

**A STUDY OF COHESION ON “HOLY THURSDAY” POEMS OF
WILLIAM BLAKE**

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ÖZET

Metindeki cümleleri birbirine bağlayan bağdaşıklık türüdür. Metinde bir yapının başka bir yapının yardımıyla anlaşılabilmesi, bağdaşıklık meydana getirir. Bu çalışma hem bağdaşıklık üzerine genel bilgi vermeyi hem de William Blake'in (1992) Songs of Innocence ve Songs of Experience adlı kitaplarındaki Holy Thursday şiirlerinde bağdaşıklık türlerini incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu çalışma İngilizce öğretiminde bağdaşıklık birimlerinin yerini vurguladığı için ayrı bir önem taşımaktadır. Bağdaşıklık bilgisi okuma ve yazma becerilerinde anlamı oluşturma açısından önemlidir ve bu yüzden sınıfta kuralları verilerek öğretilmelidir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Bağdaşıklık, Gönderme, Yerine Geçme, Eksiltme, Bağlaç

ABSTRACT

The sentences in a text are bound together with the help of cohesive ties. In a text, the interpretation of an element depends on that of another, which brings about cohesion. Not only does this study briefly give information on cohesion, but it also analyzes the types of cohesive ties in “Holy Thursday” poems in Songs of Innocence and in Songs of Experience by William Blake (1992). This study is also important since it stresses on the significance of cohesive ties in teaching English. Knowledge of cohesion is essential in forming the meaning while reading and writing; and thus, it should be taught in the classroom explicitly.

Keywords: Cohesion, Reference, Substitution, Ellipses, Conjunction

Introduction

In recent years, the idea of analyzing a linguistic string (a sentence) without taking “context” into account has been seriously questioned. According to Gee (1999), when people speak or write, they have to fit the situation or context in which they are communicating. Brown and Yule (1983:35) state “*Since the beginning of the 1970s, linguists have become increasingly aware of the importance of context in their interpretations of sentences.*” This means doing discourse analysis mainly consists of doing pragmatics, which is the relations of signs to interpreters beside doing syntax and semantics. According to Fowler (1981), a text is a process consisting of interaction of speakers, consciousnesses and of communities. Speakers and writers produce a text in some way to communicate their intentions; and the text consisting of language used as an instrument of communication is treated as a dynamic process. Thus, the way a discourse analyst approaches a text differs from that of a formal linguist. Discourse analysts study the use of language, so they are more concerned with the relationship between the speaker and the sentence, than they are with the relationship between sentences. In short, text and context are crucial elements to the analysis of sentences because messages are created through an interaction between text and context. (Schiffrin, 1994)

According to Halliday and Hasan (1976), cohesive relationships within and among sentences determine whether a set of sentences forms a text or not. A text is a text if it has texture, and texture is obtained through cohesive relations. If the interpretation of an element in the text depends on that of another, there are cohesive relationships in that text. An element presupposes another element, and presupposing and presupposed elements combine within the text to provide cohesion. By doing so, sentences constitute a text and differ from a list of unrelated sentences. Similarly, McCarthy (1994) states cohesive ties create bonds between sentence boundaries and pair and combine items that are related. The readers, therefore, must interpret the existing ties in order to understand them.

In this study, cohesion will be studied in detail with reference to the cohesive analysis model put forward by Halliday and Hasan (1976), and this model will be taken as the basis upon which an analysis of the poems, “Holy Thursday” from *Songs of Innocence* and “Holy Thursday” from *Songs of Experience* by William Blake (1992), will be undertaken.

The term “texture” means the property of being a text. Texture distinguishes a text from a non-text. If we call a group of sentences a text, there must be some linguistic features giving it unity and texture. Texture may be provided by the cohesive relations existing between two items. In other words, when an item is interpreted with reference to another, there is texture. Not only the referring item, but also the referred item is necessary for cohesion. In the sentence, “Read the book today. And translate it soon”, the relationship between “the book” and “it” forms a tie which is an occurrence of a pair of cohesively related items. “The book” and “it” are identical, co-referential. “It” has no cohesive power unless we have “the book” within reach (Halliday and Hasan, 1976; Cook, 1989; Hatch, 1992; McCarthy, 1994; Bloor and Bloor, 1995).

