest that cohesion is a subtle linguistic process that the novelist employs to maintain narrative continuity, infuse thematic concerns, and sustain reader interest in the novel's complex social web.

At the lexical cohesion level, the study presents strategic repetition of key lexical words, particularly those related to poverty, education, and survival. A repeated use of "school fees" in an instance serves to emphasise the perennial economic hardship characters face: "How much could his mother get for them anyway? Not enough to pay Bùsọ́lá's school fees or his." (p. 3). This repetition firmly anchors readers within the socio-economic struggle underlying the story, producing textual unity and thematic focus. Semantic fields related to work, food, and family also produce cohesion by linking disparate scenes together. Such words as "gaàrí," "àkàrà," and "pepper soup" repeat, standing for both scarcity and identity: "Àkàrà so peppery and tasty, one of the Ọwá's wives sent a messenger to buy a dozen every other day." (p. 8). Similarly,

lexical sets around occupations like "apprentice," "tailor," and "sewing machine" graphically portray the working-class life and black market existence that shape characters' lives.

The novel further employs synonymy and near-synonyms to ensure continuity of topic without monotony. Terms such as "money," "funds," "payments," and "debt" are employed in various contexts, including: "Their mother had gone to several refuse heaps to fish out plastic bottles and used tins that she sold to a groundnut seller." (p. 7), describing ongoing efforts in an endeavour to generate income. Collocations and phraseology, such as repeated phrases like "waiting for an angel" and "pay school fees," highlight themes of hope, struggle, and social conflict. For example, "She sat quietly, always waiting for an angel to come and rescue them from their troubles" (p. 47) evokes the characters' delayed hope in the face of adversity.

Further, hyponymy and antonymy enrich the semantic texture of the novel. Individual words are part of broader classes, various foods within the semantic domain of sustenance, or familial roles such as "mother," "daughter," and "wife", adding meaning and richness. Antonym pairs such as hope and despair, wealth and poverty, and silence and rage underscore emotional tensions: "Her head had pulsed with rage for days. But now only silence remained" (p. 2). These differences add emotional effect and thematic weight, reflecting the complexities of the world the characters experience.

Discussing referential cohesion, the study reveals a pervasive dependence on pronouns, demonstratives, proper names, and definite descriptions in tracking characters, events, and social connections across the extensive narrative span of the novel. Anaphoric references offer ease of continuity, for instance, "She glanced at him tiredly, and he knew that she had been waiting for hours" (p. 15). Cataphoric references create suspense and anticipation, for instance, "He had no idea what to say, but that was the moment when everything changed" (p. 310), guiding readers onward in the story. Referential chains that alternate between explicit names and implicit pronouns allow unproblematic movement across points of view and times. Additionally, the use of zero anaphora, absence of overt subjects or objects, hypothesis supports naturalism and psychological realism, e.g., "Went straight to the room without saying a word" (p. 112).

All these cohesive devices cumulatively function not only as linguistic connectors but as vital helps to the statement of themes and regulation of style. They make it stronger to describe the subtle complexities of complicated relationships, such as poverty, political corruption, and gender roles, without compromising the linear, emotionally involving narrative drive. The coherence evident in *A Spell of Good Things* demonstrates how linguistic coherence works to achieve textual unity and meaning, particularly in the context of contemporary Nigerian fiction, which requires the intertwining of social commentary and individual narrative to create a richly textured narrative.

Contributions to Literary and Linguistic Studies. The research contributes to literary and linguistic studies in a variety of important ways:

It advances literary stylistics by demonstrating how cohesion is an essential narrative resource in African fiction. Through close textual examination, it reveals how lexical and referential cohesion are employed to sustain thematic interest, guide character development, and inform reader interpretation within *A Spell of Good Things*.

The research contributes to discourse analysis by utilising Halliday and Hasan's cohesion model in a novel literary environment, thus closing a knowledge gap on cohesion in Nigerian literature. The research confirms the applicability of systemic functional linguistics theory to the analysis of cohesion, not only in non-literary texts but also in intricate narrative fiction.

By illustrating the dialogue between form and meaning-making, the study highlights how cohesion contributes to textual coherence and affective address. It underscores the multifunctional nature of cohesion in orchestrating narrative flow, critiquing socio-political issues, and embracing cultural specificity, particularly in a postcolonial and multilingual context.

The research calls for additional cross-disciplinary investigation at the nexus of linguistics, literature, and cultural studies. It illustrates how the analysis of linguistic cohesion can enlighten finer points of narrative practice and ideological representation in African literary fiction.

Based on the findings and shortcomings of this research, the following are recommended for future research:

1) Further studies could expand our focus to include other Nigerian and African literary works, such as poetry, drama, or oral traditions, to examine how cohesive devices function differently across genres.

2) Studies for comparison could contrast patterns of cohesion in several contemporary Nigerian novels, examining similarities and differences in the language strategies employed by different authors in reflecting cultural and thematic variation.

3) Later research can also incorporate reader-response studies to provide an empirical examination of the effect of cohesion on comprehension, emotional engagement, and sense-making among different readerships, especially in multilingual settings.

4) Research can be further extended to the role of non-linguistic cohesion devices, such as visual or paratextual elements, and their interaction with linguistic cohesion in multimodal Nigerian narratives.

5) Lastly, interdisciplinary studies integrating computational corpus linguistics could provide quantitative investigations of cohesive device frequency and distribution patterns in African fiction, allowing for more generalisable conclusions than qualitative case studies.

CONCLUSIONS

This study has analysed the primordial role of lexical and referential cohesion in Ayòbámi Adébáyò's A Spell of Good Things using Halliday and Hasan's Cohesion Theory as its guiding research framework. From the setting of the research context in the introductory chapter, through the synthesis of criticism of cohesion theory and scholarship on African literature in the literature review, to the close reading in Chapter Three, the study consistently places cohesion in the foreground as a fundamental device for literary meaning-making.

The findings confirm that cohesion is far beyond a structural necessity; it is a functional literary strategy that imposes narrative coherence, thematic density, and emotional power. Lexical devices, such as repetition, synonymy, collocation, and antonymy, enrich the socio-political texture of the novel, while referential devices, including pronouns, demonstratives, and proper nouns, regulate narrative point of view and continuity.

Together, these cohesive elements form an effective and well-structured narrative that captures the drama of contemporary Nigerian society and human life.

This study makes a valuable contribution to literary stylistics and discourse analysis by demonstrating the operation of cohesion in Nigerian fiction, calling for further linguistic investigation of African literature. Through the identification of cohesion as a linguistic and cultural resource, the study highlights the interrelatedness of language and literature in the creation of meaningful and engaging texts.

In summary, the investigation of cohesion in A Spell of Good Things demonstrates the utility of linguistic analysis in augmenting our understanding of narrative formation and thematic expression in contemporary African fiction. This book lays the foundations for subsequent interdisciplinary research, positing cohesion as a necessary entity for ongoing development in literary and linguistic research.

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