



## Exploring Cohesive Devices in Religious Discourse

FRANK ASIAMAHAH

KNUST Senior High School, Kumasi, Ghana

PEACE CHINWENDU ISRAEL

University of Education, Winneba, Ghana

**Abstract.** This study explored the language of sermon; therefore, it examined spoken discourse. The aim was to investigate the cohesiveness or otherwise of the sermon and how the cohesive devices (if any) contribute to the logicity and understanding of the non-written text and their significance. A sermon from the WhatsApp page of Rev. Fr. Joseph Nyarko, a Catholic priest of Sunyani Diocese, was purposively selected for this study. The sample was closely analyzed through the content analysis propounded by Halliday and Hasan (1976). The findings revealed that there was cohesiveness in the sermon, and reference, ellipsis, substitution, conjunction, collocation and reiteration were used in the sermon to logically organized structures into meaningful discourse. This work concluded that every utterance or text, whether written or non-written, consciously or unconsciously, has unique structure and form which could be analyzed.

**Keywords:** Religious discourse, Sermon, Cohesion, Cohesive devices, Communication

### 1. Introduction

Language is one of the most effective tools used to serve the communicative needs of human beings. Social and other needs of human existence are given meaning through language. In facts, ideas are kept and transformed through language and it is the elements through which social environments are shaped. Discourse and social practices are inter-dependent as they influence each other. In religious circle for instance, language plays a significant role. Religious language is somewhat different from other varieties of language within a society because it is

used to shape beliefs, opinion, behaviour, rights and the general countenance of a people. Therefore, it must be persuasive enough (Asiedu, 2016)

### 1.1 Religious Discourse

Religious discourse is a form of discourse/language used by members of a given religious group to communicate with one another for transactional and interactional religious purposes. Sermon is a type of religious discourse. It is a planned formal speech designed to develop faith in the hearers and to urge them on to new beliefs, new courses of actions or to spiritual progress. Religious language as used in sermonic discourse makes assumptions of people and of the world around us. Meaning in this genre is constructed and conveyed by the preacher, and the congregation is expected to rely on their background knowledge, biblical as well as other contextual information to interpret communicated meaning.

Religious language can be explained in many ways, from casual conversation to sacred texts and purposed revelations. In other words, what to be considered as a religious language can be limitless depending on one's perception on religion and spirituality. Bounds (1907), one of the foremost scholars to recognized the exclusive influence of God in any successful preaching, argues that the preacher of God's Word needs more than eloquence, the art of great, clear thinking and the art of pleasing an audience. In his opinion, for a sermon to be powerful, draws people closer, attracts hearts, edifices, convicts and saves, the preacher must have his words cohere. Civetta (2003) recognizes creativity, linguistic artistry as relevant ingredients for persuasion in

Christian sermonic discourse. In the same vein, Dzameshie (1997) in his exploration of linguistic choices as an identification strategy of persuasion in sermons in Ghanaian Christian churches, establishes that preachers show modesty in speech by employing in-group terms of address such as “folks”, “brothers”, “sisters” and “friends” as well as linguistic forms such as inclusive and exclusive pronouns as strategies to promote solidarity in discourse.

Religious discourse can also be used to sustain social roles and relations in media discourse such as radio, television and the internet (Taiwo, 2007). He points out that preachers control the discourse by using interrogatives, imperatives and declaratives to elicit responses from the listener/readers and portray themselves as the knowers/experts.

In all, it can be said that religious discourse/sermons reveals that preachers and the congregation must share some kind of knowledge which accounts for how meaning is constructed and inferred by the participants in the discourse. The interpretation of meaning hinges primarily on the cohesiveness of the linguistic devices, textual resources and contextual/situational factors available in the discourse (Adukpo, 2017).

## 1.2 Cohesion and Its Structural and Semantic Effects on Discourse

Cohesion refers to relations of meaning that exist within a text. It is a meaning relationship that an element has with another element in the text. For a text to cohere or have texture there must be the possibility of interpreting the meaning of a form with reference to another. If therefore the interpretation of any element in a discourse is dependent on making reference to another, there is cohesion (Halliday & Hasan, 1976; Emezue, 1998). For example:

Donald is well-liked. Touch him and you will receive the wrath of the people. He’s their hero.

In the above text, *him* and *he* refer back to Donald as *their* refers back to the people. While *him*, *he* and *their* are the presupposing item, *Donald* and *people* are the presupposed elements. So, we have a phoria or phoric direction that is anaphoric. The phoria give cohesion to the three sentences so that we interpret them as a whole. Like all the components of the semantic system, cohesion is realized through grammar and vocabulary (Tanskanen, 2006). Cohesion is broadly divided into two – grammatical and lexical cohesion. Grammatical cohesion includes devices such as reference, substitution, ellipsis and conjunction, while lexical cohesion is divided into

reiteration (repetition, synonymy etc.) and collocation (co-occurrence of lexical items). These cohesive ties could be applied in numerous fields of study, including spoken discourse as sermon.

