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**Cohesion and Coherence in the novel *The Portrait of a Lady*
by Henry James**

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Abstract

This paper argues that cohesion and coherence in the novel *The Portrait of a Lady*, written by Henry James, highlight how they are stylistically used. Through this paper, we see how Henry James uses coherence between the sentences and how sentences are sequenced and how one thing leads to another implication and so on. In this paper, we deal with syntactic and semantic cohesion in the novel. Examples will clarify how the writer used syntactic and semantic cohesion and coherence in his literary work.

Keywords: cohesion and coherence, syntactic and semantic cohesion, Phonological cohesion, Discourse cohesion, stylistics, discourse analysis and Stylistics Devices (SDs).

Introduction

Cohesion involves formal linguistic links between sections of a text—things which can be listed, pointed at, classified. Coherence is more difficult to define or analyse since it refers to the way we know a text gels together— continuity of theme, cause and effect, and so on. Cohesion is a

surface feature—we recognise it immediately. Coherence, especially if cohesive features are rare in a text, may only emerge slowly. By delaying our realisation of the coherence of a passage, writers can make that realization, all the more powerful (Wright. L & Hope. J, 1996: 137).

Cohesion is an important concept in discourse analysis. Halliday and Hassan (1976) have discussed in detail lexical cohesion as one of the means of achieving cohesion in a discourse, the other being phonological, syntactic and semantic. Any piece of writing, if it is to make sense at all, uses vocabulary and syntactic structure to bond or connect sentences together. The random selection of sentences does not create a coherent text. To make a text comprehensible, there should be two main ways in which sentences are combined with each other within a text; they are cohesion and coherence. These concepts work together, rather than independently, in helping one to understand the ways in which a text makes sense.

Cohesion was popularized by Halliday and Hassan (1976). It refers to the ways in which phonological, lexical and syntactic features connect within and between sentences in a text. But coherence, as Clark (1996) points out, is more to do with semantic features. It refers to the way in which a text makes a consistent sense to the readers with or without the help of cohesion.

A literary writer helps the readers to read his writing by the use of directive signals to make connection in and between sentences. These include the ways in which sentences are sequenced and how one thing leads to another implication and so on. In a text, the signals act as cohesive ties or devices of cohesion. They hold the writing together not only because of relationships between the ideas or events which are represented through lexis, semantics or syntactic structures, but through connecting forms in the lexis and syntactic structures themselves.

Four Kinds of Cohesion

From the novel of Henry James *The Portrait of a Lady* and based on the approach of Leech, cohesion can be divided into four different kinds:

1. Phonological cohesion
2. Syntactic cohesion
3. Semantic cohesion
4. Discourse cohesion

Here, in this paper, we will deal only with syntactic and semantic cohesion.

Syntactic Cohesion

The structure of a sentence is a unifying relation. The words are combined with one another to form a cohesive relation between them in a sentence. Such relation can be sensible if it creates

connection with other sentences in the same text. If one takes the three stylistic devices (repetition, ellipsis and colloquial construction), we will see that repetition is used to repeat the same phrase or clause in order to reinforce descriptions and emotional effect. But ellipsis helps avoid unnecessary and tedious repetition. In colloquial construction, there are some constructions which bear emotional feelings in the very arrangement of words whether they are stylistically colored or neutral. These have a role to play in the cohesion of a text.

Below are given some examples from ‘The Portrait of a Lady’ that illustrate them.

Repetition

Repetition is one of the syntactic devices which is used to show the state of the mind of the speaker when he or she is under the stress of strong emotion. It tends to give a logical emphasis which is necessary to fix the attention of the reader on the key word of the utterance. Such as:

1. ‘....**Great** responsibilities, **great** opportunities, **great** considerations, **great** power, a natural share in the public affairs of a **great** country....’
(Page no. 64)

In example (1) above, we observe that the syntactic cohesion are represented in the repetition of the word “great”, which has been repeated five times in the text.

