

An Analysis of Grammatical Cohesion in Written Labour Texts: A Study of Selected Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) Communiqués

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Abstract

This study is an analysis of grammatical cohesion in written labour texts. The corpus for the study consists of five written communiqués of Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) Federal University of Technology, Yola branch. Halliday and Hasan's (1976) model of cohesion was adopted for the analysis. The result showed prevalence of reference and conjunctive cohesions. The reference cohesions are means by which the writer keeps the reader abreast of all developments in the discourse. Similarly, conjunctions are means by which writers join text elements together in order to convey desired meaning.

Key Words: Grammar, Cohesion, Labour, text and Communiqué

1. Introduction

From time immemorial, linguists and language philosophers have attempted to define the concept 'language' but found no agreeable definition. Sam et al (1998) for instance defines language as the body of words and systems which are used to communicate to a people who are of the same community or nation in any system of formalised symbols, signals and gestures etc used or conceived as medium of communicating thoughts, emotions, and knowledge among others. Language is a vehicle of communication in every human

community. It is primarily in spoken form but has the written form as its secondary version. It is employed by members of a speech community to communicate in different contexts. Language is a tool which man uses to do almost everything. According to Corda (1973), language is like a tool which can be picked up, used for a purpose and put back when the purpose is over. This implies that humans manipulate language to achieve certain goals or create effects.

The term 'text' refers to any instance of language in use, in any medium, that makes sense to someone who knows that language (Halliday and Hasan, 1976). To a grammarian, text is a multifaceted phenomenon that means in many different ways. This means it can be explored from many different (Halliday and Matthiessen). Text is generally seen as any piece of language put to use. It could be spoken or written. Halliday and Hasan (1985) describe text as any instances of language that is playing some part in context of situation. This means that context plays a very important role in creating text. Tas (2007) in Hameed (2008) is of the view that as a means of communication, texts play a very important role in getting meaning across to others. Having very different types (literary/expressive, scientific/informative and so on) they are expected to meet the expectation of different-purposed readers. In other words, no matter what type it may be, every text ought to address certain receivers who read it for a specific; purpose like to get information, to read for fun etc.

For one to achieve purpose or create effect, language must be structured. All the elements must relate or function together. Cohesive devices are the resources that writers use to hold elements of texts together. This study examines the prevalence and functions of grammatical cohesion in selected ASUU communiqués to determine appropriate applications and how they enhance communication.

Method

The data for this study were extracted from the communiqués of ASUU Federal University of Technology, YoLa branch. The selected texts were analyzed qualitatively. The sentences in each text were first numbered in order to identify the cohesive devices with ease. Secondly, the prevalence of the grammatical cohesions was presented in tables. In carrying out the analysis, the theory of cohesion proposed in Halliday and Hasan (1976) was adopted. Each of the type of cohesion identified was shown in relation to its presupposed and presupposing items within the text. This implies that the study was descriptive and discursive. According to Yule (2006), this approach allows description of language as used in a given context than how it is supposed to be used.

Theoretical Framework

Text in linguistics can be spoken or written, monologue or dialogue. The message that a writer or a speaker conveys to the target audience is embedded in a text. Halliday and Hasan (1976) define text as "any passage, spoken or written, of whatever length that

forms a unified whole as opposed to a collection of unrelated sentences.” Adesanaye (1974) defines text from perspective of speech. Adesanaye is of the view that a text is a verbal record of a communication event. This entails that a text is primarily written but a written version make exist as the secondary.

Sanders and Pander 2006) relates that in their famous *Cohesion in English*, Halliday and Hasan(1976) describe text connectedness in terms of reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction and lexical cohesion, A text has features distinguish it from collection of un related sentences. Halliday and Hasan opine that a text has texture and this is what distinguishes it from something that is not a text. These feature are realized through the standard of textuality.

Halliday and Hasan define cohesion as the grammatical and lexical relationship that exists within a text. Cohesion can also be viewed as the links that hold a text together and gives it meaning. On the Theoretical framework on the Study of Discourse Cohesion and Coherence, Gang and Qiao(2004) are of the view that a number of important works were published that dealt with the subject of cohesion in the early seventies in the 20th century. The work by Halliday and Hasan has to be mentioned in particular among these works. Now it is generally admitted that the publication of *Cohesion in English* by M. A. K. Halliday & R. Hasan (1976) is the symbol of establishment of cohesion theory. Gang and Qiao(2004) further points out that in the