We can analyze a text in terms of its cohesive features with the help of ties. The kinds of cohesive ties that were first proposed by Halliday and Hasan (1976) and

were followed by the other scientists (Cook, 1989; Hatch, 1992; McCarthy, 1994; Bloor and Bloor, 1995) are:

- a. Reference
- b. Substitution
- c. Ellipsis
- d. Conjunction
- e. Lexical cohesion

If the interpretation of an element in a text depends on that of another, it means there is cohesion. A text is created by the presence, in each sentence, of some elements that require the reader to look at the surrounding sentences in order to get their interpretation. As a semantic concept, cohesion lies in the relationship between these elements in the text. Two elements, the presupposing “it” and the presupposed “the book” are integrated into a text. Cohesion lies in the relation between these two elements (Halliday and Hasan, 1976; Cook, 1989; Hatch, 1992; McCarthy, 1994; Bloor and Bloor, 1995).

There are two types of cohesion: lexical (lexical cohesion) and grammatical (reference, substitution, and ellipsis). Conjunction is on the boarder line. Some forms of cohesion are expressed through grammar and others through vocabulary. Cohesion; however, is not a structural relation, and it is independent of sentence boundaries. It is the presupposition of something that has gone before or followed. Pointing back to some previous item in the sentence immediately preceding or some earlier sentence is called *anaphora*. *Cataphora* is pointing forward to the item in the sentence following. However, if an element in the sentence refers to something existing in the environment, in context of situation, it is called *exophora*. Exophoric relations are not cohesive because they do not bind two elements together in the text (Halliday and Hasan, 1976; Brown and Yule, 1983; Bloor and Bloor, 1995).

a. Reference

There are certain items in every language which make reference to other items for their interpretation instead of being interpreted semantically in their own right. Reference is a semantic relation unlike substitution which exists on the grammatical level (Halliday and Hasan, 1976; Cook, 1989; Hatch, 1992; McCarthy, 1994; Bloor and Bloor, 1995). The reference item is not required to match the grammatical class of the item it refers to. What is required is the matching of semantic properties. It is emphasized that reference to the situation be superior to the reference to another item within the text. This is because just being in the situation happens earlier than being in the text. According to Halliday and Hasan (1976,32);

“...it is fairly easy to see that there is a logical continuity from naming (referring to a thing independently of the context of situation), through situational reference (referring to a thing as identified in the context of situation) to textual reference (referring to a thing as identified in the surrounding text); and in this perspective, situational reference would appear as the prior form.”

This means that reference items may be *exophoric* (situational reference) or *endophoric* (reference within the text), and they may be anaphoric or cataphoric if endophoric. Besides endophoric-exophoric distinction, we have to identify the three main types of reference. These are personal, demonstrative, and comparative reference items (Halliday and Hasan, 1976; Cook, 1989; Hatch, 1992; McCarthy, 1994; Bloor and Bloor, 1995). Halliday and Hasan (1976:37) state:

*“Personal reference is reference by means of function in the speech situation, through the category of PERSON.
Demonstrative reference is reference by means of location on a scale of PROXIMITY.
Comparative reference is indirect reference by means of IDENTITY or SIMILARITY.”*

b. Substitution

Substitution is the replacement of one item in the text by another. Ellipsis is a different kind of substitution in which an item is replaced by nothing. Substitution and reference are also different cohesive ties. According to Halliday and Hasan (1976, 88), “*The distinction between substitution and reference is that substitution is a relation in the wording rather than in the meaning.*” Substitution occurs between words or phrases, but for reference meaning relations are important. As Halliday and Hasan (1976, 89) state “*...reference is a relation on the semantic level, whereas substitution is a relation on the lexical-grammatical level, the level of grammar and vocabulary, or linguistic ‘form’.*” There are different types of substitution, and they are defined grammatically rather than semantically because substitution is a grammatical relation. In English, a substitute in a text may function as a noun or a verb or a clause; and it is called nominal (one, ones, same), verbal (do) and clausal (so, not) substitution (Halliday and Hasan, 1976; Cook, 1989; Hatch, 1992; McCarthy, 1994; Bloor and Bloor, 1995).