Cohesion is expressed through the semantic organization of language. Language can be explained as a multiple coding system containing three levels of coding: the semantic (meaning), the lexico-grammatical (forms/structure) and the phonological and orthographic (expression). The concept of cohesion can be described in the following ways. Meaning (the semantic system) Wording (the lexico-grammatical system, grammar, and vocabulary), Sounding (the phonological and orthographic system). Within this stratum, the guiding principle in language is that the more general meanings are expressed through the grammar, the more specific meanings through the vocabulary. Since users in spoken discourse are able to provide meaning, they consciously or unconsciously make use of cohesive devices in their utterances.

Cohesion does not only concern what the text means, it also concerns how a text is built on semantics. This means that although cohesion plays an important role in connecting ideas among the sentences in a paragraph, it must also contribute to semantic effects. Renkama (2004) explains that the most salient phenomenon of discourse is the fact that sentences or utterances are linked together. He further explains that to achieve this “connectedness”, two concepts are used: cohesion, referring to appropriate linkages in the text and coherence, referring to logicity and connections which can be made by the reader or listener based on the knowledge outside the discourse. He explains that for a proper interpretation of discourse, there should be proper link of sentences and utterances

To Adukpo (2017), cohesion is a formal feature of texts as it gives texts *texture*, while coherence is “in the eye of the beholder”. Thus, cohesion is objectively verifiable, while coherence is more subjective. He adds that a text may be coherent to a person, but incoherent to another and further stresses the fact that the way textual cohesion is achieved is best learned through paying close attention to the way sentences are linked in texts. Asiedu (2016) posits that the exact relationship between cohesion and coherence is a matter of contention. However, while it is true that a sequence of unlinked utterances can make sense, it is often the case that some form of linking, e.g. with cohesive devices such as *and*, *but*, *so*, can make it easier for the reader (or listener) to process and to make sense of what they read (or

hear). He further argues that the way that textual cohesion is achieved is best learned through paying close attention to the way sentences are linked in texts.

On the relationship between cohesion and coherence, Foltz, (2007) and Graesser, et al (2004) explain that while coherence refers to the representation relationships of a text in the mind of a reader, cohesion refers to the textual features that coherent texts are built upon. They explain that in the essence, then, cohesion consists of the elements of the text, while coherence refers to the consistency of the elements as mental representation. They further clarify that cohesion and coherence are linked, because the more language depends on cohesion, the more coherent it will be and easier it will be to understand. They agree with Renkama (2004) who believe that coherence is how the reader interprets a text based on cohesive elements in the text. Bublitz & Lenk (1999) expand the argument and explain that coherence is not completely text inherent; it is partially text dependent. This means that cohesion of a text depends both on how the text is structured and also on the logical arrangement of the text as both contribute towards the interpretation of the text by the reader. Listeners are able to interpret spoken discourse because of its peculiar structure. Therefore, the structure of spoken discourse could be studied and the cohesive devices which effect the logical arrangement of the spoken discourse aid meaning. The language of sermons is intelligible and hence coherent.

Costerman & Fayol (1977) citing Halliday and Hassan (1976) argue that connectives play an important role in the creation of cohesive links between ideas. The use of connectives in discourse relates to the density and abstractness of discourse and correlatives to higher demands of working memory. This ensures that connectives are measured through their density in two dimensions. The first-dimension contrasts positive versus negative connectives while the other dimension considers connectives associated with particular classes of cohesion identified by Adukpo (2017). This means that if there is connectivity of lexical items and structures, there is cohesion. Utterances in spoken discourse possess these connectives which help to provide cohesion, hence, meaning and coherence to listeners.

Foltz (2007) and Graesser et al (2004) have a similar view that often times a proficient speaker is determined by the form of cohesive devices he/she employs. They claim that these include logical

linguistic elements (defined as explicit markers of coherence e.g. reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction, repetition and anaphora) as well as more global measures (implicit markers of coherence) such as causal relations and semantic similarities. This means that if a speaker makes use of cohesive devices in his utterances it builds the person's confidence and skills. McNamara et al (1996) add their views that cohesive devices also allow interlocutors to make links between pieces of discourse and conceptualize the transition of information from one section of discourse to another. They argue that gaps in cohesion force participants to complete the gap or, if inferences are not possible, to negotiate meaning. Tanskanen (2006) supports the view that cohesive devices allow the speaker to provide indications of coherence in a message and provide interlocutors with a means to interpret the message.

