

# COHESION AND COHERENCE IN EDITORS' COMMENTS IN *TELL* MAGAZINES

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## **Abstract**

*This paper analyses cohesion and coherence in editors' comments in the Tell magazine. The study is motivated by the need to determine the linguistic devices that enhance cohesion and coherence in the comments and how these combine to achieve meaningful discourse.*

*For data, editors' comments are sampled in Tell magazines between July 2000 and July 2004. The data are analyzed using Halliday and Hasan's (1976) theory of cohesion and coherence in discourse.*

*The study observes that editors' comments are etched by meaning dependent, and issue-sensitive cohesive and coherent devices, which aid readers' understanding of the comments, strengthen the editors' messages and delineate stylistic peculiarities. The paper discusses the implications of the devices to readers of Tell Magazine. It concludes that a study of cohesion and coherence in editors' comments illuminates the discourse value of cohesive ties and provides material for discourse pedagogy. Also, the paper promises a better understanding for readers of editors' comments, thus having the advantage of developing critical-minded readers, who will sieve policies and events with a more balanced stance.*

## **Introduction**

Before 1960s, syntactic structures or sentences were regarded as the unit to which syntactic rules apply. Thus, linguistic analysis was, for quite some time, concerned with construction of sentences which was believed to be a linguistic form, not included by virtue of any grammatical construction in any larger linguistic form (cf. Bloomfield 1933). Research findings have, however, ostensibly revealed that linguistic analysis should no longer be limited to sentence-level analysis but should extend to cover the way sentences work in sequence to produce coherent stretches of utterances referred to as discourse or text. This led to the emergence of text linguistics which helps to overcome the obvious limitation of sentence-oriented study (cf. Zhao, Yan and Zhou 2009:313). The principal unit of discourse analysis is the text. Texts, according to Allan (2008:6), are social actions, meaningful and coherent instances of spoken and written language use. Besides, Halliday and Hasan (1991:52) have earlier described text as language that is functional. By functional, it

means language that is doing some job in some context of situation. Texts could be written or spoken depending on the medium of presentation. While the analysis of both the spoken and written texts falls under discourse analysis generally, text linguistics focuses primarily on written texts. As Ayodabo (2002:312) argued, such an analysis is “capable of evaluating a language user’s ability to select appropriate lexical items for effective communication.” Crystal (1988) has pointed out that “the focus of discourse analysis is the structure of naturally occurring spoken and written language as found in such discourses as conversations, interviews, speeches, essays, notices, reports etc.”

Aspects of texts’ structure such as texture, discourse organization, socio-semantics of discourse, and various linguistic devices that enhance cohesion and coherence in texts have attracted the attention of scholars in the last four decades (e.g., see Dane 1974; Halliday and Hasan 1976;1991; deBeaugrande and Dressler 1981; van Dijk 1980,1986; DeStefano and Kantor 1988; Khalil 1989; Nwogu 1989,2004; Osisanwo 2001; Ayodabo 2002; Miranda 2003; Chiluya(2006); Olateju 2006; Unuabonah 2008; Chen 2008; Zhao, Yan and Zhou 2009 etc.).Among these existing studies, only Osisanwo (2001) and Ayodabo (2002) specifically focus on elements of textual organization in newspaper editorials and vacancy advertisements respectively. Besides, Chiluya(2006) also explores news headlines from the critical linguistic perspective. The rest, to the best of our knowledge, have concentrated on other genres outside the media context. Motivated by the paucity of work in this area, the present work, which differs from the earlier ones, is therefore intended to fill this gap by examining cohesion and coherence in editors’ comments in *Tell* Magazines. The study will also complement the existing studies in the area of textual analysis.

### **The Nature of Editors’ Comments**

Editors’ comments, unlike news stories, are articles which express the opinions of the editors or publishers on issues of public interest. They are often regarded as *personal journalism*

( cf. Akpan 2000:66) because they project particular persons' opinions on matters affecting the public. Although an editor's comment may be the product of one person or an expression of someone's opinion on a current subject such as commenting on the Presidential race, it no doubt represents the opinion of the entire editorial board of a particular medium. Editors' comments are statements of the editors. Thus, the "editorial we" (Akpan *ibid*:71) that is found in the editors' comments section refers to the editor. This implies that the editor represents the entire organization of the particular medium that published the comments.