work of Halliday and Hasan(1976), cohesion is described as a semantic concept referring to relations of meaning that exist within a text. Their definition of cohesion emphasizes the relationship between the meanings of linguistic units. They also define a concrete form as a tie, “we need a term to refer to a single instance of cohesion, a term for one occurrence of a pair of cohesively related items. This we call a tie.” This term “tie” refers to a single instance of cohesion or one occurrence of a pair of cohesively related items. The links are called “cohesive ties” or “cohesive devices”. Halliday and Hasan distinguished cohesive ties in terms of grammatical cohesion and lexical cohesion in their work. Grammatical cohesion covers four cohesive devices: reference, substitution, ellipsis, and conjunction, while reiteration and collocation fall into the category of lexical cohesive devices.

Widdowson (1992) not only looked at cohesion as linking devices within a text but a means of propositional development. He recognizes the role of cohesion as signalling devices such as anaphoric use of pronouns in text for retrieving previous information and linking it to the present.

Halliday and Hasan (1994) cited in Glottopedia(2010), points out that Cohesion occurs where the interpretation of any item in a text or discourse requires the making of a reference to some other item in the same text or discourse). One item “presupposes the other, in the sense that it cannot be effectively decoded except by recourse to it. When this happens, a relation of cohesion is

set up, and the two elements, the presupposing and the presupposed, are thereby at least potentially integrated into a text. In other words, sentences are linked by relational elements which combine them to a unified whole that can be called a text. This process, which combines sentences to a meaningful unit, is called cohesion and can be subdivided into the categories: reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction and lexical cohesion. “Each of these categories is represented in the text by particular features – repetitions, omissions, occurrences of certain words and constructions – which have in common the property of signaling that the interpretation of [a] passage in question depends on something else” (Halliday & Hasan 1994: 13).

From a differing but related perspective, de Beaugraude and Dressler (1981) consider cohesion as the components of the surface text which are mutually connected with a sequence. They proposed a model of cohesion based on the notion of “continuity of occurrence”. This is aimed at showing how the concept of cohesion can be applied to abstract grammars such as semantic network models in texts. Cohesion occurs where the interpretation of some element of discourse is dependent on that of another—there are five types of cohesion. They are reference, substitution, Ellipsis, identification and conjunction cohesions.

Our analysis in this work is based on Halliday and Hasan’s 1976 model of cohesion. According to Gang and Qiao (2004) Halliday and Hasan outlined taxonomy of types of cohesive relationships which can be formally established within a text and bind a text together. Halliday

and Hasan studied cohesion in English and discovered two categories of cohesive devices: grammatical cohesive devices covering reference, ellipsis, substitution and conjunction, and lexical cohesive devices including reiteration and collocation. This paper is concerned with grammatical cohesion only. These grammatical devices were examined in the sampled texts with reference to Halliday and Hasan’s (1976) model. In the course of analyzing the data, the view of Nwogu (1990) that the concept of cohesion is associated with the concept of text, texture and tie was as well adopted. Nwogu (1990) agrees with Halliday and Hasan (1985) except that in place of the concept of tie, Nwogu substitutes with genre.

Data Presentation and Analysis

The texts in the corpus are subjected to analysis to uncover the prevalent cohesive devices in the selected ASUU communiqués. The texts were labelled A-E. The analysis of each was done in tabular forms in order to exhibit clearly the incidences of cohesive devices uncovered from each text. The cohesive types are represented by their initial letters. R stands for reference cohesion and C stands for conjunction,

Cohesion in text A

The pattern of cohesion in text A is analysed and presented in table 1 A below. The sentences were numbered serially for easy identification of the cohesive ties in the texts. Table 1B shows the analysis of cohesive devices in the text.

Table1A: Why we went on strike-ASUU

1	The Nigerian Government in exercise of her democratic privilege of freedom of expression is free to sell any kind of propaganda for the people to hear/believe	Presupposing item	Cohesive type
		The Nigerian Govt	R
		Her	R
2	Is is just one of the dividends of democracy	The people	R
3	Yet once again ASUU is on strike in her continued struggle for education quality and academic excellence in the nation's "ivory Tower".	It is---	R
		Yet	Conj
4	Neither can anybody be serious with education dished from the hands of poorly prepared ,poorly paid teachers in sub human, ram shackled offices and laboratories.	Her	R
		And	Conj
		The nations--	R
5	It is like some someone chasing the winds for any serious mined society to dream of quality products(students) of education when the students are poorly prepared under such haphazard environment, as we have in our decaying public universities in Nigeria.	Neither	Conj
		The hands of--	R
		It is—	R
		When	Conj
6	Nigerians should also know that the major source of foreign exchange to some countries of the world is their standard educational system.	As	Conj
		we	R
7	ASSU is on strike to persuade the government to wake –up to her responsibilities and practically address the issue of poor funding of the nation's public Universities and the chain effects there from.	Also	Conj
		The major—	R
		Their	R
8	Only for a government that brandishes the rule of law as part of her so- called guiding principles to renege on the signing of this important document.	The govt	R
		Her	R
		And	Conj
9	It is to persuade the federal government of Nigeria and her agencies to honour and sign agreement it reached with ASUU after three and half years of negotiation	The issue of ---	R
		The nation's public uni	R
		And	Conj