Liu et al (2009) argue that text cohesion arises from the use of explicit features (e.g., words, phrases and sentences) that make connections among ideas and sentences to guide the reader through the text. Their study focused on two types of text cohesion – referential cohesion and semantic cohesion. Referential cohesion is the noun, pronoun, or noun phrase that refers to another constituent in a text; which can be increased by repeating prior arguments, that is, nouns, pronouns, noun-phrases. Kintsch (1998) explains semantic cohesion as the semantic (meaning) or conceptual similarity of two sentences or paragraphs. Semantic cohesion can be increased by enhancing semantic connections of two text constituents, such as words, phrases, or sentences that share the same world knowledge. Semantic cohesion occurs when there is a semantic link between sentences and utterances.

### 1.2.1 Lexical Cohesion

Nunan (1993) describes lexical cohesion thus:

Lexical cohesion is, in many ways, the most interesting of all the cohesive categories. The background knowledge of the reader or listener plays a more obvious role in the perception of lexical relationships than in the perception of other types of cohesion. Collocation patterns, for example, will only be perceived by someone who knows something about the subject at hand.

Collocates can be words used in the same context or it can be words that contribute to the same area of meaning. For example, a text dealing with the chemical treatment of food contains lexical chains

such as: fruit, skin, citrus, lemon, orange, chemicals, products and laboratory. These words can be said to belong to the same register and contribute to the same topic.

Bloor (2004) has a similar view that lexical cohesion involves meaningful connections in text that are created through the use of lexical items and that do not intrinsically involve grammatical cohesive ties. He explains that two main categories linked with lexical cohesion are collocation and reiteration. Collocation covers two or more words which can be said to go together in the sense of frequency of occurrence. Substitution, in contrary to the reference, is a relation in syntax rather than meaning. He further suggests that lexical cohesion is simply interpreted as "the cohesive effect achieved by the selection of vocabulary". It involves meaningful connections in text that are created through the use of lexical items and that do not intrinsically involve grammatical cohesive ties. The two main categories linked with lexical cohesion are collocation and reiteration. Collocation covers two or more words which can be said to go together in the sense of frequency of occurrence. Grammatical cohesion, on the other hand, refers to the structural content, and it is categorized into four main cohesive ties: reference, substitution, ellipsis and conjunction. Reference is considered as a cohesive tie "when two or more expressions in the text refer to the same person, thing or idea" (Bloor, 2004:93). This means that textual cohesion involves semantic link of text through the use of words while grammatical cohesion is connected with structure. Grammatical cohesion is explained as follows:

We shall consider some grammatical regularities observable in well-formed written texts, and how the structuring of sentences has implications for units such as paragraphs, and for the progression of whole texts. We shall also look at how the grammar of English offers a limited set of options for creating surface links between the clauses and sentences of a text, otherwise known as cohesion. Basically, most text display links from sentence to sentence in terms of grammatical features such as pronominalisation, ellipsis (the omission of otherwise expected elements because they are retrievable from the previous text or context) and conjunction of various kinds. The resources available for grammatical cohesion can be listed finitely and compared across language for translatability and distribution in real texts. (McCarthy, 1991:25)

Djabatey (2013) suggests that collocation errors are pervasive in students' attempts to vary their lexis. He

advises that as much as possible, collocation knowledge should be developed alongside reiteration skill development and collocation dictionaries or corpus data can be used by teachers to help give students the most typical or strongest collocates of important words. Slavičková (2014) support the fact that exposure to 'contrived' texts has a negative effect on the development of a learner's use of lexical cohesive ties in writing and warn teachers not to over-simplify texts for their students as they believe that edited texts are not rich in their lexical cohesive ties. They believe that students interpreting texts from their original form is the best.

No doubt, a lot of studies have been carried out on religious discourse and cohesion/cohesive devices across the world. For instance, Azzouz (2009) analysed grammatical cohesion in expository essays; Tsareva, (2010) cohesion in students' argumentative essays and Asiedu (2016) carried out a critical discourse analysis of selected Christian sermons paying attention to language, power and ideology. To the best of our knowledge, there are minimal studies carried out on cohesion in online sermons in Ghana. This necessitates this study. And our aim is to contribute to the body of literature in this line of discourse.

#### 1.4 Research Questions

What are the linguistic features of cohesion present in the selected church sermons?

What semantic influence do the cohesive devices have in the selected sermons?