Editors' comments are used to critically review events in the society. Our contemporary social world is fraught with all sorts of justice and injustices; fairness and unfairness; subjectivity and objectivity (cf. Akpan *ibid*: 67). Besides, as human beings, we witness on a daily basis, both the savoury and unsavoury experiences within the social system where we operate. All these form the subjects of news reports. Editors' comments therefore, serve as watchdog on these social events; select the most important events from a retinue of events; arrange the experiences of the events, clarify the experiences; intensify and finally interpret the experiences for human immediate consumption. Therefore, writers of these comments must strive at not only criticizing what is wrong, but also suggesting what can be done to correct the situation. To achieve these, Onabajo (2000:203) argues that editors' comments must not deal with personalities but should concentrate on issues that are properly researched.

#### **Editors' Comments and Text linguistics**

Before 1981, text linguistics (– analysis of text) or textual organization had benefited from a wide range of analytical approaches. These approaches have been criticized based on their relative inadequacies. In specific terms, most of the early enquiries into text organization remained essentially descriptive and structurally based with occasional expansion of the framework to include text sequences or situations of occurrence (Pike (1967), Harweg (1968), Korch (1971), Heger (1976)

etc.). Text was then defined as a unit larger than the sentence, and research was tailored towards discovering and classifying types of text structure. These were assumed to be something given, rather than something partly construed by the reader, and dependent on context. While commenting on the inadequacies of the earlier approaches, de Beaugrande and Dressler (1981:23) point out that

there are many classifications with various numbers of categories and degrees of elaboration but no clear picture of how texts are utilized in social activity.

In other words, the earlier approaches to textual analysis did not consider the relevance of texts to the society in which they are produced. In fact, the total meaning of texts cannot be fully realized independent of their social contexts. Small wonders that Halliday and Hasan (1991:52) describe text as ‘‘language that is doing some job in some context of situation.’’ As noted by de Beaugrande and Dressler (ibid:25), some of these approaches are consumers’ centred and extremely complex.

Considering these inadequacies, de Beaugrande and Dressler (1981) therefore introduced or proposed their own approach called *procedural approach*. This approach, according to them, is an approach in which ‘‘all the levels of language are to be described in terms of their utilization.’’ (ibid:31). For de Beaugrande and Dressler (op.cit.), a text is ‘‘a communicative occurrence which meets seven standards of textuality namely; cohesion, and coherence, intentionality, acceptability, informativity, situationality and intertextuality’’. Cohesion is the linguistic means by which a text functions as a single unit. Coherence refers to those linguistic features that combine to make a text meaningful to the readers. Intentionality entails the text producer’s intention to produce a cohesive and coherent text that will achieve whatever goal he or she has planned that it should achieve. Acceptability is the receiver’s wish that the text should be cohesive and coherent and be of relevance to him or her (de Beaugrande and Dressler ibid:7). Informativity is the degree to which

the occurrences of the presented texts are expected versus unexpected or known versus unknown. Situationality refers to the factors which make a text relevant to a situation of occurrence. Intertextuality is the way in which the use of a certain text depends on knowledge of other texts. These seven standards of textuality function as the constitutive principles which define and create communication. In addition to these constitutive principles are three regulative principles such as efficiency, effectiveness and appropriateness, which control textual communication (Carter and Malmkjar 2002:543). We shall limit ourselves to only cohesion and coherence in this study for reasons of space and peculiarities of editors' comments. We therefore attempt a more detailed discussion of each of these below.

### **Cohesion**

Cohesion has been described as the linguistic means by which a text functions as a single unit. Cohesion in text or discourse has to do with how actual texts are held together lexically and grammatically (cf. Osisanwo 2003:31). In other words, cohesion concerns how words in a text are related or relations of meaning that exist within a text (cf. Olateju 2006:317). Besides, Halliday and Hasan (1976:4) note that cohesion occurs where the interpretation of some elements in the discourse is dependent on that of another. Certain linguistic devices that are used in relating different parts of a text to one another are called *cohesive devices*. Every language in the world possesses so many of these devices that help to link different parts of a text together to form a unified whole. Bex (1996) points out that "cohesion can be seen as present in the semantic and grammatical resources of the language. Likewise, Halliday and Hasan (1976) have argued that "texts achieve their status as communicative events through the use of cohesive devices." They point out further that a text may be defined as a unit, which is bound together by various types of cohesive devices. A text, according to them, is realized by or encoded in sentences. For Halliday and Hasan (ibid:1) a text refers to

any passage spoken or written of whatever length that is made up of a group of related sentences that forms a unified whole.

