

## **A cross-cultural study of semantic ties in the abstracts of conference proceedings**

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**Abstract:** Connectedness in research article abstracts plays a vital role for them to be able to attract a broader readership. It also enhances abstracts' potential for acceptance at local and international conferences. In view of this, the study investigates variations in the strategies that writers from Anglophone and Francophone settings use to create connectedness in their conference paper abstracts. The data for this study comprise 50 abstracts submitted by these two groups of writers to the 30<sup>th</sup> West African Languages Congress and the 10<sup>th</sup> Linguistics Association of Ghana (LAG) Conference. For analytical methodology, it employs Halliday and Hasan's (1976) Cohesive Theory, which is complemented by Kaplan's (1966) Contrastive Rhetoric Theory. The findings reveal that the writers from the two cultural backgrounds employ similar strategies such as references, conjunctions, substitution, ellipsis, synonyms and repetition in maintaining connectedness in their abstracts. The differences between these two categories of writers are linked to the frequency with which these connectives are deployed in their respective abstracts. The study has implications for Contrastive Rhetoric Theory, by proving that people who belong to the same discourse community to a large extent demonstrate similar writing styles irrespective of their different cultural backgrounds.

**Keywords:** Abstracts, conference proceedings, contrastive rhetoric, cohesion, texture.

### **1. Introduction**

The research article is one genre within the academic discourse community that has received a lot of attention in linguistic research, being considered a premier academic genre within the academic discourse community (Flowerdew & Wang 2015). After the pioneering work of Swales' (1990) genre analysis of research article introductions, many researchers have taken an interest in analyzing various aspects of the research article. Prominent among these studies are the introduction sections (Samraj 2002, 2005; Swales 2004), the methods section (Lim 2006), the results section (Taylor & Tingguang 1991; Yang & Allison 2003; Brett 1994) and discussion sections (Holmes 1997; Fallahi & Erzi 2003).

More recently, the abstract has received considerable attention mainly because of the particular role it plays as the first component of the research article. Most scholars point to the research article abstract as one of the most important research process genres within the academic discourse community (Salager-Meyer 1990). The abstract is considered one of the essential sections of the research article in the sense that it can determine the acceptance or rejection of an article for conferences, and its selection by readers (Marefat & Mohammadzadeh 2013).

Gillaerts & Van de Velde (2010) stress that the research article abstract acquired a significant position in the academic discourse community as a well-established genre "since Ventola's (1994) plea for a linguistic approach to the genre that was capable of combining a global structure view of the genre with a prescriptive local view of the linguistic realization of the abstract" (128). Its significance dates back to the 1970s, where it became a standard element in article publication.

Many scholars point out the problems with achieving a clear-cut function for research article abstracts. This issue has led to a serious debate within the applied linguistics literature on whether the abstract functions as a condensed reproduction of the text, an expansion of the title of a text or as an informative summary of the entire article (Ayers 2008; Hyland 2000; Stotesbury 2003; Yakhontova 2002). However, the abstract has been considered by some researchers as the readers' doorway to an article, journals' selection of contributions, and for conferences to accept or reject articles (Lores 2004). Abstracts have become a gateway into the research literature (Hartley & Benjamin 1998) and

are important avenues of learning and managing the numerous pieces of information that abound within the scientific community (Ventola 1994).

As a specialized opening stage of scientific studies, coupled with its potential to determine the breadth of the readership of the research article, the abstract is expected to be clear and succinct. In other words, scholars, especially those who aim to submit their research article abstracts for conferences, need to possess the skill or craft in composing abstracts that fit the standards recognized by the discourse community of experts in scientific publications. This craft is not limited to knowledge about the obligatory rhetorical stages of the genre, but also includes writers' ability to maintain connectedness.

To be more specific, since the abstract plays an essential role in "grasping the information of the whole research report, the writing of the abstract therefore should be concise and the logical relation among sentences is clear, coherent and cohesive" (Suwandi 2016: 253).

This study, therefore, aims to explore the kind of connectives (cohesive devices) employed by non-native speakers of English from two different cultural backgrounds – Anglophone and Francophone settings – to create semantic ties (connectedness) in their conference paper abstracts. The paper also investigates variations in the use of cohesive devices as a means of creating semantic ties in both the Anglophone and Francophone writers' abstracts.

## 2. Review of related literature

### 2.1. Some previous studies on abstracts

As an established genre within the applied linguistics literature, research article abstracts have received much scholarly attention. According to Afful and Nartey (2014), studies on this academic genre gained much prominence after the assertion made by Swales (1990) that the abstract continues to remain neglected by discourse analysts and scholars in English for Academic Purposes.