## 2. Theoretical Framework

Cohesion by Halliday & Hasan (1976) is the framework for this study. According to them, cohesion deals with the relations of meaning within any text. It occurs where the interpretation of some element in the discourse is dependent on another and, thus, a relation of cohesion is set up. The one presupposes the other, and cannot be effectively decoded except by recourse to it. The two elements, the presupposing and the presupposed, are integrated into a text. In their work, cohesion is described as a semantic concept referring to relations of meaning that exist within a text and their definition of cohesion emphasizes the relationship between the meanings of linguistic units. Grammatical cohesion covers four cohesive devices: reference, substitution, ellipsis, and conjunction, while reiteration and collocation fall into the category of lexical cohesive devices.

**(a) Reference**

Reference explains a kind of semantic relation whereby information needed for the interpretation of one item is found elsewhere in a text. Pronouns are the most common linguistic elements as referring devices in a text. However, other linguistic elements used to fulfill the same function are articles, demonstratives and comparatives. Reference is classified into personal such as *she, he, it, his, her, and their*; demonstrative such as *the, this, that, and those* and comparative which sets up a relation of contrast, involving a conception of likeness and unlikeness phenomenon like *such as so, as, equal, similar, different, otherwise, likewise* and comparison in respect of quantity or quality such as *more, fewer, additional, better, good*.

**(b) Ellipsis and Substitution**

There are three types of substitution – nominal, verbal, and clausal. In nominal substitution, the substitute items function as head of a nominal group, and can substitute only for items which are themselves, head of a nominal group. The verbal substitute in English is *do*. “Do” operates as the head of a verbal group, in the place where it is occupied by the lexical verb, and its position is always final in the group. Clausal substitution is one further type of substitution in which what is presupposed is not an element within the clause but an entire clause. The words used as substitutes are *so* and *not*. Ellipsis refers to “something left unsaid” which is easily recoverable in the text because it is understood nevertheless. Unlike in the substitution, in ellipsis, nothing is inserted into the “empty” slot. That is why we say that ellipsis can be regarded as substitution by zero. In many cases, ellipsis is represented by the three dots ...

**(c) Conjunction**

Conjunction refers broadly to the combination of any two textual elements into a potentially coherent complex semantic unit. Halliday & Hasan suggest that they are not principally devices for reaching out into the preceding (or following) text. They argue that in describing conjunction as a cohesive device, the attention should not be on the semantic relations between the clauses linked by the conjuncts, rather on the conjunctive devices themselves and the function they have of relating to each other linguistic elements. We have types of conjunctions as coordinating: ‘and’, ‘or’, ‘but’; subordinating: ‘because’, ‘although’, ‘if’ and conjunctive adverbs: ‘on the other hand’, ‘nevertheless’

**(d) Collocation and Reiteration**

Halliday & Hasan link collocation and reiteration with lexical cohesion. Collocation covers two or more words which can be said to go together in the sense of frequency of occurrence. To them, collocation is the most problematic part of lexical cohesion, which is achieved through the association of lexical items that regularly co-occur. In other words, collocation is just a covering term for the cohesion that results from the co-occurrence of lexical items that are in some way or other associated with one another in similar environments. The specific kind of co-occurrence relations is variable and complex, and would have to be interpreted in the light of a general semantic description of the English language. Expanding on iteration, they argue that reiteration is a form of lexical cohesion which involves the repetition of a lexical item, at one end of the scale, the use of a general word to refer back to a lexical item, at the other end of the scale, a number of things between the use of a synonym, near-synonym, or superordinate.

**3. Methodology**

This qualitative research adopts the descriptive design. The study examines the presence of cohesive devices in the selected text and how they enhance unity and understanding. The sermon was extracted from the WhatsApp page of Rev. Fr Joseph Nyarko, a Catholic priest of Sunyani Diocese in the Brong-Ahafo Region of Ghana. The Diocese was chosen because one of the researchers belongs to the priest’s WhatsApp Platform and a member of the Sunyani Diocese. This platform was created by the priest for the sole purpose of disseminating the gospel and members of the Sunyani Diocese are member of the platform. Therefore, access to the sermon was easy. A sermon titled “God Our Portion” was purposively selected for this study. The sermon was selected for its suitability. The sample was coded in sentences for easy identification of the linguistic elements of cohesion.

**3.1 Transcription**

In transcribing the recordings, it was first hand-written. Punctuations were determined by referring to both intonation contours and verbal content. For example, a falling intonation is generally taken to signal the end of a sentence, while a rising intonation might signal a comma or a question depending on the content of the utterance. It was decided that in cases where there might be a discrepancy between intonation and so-called ‘grammatical correctness’,

intonation would be given preference to determine how utterances should be punctuated. The use of subjects was also observed to help separate sentences from phrases and clauses. The initiation of subjects gave signals to the end of sentences and the beginning of new sentences.