Halliday and Hasan (1976) have identified types of cohesive relationship that can be established within a text. These include lexical cohesion and grammatical cohesion. These are discussed below.

### **Lexical Cohesion**

Lexical cohesion generally plays a pivotal role in structuring a text and making it a coherent whole (cf. Zhao, Yan and Zhou 2009:317). It is expressed through the vocabulary used in text and semantic relations between the words. Lexical cohesion is achieved through the use of certain lexical devices. These devices entail making use of the characteristics and features of words as well as the group relationships among them (Osisanwo 2003:32). Lexical devices for achieving cohesion in text encompass *reiteration* and *collocation*.

Reiteration is the repetition of a lexical item, or the occurrence of a synonym of some kind, in the context of reference; that is, where the two occurrences have the same referent. In other words, reiteration involves saying or doing something several times (Osisanwo op.cit). It can be realized in three ways namely; *Repetition, Superordinate / Hyponym and Synonym or Near Synonym*. Repetition is the use of the same lexical item several times in a text. Ayodabo (2002:322) notes, however, that it is not necessary for the second instance of a particular lexical item to be an exact repetition of the same word; it may be a synonym, superordinate or general word. He claims further that there must be identity of reference between the two. Superordinate items are those that have been used as umbrella terms and they encompass several other items under them. For example, the word, *furniture* is a superordinate concept for the word *chair* in sentences such as:

I've got a set of Italian *furniture*.

The *Chairs* are resilient. (Osisanwo 2003)

Synonyms or near synonyms are those words that have the same meanings or that are nearest in meaning. For example, the words “food” and “meal” are synonymous and they help to achieve lexical cohesion in the examples below:

A: We enjoyed our *food* yesterday.

B: I hope today's *meal* will be equally good. (Osisanwo 2003:32)

Collocation has been described as cohesion achieved via the association of some lexical items that regularly occur in discourse. Some lexical items naturally or regularly occur together in discourse to the extent that mentioning one brings to mind the other one or members of their group (cf. Osisanwo *ibid*: 32). Those words that naturally or regularly go together are said to collocate. They therefore, form a kind of collocational pattern in a language. Sadeghi (2010:4) notes, for instance, that we might expect *bank* (where money is kept) to have a high probability of co-occurrence with *cheque, cashier, account, transfer, ledger, etc.*, but a low probability of co-occurrence with *bed, saucepan, apple, etc.* Collocation also encompasses pair of words drawn from the same order series. Lexical items involved in collocation are always, to some degree, mutually predictable (Crystal, 1995).

### **Grammatical Cohesion**

Grammatical cohesion in text or discourse is expressed through the grammatical relations. It can be achieved through the use of sentential elements. These elements are subsumed under grammatical devices. Different types of grammatical devices for achieving cohesion that have been identified in the literature are *reference, substitution, ellipsis and conjunction*. These are discussed in turn.

### **Reference**

Reference is the act of using or employing words to indicate that we are talking about something or somebody. Through reference, a speaker (or writer) uses language to enable his

listener (or reader) identify something (Yule 1996:130). In order to make reference in English, certain linguistic items such as personals, demonstratives and comparatives are used. All reference items are said to have semantic property of definiteness or specificity. Two major kinds of reference have been identified namely; endophoric and exophoric references.

Exophoric reference is situational reference because it makes reference to an item outside the text in the context of situation. For example, 'that lady over there' (Odebunmi 2001:14). 'That' and 'there' refer to someone and something outside the text in the context of situation. Odebunmi (op.cit.) points out that in this example, both the identity and the spatial location of the referent (i.e. the lady) are placed outside the sentential frame.

Endophoric reference is textual reference because it exists within the text. For example, in the sentence, 'Mary gave us her book.' a reference is made between 'her' and 'Mary' and both the referring word 'her' and the referent 'Mary' can be seen within the sentence. The same thing holds for 'Him' and 'Jesus Christ' in the sentence, 'I know Him: Jesus Christ' (Odebunmi op.cit.). The endophoric reference is divided into two: anaphoric and cataphoric. An anaphoric reference is made when an item refers backwards whereas a cataphoric reference occurs when an item refers forward. For instance, in the sentence, 'Mary gave us her book.', 'her' refers backward to 'Mary' while in the second sentence, 'I know Him: Jesus Christ', 'Him' refers forward to 'Jesus Christ'. Ayodabo (2002:319) notes, however, that only endophoric reference is cohesive. He states further that:

exophoric reference contributes to the creation of text because it links the language with the context of situation.