c. Ellipsis

Substitution and ellipsis are very close to each other. In fact, ellipsis is substitution by zero. Reference is a relation between meanings on the semantic level, but substitution and ellipsis are relations between words, groups or clauses on the lexico-grammatical level. In ellipsis something is left unsaid. In substitution, explicit counters such as “one” and “do” are used as place markers for what is presupposed. While in ellipsis nothing is inserted into the slot, it is considered to be substitution by zero. If there is ellipsis, it means there is a presupposition. Like substitution, ellipsis is a relation within the text. In the great majority of cases the presupposed item is found in the preceding part of the text. When something structurally necessary is left unsaid, we get ellipsis. Normally ellipsis is an anaphoric relation. Ellipsis within the sentence is not cohesive as it is the case in reference and substitution. The study of ellipsis across sentences is essential for texture. There are three main types of ellipses: nominal, verbal and clausal (Halliday and Hasan, 1976; Cook, 1989; Hatch, 1992; McCarthy, 1994; Bloor and Bloor, 1995).

d. Conjunction

Conjunction is the fourth type of cohesive relation. It differs from reference, substitution and ellipsis. Substitution and ellipsis cohere one piece of text to another on the grammatical level. We try to get the suitable word or words already available in order to negotiate the meaning of the substitutes or elliptical items by analyzing the preceding or following part of the text. In contrast, reference is a semantic relation. Meanings are tied together not by replacing an element by a counter or a blank as it is done in substitution and ellipsis, but by using reference items which direct us to the environment for interpretation. Conjunction, on the other hand, is not an anaphoric or cataphoric relation. It is a different type of semantic relation. Conjunctive elements are not cohesive in themselves, but the meanings they express by relating linguistic elements to each other presuppose the presence of other components in the discourse. In most cases the order of the sentences does not affect the cohesion provided with conjunction. Types of conjunction are not clearly classified. There is no single scheme. Many different classifications are possible, but mainly there are four categories which are additive, adversative, causal and temporal (Halliday and Hasan, 1976; Cook, 1989; Hatch, 1992; McCarthy, 1994; Bloor and Bloor, 1995).

e. Lexical Cohesion

Reference, substitution, ellipsis and conjunction are different types in the class of grammatical cohesion. We also have to study lexical cohesion as a final step. As the name implies, lexical cohesion is of lexical interest and not of grammatical. However, like reference, substitution, ellipsis and conjunction, lexical cohesion is one of the categories of cohesion which is recognized in the lexico-grammatical system. Lexical cohesion is achieving cohesion by means of selection of vocabulary. The selection of a lexical item relies on another item existing in a previous part of a text. Lexical cohesion takes place in four forms: general nouns, reiteration, cohesive patterns and collocation.

Haynes (1995) emphasizes that while the writer makes choices which words or phrases to use, s/he also makes choices about the sequence of these words. The differences among writers in the choice of vocabulary reflect their differences of attitude to life and society. However, the style of a text does not depend on the writer's making a succession of separate choices. According to Haynes (1995), one choice affects another; therefore, the uniqueness of text stems from all the specific choices made.

Analysis of Cohesion on "Holy Thursday" Poems of William Blake

Songs of Innocence and *Songs of Experience* were written by Blake in the 1790s. Blake emphasizes that children lose their "innocence" as they grow older and are influenced by the ways of the world. Blake believes that children are born innocent. As they grow to become experienced, they are influenced by beliefs and opinions of adults. As a result, they could no longer be considered innocent. The poems from *Songs of Innocence* were written from an innocent child's perspective. Those from *Songs of Experience* were written from the perspective of a more experienced person who had seen a lot of evil in the world and had, in a way, become bitter towards the world. As emphasized in *The Norton Anthology of English* (1974), in *Songs of Innocence*, Blake stresses on the fact that he wrote happy songs for children in which he creates naïve

innocence. In *Songs of Experience*, however, an ugly world of poverty, disease, war and social discomfort is revealed.