Finally, the reliability of the transcription was augmented during the subsequent timing of the individual segments. At this time transcription were re-read, while listening to the recorded items where necessary.

#### 4. Data Presentation and Analysis

**Table 1:** Sermon Topic – God Our Portion

CODE	SENTENCES
1	Today, the church is drawing our attention to the judgment day.
2	I will hammer on that and God's love.
3	Let us bear in mind that one day either we will die or Jesus will come again.
4	Both Moslems and Christians alive believe that the world will come to an end.
5	Those who do good will go to the lord and those who do evil, to hell.
6	Today, God said, 'When I take those alive with me, I will destroy the world; I will not need it anymore'.
7	So, if the earth is destroyed, it is rather you go with him or ...
8	So, we have to live a way if God destroys the earth, we have a place to be.
9	So, let us try to avoid whatever we know to be sinful, whatever evil, or whatever bad so that our lives reflect the one God wants.
10	Let us drop sin so that when the savior comes, we find peace with Him.
11	God made it clear in the 1 <sup>st</sup> reading that Michael, the great priest will come.
12	He said when he does, nobody will be able to escape, and if your name is not written in the book of life, you will be destroyed.
13	You will go through distress that is beyond measure.
14	He said, the wise shall shine right with.
15	With reference to the bible, the wise are those who know God because (the psalmist says), 'The foolish man has said to his heart there is no God'.
16	So, if you are one, and you know there is God, then you do His will.
17	It is not those who say 'lord! Lord!' will go to heaven.
18	You are right.
19	This is not about singing beautifully.
20	You may do this around the alter, yet you go to hell.
21	You may be holding the censer like I do, but if you do what is not right, you will go to hell.
22	It is like being in school and not studying.
23	You can have the best uniforms, yet, you will fail your exams.
24	Now, I have talked about eternity, about judgment.
25	The responsorial psalms also say something I want to draw your attention on.
26	It says, 'You are my inheritance, o lord!'
27	Some bible version will say, 'You are my portion, o lord!'
28	What is inheritance?
29	I heard somebody say it but the one was not sure of herself.
30	Inheritance is what somebody takes over from the dead, isn't so?
31	You are brilliant but you don't believe in yourselves.
32	The first step to excellence is self-trust.
33	If you believe in yourself and you know who you are, nothing can destroy you.
34	I repeat, if you believe in yourself and know who you are, nothing can destroy you.
35	That's true.
36	So, if the lord is your inheritance and he, your portion, what should frighten you?
37	He said, 'I am your portion and your cup.
38	He means He is there for you in every situation.
39	To be frank, if you believe in God, yet, afraid of demons and evil spirits, then you do not know the one you believe in.
40	We must keep the lord before us; no other things.
41	So, this is the encouragement – that we should learn to keep the lord before us in everything.
42	If we are not careful, we will forget the greatness of God.
43	The psalmist says, 'I am on the lord's side'.
44	'So, my heart is full of joy, and my soul, glad'.
45	If you are able to put the lord on your side, always, when you sleep, you will see God, and angels, and Jesus, and beautiful things.
46	If you are not, you will see scary things which will frighten you.
47	He will not abandon your path.
48	He will show you the path of life, the fullness of joy in His presence, and happiness forever.
49	This is the promise.
	Number of sentences: 49

**Table 2:** Cohesive Devices in the Sermon

Cohesive devices	Sentences	Samples	Frequency	%
Reference	2, 6, 6, 12, 14, 15, 16, 19, 30, 30, 42, 47, 48, 49,	2. that, 6. I, it, 12. He 14. He, 15. His, 16. His, 19. This, 30. So, This 42. His, 47. He, 48. He, 49, This	14	16.9
Ellipsis	2, 4, 6, 7, 9,	2. but, rather, ... God's love 6. those ... alive 7. It is either you go with Him or ... 9. whatever...evil, whatever ... bad	4	4.8
Substitution	9, 12, 16, 29, 30	9. one, 12. does, 16. one, 29. One	5	6
Conjunction	3, 3, 3, 4, 4, 5, 6, 7, 7, 8, 9, 9, 9, 10, 10, 10, 11, 12, 12, 12, 13, 15, 15, 16, 16, 20, 20, 21, 21, 22, 23, 29, 30, 31, 33, 33, 36, 36, 37, 39, 39, 39, 41, 42, 42, 44, 45, 45, 45, 46, 46, 48	3. That, or, and, 4. And, that, 5. And, 6. When, 7. If, or, 8. If, 9. Whatever, or, so that, 10. So, that, when, 11. That 12. When, and, if, 13. That, 15. Who, because, 16. If, and, 20. Yet, if, 21. But, if, 22. And , 23. Yet, 29. But, 30. What, 31. But, 33. And, who, 36. If, and, 37. And, 39. If, yet, and, 41. That, 42. If, and, 44. And, 45. If, when, and, 46. If, which, 48. and	52	63
Collocation	1, 3, 15, 42,	1. judgment day, 2. Bear in mind, 15. with reference to the bible 42. the greatness of God	4	4.8
Reiteration	5, 9, 33&34, 45	5. those who do 9. whatever 33&34. If you believe in yourself 45. and	4	4.8
<b>Total</b>			<b>83</b>	<b>100</b>