Exophoric reference does not help in linking one passage with another, so that the two, together, form part of the same text (cf. Ayodabo op.cit.).

## Substitution

Substitution is a textual relation that takes place within a text. It is a relation between linguistic item such as words or phrases. It entails replacing a linguistic item which could be a word, phrase or a clause with a word in the next clause or sentence (Osisanwo 2003:34). Substitution as a grammatical device for achieving cohesion in text is divided into three types namely; *Nominal*, *Verbal* and *Clausal* substitution. Nominal substitution refers to substitution within the nominal group. It involves replacing a nominal item – a noun or noun phrase, with words such as ‘one’ ‘ones’ and ‘some’. It is noted that the substitution one/ones always functions as head of a nominal group and can substitute only for an item which is itself the head of a nominal group. For example, in the sentence, ‘I love *bananas*’, especially the very ripe *ones*’ (Osisanwo ibid: 35), ‘ones’ is used to substitute for ‘bananas’.

Verbal substitution is substitution within the verbal group. It entails replacing a verbal element or lexical verb with the form of the verb *do* in English. Clausal substitution is substitution of conditional clauses and substitution of modalized clauses (Ayodabo ibid:320). In this case, *so* and *not* are used as substitutes for clauses expressing modality. Modality has been described as the speaker’s assessment of probabilities inherent in the situation as in derived sense, of the rights and duties.

## Ellipsis

Ellipsis means deletion. Ellipsis has been described as ‘substitution by zero’ (Halliday and Hasan 1976) because when a linguistic item is ellipted, nothing is inserted into the slot. E.g.

A: Have you finished the work?

B: Yes, I have.

In B’S response above, certain items have been deleted. Without this kind of deletion, B’s response will read thus: *Yes, I have finished the work.* This makes the structure repetitive and redundant. An

ellipsis occurs when a piece of information that is structurally necessary is left unsaid and thus creates a sense of incompleteness. Where there is an ellipsis, there is an assumption, in the structure, that something is to be supplied or understood. *Osisanwo* (2003:36) has observed that the deletion of a syntactic element is often used to make room for grammatical cohesion in discourse. Ellipsis is very significant because it contributes to compactness and efficiency in texts. *Fashina* (1996:243) also observes that ellipsis is used “to strictly rationalize words to minimize cost in advertisement”. It can be realized in three ways namely; nominal, verbal and clausal ellipsis.

Nominal ellipsis has to do with deletion of nominal item from the structure. Verbal ellipsis is the deletion of a verb or verbal element while clausal ellipsis deals with deletion of the clause structure from the existing syntactic structure(s).

### **Conjunction**

As a grammatical device of achieving cohesion, conjunction connects what is to follow to what has gone before. It entails the use of conjuncts such as *but, and, although* etc. Broadly speaking, there are four types of conjunctive adjuncts namely; coordinating conjuncts, subordinating conjuncts, compound adverbs, and continuatives. Coordinating conjuncts, include *and, but, so, yet*, etc. Subordinating conjuncts are *although, because, if, unless* etc. Examples of compound adverbs are *furthermore, nevertheless, nonetheless, moreover* etc. while those of continuatives include *well, anyway* etc.

Halliday and Hasan (1976:238) identify four categories of conjunction. These are Additive, Adversative, Causal and Temporal. Although conjunction is identified as a grammatical device of cohesion, Halliday and Hasan (1976:6) note, however, that conjunction is “on the borderline of the two; mainly grammatical, but with a lexical component in it.” The distinction between grammatical and lexical cohesion is really only

one of degree. Halliday and Hasan (op.cit.) emphasise, however, that “cohesion being grammatical or lexical’ has to do with meaning. It is a semantic relation.