“Holy Thursday” in *Songs of Innocence* describes a religious ceremony held on a holy Thursday. It reflects the joy and innocence of children. The one in *Songs of Experience*, on the other hand, uses more depressing language although it describes the same ceremony. These two poems were chosen to be analyzed because they take the same event from opposite points of view. The aim of this study is to search if the lexical items used in the two poems reflect the atmosphere the poet intended to create. Besides, this study aims at, through these poems, analyzing the cohesion model developed by Halliday and Hasan (1976) in a meaningful context.

HOLY THURSDAY (from *Songs of Innocence*)

*'Twas on a holy Thursday, their innocent faces clean,
The children walking two & two, in red & blue & green,
Grey-headed beards walk'd before, with wands as white as snow,
Till into the high dome of Paul's they like Thames' waters flow.*

*O what a multitude they seem'd, these flowers of London town!
Seated in companies they sit with radiance all their own.
The hum of multitudes was there, but multitudes of lambs,
Thousands of little boys & girls raising their innocent hands.*

*Now like a mighty wind they raise to heaven the voice of song,
Or like harmonious thunders the seats of heaven among.
Beneath them sit the aged men, wise guardians of the poor;
Then cherish pity, lest you drive an angel from your door.*

In the poem, there are some personal, demonstrative and comparative reference items. This poem is rich in personal reference items. “It” in “’Twas” does not refer to a particular person or object. It has the property of extended reference because it refers to a portion of the text; all the things happened on that Thursday.

“Their” in “their innocent faces clean” is a possessor, determiner and modifier. It is an endophoric, cataphoric reference to “the children’s” in the following part of the text. Since referring forward to succeeding elements is not cohesive, the “their” here does not bind the text cohesively. On the other hand, the “their” in “with radiance all their own” and “raising their innocent hands” is an endophoric, anaphoric reference to “the children’s” in the preceding text. It functions cohesively.

“They” in “they like Thames’ waters flow” refers anaphorically to “the children”. It is cohesive because identification lies in the pretext. It is a participant, subject, pronoun and head. Besides this “they”, the “they” in “O what a multitude they seem’d”, “Seated in companies they sit” and in “they raise to heaven the voice of song” has the same qualities. According to Halliday & Hasan (1976:48);

“Only the third person is inherently cohesive, in that a third person form typically refers anaphorically to a preceding item in the text. First and second person forms do not normally refer to the text at all; their referents are defined by the speech roles of the speaker and the hearer, and hence they are normally interpreted exophorically, by reference to the situation.”

“Them” in “Beneath them sit the aged men” is a personal reference item. It is a participant, non-subject, pronoun, head and refers to “the children” in the preceding part of the text, therefore it is endophoric, anaphoric and creating cohesion throughout the text.

“You” and “your” in “lest you drive an angel from your door” do not form any kind of cohesive ties because first and second person forms do not refer to the text, they refer to the speaker and the hearer. They can only be interpreted exophorically, by taking the situation into account.

The poem has some examples of demonstrative reference items. “The” in “The children” has the function of signaling the identity. The identification is recovered from the nominal group where the “the” occurs as the first element. The defining element is “walking two & two, in red & blue & green”, and it gives the answer to the question “which children?” This nominal group with “the” is a good example of endophoric and cataphoric referential case in which the “the” occurs with the referred item together in the same nominal group. “The” as a cataphoric reference item as we have in this example is limited to structural purposes. As we know “the” can never refer to the other items cohesively if it is cataphoric. All these qualities are the same for the “the” in “the high dome of Paul's”, “the hum of multitudes”, “the voice of song”, “the seats of heaven”, and for the first “the” in “the aged men, wise guardians of the poor”. However, “the” in “guardians of the poor” presents an ellipsis which leaves something unsaid. “Poor” preceded by “the” presents a nominal ellipsis where the common noun in the nominal group is omitted. Here the function of head is taken by an epithet “poor”. It is a fact that, except for the colour adjectives, adjectives normally do not function as head in ellipsis. “The poor” is elliptical, but it is exophoric because “the poor” is interpreted as “poor people” without presupposing any part of the text. Our knowledge of the world, not the text, helps us to obtain the omitted head which is “people”. Since it is exophoric, it is not cohesive.