The discourse makes use of reference as a cohesive device.

S1. *'Today, the church is drawing our attention on the judgment day'.*

S2. *'I will hammer on that and God's love'*

In sentence 2, the pronoun, "that" is used to make a demonstrative reference. The pronoun "that", makes reference to the expression, "the judgement day", in the preceding clause (sentence 1): Another demonstrative reference is used with the pronoun, "this":

S18. *It is not those who say, "lord! Lord!" will go to heaven'*

S19. *'This is not about singing beautifully'.*

The determiner, "this", in sentence 19 is used as a demonstrative reference to the infinitive nominal clause, "going to heaven" in sentence 18. Demonstratives such as *the, this, that* and *those* are used for referential purposes (Halliday and Hasan, 1976). Personal reference is observed in sentence 6. The pronouns, "I" and "it", are used to make personal reference:

S6. *'Today, God said, "when I take those alive with me, I will destroy the world; I will not need it".'*

Whereas the pronoun, "I", in sentence 6 makes reference to the name, "God", the pronoun, "it", makes reference to the phrase, "the world". Another personal reference is observed in sentence 12 with the use of the personal pronoun, "He":

S11. *'God made it clear in the first reading that Michael, the great prince will come...'*

S12. *'He said when he does, nobody will be able to escape'.*

The personal pronoun, "He" makes reference to the names, "God" and "Michael", in the preceding clause (sentence 11). Personal reference with the use of determiners is observed in sentence 15 and 16. In sentence 15, the determiner, "his", makes personal reference to the expression, "the foolish man":

15. *'... (the psalmist says) the foolish man says in his heart there is no God'.*

16. *'So, if you are one and you know there is God, then do His will'.*

The same determiner makes reference to the name, "God", in sentence 16. According to Halliday and Hasan (1976), reference is classified into personal reference, demonstrative reference and comparative reference. As to personal reference, we often use pronouns such *she, he, it, his, her,* and *them* to refer to earlier items. The use of pronouns here could be termed as anaphoric since each expresses meaning by referring back to its antecedent. For instance, the pronoun, "He" in sentence 12 is anaphoric which depends on its antecedent, "God" in sentence 11 for meaning. In linguistics, anaphora is the use of an expression whose interpretation depends upon another expression in context (its antecedent)

An elliptical item is one, which leaves specific structural slots to be filled from elsewhere. Like substitution, there are nominal ellipsis, verbal ellipsis and clausal ellipsis. Ellipsis, as non-structure cohesive device is observed in the discourse. The discourse makes use of clausal ellipsis in sentence 2: S2. *'I don't want to hammer on that but rather, ... God's love'.*

A structural slot is left to be filled, and it is an entire clause in the sentence. This could be filled from the immediately preceding clause on the sentence. A similar usage is observed:

S24. *'Now, I have talked about eternity... about judgment'.*

In sentence 24, the entire clause is omitted and could be filled "elsewhere" in the discourse. Another clausal ellipsis is observed in sentence 7:

S7. *'It is either you go with Him or ...'*

Here, the elliptical item is the entire clause, which is left to be filled by the listeners. The user intentionally uses ellipsis as a pause. This can be used to demand contributions from listeners. The use of verbal ellipsis is observed in the discourse:

S5. *'Those who do good will go to heaven and those who do evil, ... to hell'.*

Sentence 5 is a compound sentence in which the verbal group of one of the independent clauses, "will go", is omitted, and could be filled from the other independent clause. The use of ellipsis can avoid redundancy, that is, needless repetition of lexical items and expression. Another use of verbal ellipsis is observed in sentence 36 with the verb "be" as the elliptical item:

S36. *'So if the lord is your inheritance, and He, ... your portion, what should frighten you?'*

The verb "be" as an elliptical item is omitted and, therefore, creates a verbal slot which could be filled from the textual environment. A similar usage of the verb "be" is observed in sentence 44: *'So, my heart is full of joy and my soul, ... glad'.*

