



Research Article

Linguistic Threads: Crafting Meaning Through Cohesion and Coherence

Nwagbara Blessing Chinelo* 

Department of Educational Foundations, Michael and Cecilia Ibru Foundation College of Education, Delta State, Nigeria

Abstract

This study investigates the interplay between cohesion and coherence in discourse, examining how linguistic resources enable texts to function as unified and interpretable wholes. Grounded in Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar, with particular emphasis on the textual metafunction, the paper analyses grammatical and lexical cohesive devices in selected texts by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie - *Purple Hibiscus* and *Zikora*. Employing a qualitative descriptive methodology, the study identifies and categorises instances of reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction, and lexical cohesion, demonstrating how these surface-level mechanisms establish syntactic and semantic connectivity across clauses and sentences. Beyond the identification of cohesive ties, the study interrogates how such linguistic patterns facilitate the construction of coherence. Cohesion operates through explicit textual markers that signal relationships within the discourse, coherence is conceptualised as a cognitive and interpretive achievement shaped by contextual knowledge, thematic development, and logical sequencing. The analysis reveals that cohesive devices function as guiding frameworks that structure information flow, whereas coherence emerges from the reader's integration of these cues into a meaningful and contextually grounded interpretation. The findings affirm that cohesion and coherence are complementary yet analytically distinct processes in discourse construction. Effective meaning-making depends not solely on the presence of cohesive markers but on their interaction with interpretive processes that sustain unity and relevance. By elucidating this relationship within literary discourse, the study contributes to ongoing discussions in discourse analysis and stylistics, highlighting the centrality of cohesive strategies in enhancing textual clarity, continuity, and communicative effectiveness.

Keywords

Cohesion, Coherence, Discourse, Textuality

1. Introduction

Language is central to human communication and meaning-making. It is through language, individuals express thoughts, emotions, and experiences, and construct shared realities within social contexts. However, meaning in language does not arise from isolated words or sentences alone; rather, it

emerges from the way linguistic units are organised into coherent texts. This understanding has drawn scholarly attention to how texts achieve unity and interpretability beyond sentence boundaries [7, 9].

During discourse the use of language extends beyond the sentence or utterance level. There is an emphasis on the social

*Correspondence: Nwagbara Blessing Chinelo (blissingnwagbara39@gmail.com)

Received: 21 February 2026; **Accepted:** 5 March 2026; **Published:** 22 July 2026



Copyright: © The Author(s), 2026. Published by Science Publishing Group. This is an **Open Access** article, distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

context and the interactive, dialogic nature of communication [15]. In linguistics, comprehension is ascertained through cohesion, coherence among other elements of textuality as Beaugrande and Dressler emphasis [5]. The distinction between cohesion and coherence has become fundamental to the study of texts and discourse. Cohesion refers to the explicit linguistic devices that connect sentences and clauses, such as reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction, and lexical relations [9]. These surface-level features contribute to textual continuity and signal relationships within a text. Coherence, on the other hand, concerns the underlying sense and logical unity perceived by readers, arising from contextual knowledge, shared assumptions, and the meaningful progression of ideas [5, 8]. Cohesion is text-based and observable while coherence is interpretive and reader-dependent.

Despite their close relationship, cohesion and coherence are not synonymous. A text may be cohesive without being coherent, just as a coherent text may rely on minimal overt cohesive markers. This distinction has been widely discussed in discourse studies. Although, Halliday and Hasan have emphasised the structural role of cohesive ties in textual organisation [9], Beaugrande and Dressler argue that textual unity depends not only on cognitive and contextual factors [5]. Similarly Brown and Yule [7] stress that interpretation extends beyond linguistic form to background knowledge and situational understanding.

Several studies have applied discourse analytical and systemic functional approaches to literary texts, including analyses of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's works (Allagbe & Allagbe [4] Al Fajri [3]; Nwagbara, [13]). However, many of these studies focus on stylistic patterns, ideology, or feminist concerns, with less emphasis on a systematic examination of how cohesive mechanisms interact with coherence construction within and across texts. There remains a need for a study that integrates grammatical and lexical cohesion with reader-oriented coherence within a unified textual metafunction framework.