“These” in “these flowers of London town” occurs as an element within the nominal group. It belongs to the class of determiners and functions as a modifier. According to Halliday & Hasan (1976), the demonstratives regularly refer to something in the context of situation; and thus, they are not cohesive. Besides, “these flowers of London town” refers anaphorically and cohesively to “The children walking two & two, in red & blue & green.”

“There” in “The hum of multitudes was there” is anaphoric and locative; it refers to extended text which stands for numerous children of London walking with their innocent hands up and singing heavenly songs on the streets of London on a holy Thursday.

In terms of comparative reference, the poem has some examples of likeness between things. The expressions “with wands as white as snow”, “like Thames’ waters

flow”, “like a mighty wind” and “like harmonious thunderings” include likeness as a referential property. However, the reference is backwards in these examples, and thus, structural and non-cohesive.

The poem does not include any kind of substitution or ellipsis, but there are some examples of conjunction. “And” in “two & two, in red & blue & green” and “little boys & girls”; “or” in “Now like a mighty wind they raise to heaven the voice of song./ Or like harmonious thunderings the seats of heaven among”; and “but” in “The hum of multitudes was there, but multitudes of lambs” function structurally as co-ordinates between clauses within the same sentence; therefore, they are structural rather than cohesive.

“Now” in “Now like a mighty wind they raise to heaven the voice of song” refers to the present situation described in the poem, not to the time of speaking; therefore, it forms a cohesive tie temporally.

“Then” and “lest” in “Then cherish pity, lest you drive an angel from your door.” are causal conjunctions which are interpreted as “that’s why” and “for fear that” respectively. Therefore, this line is cohesively bound into the pretext. Here, “then” does not form a temporal relation, on the contrary, it cohesively creates a causal relation with the pretext. Similarly, “lest” gives the cause of the fear that an angel may fly away if you do not cherish pity.

This poem is rich in cohesive lexical items. General nouns are on the borderline between grammatical and lexical cohesion, and they are generally accompanied by “the” which is a demonstrative reference item when general nouns function cohesively. Besides, general nouns help the speaker represent the meanings in a way they make him feel personally. “The children” and “the poor” can be taken as the general nouns in this text.

Reiteration is another form of lexical cohesion which is based on repetition, synonymy, near synonymy or super-ordinate relation. In this text, there are following examples of reiteration:

“walking” “walk’d”----- repetition
“multitude” “multitudes” “multitudes”----- repetition
“sit” “sit”----- repetition
“innocent” innocent”----- repetition
“heaven” “heaven”----- repetition
“seated” “sit”----- synonymy
“multitudes” “thousands”----- near synonymy
“children” “boys and girls”----- super-ordinate

Collocation is a kind of lexical cohesion which provides cohesion with the association of lexical items co-occurring regularly (Halliday and Hasan, 1976; Cook, 1989; Hatch, 1992; McCarthy, 1994; Bloor and Bloor, 1995). The collocations are as follows:

“red” --- “blue” --- “green” --- “grey” --- “white”
“holy” --- “beadles” --- “wand” --- “innocent” --- “heaven” --- “angel”
“seated” --- “sit” --- “seats”

“snow” --- “white” --- “clean” --- “innocent” --- “radiance”
“hum” --- “voice” --- “song” --- “thunderings”
“hand” --- “face”
“boys” --- “girls” --- “men”

HOLY THURSDAY (from *Songs of Experience*)

*Is this a holy thing to see
In a rich and fruitful land,
Babes reduc'd to misery,
Fed with cold and usurious hand?*

*Is that trembling cry a song?
Can it be a song of joy?
And so many children poor?
It is a land of poverty!*

*And their sun does never shine,
And their fields are bleak & bare,
And their ways are fill'd with thorns:
It is eternal winter there.*

*For where-e'er the sun does shine,
And where-e'er the rain does fall,
Babe can never hunger there,
Nor poverty the mind appall.*

The poem includes some examples of personal reference items. For example, “It” in “Can it be a song of joy?” refers to “that trembling cry” anaphorically and creates cohesion throughout the text. However, “It” in “It is a land of poverty” refers to “a land of poverty” cataphorically, and this does not contribute to the cohesion of the text. Similarly, “it” in “It is eternal winter” refers to “eternal winter” cataphorically, and it does not form a cohesive tie either. “Their” in “their sun”, “their fields” and “their ways” is a possessor, determiner and modifier, and it is interpreted as “poor children’s” by reference to the preceding part of the text. Therefore, a cohesive tie exists between these items.