2. ‘....Not in the usual sense. It’s **getting-getting-getting** a great deal.
But it’s giving up **other chances**.’
‘Other chances for what?’
‘I don’t mean chances to marry.’ Said Isabel, her colour quickly coming back to her... (Page no. 122)

However, in example (2) above, we observe that the syntactic cohesion is represented in the repetition of the words “getting” and “other chances”, which have been repeated three times and twice respectively.

Ellipsis

Ellipsis is a cohesive device involving the absence of an item which the reader or listener has to supply. The cohesive link is set up by the process of referring back to recover the missing item.

Ellipsis can also be used to set up coherent links when the item to be supplied comes from the reader’s general knowledge or common sense, rather than the actual text. It is common in speech as a device for economy, but its use in writing treads a fine line between economy and

incoherence (where too little information undermines understanding) (Wright. L & Hope. J, 1996: 132-133).

In this work the focus will particularly be given to two types of ellipsis; one is noun ellipsis and second one is verb ellipsis as in the below:

Noun Ellipsis

Noun ellipsis refers to the crossing out of a name (noun or pronoun) either it stands as a subject or an object of a sentence. The writer presupposes that what is left out can be apprehended by the reader from the context. For example,

1. ‘There’s something the matter with us all.’

Isabel came behind these two; **Miss Molyneux**, who decidedly liked **her immensely, had taken her arm**, to walk beside her over the polished floor. (Page: 125)

There is a noun ellipsis in the above example represented in the proper noun “Miss Molyneux” in the clause “had taken her arm, to walk beside her over the polished floor”.

2. She knew more **people**, as she told Isabel, than she knew what to do with, **and something was always turning up to be written about**. (Page: 178)

A noun ellipsis of people has been observed in the following clauses of the example above: “than she knew what to do with (them), and “and something was always turning up to be written about (them)”.

Verb Ellipsis

Verb ellipsis means the striking off the verb from the utterance because either it is mentioned before or the reader can infer it from the context. The examples below are samples of verbal ellipsis.

1. ‘I can’t **escape** unhappiness,’ said Isabel. ‘**In marrying you I shall be trying to.**’

‘I don’t know whether you’d try to, but you certainly would: that must in candour admit!’ he exclaimed with an anxious laugh. (Page: 122)

In the example above, the clause marked bold has no verb after the infinitive marker 'to'. The verb 'escape' should come after 'to'. The verb 'escape' that should come after 'to' is deleted because it is mentioned in the sentence before and the reader can easily understand it.

2. 'Indeed I shan't!' **cried** the Countess. '**Why should I**, of all women, set such a price on a husband?' (Page: 255)

Here, the writer also used the same technique, in the sentence 'why should I,' the verb 'cry' should come after 'I'. The sentence has missed the verb and the verb 'cry' is deleted because it is mentioned in the sentence before and the reader can easily understand it.

Colloquial Construction

There are some constructions which bear emotional feelings in the very arrangement of words whether they are stylistically colored or neutral. These constructions are used in lively colloquial intercourse. Here we show how colloquial construction has been achieved through these two examples, especially in Question form with an exclamatory meaning, expressing amazement, enjoyment, indignation, excitement, etc. For example:

1. '**No, no, you're all wrong,**' said the old man. 'You can't tell what they'll like. They're very inconsistent; that's their principal interest.' (Page: 52)
2. '**Shall I love her or shall I hate her?**' Ralph asked while they moved along the platform. (Page: 75)

Semantic Cohesion

Every text is not only a string of grammatical sentences but it is also unit of a different kind called semantic unit. A group of sentences constructs a text. Being a semantic unit, there should be cohesion between these sentences. That is, the understanding of the semantic unity of the text lies in the cohesion between utterances. In every text this can be noted in the relation that exists between the preceding and following sentences (Halliday and Hasan 1976).

