

# **Cohesion in English Biblical Narratives: A Study of 'The Prodigal Son'**

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## **Abstract**

*Cohesion as a means of tying a text together to support the flow of its narrative has received the attention of narrators and researchers in linguistics. However, meaning is still often lost in many narratives owing to lack of cohesion. This paper examines the different methods that writers/speakers employ in making English narratives coherent. It points out reasons why many texts are considered disjointed/disorganized thereby making such texts lose the desired radiance. The objectives are to describe how meanings are worked out through cohesion and how cohesive devices employed as communicative tools in English narrative texts are determined. Drawing from Halliday and Hasan's *Cohesion in English*, an offshoot of 'textual metafunction' in Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), the paper analyses 'The Prodigal Son' (King James Version) - one of the most recited narratives of the Christian scripture - to situate text, context, texture and grammatical concepts of ellipsis, reference (anaphora and cataphora), substitution (proforms), repetition (partial and full recurrence), subordination, coordination (conjunction, disjunction and contrajunction), etc. as the essential elements required in making a piece of writing coherent. Given the analysis of grammatical and lexical cohesion in the studied data, the paper provides evidence to show that the narrator employed adequate cohesive items to establish the narrative discourse as one united text through the interconnectivity of the various thematic preoccupations of the Christian literature. It concludes that the unity of a text is enhanced by adherence to appropriate usage of grammatical and lexical ties in English narratives.*

**Keywords:** *Cohesion, narratives, text linguistics, texture, ties*

### **Introduction**

Cohesion is a function of semantics and syntax. It refers to the surface text and evidence of unity in the text. This is the hallmark of a balanced cognition. A disjointed or disorganized text is deemed emanated from impairment in the use of language. A cohesive piece of writing is supposed to exhibit a closely-knit pattern of consistent and systematic structure in phrase, clause and sentence which makes it seamless in texture. This is likened to taking control of our actions if we want to direct our lives. What shape our lives are not what we do once in a while but that which we do consistently (Suningsih viii).

Cohesion separates texts from non-texts. As a major resource for text construction, cohesion represents explicit cues in a narrative to enhance the semantic potential. Cohesion refers to the surface text and evidence of unity in the text – written or spoken. This is the hallmark of a balanced cognition. A disorderly or jumbled text is deemed stemmed from impairment in the use of language. An interconnected piece of writing, therefore, is supposed to show evidence of a closely-knit pattern of unswerving and methodical structure in phrase, clause and sentence which makes it flawless in texture. Replicating the systems of Halliday and Hasan's Cohesion in English, 'The Prodigal Son' (King James Version), which has remained one of the teaching modules to children and adults in Christendom, is used as data on which cohesive analysis is made to bear. This is essential in the submission to locate text, context, texture and grammatical concepts of ellipsis, reference (anaphora and cataphora), substitution (proforms), repetition (partial and full recurrence), subordination, junction (conjunction, disjunction and contrajunction) etc. as the indispensable fundamentals requested to making a piece of writing logical and rational.

One essential quality of an acceptable feature of a high rated text is a systematic organization of ideas. Presentation of points and ideas is either coherent or incoherent. A close-knit text is applauded while a text without harmony is rated poor and unacceptable. A well-structured, organized and inter-connected piece of writing is said to be cohesive. Cohesion is the way words formally hang together in sentences (Mey 153). The aim is to explicate how cohesion, and by default coherence, is achieved in a narrative text. Consequently, we set out to determine how meanings are worked out through cohesion and to determine what cohesive devices are employed as communication

tools in the ‘great story’ ‘The Prodigal Son’. The appropriateness of using cohesive devices in narrative texts (written and spoken) will be validated through the study. The focus of the study, then, is to explicate appropriate and acceptable components of a narrative text. By this, two objectives have been set thus: to describe grammatical cohesion employed in ‘The Prodigal Son’ as a tool for texture and cohesive harmony in the narrative; and to describe lexical cohesion as a means of achieving textual harmony through the employment of the selection of vocabulary in English narrative. This is more so as writers, students, discourse analysts, public commentators (political, religious, legal) will be able to avail themselves of the overview of the use of cohesive devices in compositions. The work, therefore, will serve as another reference in the application of cohesion as essential semantic component to understand English narratives. Researchers and scholars will be provided knowledge of lexical and grammatical cohesion as elements of research in discourse analysis.

Cohesion and coherence are not the only tools by which texture and meaning are achieved in a narrative text. While cohesion is the focus of this study, there are others as pointed out below: Intentionality (the text writer’s attitude); Acceptability (the text reader’s attitude to the text); Informativity (the extent to which the message of the text is (un)expected, (un)known, etc.); Situationality (the factors that make a text relevant to a situation) and Inter-textuality (the factors which make the utilization of one text dependent upon knowledge of previously encountered texts).

Cohesion has to do with relations between surface linguistic forms (Stubbs 126–7). Cohesion establishes local relations between syntactic items (Mey 154). Such local progression generates particular degree of textual consistency. Local cohesion is precious in detecting and organizing textual coherence. Cohesion is the linguistic means by which a text is enabled to function as a single meaningful unit (Halliday & Hasan 1976: 20). As a defining property of the word, as a grammatical unit, cohesion precludes that the new elements cannot usually be inserted into words in normal speech, but only at word boundaries. Beyond such intrusion, well-formedness and inter-relatedness of the lexical items are necessary for a harmonious piece of, not only writing but, discourse in general. Cohesion is a major concept of Hallidayan approach to grammatical analysis, which refers

to those surface–structure features of an utterance or text which link different parts of sentences or larger unit of discourse (Crystal 85).