Literary texts provide a particularly rich site for exploring this relationship, as they often combine dense cohesive patterns with implicit meaning-making strategies. This study therefore investigates the interaction between cohesion and coherence in selected texts by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie - *Purple Hibiscus* and *Zikora*. These texts are chosen for their thematic depth, stylistic clarity, and relevance to contemporary African discourse. Using Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar, with emphasis on the textual metafunction, the study analyses how grammatical and lexical cohesive devices contribute to textual unity, and how coherence emerges through interpretation and contextual relevance.

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to discourse analysis by clarifying the functional relationship between linguistic structures and interpretative meaning in contemporary African literary discourse. By demonstrating how cohesion operates as a facilitating mechanism for coherence, the study advances understanding of how texts function as unified communicative acts.

The objectives of this study are therefore:

- I To identify and systematically catalog linguistic features of grammatical and lexical items that are employed to create cohesive devices within a discourse.
- II To analyse and describe the function of these identified linguistic features in creating syntactic and semantic links.
- III To examine the interaction between surface-level cohesion and reader-oriented coherence in literary discourse.

2. Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) as developed by Halliday, which views language as a resource for making meaning in social contexts. Rather than treating language as a set of abstract rules, SFG emphasises how linguistic choices are shaped by communicative purposes and situational contexts. Central to this framework is the notion that language performs multiple functions simultaneously whenever it is used.

Halliday identifies three broad metafunctions of language: the ideational, interpersonal, and textual metafunctions. The ideational metafunction enables speakers and writers to represent experience and construct meaning about the world, while the interpersonal metafunction facilitates interaction and the expression of attitudes, roles, and relationships. The textual metafunction, which is most relevant to this study, concerns how language is organised to form coherent and unified texts. It accounts for how clauses and sentences are woven together to produce continuity and relevance in discourse.

Cohesion plays a central role in textual metafunction. As Kamalu and Osisanwo [12] assert, discourse analysis demands a systematic catalog of linguistic features which we apply in this study to examine how cohesion supports thematic coherence in Adichie's texts. Halliday and Hasan describe cohesion as the network of linguistic ties that link elements of a text together. These ties operate across sentence boundaries and include grammatical resources such as reference, substitution, ellipsis, and conjunction, as well as lexical relations such as repetition, synonymy, hyponymy, and collocation. Through these devices, texts achieve surface continuity and structural connectedness.

However, cohesion alone does not guarantee that a text will be meaningful or interpretable. This brings into focus the concept of coherence, which refers to the underlying sense or unity that readers perceive in a text. Coherence is not encoded directly in linguistic forms but emerges through the interaction between textual cues and readers' background knowledge, expectations, and contextual understanding. Cohesive devices signal relationships within the text while coherence depends on how these signals are interpreted and integrated into a meaningful whole.

The distinction between cohesion and coherence is therefore crucial for discourse analysis. Cohesion is observable and text-based, whereas coherence is interpretive and context-dependent. Nonetheless, the two are closely related: cohesive

patterns often guide readers toward coherent interpretations, even though they cannot, by themselves, ensure textual unity. This study adopts this complementary view, treating cohesion as a facilitating mechanism and coherence as an interpretive outcome.

By situating cohesion and coherence within the framework of the textual metafunction, this study provides a systematic basis for analysing how literary texts achieve unity and meaning. The framework enables an examination of both the linguistic resources employed in the texts and the interpretive processes through which readers construct coherence.

3. Tools for Knitting the Linguistic Surface Structure

The surface structure is the linguistic output (linguistic constructs that we can see and hear) that we perceive. It manifests systematically through cohesion. Cohesion occurs at the surface structure of the text manifested through syntax. Cohesion – sticking together; Beaugrande and Dressler explain the various occurrences in the text and its situation of utilisation related to each other. Cohesion is therefore connecting words to form syntactic and semantic harmony [5]. Such relations are demonstrated through grammatical cohesion and lexical cohesion. Although, cohesion has been treated as a network of overt linguistic ties within text, more recent scholarship emphasises that coherence is not merely the cumulative effect of cohesive devices but an interpretative achievement negotiated between text and reader. In Hyland's opinion, textual meaning is shaped through metadiscursive guidance, whereby writers actively structure discourse to anticipate reader interpretation [11]. This position is similar to Tanskanen who foregrounds that interpersonal coherence is as a dynamic process emerging from shared contextual assumptions rather than from surface ties alone [16]. These perspectives reinforce the position adopted for this study: that cohesive resources in Adichie's narratives function not only structurally but interpretatively, guiding readers towards deeper semantic integration.