The poem includes some demonstrative reference items. For instance, “This” in “Is this a holy thing to see” is a demonstrative referring to extended text. It refers to the whole event; poor children’s hunger and misery. However, “That” in “Is that trembling cry a song?” does not form any kind of cohesive tie, it only emphasizes a distance from the speaker.

“There” in “It is eternal winter there” refers anaphorically to extended text; the misery of the poor children on the land of poverty where the sun does not shine and the

fields are bleak and bare. However, “there” in “Babe can never hunger there” refers anaphorically to the preceding lines which describe a land where the sun shines, the rain falls and there is no fear of hunger. In both cases, there is a cohesive tie because the interpretation is possible if the pretext is analyzed.

“The” in “the sun”, “the rain” and “the mind” is identified on extralinguistic grounds. The “the” in “the sun” and “the rain” has an exophoric use and refers to one member of the class of objects whereas “the” in “the mind” refers exophorically to the whole class of the human mind. Neither of them establishes a cohesive tie.

The poem does not include any kind of substitution or ellipsis, but some examples of conjunction exist. “And”, for instance, in “rich and fruitful land” and “cold and usurious hand” is a co-ordinate which combines two adjectives in the same sentence. Therefore, it is not cohesive. On the other hand, “and” in “And so many children poor?”, “And their sun does never shine,/ And their fields are bleak & bare./ And their ways are fill’d with thorns” and “And where-e’er the rain does fall” is a conjunction having an additive relation. It combines sentences cohesively.

“For” in “For where-e’er the sun does shine” is an example for the reversed form of the causal relation. It gives a reason for the whole preceding text. For this textual purpose, it is cohesive. Similarly, “Nor” in “Nor poverty the mind appall” is an additive conjunction which binds this sentence to the previous one “Babe can never hunger there” cohesively.

In terms of lexical items, this poem is also very rich. “The sun”, “the rain” and “the mind” are general nouns which function cohesively as the starting point. Although these nouns are not defined in the text, their interpretation is possible.

The examples of reiteration in this text are as follows:

“babes” “babe”---- repetition
“poverty” “poverty”---- repetition
“song” “song”---- repetition
“land” “land”---- repetition
“babes” “children”---- near synonymy
“field” “land” ---- near synonymy

The examples of collocation are as follows:

“rich” --- “fruitful”
“trembling” --- “cold” --- “winter”
“misery” --- “hunger” --- “poverty”
“cold” --- “bleak” --- “bare”
“joy” --- “misery”
“sun” --- “rain”
“sun” --- “shine”
“rain” --- “fall”
“rich” ---- “poverty”
“cry” --- “song”

Conclusion

The analysis of the poems indicates no differences in terms of the frequency of reference items. Both poems have similar reference items. Both poems can be said to be similar regarding substitution, ellipsis and conjunction. They are rich in lexical items, which helps the poet to create the proper atmosphere in each poem as he intended to. Blake uses positive items of vocabulary in “Holy Thursday” from *Songs of Innocence* to introduce a religious ceremony through the eyes of an innocent and happy child. The “Holy Thursday” in *Songs of Experience*, nevertheless, includes many depressing and negative lexical items to narrate the same ceremony from the viewpoint of a pessimistic adult. The poet’s choice of vocabulary signals the exact meanings to be emphasized in each poem.

Since cohesion is essential both to the reader and the writer to produce and comprehend a text, language teachers should place more importance to text cohesion in their teaching and evaluation of writing. Therefore some research has been carried out by using Halliday and Hasan’s (1976) taxonomy of cohesive devices (Goldman and Murray, 1992; Wenjun, 2001; Liu and Braine, 2005). All these studies indicate that learners need external instruction with examples in order to be able to use cohesive devices accurately.

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