As we noted earlier, we have three types of substitution – nominal, verbal and clausal. In nominal substitution, the substitute item always functions as the head of a nominal group. The usage of this is observed in sentences 9, 16 and 29 in the discourse with the substitute, "one". In sentence 9, the nominal group which contains the substituted item is, "our lives":

S9. *'... so that our lives reflect the one God wants'.*

The head of the nominal group which is substituted is the word, "lives". Nominal substitution is used:

S14. *'He said the wise shall shine right in'.*

S16. *'So, if you are one and you know there is God, you do His will'.*

The nominal group, "the wise", is the substituted item in sentence 16, and the head of the nominal group is, "wise". The substitute "one", then becomes the head of the nominal group since it replaces the entire group. In sentence 29, the substitute, *one* replaces the pronoun, somebody: *'Somebody said it but the one was not sure of herself'.*

Conjunction as a grammatical cohesive device is employed in the discourse. Conjunctions are used as linguistic tools to connect sentences and clauses.

According to Halliday and Hasan (1976), unrelated clauses, expressions, and items could be made related through the use of conjunctions. In sentence 3, two conjunctions are used – the coordinator, "or" and the subordinator "that":

S3. *'Let us bear in mind that one day, either we will die, or Jesus Christ will come again'.*

The coordinator, "or", connects two main clauses: "we will die" and "Jesus Christ will come again". The subordinator, "that" connects the subordinate clause, "that one day either we will die or Jesus Christ will come again" to the main clause, "Let us bear in mind". In sentence 6, the adverbial conjunct, "when", connects a subordinate clause and a main clause to achieve connectivity:

S6. *'When I take those alive with me, I will destroy the world'.*

A complex sentence is formed from the subordinate clause, "When I take those alive with me" and the main clause, "I will destroy the world". Another complex sentence is formed with the subordinating conjunction, "if" in sentence 7:

S7. *'So, if the earth is destroyed, it is either you go with him or ...'*

There is another connectivity of clauses in sentence 9 with the subordinating conjunction, "whatever":

S9. *'So, let us try to avoid whatever we know to be sinful...'*

The subordinate clause, "whatever we know to be sinful" is embedded in the entire clause and functions as an object. Connectivity occurs in sentence 15 with two subordinating conjunctions "who" and "because":

S15. *'... the wise are those who know God because, the psalmist says, the foolish man has said in his heart, there is know God'.*

A complex sentence is formed from the main clauses, "... The wise are those" and the subordinate clauses, "who know God", and "because the (the psalmist says), the foolish man has said in his heart there is no God". In sentence 23, the coordinating conjunction, "yet" is used to connect two independent clauses to form a compound sentence:

S23. *'You can have the best uniforms, yet you will fail your exams'.*

Lexical cohesion is simply interpreted as the cohesive effect achieved by the selection of vocabulary. The two main categories linked with lexical cohesion are collocation and reiteration. Collocation covers two or more words which can be said to go together in the sense of frequency of occurrence (Bloor, 2004). There are such co-occurrences of associated words in this discourse. The usage of this device is observed in sentence 3:

*'Let us bear in mind that...'*

This is a kind of collocation which expresses the usage of a verb and a noun with a preposition. Any change of the collocated items can distort meaning; for instance, “\*bear at mind”. Another usage of collocation is found in sentence 15: ‘*With reference to the bible, the wise are those who know God*’. This is a kind of collocation which a noun collocates another noun with a preposition.

Reiteration is the repetition of lexical items. The usage of this cohesive device is observed in the discourse. In sentence 5, there is the repetition of the expression, “*those who do*”:

S5. ‘*Those who do good will go to the lord and those who do bad, hell*’.

This repetition is employed to clarify the difference between good and evil. In sentence 9, there is repetition of the word “*whatever*”: ‘*So, let us try to avoid whatever we know to be sinful, whatever bad*’. The repetition lays emphasis on the fact that we should stay away from sin. Sentences 33 and 34 are the repetition of the same clause:

‘*If you believe in yourself and you know who you are, nothing can destroy you*’.

The speaker does this to emphasize his point. In sentence 45, there is repetition of the conjunction, “*and*” which connects lexical items; ‘*... when you sleep, you will see God, and angels, and Jesus, and beautiful things*. This is to emphasize on what is entailed in believing in God.

## 5. Findings and Conclusion

**Question 1:** What cohesive devices are present in the selected church sermons?

It was discovered that sermons as spoken discourse influence listeners through its meaning and structure. And this meaning was largely as a result of the numerous cohesive devices present in the sermon. This semantic and structural significance came as a result of linguistic elements incorporated in the utterances of the text. These were cohesive devices propounded by Halliday & Hasan (1976) – reference, ellipsis, substitution, conjunction, collocation and reiteration.