Grammatical cohesive devices are linguistic tools that link sentences and clauses within a text, ensuring a smooth flow and making the entire piece unified and connected. The four main grammatical cohesive devices outlined by Halliday and Hasan are: references, conjunctions, substitution and ellipsis [9]. In their opinion, Beaugrande and Dressler (1981) state that these devices contribute to the stability and the economy in text production and text processing for the participants of the discourse. In the preceding paragraphs, the cohesive ties are discussed.

3.1. Phoric Relations

Phoric relationships are lexical constructs used to identify aforementioned, undermentioned and metaphorical entities to avoid repetition in texts. They are used to make texts economical; pronouns are best known for references. References are

basically categorised into: endophoric and exophoric references. Endophoric references are found within a text. Exophoric references on the contrary are not constituents of a text's internal structure, it points to the real-world context. This kind is often seen in newspaper publications where comprehension is dependent on the physical setting, ongoing activity and shared experience. An instance is: *The First Lady addressed the nation; it is* inferred that the readers already know who the first lady is in the real-world. The reference made in that instance is the exophoric reference. Opara highlights that exophora is used to help interlocutors establish a fictional situation of reference to which the participants can be referred [14].

Anaphoric and cataphoric references are within the endophoric reference. Anaphoric reference means to “look backwards” in the text. Consider: Mr George is a citizen of the United States but he prefers to live in Nigeria. In order to decipher who *he* refers to, one has to look backward.

Cataphoric reference is “looking forward” in the text. Opara explains that in cataphoric referencing, the unnamed expression usually a pronoun or demonstrative appears first and the named expression appears second for instance: *she is a survivor, a warrior, a defender of her pride, ever since she travelled abroad its been one strain after another but she has conquered, I've never met a lady like Evanessa* [14]. In this context, *she* is unknown, creating suspense until the end when Evanessa is revealed as *she*.

3.2 Conjunctions

Conjunctions are connectors used for additive, adversative, casual and temporal purposes. By additive, ideas are made to connect and correlate using *and, also, in addition, furthermore, moreover, besides, plus, as well as*. These additive conjunctions also overlap with other word classes depending on how they function in a sentence. Adversative expresses opposition, contrast, concession and such examples are: *but, yet, however, nevertheless, still, though, on the other hand, in contrast, nonetheless, nonetheless, even so, all the same*. Take for instance; I went to the market to buy some tomatoes, pepper and salt to make some sauce. (additive). My mother ate the food but she complained about the taste (adversative). Sandra chose Kelly over John because John's account is in the red.

3.3. Substitutions

Substitution is a cohesive device that includes repeating a structure but filling it with new element(s) to maintain flow in the text. In the response, did *he go to Obusa?* Yes, he did. The pro-verb *did* substitutes for the answer, “yes, he went to Ibusa” [14]. Another instance is: he did not *hide*; he did not *pretend*. Besides lexical items, phrases and clauses can also be substituted. Basically, there are three kinds of substitution: nominal, verbal and clausal. In nominals, nouns or noun phrases are substituted commonly with *one, ones*, other instances are: I

want a *new bracelet*, do you want *one*? Such a *brilliant wife*! Not like other *ones*.

Verbal substitutions are usually done with *do* and *did* in: A: I prefer singing to praying. B: I *do* too. *Do* embodies *singing to praying*.

3.4. Ellipsis

Ellipsis involves leaving out a word or a phrase with the hope that it is understood nonetheless. It is an intentional omission that helps to link utterances. It is used with the assumption that the readers can infer what the writer is saying because the omitted idea has been previously mentioned. Ellipsis can be done at the word, phrasal or clausal level. Instances of ellipsis are: *She* paused and collapsed and died. (She paused and she collapsed and she died.) *Obiora* jumped up and ran. (Obiora jumped up and Obiora ran out).

3.5. Lexical Cohesion

Lexical cohesion refers to semantic relations rather than grammatical structures such as synonymy, antonymy, repetition, hyponymy and collocation. This concept was extensively discussed by Halliday and Hasan (1976). These are techniques employed to aid unity and coherence in texts.

3.5.1. Synonymy

Synonymy/near synonyms is a semantic situation whereby lexical items are easily replaced with others and the same meaning is retained. Instances are: The house is *large* / the house is *big* (gigantic, enormous). The pastor told the congregation to make a joyful noise (shout of joy/ song of praise/ exultant sound/ jubilant sound) to the lord.