A text is ‘a unit of language in use’ (Halliday and Hasan 1996: 1). It is a semantic unit. A text is a product and process (Halliday and Hasan 1985: 10). “It is a process in the sense of a continuous process of semantic choice, a movement through a network of meaning potential with each set of choices constituting the environment for a further set. Bondness, harmony or unity of text may be of structure or of texture which are related at different levels of delicacy to the context of situation (Khoo 301; Hasan 1985, 2004, 2009). Texture is the property of a text differentiating it from a ‘non-text’ text. The property of connectedness is the resources that allow a text ‘to cohere with itself and the context of situation. Halliday and Hasan (1976: 299) reiterate that cohesion is one of the resources embedded in a narrative to come to life as a text. As a semantic concept, cohesion refers to non-structural relations of meaning (Khoo 302).

#### **Elements of Cohesion in Discourse**

Text is a linguistic material, a linguistic content in which the stable semantic meanings of words, expressions, and sentences are used. It refers to the propositional meanings that are linguistically related. Text does not cover the inferences which are available to hearers in relation to physical or psychological contexts, irrespective of the participants in the discourse relation. Text, from Latin *textus* meaning ‘to weave’ refers to a continuous piece of writing such as a precise extract from any part of written or printed document (De Beaugrande & Dressler 3). As a product, a text is an output that can be constructed and recorded in a systematic way for the purpose of further examination. Text, however, as a process, evolves continuous semantic choice through a network of meaning potential within a given context. Basically, a text is the naturally occurring manifestation of language the sequential organization of discourse in order that communication is not impaired.

Contextual information is identified in relation to something else. It may not be possible, then, to discuss context in a vacuum. Context does not exist outside something else. The source of contextual information usually varies. Context is the environment of the occurrence of sayings and linguistic productions. Consequently, inferences that are available to discourse participants are dependent

upon the contexts in which words, expressions, and sentences are applied. While context could be sociological, psychological, physiological or physical, revealing a world filled with people producing utterances (what is said), it is merely to emphasise that many of the features of a text can be explained by reference to generalized situation types (Halliday & Hasan 1976: 21). The focus of this study is linguistic context in diverse forms and directions.

Texture is a product of cohesion. A text coheres or has texture when there is the possibility of interpreting the meaning of a form with reference to another. Cohesion as a semantic concept is a meaning relationship that an element has with another element in the text. Texture as a basic characteristic of textual unity, in addition to the structure, is not achieved without cohesive elements in the text. Texture is a demonstration of some kinds of semantic relations among the component parts of the message. Texture determines the quality of a text. The texture of a narrative text refers to the global structure of the message as indicated in the usual narrative elements in 'The Prodigal Son'. This is explicated in the figure below in clockwise arrangement in a narrative: Precipitative Event, Consequential Event and Revelation Event.

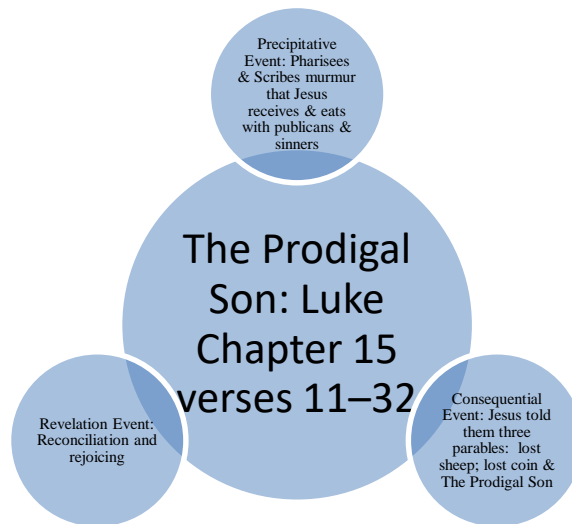


Figure 1: Texture as the global structure of the message

While the above is viewed from the genre theory, the figure below elaborates the relationships among cohesion, coherence and texture.

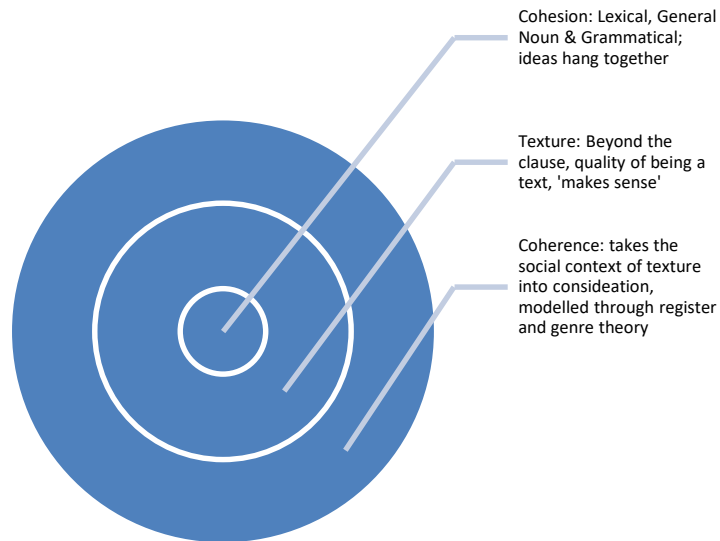


Figure 2: The relationships among cohesion, coherence and texture

By the above demonstration, texture lies beyond the clause. Cohesion is one part of the study of texture (Martin 35). Texture considers the interaction of cohesion with other aspects of text organization, texture is an aspect of coherence. Coherence takes the social context of texture into consideration. Coherence is about meaning and sense i.e., continuity of senses in textual worlds, concepts and relations. It is achieved through strength of linkage. By this, discourse analysis integrates and situates texts in their social context.