Finally, though cohesion is a semantic relation, it is realized through the lexico-grammatical system of language. Texts are said to be cohesive to the extent that the grammatical relationships between their constituent sentences are recoverable. For Bex (1996:75), cohesion as a standard of textuality is “‘writer-oriented,’ simply because it seems to refer to the selections made by the writer just like coherence.“ It is however, noted that such selections that the writer makes will be meaningless without the readers’ cooperation. Such cooperation, according to Ayodabo (2002:326), is achieved mainly because language is a social phenomenon. He points out further that readers know how to interpret text because they know, through experience, how language works.

### **Coherence**

Coherence has to do with the way in which the things that the text is about, called the textual world, are mutually accessible and relevant (Carter and Malmkjar 2002:544). The textual world consists of concepts and relations. To de Beaugrande and Dressler (1981:4), a *concept* is ‘a configuration of knowledge (cognitive content) which can be recovered or activated with more or less unity and consistency in the mind’, and *relations* are the links between the concepts “which appear together in a textual world. In other words, coherence has to do with sense. According to Osisanwo(2003:43), coherence answers the question of what is it that accounts for the fact that a text makes sense to us as a discourse. A text or discourse that makes sense or that is meaningful to us is said to be coherent.

Some of the most common relations have been classified in terms of two major notions, namely; *causality relation* and *time relations*. Causality relations refer to the ways in which one situation or event affects the conditions for some other ones (De Beaugrande and Dressler 1981:4). These relations are of four major kinds namely; *Cause, Enablement, Reason* and *Purpose*. Time

relations, on the other hand, refer to the arrangement of events in time. In the case of cause, enablement and reason, an earlier event causes, enables or provides the reason for a later one, such that there is *forward directionality* (Carter and Malmkjar 2002:545). Purpose is claimed to have *backward directionality* because a later event is the purpose for an earlier event. Osisanwo (2003:43-45) has identified three main devices for achieving coherence in text or discourse. These are cause and effect devices, contiguity in time and space devices and associative devices.

**Cause and Effect Devices** include (a) Condition – consequence signaled by e.g. **If then**; (b) Reason – result signaled by e.g. **because**; (c) Means – Purpose signaled by e.g. **in order to, in order that**; (d) Means – Result signaled by e.g. **by means of**; and (e) Grounds – Conclusion signaled by e.g. **so, therefore, thus** etc.

**Contiguity in time and space devices** include (a) Chronological sequence signaled by e.g. **and then**; (b) Temporal overlap signaled by e.g. **while**, and (c) Bonding signaled by the additive coordinator **and** as we have in the sentence:

The young mothers were in beautiful dresses and carrying their babies on the back (Osisanwo 2003:45). **Associative Devices** are realized through one or more of (a) Simple Contrast e.g. **strong and weak, fantastic and unsightly** (Osisanwo op.cit.), (b) Simple Comparison e.g. **too, as well**; (c) Statement and Affirmation (e.g. The Manager said that we shouldn't have come and we agreed.); (d) Statement and denial (e.g. My father said that I shouldn't have gone there, but I disagreed.); (e) Concession – Contra expectation (e.g. John isn't a lawyer, he is a teacher.); (f) Contrastive Alternation (e.g. either, or as in the sentence: You can either eat rice or beans.); (g) Supplementary Alternation (e.g. She can fry the plantain or boil it.); (h) Paraphrase (e.g. I like singing; singing pleases me.) and (i) Amplification (e.g. They crowned the beauty queen: It was Ngozi (Osisanwo ibid:46).

## **Methodology**

For data, we randomly sampled editors' comments in **Tell** magazines between July 2000 and July 2004. 50 publications of **Tell** magazines were sampled. This represents about 25% of the publications within a period of four years. We have chosen to analyse editors' comments published within this period because this period in Nigeria significantly marked the nurturing era of our so called nascent democracy. As such, various social, political and economic issues affecting the Nigerian populace were given critical assessment by the media, most especially newspapers and magazines. The data were later analysed using cohesion and coherence features of textuality. Specifically, we analysed the lexical cohesive features in the data by using the concept of semantic mapping. The idea of semantic mapping works on the principle that a text constitutes a discourse universe with related lexico-semantic features that account for the coherence of the text (Odebunmi,2006:70). These features can be related in a spider web. In other words, lexical relationships such as synonymy, antonymy, polysemy, hyponymy, homonymy, collocation,etc. of necessity, occur in a single text and help to develop the idea(s) of the writer in terms of the experiences being imported into the page(s)(Odebunmi,op.cit.). The text used for the analysis is the **Tell** editor's comment of November 20, 2000. On coherence, samples of the comments were analysed using the coherence features already reviewed in the literature.