Table 1 B: Analysis of Cohesion in table A:

It is to –	R	subject of discussion in sentence 1 and 5 in the text.
And	Conj	Nigeria (S9)
And	Conj	Conductions serve as linking devices. They are in two major categories-the coordinating and the subordinating conjunctions. The
After	Conj	coordinating conjunctions join two or more grammatical elements of equal ranks as in sentences 7 and 9. The subordinating conjunctions on the other hands join grammatical elements of different ranks usually the dependent and the independent clauses. These two major categories help the reader to retrieve the identity or entities or participants in a discourse and enhance cohesion.

The text above consists of nine sentences excluding the title. The title of the text is ‘Why we are on strike-ASUU’. The analysis revealed two types of grammatical cohesion-reference and conjunction. The table presents the number of sentences in Text. Reference cohesion is the prevalent. This is probably because locating participants in discourse is common through the use of the different referencing devices especially articles and personal pronoun. They are few instances of reference to items outside the text (exophoric). These references in made on assumption that the reader is familiar with the information and therefore can link it to the present

The primary function of the referential devices is locating entities within the text and outside the texts. Those locating entities with the text perform either anaphoric (pointing backward) or cataphoric (pointing forward), while those make reference to entities outside the texts are performing exophoric reference. The most prevent as the analysis shows is the anaphoric reference which keeps the reader informed of the identity of the referent. These are often represented by the definite article ‘the’ or the personal pronouns (he, she, they, her, we, I etc.) Things outside the texts are usually referred to by first mentioning it as

Text B

Table 2 A: Reactions to statements by the honourable Minister of Education –June 26 ,2009- ASUU-President-Prof. Ukachukwu Awuzie

- 1 To reverse the decay in the University system, in order to reposition it for greater responsibilities in national development.
- 2 To reverse the brain drain, not only enhancing the remuneration of academic staff, but also by disengaging them from the encumbrances of a unified civil structure.
- 3 We thought and believe that the negotiation will give rise to better learning and teaching environment and ensure that our Universities, once again rated amongst the best in the world.
- 4 These people participated effectively in the deliberation which was conducted in the

- best practices of democracy under the table, meticulous and profound leadership of Deacon Gamanliel Onosode , as chairman.
- 5 I have take to give you this background, in order to share the integrity and the process adopted in reaching agreements in all the four items for negotiation .
- 6 It must also be stated, that on on sensitive issues like the case of our unjustly sacked UniIlorin 49 and the condition of service, the chairman considered them so critical to the negotiation and the final agreement that he had to on behalf of the committee, write the president
- 7 It should further be noted that by September 2008, the executive secretary of NUC in one of our meetings urged the committee to quickly wind up its deliberations to enable the access the money already provided for that agreement in the 2008 budget
- 8 If there was no agreement, from where did the Hon. Minister compute the N78 billion naira which, he has been bandying about as the additional fund needed to service the agreement which he claimed that the government does not have.
- 9 On May 12,2009, and on Government's invitation , we assembled at the NUC to sign the agreement reached between the FGN and the ASUU, and since December, 2008.
- 10 Even with the meltdown, government recently approved N40,Billion naira for the construction of grain silo, when the country has not as of now, met the carrying capacity of the existing ones.

- 11 While we appreciate that the minister was not on seat during the greater part of the negotiation, this should not be an excuse, as his predecessors and subordinates had the primary due to brief him on all issues that relate to the ministry activities.