### **Lexical Cohesion**

Lexical cohesion involves the choice of vocabulary. It is a relation between words and phrases in a text. Lexical cohesion is realized either as Reiteration or Collocation.

Reiteration refers to two items that share the same referent and could either be repeated or have similar meaning. Categories of

reiteration are repetition, synonymy, antonymy and superordination (hyponymy and meronymy) (Paltridge 119).

Halliday and Hasan (1976: 274) explain this as the cohesive effect achieved through the selection of vocabulary. This is a particular way in which lexical items relate to one another and other cohesive elements to foster textual harmony. The two distinct but related aspects of lexical cohesion are Reiteration and Collocation.

### **Cohesion through Reiteration**

Reiteration refers to the repetition of lexical item, or occurrence of a synonym of some kind, in the context of reference, that is, where the two occurrences have the same referent (Halliday & Hasan 1976: 318–9). Reiteration encompasses Repetition, Synonym, Superordinate and General Noun whose referential relations manifest in same referent, inclusiveness, exclusiveness and unrelatedness respectively. They all function to reiterate previous items in an identical or a modified form. They are cohesive agents that signal co-referentiality.

### **Cohesion through Collocation**

Collocation is a combination of vocabulary items that co-occur in a text in the form of Adjective+Noun; Verb+ Noun; Noun+Noun (Bahaziq 112). This is achieved through the association of lexical items that regularly co-occur (Halliday & Hasan 1976: 284). This is the company that words keep in context. It is the use of a word that is in some way associated with another word. Collocation results from the co-occurrence of lexical items that are in some way or the other characteristically connected with one another, as they have a tendency to occur in comparable environments. Such environments engender the ‘instantial meaning’ that is exclusive to each definite intention.

### **Grammatical Cohesion**

Grammatical cohesion is the surface marking of semantic links between clauses and sentences in a narrative text and especially the dialogic acts in the narrative. It manifests in a good turn-taking in utterances (McCarthy, 99). Grammatical cohesion is constructed by the grammatical structures in which each component ties to each other.

### **Cohesion through Reference**

Reference is a relational device of discourse between preceding and succeeding elements in a text. It is a semantic relationship. Reference

refers to a situation of ‘pointing’ of an item which cannot be sufficiently defined or identified as its signification is dependent on another item in the text. Items that serve references purposes are pronouns, articles, demonstratives, and comparatives. Reference functions as a proform. It is identified as exophora (situational) or endophora (textual). Endophora reference connects anaphorically or cataphorically a person or a thing. Anaphoric reference is where a word or a phrase refers back to another word or phrase used earlier in the text (Paltridge 115). It may be realized in personal pronoun, demonstrative, definite article or comparison. Cataphorically, the reference is forward looking as demonstrated in figure 3 below.

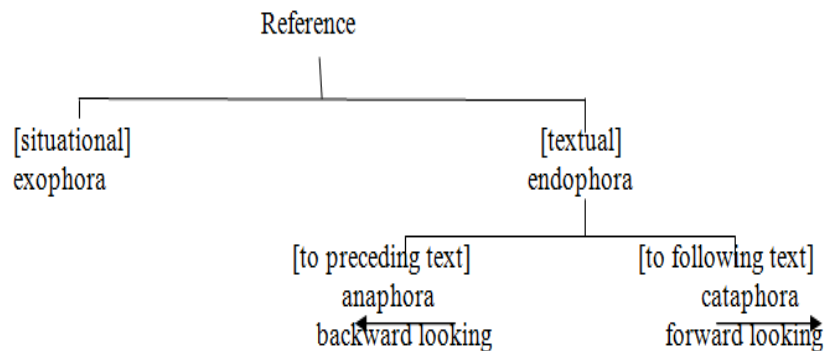


Figure 3: Types of reference adapted from Halliday & Hasan (1976: 33)

As demonstrated in the figure 3 above, reference may be exophoric or endophoric (Bloor & Bloor 96). Exophoric reference requires the reader to look beyond the text in the direction of the immediate environment for its interpretation. Within the text is endophoric reference. It is classified as either anaphoric or cataphoric, that is ‘backward looking’ or ‘forward looking’ for its referent which presupposes recoverability of meaning from the environment (Halliday & Hasan 1976: 89).

### **Cohesion through Substitution**

An item replaces another in substitution to avoid an unnecessary repetition. Substitution could be nominal, verbal or clausal. Substitution is done by another member of the same group a counter which is used in place of the repetition of a particular item (Halliday



& Hasan 1976: 89). Pronoun replaces noun; verb replaces verb; clauses are replaced by proforms. Substitution, unlike reference which relation is of meaning, is in the wording – a relation within the text (Halliday & Hasan 1976: 88). Nearly every occurrence of substitute is a referent of a preceding occurrence (anaphoric). Substitution could be nominal, verbal or clausal.

### **Cohesion through Ellipsis**

It is the omission of an item which is recoverable in context. It is a zero substitution. As a relation within text, there is a presupposition that something is to be supplied or understood owing to mutual linguistic experience. In the same manner as substitution, ellipsis can be nominal, verbal or clausal. Whatever is elliptic is recoverable through clausal reconstruction.