One of the earliest works on abstracts can be traced to the scholarly work of Santos (1996), who explores the rhetorical structure of 96 research abstracts in applied linguistics. Santos (1996) charts a five-move structure in the genre. These moves include situating the research (move 1), presenting the research (move 2), describing the method (move 3), summarizing the results (move 4), and discussing the results (move 5). These five rhetorical stages together realize the communicative purpose of summarizing the entire article.

Following Santos (1996), other studies have explored the rhetorical moves in research article abstracts from different contexts: Pezzini (2003), Dongmei & Ruiying (2005), Cross & Oppenheim (2006), Salager-Meyer (1991), Marefat & Mohammadzadeh (2013) and Al-Khasawneh (2017). Pezzini (2003) for instance, undertook a genre analysis of research article abstracts written in English and Portuguese while Dongmei & Ruiying (2005) focused on discourse structure and linguistics features across disciplines. Cross & Oppenheim (2006), on the other hand, explored the semantic organization and thematic structure in research article abstracts from the field of protozoa, and Salager-Meyer (1991) studied the structure of medical research articles. In addition to these, Marefat & Mohammadzadeh (2013) conducted a genre analysis of abstracts written in English and Persian, while Al-Khasawneh (2017) accounts for the variation in the move structure of abstracts written by native and non-native speakers of English.

Aside from the move analysis of abstracts, a different category of linguistic research aims at charting the kind of linguistic strategies used by writers. For example, Afful and Nartey (2014) examine grammatical cohesion in the Language and Literature abstracts of undergraduate dissertations at the University of Cape Coast. The data for the study comprises 25 Language and 25 Literature abstracts. By drawing on Halliday and Hasan's (1976) theory of cohesion, the study reveals that cohesive devices like conjunction, reference, substitution, and ellipses are used in the abstracts. It is further observed that students from these two disciplines significantly use references and conjunctions. Despite students' ability to use varying cohesive ties in their dissertation abstracts, the

findings reveal a lack of sophistication and flair in the abstracts of students from the two disciplines.

Within the same focus as Afful and Nartey (2014), Seddigh, Kafipour and Shokrpour (2009) compare and contrast the type of lexical cohesion used in English and Persian abstracts written by Iranian medical students. The data for the study comprise 100 English and Persian thesis abstracts which were analyzed by using Seddigh and Yarmohammadi's (1996) lexical cohesion framework. The findings reveal similarity in the use of lexical cohesion in the English and Persian abstracts. Despite some degree variation, the differences are, nevertheless, noted to be statistically insignificant. The analysis further confirms repetition as the most prominent cohesive agent in the two corpora, while synonymy and meronymy were the least frequent.

The same concept of cohesion is also explored by Blanka and Hubackova (2013), who study grammatical cohesion in the abstracts of native speakers of British origin. Unlike previous studies that focused on grammatical cohesive devices like references, substitution, ellipsis and conjunctions, Blanka and Hubackova (2013) explore the organic grammatical means of cohesion, with emphasis on discourse connectives and discourse adverbials. By analyzing 45 research article abstracts and employing Quirk et al.'s (1985) seven conjunctive models, Blanka and Hubackova (2013) identify four groups of conjuncts. These include listing conjuncts, appositional conjuncts, resultative conjuncts and contrastive conjunctives. Blanka and Hubackova (2013) further confirm that listing conjuncts, which are typified by words like *in particular*, *secondly*, *then*, *furthermore*, *finally*, *moreover*, *more*, *thirdly*, *in addition*, and *equally* are the most dominant ones in the data. Listing conjuncts are followed by contrastive conjuncts (*however*, *despite*, *contrary to*, *though*, *yet*), resultative conjunct (*therefore*, *accordingly*, *as a result*, *thus* and *hence*) and appositional conjuncts (*such as*, *in other words*, *that is*).

From a broader perspective, Suwandi's (2016) study shares similarities with that of Afful and Nartey (2014), Seddigh, Kafipour and Shokrpour (2019) and Blanka and Hubackova (2013), as they are all concerned with the textual metafunction of language. That is, Suwandi (2016) investigates macro-level coherence in the abstracts of final project reports of undergraduate students of Indonesian university students, i.e. how each sentence is connected to the other to create logical relations, as well as the correct use of cohesive devices like conjunction, references, substitution, or ellipsis. The findings reveal that despite the dominant use of cohesive devices like references, conjunctions and ellipsis, the abstracts did not satisfactorily achieve cohesion.