3.5.2. Antonymy

Antonymy is a linguistic situation where linguistic features are in contrast with the replaced lexical items. Lecturer/student, complicated/ simple, plaintiff/defendant etc. There are gradable antonyms, complementary antonyms, relational antonyms, directional/ reversive antonyms.

3.5.3. Repetition

Repetition is a linguistic device adopted to create emphasis, cohesion and clarity. It is a type of lexical cohesion that emphasises key ideas through restating a word, phrase or clause. It is mostly adopted for rhetorical purposes and to show emotion. Such as: *They killed his son*, after paying the ransom and pleading that they let him leave, *they killed his son*. It was later discovered that he is *a boy*, *a boy*!

3.5.4. Hyponymy

Hyponymy is a term for linguistic items which have other units in classification. A hyponym is a subcategory of a broader term (superordinate). To illustrate: Africa, Europe,

Asia, North America- hyponyms (the hypernym therefore is Continent). Other examples are Dr, Chief, Reverend, Bishop, Prof., Engineer, Pastor (titles - superordinate term).

3.5.5. Collocation

Collocation occurs when certain words co-occur. They frequently occur to express certain ideas in heavy rain, strong wind, bright sunshine, feel sick, overcome fear, show anger, make profit, shop online, give advice, speak clearly, sleep peacefully, congratulate on, strong coffee, sense of humour, commit a crime etc.

4. Coherence

Coherence underlies the surface structure to give the overall sense and logical flow of the text. It is what goes on in the mind of the reader and it “determines the rational organisation of the subject matter determined by a given cultural context” Boreus and Bergstorm [6]. As Morgan as cited in Beaugrande and Dressler [5] puts it, the cohesion of the surface text rests upon the presupposed coherence of the textual word. In other words, a text’s logical flow emerges as readers connect linguistic cues to their own background understanding.

This assertion indicates that the human mind achieves coherence based on preconceived knowledge it has about a concept. Take for instance at the mention of the kitchen, one need not be told that it is a place where meals are cooked. These ideas have already been embedded into the human mind as well as the utensils expected to be found in the kitchen. In describing the concept of coherence, Brown and Yule explain that we could rely on syntactic and lexical features in a linguistic message to arrive at an interpretation yet, it is not enough for our understanding of a text. They further add that, we might claim to have knowledge of other non-linguistic formats through which information is relayed [7]. The fact is that their contiguity leads us to interpret them as connected. The readers make subconscious effort to arrive at the writer’s intended meaning.

Coherence is attained through consistency in topic development, clear logical progression from one idea to the next, the use of appropriate transitional phrases, and the overall clarity and unity of the text. A coherent text will guide the reader from one point to the next without confusion. In analysing coherence in a text, we look at how the text maintains consistency in terms of topic and subtopics. This involves relying on the surface structure to consider whether they help the reader follow the argument. Thematic progressions - how topics and themes are introduced and developed across sentences and paragraphs - aid coherence. There are few nuanced aspects of coherence:

4.1. Cognitive Coherence

This kind of coherence is determined by the participants’ level of understanding. It is dependent on age, exposure and

inferences. It involves invoking familiar knowledge structures (e.g. sermon, academic discussions, sports etc). The term “intercourse” can be used in business and romantic environments and it is how much knowledge an individual has that would define the intended meaning in both contexts.

4.2. Rhetorical Coherence

This concerns how a text is strategically organised to achieve communicative goals, especially persuasion, explanation and evaluation. It is mostly employed in didactic situations, politicking and orature. It is patterned to attain claim; justification, problem; solution, evidence; interpretation, concession; rebuttal, evaluation; recommendation.

4.3. Intertextual Coherence

Coherence is influenced by interconnectedness of similar experiences of the world to the text being consumed. Intertextuality results as an effect of knowledge of the world around the text being studied. In the text for this study, we see Chimamanda’s character in *Purple Hibiscus* (PH) depicting a character as one with a dual personality - kind to the public but difficult and unloving with his family. In real life situations, such a personality exists.

4.4. Pragmatic Coherence

As the term pragmatics imply, it refers to the alignment between a text and the situational context. Registers are appropriate, tone is right for the communicative process, audience expectations are met and contextual cues are not ignored. For example: the diction of a teacher would differ if he/she teaches in a primary school for children from teaching in a tertiary institution.

4.5. Multimodal Coherence

Semiotic modes such as language, visuals, layout, sound, gestures work together to create unified meaning. It involves symbolic interpretation: take the instance of a public carrying a logo of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, that memo would be considered both authentic and taken seriously.