### **Cohesion through Conjunction**

Conjunction links. It is concerned with a relationship which indicates how two phrases, clauses or sentences should be connected. Conjunctions are connectives. It expresses the ‘logical-semantic’ relation between sentences. Conjunctions may be additive (negative, alternative, afterthought, comparative [similar, dissimilar], expository, exemplificatory, appositional), adversative (proper, contrastive, avowal, corrective, dismissive), causal (reason, result, purpose) or temporal (sequential, continuation, simultaneous, preceding).

### **Methodology**

This paper is a qualitative investigation of ‘The Prodigal Son’. A qualitative approach was necessary in line with the objectives of the work to describe how meanings are worked out through cohesion and determining the cohesive devices that are employed as the communicative tools in the narrative text. Narrative writing is one of the genre-based writings. Others are argumentative and expository. The rationale for the choice of a narrative resides in the fact that all human beings are story tellers as we recount daily activities and experiences. It thus lies beyond the prerogative of the researcher to prescribe or interpret but to observe and describe such items in line with the focus of the study. To describe language without accounting for text is sterile; to describe text without relating it to language is vacuous (Halliday 2014: 10). Recurrence in the application of certain

lexical and grammatical choices in a narrative prompts our opening explanation credited to Suningsih (2016: viii) that our consistent structural and semantic display of language use shapes our live.

*The Prodigal Son* is one of the parables of Jesus in the Bible. The story of a father and his prodigal son is extracted from the King James Version of Dake's Bible: Luke Chapter 15 verses 11–32. It is the 36th parable in Luke. A parable is a concise fictitious narrative that exemplifies an ethical mind-set or a religious standard; a didactic story, told in prose or verse to demonstrate one or more informative teachings or values making use of human characters. Telling tales of familiar characters and activities was a preferred method for earliest rabbis (teacher) to hold an audience's attention while demonstrating an important moral position (learnreligions.com).

### **Theoretical Consideration**

The analysis of the narrative text 'The Prodigal Son' is situated within Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and in particular, within the concept of Textlinguistics. Textlinguistics deals mainly with texts as a communication system in which linguistic analysis extends beyond the sentence. Textlinguistics is situated within the domain of textual metafunction of the SFL to account for texts in an interactional context. As a major proponent of text-linguistics, Halliday postulated three models of functionalism namely, ideational, interpersonal and textual metafunctions. From its metalinguistic property, the ideational metafunction concerns itself with the representation of language user's experience of the world around him; the interpersonal metafunction is concerned with the role of relationship among the interlocutors; while textual metafunction, combining ideational and interpersonal metafunctions, is a mode of meaning that relates to the construction of the text in an enabling or facilitating function.

Textual, from the above, is anchored on the informational principles underpinning social conduct. They are the tacit beliefs and assumptions which allow speakers to send and receive coherent messages (McCormick 114). This is not restricted to any medium or time but covers the entire spectrum of both written and spoken meaning. In Halliday (1973: 107), it refers to the way in which an exchange is consistent with the behavioural forms of that group.

Table 1: The place of COHESION in the description of English narrative

Ideational		Interpersonal	Textual		
Experiential	Logical		(structural)		(non-structural)
By rank:	All ranks:	By rank:	By rank:	Cross-rank:	
Clause: transitivity	Paratactic and hypotactic relations (condition, addition, report)	Clause: mood, modality	Clause: theme	Information unit: Information distribution, information focus	<b>Cohesion</b> Reference Substitution Ellipsis Conjunction Lexical cohesion
Verbal group: tense		Verbal group: person	Verbal group: voice		
Nominal group: epithesis		Nominal group: attitude	Nominal group: deixis		
Adverbial group: circumstance		Adverbial group: comment	Adverbial group: conjunction		

Cohesion and Linguistic Context extracted from Halliday & Hasan (1976 29)

### Data Presentation

Below is King James Version of the Bible, Luke Chapter 15 Verses 11-32. Preceding 'The Prodigal Son' is the Parable of the Lost Coin and succeeding it is the narrative about an unforgiving servant.

<sup>1</sup>And he said, <sup>2</sup>A certain man had two sons:

<sup>3</sup> And the younger of them said to his father, <sup>4</sup>Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. <sup>5</sup>And he divided unto them his living.

<sup>6</sup>And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, <sup>7</sup>and took his journey into a far country, <sup>8</sup>and there wasted his substance with riotous living.

<sup>9</sup>And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; <sup>10</sup>and he began to be in want.

<sup>11</sup>And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; <sup>12</sup>and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.

<sup>13</sup>And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: <sup>14</sup>and no man gave unto him.

<sup>15</sup> And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, <sup>16</sup> and I perish with hunger!

<sup>17</sup> I will arise and go to my father, <sup>18</sup> and will say unto him, <sup>19</sup> Father; I have sinned against heaven, and before thee,

<sup>20</sup> And am no more worthy to be called thy son: <sup>21</sup> make me as one of thy hired servants.

<sup>22</sup> And he arose, <sup>23</sup> and came to his father. <sup>24</sup> But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, <sup>25</sup> and had compassion, <sup>26</sup> and ran, <sup>27</sup> and fell on his neck, <sup>28</sup> and kissed him.

<sup>29</sup> And the son said unto him, <sup>30</sup> Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, <sup>31</sup> and am no more worthy to be called thy son.

<sup>32</sup> But the father said to his servants, <sup>33</sup> Bring forth the best robe, <sup>34</sup> and put it on him; <sup>35</sup> and put a ring on his hand, <sup>36</sup> and shoes on his feet:

<sup>37</sup> And bring hither the fatted calf, <sup>38</sup> and kill it; <sup>39</sup> and let us eat, <sup>40</sup> and be merry:

<sup>41</sup> For this my son was dead, <sup>42</sup> and is alive again; <sup>43</sup> he was lost, <sup>44</sup> and is found. <sup>45</sup> And they began to be merry.