The study of cohesion helps the reader to pick out the patterns of meaning running through the text and arrive at some kind of linguistic account of what the text is about. It makes the reader easily follow the meaning which appears in the text. However, Leech (1970) argues that this kind of meaning is superficial and can be applied to any English text. But the literary text is coherently complex. The reader needs to go beyond the normal meaning to comprehend the

literary meaning. The use of imagery through exploiting unusual collocation may create cohesion within a text.

Semantic features are more to do with coherence than cohesion because they are concerned with the meaning that makes sense to the readers. For example:

Metaphor

Ullmann (1973) elucidates that a metaphor occurs in literary work when two different phenomena (things, events, ideas, and actions) are simultaneously brought to mind by the imposition of some or all of the inherent properties of one object on the other which is by nature deprived from these properties. Galperin (1977) deems this kind of metaphor as a special device. Such an imposition generally results when the creator of the metaphor finds in the two corresponding objects certain features which appear to his eye to have something in common.

The examples below are samples of metaphor,

1. **“The two amused themselves, time and again,** with talking of the attitude of the British public as if the young lady had been in a position to appeal to it; but in fact the British public remained for the present profoundly indifferent to Miss Isabel Archer, whose fortune had dropped her, as her cousin said, into the dullest house in England.” (Page: 52)

In the above example, the phrase *the two amused themselves* is used with *time and again*. For ‘time’ it is alright that it is amused by them but, for ‘again’, it is not like this to be amused by them because any personal noun can be amused by any person but ‘again’ is not a personal noun. Then how can it (*again*) be amused by someone? The novelist uses this device to create a good effect and confusion in the speech. It is a sort of mess for the reader and for the characters also.

2. **‘...It keeps the sounds of the world from reaching the private apartments, and it makes the world think that dancing’s going on with.’**(Page: 54)

Here it is used for the band of music which is an inanimate pronoun, but the novelist uses *band of music* as personification because it produces sound and dancing and makes the room as lively as a human can do. It is a kind of identification between animate and inanimate things. Henry James uses also the word *think* for the *world*. Again he considers *world* as an animate noun instead of its original function as an inanimate. And the dialogue is ended like ‘the world think that dancing’s going on with private apartments’.

Metonymy

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10 : 9 September 2010

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Metonymy is based on a different type of relation between the dictionary meaning and contextual meaning. A relation based not on identification (as in the case of metaphor) but on some kind of association, connecting the concepts, which these meanings represent. Thus, the word 'Crown' may stand for king or queen, 'cup or glass' for drink it contains. Here also the interrelation between the dictionary and contextual meanings should stand out clearly and conspicuously.

Lodge (1977) and Galperin (1977) have the view that metonymy and metaphor differ in the way they are deciphered. In the process of disclosing the implied in a metaphor, one image excludes the other that is the metaphor. In the phrase "The sky lamp of the night", lamp means the moon and though there is a definite interplay of meanings, we perceive only one object, the moon. This is not the case with metonymy. Metonymy, while presenting one object to our mind, does not exclude the other. For example:

1. Ralph had met the frank advances of one of the dogs before the fire that the temperature of **an English August**, in the ancient expanses, had not made impertinence. (Page: 69)

Here, the writer is creating the effect of metonymy to explain the thing more clearly. He is saying ... the temperature of English August in the ancient expanses had not made impertinence. It means there is some characteristic property of English August. He is talking about the temperature, climate and atmosphere of August of London. It has some relation based not on identification but on some kind of association, connecting the concepts, which English August represents.

2. **'When you look at me in a certain way my knees knock together, my faculties desert me; I'm filled with trepidation and I ask only for strength to execute your commands. You've an address that I've never encountered in any woman.'** (Page: 109)

In the above example, 'when you look at me in a certain way my knees knock together, my faculties desert me' means that Stackpole becomes shy, and shyness is a feeling which is abstract in nature, but the writer describes it as some concrete thing. In metonymy, a concrete thing is used instead of an abstract notion. In this case, the thing becomes a symbol of the notion.