5. Methodology

The data for this study are sourced from Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus* [1] and *Zikora* [2]. The data retrieved are based on Halliday’s Language function and anchored on the textual metafunction - cohesion.

The data utilised are retrieved using a purposeful selection method. Selected data are displayed for references, substitutions, hyponymy, synonymy, collocations, conjunctions and ellipsis. The extracts for analysis are chosen based on their ability to reflect elements of cohesion in Adichie’s texts.

The justification for this study rests on the premise that Adichie is a Nigerian literary writer; this makes her work easy to analyse, because she inculcates the Nigerian experiences in her works and her style of writing is exemplary of the contemporary writer in the 21st century. Amongst her works, *Purple Hibiscus* and *Zikora* have been chosen based on their varying qualities – *PH* is a novel, *ZK* is a short story that possesses the qualities of both a letter and a manifesto.

The data for analysis are analysed formally by considering the linguistic properties of the texts and functionally by relating it to the context to show how the elements of textuality are realised. In order to make the analysis descriptive and organised, this study adopts a qualitative approach of data analysis.

6. Data Presentation and Analysis

6.1. Tag Reference/Phoric Relations

A1 You know that small table where we keep the family Bible nne? Your father broke it on my belly. (Ref. Type = Anaphoric PH. 243)

A2 My doctor said there was nothing he could do to save it. I was six weeks gone. (Ref. Type = Cataphoric PH 248)

A3 The insects did not buzz around us, perhaps because the Kerosene lamp was not on or perhaps because they sensed the tension (Ref. Type = Anaphoric PH 23)

A4 A blooded corpse, a man in blue jeans, lay on the roadside. (Ref. Type = cataphoric PH 103)

A5 Coups begat coups, he said, telling about bloody coups of the sixties, which ended in civil war... (Ref. Type = Exophoric PH 24)

A6 A general with a strong accent came on. (Ref. Type = Exophoric PH 24)

A7 Inside is a magazine with an envelope stuffed full of crisp naira notes, fresh from the bank. (Exophoric PH 294)

B1 Emmanuel still waits until I’m asleep, then he climbs on me, and of course I’m dry and I wake up in pain (Anaphoric PH 10)

B2 ‘Water, this is why it’s best to wait for the right person, and not just settle’, I said over face time to my cousin Mmiliaku (Anaphoric PH 10)

B3 My doctor came in looking unbearably calm. “Dr. K, something is wrong. I just know something is wrong” (Cataphoric ZK 6)

B4 After the author introduced us, Kwame leaned toward me and said with a casual intimacy that wasn’t inappropriate, as though we already knew each other but only as good friends. (Cataphoric ZK 8)

B5 Some of us have men and are still doing it alone (Exophoric ZK 14)

B6 I’d read somewhere that material mortality was higher in America than anywhere else in the Western World - or was it just higher for Black women? (Exophoric ZK 6)

Adichie utilises anaphoric references to maintain connectivity by reminding readers of previously mentioned entities.

Anaphora in A1, A3, B1, are employed to avoid redundancy. It is also a method to produce substitution. In B2, she demonstrates the cognate relationship between English and Igbo showcasing the language as one rich in lexicon and allowing for code-mixing. Cataphoric references create suspense or provide clarity as the reader progresses. Exophoric references link the text to real-world Nigerian history and social issues, such as political instability, corruption, and the solidarity plight of women. The technique here is: for readers to make sense of what they read, there should be reference within and outside the world of the text.

6.2. Tag Substitutes

C1 Most people did not kneel to receive communion at the marble altar, with the blond life – size virgin Mary mounted nearby, but papa did. (P.H. 4)

C2 He would hold his eyes shut so hard that his face tightened into a grimace, and he would stick his tongue out as far as it could go. (P.H. 4)

C3 He was supposed to say something now, to contribute, to complement Papa's new product. We always did, each time an employee from one of his factories brought a product sample for us. (P.H. 13)

C4 'Chiamaka' says God is beautiful, 'Chima' says God knows best, 'Chiebuka' says God is the greatest. (P.H. 266)

D1 Once, I was about nine and my father's second wife, Aunt Nwanneka, had just had a baby, my brother Ugonna ("Your half brother", my mother always said) (Z.K. 6)

D2 She wanted me to meet each rush of pain with a mute grinding of teeth, to endure pain, to embrace pain. (Z.K. 7)

D3 She was my cousin's cousin. I had not liked her but I mourned her. (Z.K. 6)

D4 I think I should leave. Is that okay? He asked as though he needed permission to abandon.