<sup>46</sup> Now his elder son was in the field: <sup>47</sup> and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard musick and dancing.

<sup>48</sup> And he called one of the servants, <sup>49</sup> and asked what these things meant.

<sup>50</sup> And he said unto him, <sup>51</sup> Thy brother is come; <sup>52</sup> and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound.

<sup>53</sup> And he was angry, <sup>54</sup> and would not go in: <sup>55</sup> therefore came his father out, <sup>56</sup> and intreated him.

<sup>57</sup> And he answering said to his father, <sup>58</sup> Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: <sup>59</sup> and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends:

<sup>60</sup> But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.

<sup>61</sup> And he said unto him, <sup>62</sup> Son, thou art ever with me, <sup>63</sup> and all that I have is thine.

<sup>64</sup> It was meet that we should make merry, <sup>65</sup> and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; <sup>66</sup> and was lost, and is found.

### **Analysis of ‘The Prodigal Son’**

The Prodigal Son was segmented into 66 clauses by the author and it was subjected to a model of cohesion as suggested by Halliday and Hasan. The following were the results of the analysis.

#### **A. Lexical Cohesion: Reiteration and Collocation**

Following are the cohesive effects achieved by the selection of vocabulary through Reiteration and Collocation.

a. Reiteration: two items sharing the same referent. It encompasses:

i. Repetition:

Brother was used in 51 and 65

Country first appeared in clause 7 and repeated in 11

Eat first appeared in clause 13 then in 39

Father appeared first in clause 3 and repeated in 4, 15, 17, 19, 23, 24, 30, 32, 52, 55, 57

Fatted calf was used in clause 38 followed by 52 and 60

Heaven appeared in 19, then 29

Living was first mentioned in clause 5 and then in 8 and 60

Merry cropped up in clause 40 followed by 45 and 59

Servants occurred in clause 32 and recur in 15, 20 and 48

Son appears first in clause 2 and is repeated in clauses 6, 20, 29, 31, 41, 46, 60, 62

Younger was used in clause 3 and the 6

- ii. Synonym or near synonym  
Man – father  
  
Son – brother  
  
Safe – sound  
  
Want – hunger  
  
This my son<sup>41</sup> – this thy son<sup>60</sup> – this thy brother<sup>65</sup>
- iii. Antonym  
Younger – elder  
  
Heaven – thee  
  
Father – son
- iv. Complementarity: much like parallelism, words complements each other in a narrative as we have in <sup>41</sup>...son was dead, <sup>42</sup>...is alive again; <sup>43</sup>was lost, <sup>44</sup>and is found; <sup>35</sup>a ring on his hand

b. Collocation: Diverse extracts below explicate lexical co-occurrence which refers to the occurrence of related words in the same linguistic or lexical environment. The various occurrences could be categorized as collocational set (items sharing the similar semantic environment in paradigmatic relations) or collocational range (in which particular words tend to co-occur presupposing restriction of certain lexical affiliation). Collocational set in in **bold** and collocational range is underlined in the text below.

<sup>3</sup>said to his **father**, <sup>4</sup>give me the **portion** <sup>5</sup>he divided unto them <sup>6</sup>the **younger** son gathered all together <sup>7</sup>took his journey <sup>8</sup>**wasted his substance** <sup>9</sup>there arose a mighty famine <sup>11</sup>he went and joined <sup>13</sup>he would fain have <sup>14</sup>no **man** gave unto him. he came to himself <sup>16</sup>I **perish with hunger**! <sup>17</sup> arise and go <sup>21</sup>make me as <sup>25</sup>had **compassion** <sup>27</sup> fell on his

neck, <sup>28</sup>kissed **him**. <sup>33</sup>Bring forth <sup>35</sup>a ring on his hand, <sup>36</sup>shoes on his feet <sup>41</sup>this my **son** <sup>41</sup>was dead <sup>42</sup>is alive again <sup>43</sup>was lost <sup>44</sup>is found <sup>46</sup>**elder** son <sup>47</sup>musick and dancing. <sup>58</sup>neither **transgressed** I <sup>59</sup>thou never gavest me a **kid** <sup>60</sup>this thy son <sup>64</sup>this thy brother

Table 2: A summary of types of conjunctions in The Prodigal Son

Type	Lexical item	Clausal occurrence	Context sample
<b>Additive</b>	and	15, 17, 19	<sup>15</sup> have bread enough and to spare; <sup>17</sup> I will arise and go to my father; <sup>18</sup> and will say unto him; <sup>19</sup> ...sinned against heaven, and before thee
<b>Adversative</b>	and (but)	14, 16	<sup>14</sup> and no man gave unto him. <sup>16</sup> and I perish with hunger!
	And yet (on the contrary)	59	<sup>59</sup> and yet thou never gavest me a kid
	But	24, 32, 60	<sup>24</sup> But when he was yet a great way off; <sup>32</sup> But the father said to his servants; <sup>60</sup> But as soon as this thy son was come
<b>Temporal</b>	and (then)	53, 54, 61	<sup>53</sup> And he was angry <sup>54</sup> and would not go in <sup>61</sup> And he said unto him
<b>Causal</b>	for	41	For this my son was dead
	Because	52	<sup>52</sup> and thy father hath killed the fatted calf
<b>Result</b>	Therefore	55	<sup>55</sup> therefore came his father out