### **Findings and Discussion**

For the purpose of analysing the data for this study, we have decided to first of all analyse linguistic features that are used to achieve cohesion in the editors' comments and thereafter analyse coherence features in the data.

#### **Cohesion**

As reviewed in the literature, cohesion is divided into two types namely: lexical cohesion and grammatical cohesion.

#### **Lexical Cohesion**

In analyzing lexical cohesion, the concept of semantic mapping is employed. As noted earlier on, the text used for the analysis is the *Tell* editor's comment of November 20, 2000. Lexical cohesive features in the data are therefore related in a spider web. The writer discusses socio-political and economic events in both Nigeria and America in a comparative manner. The writer also mirrors the negative effects of bribery and corruption on the social and economic lives of Nigerians and highlights what are being done to tackle the problem. This, by and large, shows the exhortive nature of the editor's comment. The lexical items engaged and the semantic relationship they enter into are presented in the semantic map below:



on the matters reviewed. These issues range from politics to economy, religion, social interaction, health, education, governance, international relation etc. As our data reveal, the *Tell* editor's comment of November 20<sup>th</sup>, 2000 focuses on social, political and economic problems in both Nigeria and America. Social problems discussed are corruption and road accidents among others. Corruption, for example, is said to have its attendant effects on politics, economy and other facets of the countries' national life. Figure 1 above shows the semantic mapping of words and expressions used by the writer to present social, political and economic issues in the editor's comment. As figure 1 above revealed, the lexical items employed have certain kinds of semantic or meaning relationship that not only largely enhance cohesive ties within the text but also aid understanding of the comment and enhance the editor's message. Meaning relationships observed in the text are synonymy, antonymy and collocations. Among these, there are preponderance of synonymous words and phrases. For instance, in discussing political issues, the writer engages synonymous words and expressions such as 'legislature' and 'law maker', 'American presidential election' and 'millennial political drama' etc. 'Millennial political drama' is used to refer to the unprecedented American presidential election whereby both the winner and the loser are said to have emerged. Besides, expressions such as 'up-and-down', 'nail-biting', and 'photo-finish' betray the activities of the two presidential candidates in the American Presidential election mentioned in the text. The author of the comment thereafter compared the political activities in America with those of Nigeria by projecting the activities of Nigerian and American politicians in a comparative manner.

The author also presented corruption as one of the social problems ravaging the two societies in question. In discussing war against corruption and other related matters in Nigeria, for example, the writer employed expressions such as 'moral crusade' and 'anti-corruption crusade'. The two antonymous words, 'new' and 'old' are used by the writer to

describe the enormity of corruption in Nigeria. According to the writer, corruption in the country is not new. It is as old as the country itself.

Words such as ‘carnage’ and ‘accident’ portray road accidents as another social problem mentioned in the text. Considering the social context in which the comment is written, corruption and road accidents have cause and effect meaning relationship and this enhances a better understanding of the issue being discussed. This is so because when top government officials take bribe from road project contractors, this will make the latter to deliver low quality road projects. This in turn leads to road accidents as the rehabilitated roads get damaged within a short period. This corroborates Guo’s (2008:45) argument that ‘a full understanding of a text is often impossible without reference to the context in which it occurs.’ In Nigeria, for example, the high rate of corruption has made it difficult for contractors to deliver quality work most especially on road projects. This in turn has impacted negatively on the kinds of roads being constructed in the last ten years. Corruption is described as social evil most especially as ‘the treasury was continuously plundered and ransacked at will.’ In addressing these various problems, the writer says that Nigerian government has ‘no vocabulary’ and is ‘short of words’. However, solution to corruption which Obasanjo’s administration was poised to search for is also betrayed in the editor’s comment via the expression, ‘... running an open and accountable system.’ Here, ‘open’ and ‘accountable’ are contextually synonymous. As noted earlier on, these words and expressions not only betray the nature and content of the editor’s comment but also aid its meaning. This agrees with Odebunmi’s (2003:11) argument that “... when we select the right word in the right context, we offer our hearer or reader the benefit of identifying our subject and consequently getting better grasp of our meaning”.