The following selections illustrate how substitution is used to maintain flow, avoid lengthy repetitions and avoid redundancy - it is an effective technique adopted to avoid boring readers. In C1, C2, C3, substitution occurs as shorter versions, a technique that helps readers to maintain a flow of thought. Asides just replacing phrases or clauses, substitutes are also used to display synonyms and build word order to heighten feelings - illustrated in D1, D2 and D4. C4 displays substitution as a technique for creating parallel structures. Substitution also creates multiple perspectives on a single character enriching the reader's mental image.

6.3. Tag Collocation

E1 Heathen festival unconventional collocate (P.H. 75)

E2 Eucharistic feast conventional collocate (P.H. 205)

E3 Big Man unconventional (P.H. 95)

F1 Beautiful boy unconventional (Z.K. 17)

F2 Formal uniforms unconventional (Z.K. 10)

F3 World-weary unconventional (Z.K. 8)

Some of the collocates in Adichie's works are unconventional (irregular). This method of collocate creation is adopted for demonstrating that Nigerian writers have unique ways of putting out their thoughts and the Nigerian experiences to the world. Eugene, a character in PH demonstrates that he is pious through his idiolect by categorising traditional festivals as ungodly. E3 showcases a Nigerian variety of English used to denote affluence. In F1, there is a case of what Udumukwu terms "defamiliarisation" - Beautiful is a word that is often associated with femininity but this convention is deliberately challenged to encourage readers to adopt a more balanced perspective. F2 is adopted for comic relief and to expose cultural shock. In African countries, uniforms especially for ceremonies are termed "ashoebi" - it comprises vibrant colours and designs used to group personalities (family, friends, Alumni, christian body etc). Adichie exposes America as devoid of concepts such as this.

6.4. Tag Synonymy

G1 I stood up and he hugged me, pressed me close so that I felt the beat of his heart under his soft chest (P.H. 34)

G2 Those shoulders that bloomed in Nsukka that grew wide and capable have sagged in the thirty-one months that he has been here. Almost three years. P.H. 291-292.

G3 She writes about her two jobs, one at a community college and one at a pharmacy, or drugstore, as they call it. (P.H. 292)

H1 The clenching in my lower body came and went, random, irregular, like mean surprises. (Z.K. 5)

H2 In America, I began to call her my father's other wife, because people assumed second wife was the woman my father had married when he was no longer married to my mother. (Z.K. 22)

H3 I looked at my mother, by the window, turned away, separate and apart from the conversation. (Z.K. 24)

Synonyms are used to establish entailment and provide extra layers of meaning. G1 illustrates that hugging entails "pressing close". In G3, she uses synonyms as a bridge for dialectal differences between Nigerian and American English. H1 and H3 are used to create a crescendo effect, heightening the emotional impact of the narrative. This technique ensures clarity while avoiding repetitive phrasing. H2 shows the struggles Zikora has with identity, both "other wife" and "second wife" have a psychological import on how her relationship with the character would be. This "other wife" and "second wife" also showcasing how meaning is perceived in different climes. Adichie through this technique illustrates that no two words are exactly the same. There must be a slight difference. These synonyms are used for emphasis and the avoidance of repetition.

6.5. Tag Hyponymy Co-Hyponyms

I1 Plants Cashew tree, feangi pani trees, purple bongainvillea, gnarled trees, hibiscus (P.H. 8-9)

I2 Soft drinks Coke, Fanta and Sprite (P.H. 8)

J1 Medicine A bottle of Advil, birth control pills (Z.K. 12 & 15)

J2 Wife Other wife, second wife, senior wife (Z.K. 22 & 24)

Hyponyms in both PH and ZK are essentially for educational purposes. By listing the co-hyponyms through her narrative technique, Adichie is able to enlighten young readers as seen in I1. Soft drinks also known as “mineral” in Nigerian parlance used to show the distribution of Coca-cola products around the world (maybe as a means to demonstrate Nigeria as a developed nation). In J2, we see what polygamy entails - “other wife” implies a certain significance, “second wife” suggests a diminished status and “senior wife” conveys a greater sense of importance. This demonstrates that although they are similar in terms, they are not essentially similar in meaning.