**Question 2:** What semantic influence do the cohesive devices have in the selected sermons?

It was discovered that cohesion has logical and semantic influence on the text. This was manifested through cohesive devices. It was found out that grammatical cohesive devices like ellipsis, substitution and reference help prevent redundancy and support easy interpretation of text. Conjunction, as a grammatical cohesive device provides logical

connectivity to text. Lexical cohesive devices like collocation and reiteration also have influence on text interpretation. Collocation adheres to co-occurrence and provides logical word order. These co-occurrences established name for, or idiomatic way of conveying a particular semantic concept. Reiteration lays emphasis and clarifications on the utterances of the discourse.

The analysis identified how words are manipulated by the priest to achieve cohesion in church sermons. It revealed the linguistic features of sermons and how they were structured to achieve cohesion. The work therefore identified cohesive devices and their effects on cohesion of utterances of church sermons. The cohesive devices identified/adapted for this study were reference, ellipsis, substitution and reiteration/collocation.

## References

- Adukpo, J. (2017). An analysis of register and lexical cohesion in selected political manifestos in Ghana. MPhil Thesis; University of Education, Winneba.
- Asiedu, E. K. (2016). Language, Power and Ideology: A critical discourse analysis of selected Christian sermons. MPhil Thesis: University of Education, Winneba.
- Azzouz, B. (2009). *A discourse analysis of grammatical cohesion in student's writing*. (Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Mentouri University-Constantine)
- Bloor, T. and Bloor, M. (2004). *The Functional Analysis of English*. London: Hodder Arnold.  
<http://doi.org/10.4324/9780203774854>
- Bound, A. (1907). *Preaching and Prayer*: Chicago, The Christian witness.com.
- Bublitz, W., and Lenk, U. (1999). *Coherence in Spoken Discourse: How To Create it and Describe it*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins
- Civetta, P. (2003). The performance of God-Religious discourse in the aftermath of 11 September. *Journal of Religion and Theatre*. 2(1). [www.org/file/civetta](http://www.org/file/civetta).
- Costerman, J. and Fayol, M. (1997). *Processing interclausal relationships: Studies in Production and Comprehension of text*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates
- Djabatey Nyako, I. (2013). *Language, power and ideology: A critical discourse analysis of selected speeches of Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo and John Dramani Mahama* (Unpublished M. Phil. Thesis). University of Ghana, Legon, Ghana. *n Journ*

- Dzameshie, A. (1997). "The use of in-group linguistic choice as an identification strategy of presentation in Christian sermonic discourse". *Legon Journal of Humanities* Vol. x 127 – 145.
- Emezue, C. I. N. (1998). *Understanding discourse analysis*. Nigeria: Hinoma Arst & Publishing Co.
- Foltz, P.W. (2007). "Discourse coherence and LSA". In Landauer,
- Graesser, A., McNamara, D. S., Louwerse, M., & Cai, Z. (2004). Coh-Metrix: Analysis of text on cohesion and language. *Behavioral Research Methods, Instruments, and Computers*, 36,193–202.
- Halliday, M. A. K., and Hasan, R. (1976). *Cohesion in English*. London: Longman.
- Kintsch, W. (1998). *Comprehension: A paradigm for cognition*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Liu, C.-J., Kemper, S., & Bovaird, J. A. (2009). Comprehension of health-related written materials by older adults. *Educational Gerontology*, 35, 653–668.
- McCarthy, M. (1991). *Discourse Analysis for Language Teachers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- McNamara, D., Kintsch, E., Songer, N. B., & Kintsch, W. (1996). Are good texts always better? Interactions of text coherence, background knowledge, and levels of understanding in learning from text. *Cognition and Instruction*, 14(1), 1–43.
- Nunan, D. (1993). *Introducing Discourse Analysis*. London: Penguin.
- Renkema, J. (2004). *Introduction to Discourse Studies*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins
- Taiwo, R. (2007). Power, ideology and power relations in Nigerian Newspaper headlines. [www.Nobleworld/B12/image/taiwo.pdf](http://www.Nobleworld/B12/image/taiwo.pdf).
- Slavičková, T. (2014). *Oratorical Style and Performance in the Epideictic Speeches of American Presidents*. *Brno Studies in English*. Vol. 40(1), pp. 227-248.
- Tanskanen, S.K. (2006). *Collaborating Towards Coherence: Lexical Cohesion in English Discourse*. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Tsareva, A. (2010). *Grammatical cohesion in argumentative essays by Norwegian and Russian learners*. M.A. Thesis. The University of Oslo.