**Semantic implication of ‘and’ in ‘The Prodigal Son’**

- a. The second clause is a consequence or the result of the first.  
<sup>4</sup>Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. <sup>5</sup>And he divided unto them his living.
- <sup>19</sup>Father; I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, <sup>20</sup>And am no more worthy to be called thy son
- <sup>64</sup> It was meet that we should make merry, <sup>65</sup>and be glad
- b. The second clause is chronological sequence of the first clause.  
<sup>17</sup> I will arise and go to my father
- <sup>48</sup>And he called one of the servants, <sup>49</sup>and asked what these things meant
- c. The second clause introduces a contrast  
<sup>13</sup>And he would ... <sup>14</sup>and no man gave unto him.  
<sup>41</sup> For this my son was dead, <sup>42</sup>and is alive again;  
<sup>43</sup>he was lost, <sup>44</sup>and is found
- d. The second clause may introduce a surprise  
<sup>51</sup>Thy brother is come; <sup>52</sup>and thy father hath killed the fatted calf  
<sup>58</sup>these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I ...  
<sup>59</sup>and yet thou never gavest me a kid...
- e. The first clause is a condition of the second clause  
<sup>62</sup>Son, thou art ever with me, <sup>63</sup>and all that I have is thine  
<sup>33</sup>Bring forth the best robe, <sup>34</sup>and put it on him



Table 3: A summary of reference in 'The Prodigal Son'

Type of Reference	Use of Reference			
	Pronominals	Functioning as	Clause Pointer	Recurrence
Personal Reference	I (singular, masculine known -in the narrative)	non-possessive, as head	16,17,19,30,58,58,59,63	08
	We (plural, masculine known)	non-possessive, as head	64	1
	me (singular)	non-possessive, predicative	4,4,21,59,62	5
	us (plural)	non-possessive, predicative	39	1
	You		59,60	3
	you		17,58	2
	He (singular, masculine)	non-possessive, as head	1,5,9,10,11,12,13,15,22,24,47,47,48,50,52,53,57,61	19
	him (singular, masculine)	non-possessive, as head	12,14,24,28,29,34,60,61	10
	his (singular, masculine)	(possessive, as Deictic)	3,5,7,8,12,13,32,35,36,46,55	12
	It (singular, neuter)	non-possessive, as head	38,64	2

	They (plural)	non-possessive, as head	45	1
	them (plural)	non-possessive, as head	3,5	2
Demonstrative Reference	This (near)	nominal, Deictic or Head	41,60,65	3
	These (near)	nominal, Deictic or Head	48,58	2
Definite article	The	nominal, Deictic or Head	3,4,6,13,29 ,32,33,37,4 6,47,48,52, 60,	13
Comparative Reference	Neither	non-identity and dissimilarity	58	1

### A summary of Ellipsis in *The Prodigal Son*

#### a. Nominal

##### **A certain man/his father/he:**

<sup>24</sup>But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, <sup>25</sup>and (...) had compassion, <sup>26</sup>and (...) ran, <sup>27</sup>and (...) fell on his neck, <sup>28</sup>and (...) kissed him. <sup>55</sup>therefore came his father out, <sup>56</sup>and (...) intreated him.

**Younger son:** <sup>6</sup>...the younger son gathered all together, <sup>7</sup>and (...) took his journey into a far country, <sup>8</sup>and there (...) wasted his substance with riotous living. <sup>11</sup>And he went and (...) joined himself to a citizen of that country <sup>17</sup>I will arise and (...) go to my father, <sup>18</sup>and (...) will say unto him <sup>22</sup>And he arose, <sup>23</sup>and (...) came to his father <sup>31</sup>and (I) am no more worthy to be called thy son. <sup>41</sup>For this my son was dead, <sup>42</sup>and (...) is alive again; <sup>43</sup>he was lost, <sup>44</sup>and (...) is found. <sup>65</sup>...for this thy brother was dead, and (...) is alive again; <sup>66</sup>and (...) was lost, and (...) is found.

**Elder brother:** <sup>48</sup>And he called one of the servants, <sup>49</sup>and (...) asked what these things meant; <sup>53</sup>And he was angry, <sup>54</sup>and (...) would not go in

b. **Verbal:** No Verbal Ellipsis was recorded in *The Prodigal Son*

c. **Clausal:** <sup>19</sup>Father; I have sinned against heaven, and (...) before thee; <sup>64</sup> It was meet that we should make merry, <sup>65</sup>and (...) be glad:

#### A summary of Substitution in *The Prodigal Son*

a. **Nominal:** Certain man(2) became father(3,4,15,17,19,23,24,30,32,52,55). Then he (5,52,61) and him(18); thee(19,57); thy(20,21,30,31,58,60,60); my(41)they-inclusion, third person plural(45); thou(59,60); me(62);I(63); we- inclusion, first person plural(64); us(39).