Table 2 B: Analysis of Cohesion in text-B

Presupposed item	Cohesive type	Presupposing item
The decay	R(cata)	University system(S1)
It	R	University system(S1)
The brain drain	R	The decay(S1)
The remuneration	R	Exophori
But al	conj	Academic staff(S2)
Them	R	Academic staff
We	R	ASUU(in title of text)
And	Conj	Thought (S3)
The negotiation	R	Exophoric
And	Conj	Better learning(S3)
And	Conj	Environment(S3)
Our Universities	R	University(S1)
These people	R	Exophoric
The deliberation	R	The negotiation (S3)

And	Conj	meticulous	We	R	ASUU(Text title
			The NUC	R	NUC(S7)
I	R	ASUU	The	R	ASSU-
The integrity	R	President(text title)	agreement		GOVT(Exophoric)
And	Conj	Profound	When	Conj	N40 billion
		leadership of—(S4)	The country	R	Nigeria (exophoric)
		Integrity(S5)	While	Conj	ASSU(S9)
It must also	R	UniIlorin 49	We	R	ASS(S9)
And	Conj	Sacked UniIlorin	The minister	R	Hon. Minister(S8)
The chairman	R	49(S6)	The	R	Negotiation(S5&6)
The	R,	Deacon Gamaliel	negotiation	R	The greater part
negotiation		,O(S4)	This		of—(S11)
		The			
		negotiation(S3)			
It	R	The executive			
		sec(S7)			
The	R	Committee(S7)			
committee	R	Our university(S3)			
deliberations					
The					
university					
If	Conj	sentence(7)			
The	N78 R	Exophoric			
billion naira	R	Hon. Minister(S8)			
He	Conj	N78 billion(S8)			
As	R	Exophoric			
The	R	Nigerian			
additional		govt(exophoric)			
fund					
The govt					

The above table exhibits the incidences of grammatical cohesion in text C. Reference conjunctive cohesions are the prevalent. This could be so as the write makes every effort to carry the reader along. References are therefore made backward and forward as well as outside the text. There are few instances of exophoric references.

Text C: Resolution of the Emergency National Executive Council (NEC) meeting of the Staff Union of Universities(ASUU), June 30,2007.

1 The meeting discussed issues relating to the current industrial action embarked upon by the union.

2 THE nec has considered the positive intervention , especially by the president and commander in-chief of the Nigerian Armed forces, Alhaji Umaru Musa Yar’adua ,the speaker of the House of Representative Rt.Hon. Patricia Olubunmi

	The meeting	R	NEC meeting(Text title)
3 The union note the firm signals emanating from the government, that no academic staff should be victimized on account of his role in and participation in the current strike.	The current industrial action	R R	ASUU Strike(Exphoric)
4 We, however,want to express our fears that what could potentially be achieved and consolidated through this intervention in the overall interest of the nation can be undermined and jeopardized by bureaucracy and elements interested in keeping the Nigerian education down.	The union		ASUU(text title)
5 In weighing the intervention, NEC has particularly considered as serious the pronouncement of the president on currecnt industrial action and hsi assurances to resolve the issues in the interest of education and the development of Nigeria	The NEC	R	NEC(title of text)
6 Given these assurances, the pleas of our students and parents, NEC of our union at an emergency meeting held on Saturday, June 30, 2007 at the University of Abuja resolved to suspend the current industrial action effect 12 mid night of Saturday, June 01,2007. All lecturers are to resume all academic activities accordingly.	The positive intervention	R R	The president(S2)
Table 3: Analysis of Grammatical cohesion in text C	The speaker house of rep	Conj	Patricia Olubunmi Etteh(S2)
Presupposed Item	Also	Conj	The senate house of rep(S2)
Cohesive type	And	R	Traditional institution
Presupposing item	The peculiarity	Conjunctio n	Exophoric Scholars(S2)
	And	Conj	Pensions(S2)
	And	Conj	ASUU
	The Union	R	Exophoric
	The firm signals	R R	Exophoric
	The government		ASUU(title of text)
	We	R	Sentence 3
	However	conj	
	Our	R	

And	Conj	We(S4)
This intervention	R	Achieved (S2)
And	Conj	Undermined (S4)
And	Conj	Bureaucracy
The pronouncement	R	Exoph1)
	Conj	Action(S5)
And	R	President(S5)
His assurance	Conj	Education(S5)

And		
These assurances	R	Sentence 5
The NEC	R	NEC(S5)
The current industrial action	R	Current industrial action(S5)

Like the preceding two texts, the reference and conjunctive cohesions occurred prevalent in the text. Reference relates two linguistic items in a text, thereby helping the reader to keep abreast. On the other hand conjunctions join grammatical elements in a discourse.

TABLE 4: Text D: Notification of National Strike and Congress Resolution 3rd July, 2007.