6.6. Tag Conjunction

K1 And although I was not sure why I was crying, or if I was crying for the same reasons as those other people kneeling in front of the pews, I felt proud to have Papa do that. (P.H. 250)

K2 And yet, I did not want to talk to him, I wanted to leave with Father Amadi, or with Auntie Ifeoma, and never come back. (P.H. 262)

K3 That evening, tempers cooled and we had dinner together, but there was not much laughter. (P.H. 267)

L1 Auntie Nwanneka offered us plantain and fish, the house smelled of delicious frying and my mother said no thank you, that we had just eaten, but when I went to pee, I told Auntie Nwanneka I was hungry, and she brought me a plate, smiling, her face plump and fresh. (Z.K. 7)

L2 I cradled him and hushed him and pushed my nipple into his mouth and then I, too, began to cry. (Z.K. 20)

L3 Sleep, try and sleep (Z.K. 26)

Conjunctions are used to bring ideas together and prescriptive grammar frowns against using conjunctions at the thematic positions. However, Adichie flaunts this rule in K1 & K2. In K3, L1 and L2 the order is maintained - structures are conjoined. In L3 there is a significant display of language patterns. “Try and sleep” is rather informal and casual; this demonstrates that the characters share an informal kind of relationship. If “try to sleep” were used instead, it may have demonstrated another kind of relationship that exists between the participants of the discourse. Here, the right register is used in the right context. In L2 furthermore, conjunctions are used to display a flow of emotions as the character speaks. Plantain and fish is used to expose a meal combination that is prevalent in Nigeria.

6.7. Tag Ellipsis

M1 I was glad to wake up, * glad to see the morning stream in through the window. (P.H. 276)

M2 I knew that there was much laughter, *much talk about

the stadium and *about remembering (P.H. 276)

M3 I stared at his car until it disappeared down the slope that led to Ikejiani Avenue. I was still staring *when Amaka walked over to me.

N1 All through the night my mother sat near me but * never touched me. (Z.K. 5)

N2 She wanted me to meet each rush of pain with a mute grinding of teeth, *to endure pain with pride *to embrace pain.

N3 My head pounded and * throbbed. (Z.K. 16)

The selected instances of ellipsis reveal that deletion in the texts is not merely a stylistic economy but a meaning-bearing discourse strategy that encodes character psychology, sociocultural ideology, and narrative pacing. Across the excerpts, ellipsis operates at three interrelated levels: experiential focus, cognitive engagement, and ideological positioning.

At the experiential level, ellipsis functions to re-orient reader attention away from grammatical agents and towards temporality, affect, or action. For instance, in M1 (I was glad to wake up, glad to see morning stream in through the window), the deletion of the repeated subject (I was) suppresses self-reference and foregrounds morning as a symbolic temporal marker. This foregrounding encodes hope and renewal, suggesting that ellipsis here participates in the construction of affective meaning rather than grammatical cohesion alone. Similarly, in M3, the omission of a prepositional phrase after still staring shifts attention from Father Amadi’s car to Kambili’s psychological state, signalling introspection and emotional suspension. In these instances, ellipsis becomes a tool for interiority, allowing the narrative to privilege consciousness over physical description.

Ellipsis also plays a crucial role in shaping narrative rhythm and cognitive processing. In M2, the deletion of repeated structures (much laughter, much talk about...) avoids a poetic parallelism that would slow the prose and instead sustains narrative flow. This choice aligns with the demands of prose narration, where excessive repetition may disrupt readability. Likewise, in N3 (My head pounded and throbbed), ellipsis facilitates a crescendo effect, compressing sensation into a rapid sequence that mirrors physical pain. Here, ellipsis works iconically: the reduced linguistic form mirrors the overwhelming immediacy of the experience described.

7. Discussion

The analysis demonstrates that cohesive resources in the selected texts function beyond mere grammatical linkage. The Halliday framework within the textual metafunction demonstrates that these devices organise information flow, manage thematic progression and guide interpretative processing. Referential ties operate not only as syntactic connectors but also as mechanisms of perspective management, positioning readers within the experiential world of the characters.

Lexical cohesion, particularly through synonymy, hyponymy and collocation, contributes to semantic density and cul-

tural positioning. The deployment of unconventional collocates reflects localised Nigerian English usage, thereby embedding sociocultural identity within textual texture. These findings align with systematic functional claims that language simultaneously constructs experiential and textual meaning [10].