Irony

Irony as a stylistic device is based, like the two mentioned above, on the simultaneous realization of two logical meanings: dictionary and contextual. But this very stylistic device differs from others in the sense that the two meanings stand in opposition to each other. Searle (1979: 122) defines irony in the following manner: "Utterance meaning is arrived at by going through sentence meaning and then doubling back to the opposite of sentence meaning". For example,

1. 'What's that?'
'Too many ideas.'
'I warned you she was clever.'
'Fortunately they're very bad ones,' said Osmond.
'Why is that fortunate?'
'Dame, if they must be sacrificed!' (Page: 269)

Henry James uses irony in this example - 'fortunately they're very bad ones.' For the ideas he says they are bad, but, in the same place, he uses *fortunately*. Fortunately is completely opposite of bad. Irony has common features with humour, but they are, in particular sense, different. Humour always causes laughter whereas irony expresses the feeling of irritation, displeasure, pity or regret. The strongly marked intonation is a prerequisite in the word containing the irony.

2. 'You must be very tired,' said Isabel, seating herself, and generously, as she thought, to give him this opportunity.
'No, I'm not at all tired. Did you ever know me to be tired?' (Page: 307)

Here, the writer uses the device irony to make it more clear and humorous at the same time. In this dialogue 'No, I'm not at all tired. Did you ever know me to be tired?' the writer wants to say that Casper Goodwood is not at all tired and he never may be tired by saying 'Did you ever know me to be tired?' By this sentence he expresses that he never gets tired because tiredness is the property of human being and he is superior to humans.

Simile

Simile is one of the stylistic devices used to intensify a certain feature of a phenomenon or thing. Ordinary comparison and simile must not be confused with. Galperin (1977:167) says "... comparison means weighing two objects belonging to one class of things with the purpose of establishing the degree of their sameness or difference". It also takes into consideration all the properties of the two objects, stressing on the one that is compared. On the other hand, to use simile is to characterize one object by bringing it into contact with another object belonging to an entirely different class of things.

Simile, furthermore, excludes all the properties of the two objects except one, which is made common to them. For example, "the girl seems to be as clever as her mother" is ordinary comparison. "girl" and "mother" belong to the same class of objects (human beings), so this is not simile but ordinary comparison. But, in this example:

1. ‘...Then Miss Stackpole and Bantling have gone out to a café to eat an ice – Miss Stackpole delights in an ice. I don’t think they wanted me either. The opera’s very bad: **the women look like laundresses and sing like peacocks. I felt very low.**’ (Page: 281)

In the example above, two similes are used by the writer. Firstly, women looked like laundresses and secondly their singing was compared with the singing of a peacock. Melody of the song of omen and peacock is same. Here the clauses ‘the women look like laundresses’ and ‘sing like peacocks’ belong to heterogeneous classes of objects. The primary feature of women is that they looked like laundresses and the secondary feature was they sing like a peacock

2. **The Countess seemed to her to have no soul; she was like a bright rare shell**, with a polished surface and a remarkably pink lip, in which something would rattle when you shook it. (Page: 424)

Here, we see the simile between a woman (countess) and rare shell. It gives the meaning that she looked like a rare shell.

Cohesion and coherence are the two main features that make a literary text comprehensible. Cohesion refers to the way in which phonological, syntactical aspects within and between sentences function to make a text, while coherence refers to the way a text makes consistent sense to the readers. Henry James uses syntactic cohesion, which is the structure of a sentence, which makes a unifying relation. The words are combined with one another to form a cohesive relation between them in a sentence. He uses also semantic cohesion to help the reader to pick out the patterns of meaning running through the text and arrive at some kinds of linguistic account of what the text is about. It makes the reader easily follow the meaning which appears in the text.

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Cohesion and Coherence in the novel *The Portrait of a Lady* by Henry James

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