Figure 1 above also reveals the writer’s choice of some antonyms. Antonymous words and expressions observed are: ‘new’ and ‘old’, ‘up and down’, ‘accusations’ and

'counter-accusations', 'winner' and 'loser' etc. As our data reveal, antonymous words and expressions were used to discuss corruption, political activities and anti-corruption efforts of the successive Nigerian governments in a comparative manner. Besides, they show the comparison – contrast stylistic device employed in the sampled editor's comment.

Figure 1 above further reveals the use of collocations in the text. Collocations in our context are viewed from an expansive or extended lense encompassing words that go together not necessarily in terms of structure but in terms of meaning. Therefore, words and expressions such as 'Nigeria' and 'accident', 'carnage', 'recent', 'last week', 'accusations' and 'counter-accusation', 'legislature', 'lawmakers', 'journalist', 'reporters', 'editors', 'nail-biting', 'photo-finish', 'up-and' down', 'open' and 'accountable', 'mortally wounded' and 'rag-tag' party etc. could be said to be collocates of one another because they are used in the same semantico-social context to enhance cohesion and meaning intended by the writer.

By and large, meaning relations such as synonymy, antonymy and collocation observed in the editor's comment have quite a number of textual values. First, as pointed out earlier, they enhance better understanding of the texts. Second, they assist the text consumers (readers) to follow the trend of thought as well as the thought pattern employed by the writer. Besides, lexical cross referencing which is common in lexical cohesion helps text producers (writers) to achieve emphasis. Finally, they render the use of dictionary unnecessary. The foregoing has, no doubt, corroborates Chen's(2008:93) argument that cohesion is an essential textual component not only to create organized texts but also to render the content comprehensible to the reader.

### **Grammatical Cohesion**

To analyse grammatical cohesion in the data, we have chosen to itemise the extracts from the editor's comments sampled. Grammatical cohesive devices observed in our data are

divided into four, namely; reference, substitution, ellipsis and conjunction. Each of these shall be analysed in turn.

For reference, we can consider the extract below:

**Text 2:**

Almustapha apparently relished the opportunity that the Oputa panel gave him to put the generals in their places, and he did so with a vengeance-humiliating, Diya and Adisa with the video show of shame. But he did more than that. In a bold attempt to bury his immediate ugly past and even re-invent himself as a compassionate, do-good officer, he told half truths and, in most cases, outrageous lies. (*Tell. Jan.1, 2001*).

In the above extract, there are pronouns such as 'him', 'he', 'his', 'himself' that are used to make backward reference to Al-Mustapha', the subject of the first sentence. The extract contains three sentences and all of them are linked with one another through the referring expressions and thus enhance unity of the text. The kind of reference made here is anaphoric reference.

Our data reveal that cataphoric reference in editor's comments is to, a large extent, made via the use of linguistic items and the punctuation mark, colon(:). Let us consider the examples below:

**Text 3:**

Some arrests have been made, and *these include* two soldiers of the X Army who are said to have confessed to being paid N50,000 each to take part in the Fugal killings. (*Tell. Nov.4, 2002*).(Emphasis mine)

**Text 4:**

... Although his rebellion was swiftly crushed, the message has been sent by the Niger Deltans. *That is:* "Give us an equitable share of our God-given wealth." (*Tell*. April 7,20 03).(Emphasis mine)

In text 3, cataphoric reference is made through the expression 'these include' whereas in text 4, the same reference is made via the expression, "that is' together with the colon (:).

Besides, we hardly observe instances of substitution but a few cases of ellipsis can be found in the data. Out of the three kinds of ellipsis, more instances of nominal ellipsis are found in the data. The examples below substantiate this:

**Text 5:**

Many have scratched the surface to unveil the truth but nothing compares with what *Tell* is publishing this week. It is an exclusive... (*Tell* May 14, 2001).

**Text 6:**

... And it has to do with the Onshore/Offshore Dichotomy Bill. The Bill was the President's. (*Tell* Dec 30. 2002)

Considering the linguistic contexts in which texts 5 and 6 are used in our data, the nouns 'edition' and 'bill' are ellipited respectively. Without this ellipsis in text 5, for instance, the last sentence would have read" 'It is an exclusive edition'. This enhances cohesion in the text.

Several instances of conjunction are also observed in our data. Prominent among these are coordinating conjunctions and subordinating conjunctions. All these were used by the writer(s) of

the editors' comments to connect various parts of the texts together to form a cohesive link. Let us consider the example below:

**Text 7:**

Akande's Osun is not a place for dubious contractors, *because* the governor not only has an eye for detail, he expects quality work. *And* he not only barks, he bites. (*Tell*, May 27, 2002).