Furthermore, ellipsis and substitution reveal that cohesion interacts with narrative pacing and psychological representation. The strategic omission of recoverable elements shifts attention from grammatical structure to experiential meaning, reinforcing Beaugrande and Dressler's [5] argument that textual unity depends on both linguistic and cognitive factors.

The findings therefore confirm that cohesion alone does not guarantee coherence; rather, coherence emerges through the interpretative integration of cohesive cues within sociocultural and cognitive cues frameworks. This supports Van Dijk's position that discourse comprehension involves mental model construction beyond surface ties [8].

8. Conclusion

The analysis of the selected texts demonstrates that textual unity is not accidental but carefully constructed through identifiable grammatical and lexical cohesive devices. Through references, substitutions, ellipsis, conjunctions, synonymy, hyponymy, repetition and collocation, the texts reveal a systematic network of linguistic ties that sustain surface continuity. These devices function not merely as structural connectors but as strategic resources for organising meaning within the discourse.

Beyond identifying these mechanisms, the study has shown that their significance lies in how they contribute to coherence construction. Cohesive ties guide thematic development, regulate information flow and create semantic proximity between ideas. However, coherence does not reside in linguistic forms alone; rather, it emerges through the reader's interpretative engagement with these forms, supported by contextual knowledge and cultural awareness. The textual metafunction framework makes visible how structural organisation and interpretative meaning operates simultaneously.

Furthermore, the findings confirm that cohesion and coherence function as complementary but distinct processes in literary discourse. Cohesion provides the observable texture of the text while coherence is achieved through the integration of these surface cues into a meaningful whole. The interaction between linguistic structure and cognitive interpretation ultimately enables the narratives to remain engaging, culturally resonant and logically unified.

Overall, the study reinforces the view that effective discourse construction depends on the dynamic relationship between surface-level organisation and deeper interpretative processes. By situating cohesive analysis within a broader framework, this research contributes a clearer understanding of how literary texts craft meaning through linguistic design.

Abbreviations

PH	Purple Hibiscus
ZK	Zikora

Author Contributions

Nwagbara Blessing Chinelo: Conceptualization, Resources

Conflicts of Interest

The author affirms that there are no financial, personal or professional conflicts of interest that could have influenced the outcomes or interpretations presented in this study.

References

- [1] Adichie, C. N. (2003). *Purple Hibiscus*. Lagos: Farafina.
- [2] Adichie, C. N. (2020). Zikora. Amazon: www.apub.com
- [3] Al Fajri, S. M. (2017). A stylistic analysis of linguistic patterns in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*. *Advances in Language and Literary Studies* 8 (3), 55-61
www.journalsaiac.org.com
- [4] Allagbe, A. A. and Allagbe, A. M. (2017). A systemic functional stylistic appraisal of Chimamanda N. Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*. *International Journal on Studies in English Language and Literature (IJSELL)* 5(1), 69 – 86.
<https://www.arcjournals.org>
- [5] Beaugrande, R. A. and Dressler, W. (1981). *Introduction to Text Linguistics*. London: Longman.
<https://academic.onp.com>
- [6] Boreus, K and Bergstorm, G. (2017). *Analyzing Text and Discourse*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- [7] Brown, G and Yule, G. (1983). *Discourse Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- [8] Dijk, V. T. (2013). *Discourse and knowledge*.
www.lektorium.tv
- [9] Halliday, M. A. K. and Hasan, R. (1976). *Cohesion in English*. London: Longman. www.worldcat.org
- [10] Halliday, M. A. K. (1978). *Language as Social Semiotics: The Social Interpretation of Language and Meaning*. London: Edward Arnold. www.scrip.org
- [11] Hyland, K. (2017). Metadiscourse: what is it and where is it going? *Journal of Pragmatics*, 113, 16-29.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma2017.03.007>
- [12] Kamalu, I. and Osisanwo, A. (2015). Discourse analysis. In Kamalu, I. and Tamunobelema, I. *Issues in the Study of Language and Literature*. Ibadan: Kraft books Limited.

- [13] Nwagbara, B. C. (2016). *A Discourse Analysis of Selected Fictional Texts of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie*. Delta State University, Abraka.
- [14] Opara, S. (2000). *Topics in Discourse Analysis*. Owerri: Gabotony and Associated Ltd.
- [15] Stubbs, M. (1983). *Discourse Analysis*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- [16] Tanskanen, S. K. (2018). Interpersonal coherence in discourse. *Discourse Studies*, 20(4), 473-490.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1461445618754590>