Sons(2)/younger of them(3,5) became his(3,713,23,35,46) and then me(4,4,21); he(9,10,11,15,22,24,43); himself(11); him(12,14,24,28,34,52,60); my(17); I(19,30); am(20,31); me(21); one(21); brother(51,65); this thy son(60), this my son(41); which(60)

Sons/elder(2)was reported as them(3,5); elder son(46); he(47,47,48,53,57); him(50,56,61); thy(51,52); his(53,57); I(58,58,59); me(59); my(59); thou(62); thine (63); we-inclusion, first person plural(64); this thy brother(65)

b. No **Verbal** substitution was employed in the narrative.

c. **Clausal:** He heard musick and dancing – these things

#### Discussion

As data never exists in vacuum, the previous section turns to the data to discover and explain what the study has perceived as its focus. The structure of the narrative 'The Prodigal Son' is a uniformly integrative device (Khoo 302). Both lexical and grammatical cohesive devices are subjected to semantic consideration of identity and similarity (302). It is therefore, as a text, one of meaning and not form. The output of both textual and experiential is reconciled in harmony. The interconnectivity of various lexical items via the syntagmatic axis is bonded. Cohesive harmony in the narrative is derivable in the employment items that give account of how lexical and grammatical

cohesion find their expression in the overall meaning making of the narrative.

The interpersonal meanings of repetition add up as discourse phenomena. These manifest themselves in concrete narrative context. The repetition of items related to the various participants in 'The Prodigal Son', affects the alignment of conversational participants and their interpersonal relationships. The verbatim repetition of enhances the meaning potential of the narrative. Discourse of the kind below is more forceful in memory.

<sup>17</sup> I will arise and go to my father, <sup>18</sup>and will say unto him, <sup>19</sup>Father; I have sinned against heaven, and before thee,  
<sup>20</sup>And am no more worthy to be called thy son:  
<sup>21</sup>make me as one of thy hired servants.

It gives the listeners/audience lasting record of transitory goings-on that we can scrutinize visually at our spare time. It is a useful narrative tool that does further the understanding of how minds and language proceed through time. It is something that remains in the minds of the participants afterwards. The role of repetition is essential in the production and understanding of narrative, in the coherence and interpersonal meaning of the exchange.

The employment, by the narrator, of various shades of conjunctions (additive, adversative, temporal and causal) helps to create a text. Conjunctions thus indicate semantic relations in the underlying structure of ideas of the narrative. This conveys conjunctive relations. Conjunctions in 'The Prodigal Son' express certain meanings which presuppose the presence of other components in the discourse (Halliday and Hasan 236). They created a logically articulated narrative discourse.

Collocational fact in 'The Prodigal Son' is linguistic. Many use of collocations may sound metaphoric, the combinations pose no problem for decoding. While some linguistic associations are predictable combinations, some are not. They contribute to the overall textual understanding of coherence in the narrative discourse through the assumptions they trigger (Stubbs 312). Considering the set and range of collocation, language learner needs to be able to acquire a word's potential range of meaning and to be able to recognize the

particular meaning which is compatible with the context and the discourse within which the word appears.

The identity of participants and circumstantial elements in *The Prodigal Son* is recoverable through Reference. Personal pronouns, demonstratives, comparatives and definite article 'the' generally require some prior discourse for its interpretation. They refer to the location of presupposed elements. They serve as main cohesive ties in the narrative. Anaphoric and cataphoric references enable the listener and subsequently the reader understand the relationships between previously identified and that which will be identified thereafter as certain elements are forward looking while some are backward looking.

Ellipsis in 'The Prodigal Son' occurred when certain elements that have been previously mentioned are omitted in subsequent necessary linguistic environments. Ellipsis is context dependent and elements relating to the major participants – a certain man/father, two sons (younger and elder) – were either elliptic or substituted at various stages of the narrative. Nominal and clausal ellipses were identified in the narrative while there was no evidence of verbal ellipsis. Ellipsis, though, is substitution by zero.

Substitution in 'The Prodigal Son' was used as place holders. It is the replacement of one item by another. 'A certain man' became 'father' and later 'he, him, thee, thy, my, thou, me' in different contexts within the narrative. 'Sons' became 'them' and branched to become 'younger/elder'. 'Younger son' in context was substituted as 'his, me, he, himself, him, my, am, me, one, brother, this thy son, this my son, this thy brother, which'. The 'elder son' was reported as 'he, him, thy, his, I, me, my, thou, thine'.

The concept of texture is necessary as Hasan observed cohesion to be a 'necessary' (1985 94) but not sufficient condition of coherence (Khoo 304). The construction of cohesive chains, otherwise collocational possibilities, is predicated on links that are semantic. This is evident in the analysis of the narrative. These are co-reference, co-classification and co-extension. Such is seen in the father-sons relation; elder-younger brother relation; master-servant relation; food and lack of it; abundance and want etc. in 'The Prodigal Son'. They are relations of reference. Chain development alone did not account for coherence in the narrative but a conglomeration of other structures

as ellipsis, substitution and reference. Thus an account of paradigmatic relations was necessary to track relations of continuity of the texture in ‘The Prodigal Son’. The narrative is seen as coherent, in which the central tokens (CT) form at least 50 percent of the total tokens (Hasan 1984: 218).