(Our emphasis)

In text 7 above, 'because' is a subordinating conjunct whereas 'And' is a coordinating one. The two lexical items connect the two sentences together in such a manner, that they form a single text i.e. 'they hang together' (Halliday and Hasan 1976). Other instances of conjunctions observed in our data are compound adverbs and continuatives. These can be found in the example below:

**Text 8:**

... Having secured the appointment, *however*, there was a fresh hurdle from this end. *Apart from* Thursday being an editorial board meeting day, many of our editors had several other engagements. Yet this is a highbrow encounter. *Tell* Aug. 5, 2002).

'However' is a compound adverb while 'apart from' is a continuative. 'Apart from' has also been called enumerative conjunct (see Osisanwo 2003:39) that is mostly used to advance authors' main ideas in discourse.

**Coherence Features**

Meanings of editor's comments are etched through the use of certain coherence features. As our findings revealed, the writers of the comments used the three main coherence devices to achieve meaning in their comments. Let us consider the extracts below:

**Text 9:**

The commission, popularly referred to now as the Oputal panel, was set up by President Olusegun Obasanjo to look into human right abuses from January 1966 to May 1999, a period of 33 years. (*Tell* Oct. 22 2001).

**Text 10:**

... The reaction of the police to the latest request does not give much room for hope. So, will Ige's killing join the long list of the nation's unsolved assassinations? (*Tell*. Aug 5. 2002)

**Text 11:**

Abuja Bureau Chief of *Tell*, Shola Oshunkeye, would write the cover story of the magazine, every week, *If he also has his way.*(*Tell*, May 31 2004)

(Our Emphasis)

In the above examples, meaning is achieved through cause and effect devices of mean-purpose, ground-conclusion, and condition-consequence. In text 9, the panel was set up purposely to look into human right abuses. In text 10, lack of hope in the police reaction leads to the conclusion expressed. In text 11, the condition for writing the cover story is

expressed and if the condition is met, the expected consequence: ‘writing of the cover story’, would be realized.

Another coherence feature observed to be common in our data is associative device. This device is etched via contrastive alternation, simple contrast and amplification devices. Examples below can be considered.

**Text 12:**

And thanks to the electronic media, thousands of Nigerians have *either* seen live, *or* the repeat of, the proceedings of the panel on national television (*Tell* Oct. 22 2001) (Our Emphasis)

**Text 13:**

Watching proceedings at Oputa, millions of Nigerians have seen *the good, the bad* and *the ugly*. (*Tell*. Oct. 22 2001) (Our Emphasis)

**Text 14:**

... But great as the copy is, it is the appetizer to its accompanying pieces. This edition, *I bet you, is a collector's item*. (*Tell* Oct. 22, 2001)

In text 12, the two ways for watching the proceedings of the panel are contrasted with each other. In text 13, simple contrast is employed whereas in text 14, the editorial writer tries to amplify the quality of the story contained in that edition of the *Tell* magazine.

All these devices work together to make the editors' comments meaningful and sensible to text receivers (consumers). Besides, these devices, as our data revealed, are also used by the writers to encourage the reading public to read the comments and think like the writers (cf. Akpan 2000:69). Little wonder that most of the editors' comments sampled in this study are coded in persuasive language aimed at influencing the audience's mind.

## **Conclusion**

We have shown in the foregoing that cohesion and coherence standards of textuality are capable of enhancing the unity and meaning of texts. Through lexical and grammatical cohesive devices, for example, text producers (writers) can generate unified, cohesive and meaningful texts that facilitate effective communication between them and texts' consumers. Besides, the foregoing has ostensibly revealed that editorial comments are presented by meaning dependent, and issue sensitive devices which aid understanding, enhance the editors' messages and delineate stylistic uniqueness. By and large, it can be concluded that a study of cohesion and coherence in editors' comments such as this illuminates the discourse value of cohesive ties and provides material for discourse pedagogy. Also, going through the article, the readers will, without doubt, be familiar with the cohesive and coherence features in texts of different types in general and editor's comments in particular. With this therefore, the paper promises a better understanding for readers of the comments thus having the advantage of developing critical- minded readers who will have critical views on important issues.

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