The table presents sentences in the texts forming the corpus

- 1 Following the suspension of the National ASUU Strike by the National Executive Council of the Union, the congress at its post strike evaluation meeting held today the 3rd of July, 2007 wish to notify the University administration that the strike at this branch has been suspended
- 2 However, the congress resolved at the meeting that teaching will not commence until the following conditions are met: the immediate payment of May and June Salaries along with the arrears of the excess work load from January to June, 2007, a very positive response on the five percent (5%) hazard allowance and fifteen percent (15%) field trip allowance earlier conveyed to you.

Table 4B: Analysis of Grammatical Cohesion in text D

Presupposed item	Cohesive type	Presupposing item
The suspension of—	R	Exophoric
The congress	R	Title of text
The university administration	R	Exophoric
The strike	R	Strike(title of text & S1)
This branch	R	ASUU FUT, Yola
However	Conj	Sentence
the congress	R	Congress (S1)
The immediate —	R	Cataphoric
	R	Cataphoric

A very---

Text D consists of two sentences. There is only one incidence of conjunction exhibited in the text. The reference cohesion featured is prevalent. Most of them are used intrasentential to relate linguistic elements within a sentence.

Table 5 A: Text E: Resolution ASUU FUT, Yola Branch on non payment of 2 months withheld salaries for

two months.

The branch (ASUU FUT, Yola) held a congress meeting on the 27th January, 2010 and after careful and critical review of the recent developments as regards the above resolved thus: NEC shall give the Federal government three weeks ultimatum to pay the two months withheld salaries after which ASUU-FUT, Yola, will resume full blown strike if the money is not paid with or without the permission of NEC to demand for the payment of the two months withheld salaries from the University authority.

Table 5E: Analysis of Cohesion in Text 5

Presupposed item	Cohesive type	Presupposing item
The branch	R	ASUU
And	Conj	FUT, Yola (text title)
And	Conj	2010(S1)
The above	R	Careful(S1)
NEC	R	Payment of 2
The federal		months withheld

govt	R	salary
The 2 months salary	R	Exophoric
	R	Exophoric
The money		2 months salary (title of text)
		The 2 months salary (title of text)

Text E which is the finally, consists of single complex sentence. Reference cohesion is exhibited as the predominant. The referential items relate the decisions of the branch on the suspension of the strike which include payment of withheld salaries,

Findings and Discussions

The study of grammatical cohesions in the selected communiqués showed that the reference and conjunctive devices are prevalent in all the texts. No incidences of substitution and ellipsis were uncovered. This could be so since communiqués are written to inform or educate the public. Communiqués of trade unions especially are written to enlighten the public on actions/activities of the union. Emphasis therefore is on both how well the text is structured and how concise and comprehensive it is. The prevalence of reference and conjunctive cohesions is in consonance with the bone of contentions between union and the government. In all the six texts, references are often made to the agreement that the union and the government reached and the refusal of the

government to implement the agreement which led to yet another strike by the union. The use of reference cohesions serves two major purposes. It keeps the reader abreast with the identities of the participants or entities in the discourse. Through the use of the definite article 'the' for example, the reader picks the identity of earlier mentioned participant or entity in a discourse. Similarly, the uses of the personal pronouns enable the reader not only to retrieve the identity of a participant or entity in a discourse but enable the writer to avoid repetition which may make the reading boring and cumbersome.

Conjunctions are cohesive devices used to hold or join elements of texts together. The elements could be words, phrases, clauses, and sentences. They are vital in presenting summary of information such as communiqués. The conjunctions therefore enable writers to convey concise information to the audience. Grammatical cohesions in discourse are integral part of discourse as they are bricks for building sentences. Elements of texts cohere only through the use of grammatical cohesive devices.

Conclusion

Based on the result of the study, conclusion can be drawn that ASUU communiqués exhibits two common grammatical cohesions. They are the referential and conjunctive cohesions. It can also be concluded that referential devices are used to locate linguistic items in a text. The most common ones in the texts subjected to analysis are personal pronouns. It can also be concluded that conjunctions enable

writers to join elements of texts together. The most prevalent in the texts studied are the coordinators. Not many incidences of the uses of subordinations were noted. This could be probably because communiqués are summaries, which does not require elaborations by the use of subordinators. Finally, conclusions can be drawn that substitution and ellipsis are negligible in trade union communiqués. This could also be attributed to the need to inform or educate the audience on the activities of the union. Substitution and ellipsis however conceal information. Lay people and inexperienced readers may find difficulties in relating the antecedent of the substitutes or elided elements.

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