For the text to be coherent, ‘The Prodigal Son’ deploys the resources of cohesion in ways that are motivated by the register of which it is an instance. It is, thus, semantically appropriate, with lexico-grammatical realisations to match (making sense). ‘The Prodigal Son’ has structure (Halliday 2014: 339). Khoo doubted whether cohesion and connectedness can be turned into coherence (312). His question was whether coherence is a text-inherent property. While the answers did not lie within the purview of that study, Khoo hinted at multidimensional coherence construct. Factors such as “nature of phoric references, degree of ambiguity dependent on the extent of shared knowledge with text creator, definitions of text and discourse” were suggested (Khoo 312). Shared knowledge, also called world knowledge (Osisanwo, 84) in the days of the Bible refers to societal experiences known to members of similar speech communities. In ‘The Prodigal Son’, the major and minor Participants/Actors (Jesus as the narrator, father, two sons, servants, master), Participants/phenomenon/goal/attribute (field, far country, famine, hunger, heaven), Processes – major and minor – (said, give, gathered, arose, saw, bring, called, received) and circumstances (when he had spent all; into a far country; for this my son was dead; because he hath received him; these many years) are much familiar experiences of life, irrespective of geography. The knowledge of the world of the interlocutors (participants) in ‘The Prodigal Son’ serving as background knowledge lubricates the smooth flow of the narrative. It, thus, is easier for the audience to decode the message of the narrator within the context it was relived. Sentential and intra-sentential connectivity engendered by the various tools of cohesive harmony guaranteed the text as a piece rather than bits of a piece. This is cohesion following Fang and Cox suggested dimensions of organisation, participant, process and tense of textual quality of a narrative considered as more consistent and reliable measuring tool (351). Pappas suggested ‘narrative form schemas that give prominence to events in the text analysis’ (169) with which this work is concluded.

Texture in the narrative 'The Prodigal Son' is positioned as a result of semantic configurations of register and cohesion. It presupposes a well-blended language (form and function), semantics (sense and connotation), and context (situation and culture) with lexical posts (anaphorical and cataphorical). The above are related to the property of connectedness' (Hasan 1979: 370; Khoo 301). These are within the purview of the textual metafunction of Halliday Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) (2014).

Understanding the importance of the expression '65... for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; 66and was lost, and is found' and the ways this relate/interact with events on hand is 'central to the concept of context' (Wegener 230). Context of Situation, as Wegener (227) reports Hasan's model, is construed by discourse (2004: 21). Context of Situation (COS) includes other modalities as part of the context rather than as discourse. It presupposes the existence of other modalities in the narrative 'as modes of meaning and represented in the contextual plane as part of the context of discourse' (Wegener 227).

By the above, Wegener harmonises the differentiations made by Hasan that the focus of a narrative is discourse alone in contradiction associated with the Russian, particularly (neo-) Vygotskian literature (Engestrom et. al, 1999). Hasan countered the Russian Literature: '... context theory was not intended to apply to all kinds of social action, being designed specifically with discourse in mind'. Hasan distinguishes between social action and those aspects of social action which relate specifically to narrative discourse as was observed in 'The Prodigal Son' thus:

Context of situation construed by narrative discourse

includes other modalities as part of the context rather than as the discourse in the wider context of Systemic Functional Linguistics. This means that modalities are present on the expression plane as separate modes of meaning and represented in the contextual plane as part of the context for discourse

The problem posed by Hasan's restriction is raised by Weneger (228). Weneger argues for 'modelling alternate forms of communication such as communication through challenging behaviour, augmented

communication or computer-mediated communication of some forms, which do not take a spoken or written form' as postulated by Hasan.

However, Butler (486) seems careful to support one of the two: 'Discourses are not produced in a vacuum, but in contexts which both shape and are shaped by "the ongoing interaction" where clarification of "interaction" is a subject of another discourse session.

### **Limitation of the study**

It was not possible to do a complete and comprehensive analysis of cohesion in 'The Prodigal Son' owing to time and space. If all cohesive ties are included in an analysis, a cohesion analysis would need to be complete (Khoo 323). It has been seen, on numerous occasions, which despite the reasoning set out by Hasan, a cohesion analysis has been incomplete owing to omissions of particular components of the method of analysis and in particular, constraint of space provided in a chapter of this kind.

### **Conclusion**

'The Prodigal Son' as a narrative text has a high degree of coherence. If coherence is sense in text, the story makes sense. All parts of the narrative account for coherence in three parts namely, cause and effect, contiguity and associatives. The desired cohesive harmony in any appropriate or acceptable well-laid narrative is realized.

Halliday and Hasan explain that discourse does not wander at random from one topic to another, but runs on reasonably systematic lines with a certain consistency of topic and predictability of development (1990: 28). Discourse as the narrative 'The Prodigal Son' is thus an explicit, systematic account of structures, strategies or process of text or talk (of Jesus) in terms of SFL and consequently, cohesion as theoretical notion developed to account for such narrative. Cohesion in 'The Prodigal Son' is an apt analysis of language in use relative to social, political and cultural formations of the human society.

Apart from the structure of 'The Prodigal Son', the texture is equally unearthed as another basic characteristic of textual unity. The texture of the legendary narrative is a demonstration of semantic relations among the component stages through the precipitative, consequential to the revelation events. The relationship between the linguistic and situational cues enhances the meaningfulness of the



discourse. A cohesive text has texture as evident in the Prodigal Son. A text is cohesive when the stretches of language are hung together with ties (Hasan, 1968; Bahaziq 116). The ties could be grammatical or lexical as shown in this study. A writer/speaker succeeds in making sense to the reader/listener when s/he successfully employs cohesive devices which make the text a whole piece.

The various narrative thematic preoccupations linked in one form or another through the cohesive items are:

- i. Departure and sins – vs 11–13;
- ii. Misery and chastisement – vs 14–16;
- iii. Conviction and resolve – 17–19;
- iv. Return and welcome – vs 20;
- v. Confession and repentance – vs 21;
- vi. Reconciliation and rejoicing – vs 22–24;
- vii. Jealousy and anger of the elder brother – vs 25–32.

By the literature, explanations, arguments, clarifications, analyses of varying kind in this study, narrative discourse is ‘socially constitutive as well as socially shaped’ (Fairclough and Wodak 258); one shaped by acceptable and intelligible patterns of structure and meaning; one reliving the experiential and interpersonal knowledge of the participants.

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