This finding confirms an earlier study on research article abstracts by Afful and Nartey (2014) as they reflect that there is no one-to-one correspondence between frequency of cohesive devices and quality of writing. Cohesiveness therefore stems from the writer's ability to use cohesive devices effectively.

From a functional perspective, Ebrahimi and Chan (2015) explored the grammatical subject in abstracts from the fields of applied linguistics and economics. Specifically, the researchers compared the discourse functions of grammatical subjects used in research article abstracts in the two disciplines. They reveal disciplinary differences in the use of grammatical subject in abstracts in the two disciplines.

The implication of the findings of Ebrahimi and Chan's (2015) study is that genres within the academic discourse community are shaped by the writer's disciplinary background. This finding differs from that of Afful and Nartey (2014), whose study reveals insignificant difference in abstracts written by students with different disciplinary backgrounds, apparently because this study involved learners.

Within the context of cross-cultural studies on research article abstracts, Xiao and Cao (2013) explored the abstracts written by native and non-native English writers. By relying on a multi-dimensional analytical approach, the results reveal a seven-dimensional framework which represents seven different communicative purposes. The findings further confirm that five out of these seven-dimensional frameworks exhibit significant differences in the abstracts of the two sub-corpora. Xiao

and Cao (2013) further confirm that the abstracts written by the native English speakers demonstrate more active involvement and commitment in presenting their ideas. It is further revealed that the English native speakers' abstracts are dominantly characterized by intensifying devices whereas their Chinese counterparts favored conceptual elaboration, passives, and abstract noun phrases.

Different from the focuses of the studies mentioned above, Cao and Hu (2010) investigate hedging and boosting devices in the abstracts of applied linguistics articles. The findings reveal that the abstracts published in English-medium journals feature markedly more hedges than those published in Chinese-medium journals. It is also revealed that the abstracts of empirical research articles use significantly more boosters than those of non-empirical academic articles. Also, hedging devices and boosters in the abstracts published in the English and Chinese-medium journals have a collaborative and interactive effect on authorial certainty and confidence.

A review of literature on abstract-related studies reveals a lacuna of research on how the cultural background of writers affects the way they achieve semantic ties (cohesion) in their conference paper abstracts. This lacuna is particularly evident within the West African setting. Accordingly, the present study investigates the strategies used by West African writers from different cultural backgrounds – Anglophone and Francophone settings – to maintain connectedness (semantic ties) in their conference paper abstracts.

Specifically, the data for this study consisted in conference paper abstracts that featured in the book of abstracts of the 30<sup>th</sup> WALC/ 10<sup>th</sup> LAG Conference. As an international conference that attracted scholars from around the globe, the 30<sup>th</sup> WALC and 10<sup>th</sup> LAG Conference came out as one of the biggest conferences on the African continent. However, not all abstracts submitted to that conference were accepted. This must be assumed to reflect that the abstracts that were accepted must have been of a sufficiently high linguistic quality.

One marker of linguistic quality is the way in which writers successfully connect ideas and sentences in their abstracts. Hence, the research questions for the present study are:

1. What are the types and meanings of cohesive devices used in the abstracts of Francophone and Anglophone West African writers?
2. What are the differences and similarities in the cohesive devices used by these two categories of writers?

### **3. Theoretical/conceptual framework**

#### *3.1. The concept of cohesion*

*Cohesion*, from Halliday and Hasan (1976), is a semantic concept which concerns the relation of meanings in the progression of a text. Thus, according to Klimova & Hubackova (2014), a major function of cohesion is text formation. Cohesion has the potential to link “together the elements that are structurally unrelated through the dependence of one on the other for its interpretation” (664). Cohesion, as stressed by Klimova & Hubackova (2014), plays a significant role in text formation because, without it, the semantic system within a text cannot be effectively activated. Texture is created when writers effectively use linguistic resources to connect sentences in a text. According to Halliday and Hasan (1976), it is only when a piece of writing has texture that it can be categorized as a text. As the elements that create texture, Salkie (1995: 10) considers cohesive devices “the glue which holds different parts of a text together”.

As an aspect of the textual metafunction, cohesion represents the grammatical and lexical relationship within a text (Kadiri, Igbokwe, Okebalama & Egbe 2016). Halliday and Hasan (1976) classify cohesive devices into two main broad categories: lexical and grammatical cohesion. Lexical cohesive comprises two main types – reiteration and collocation – while grammatical cohesion

consists of reference, conjunction (logical connectives), ellipsis and substitution.

According to Halliday and Hassan (1976), reference can either be endophoric or exophoric. Exophoric reference means reference to information from the immediate context of situation while endophoric reference is text-internal. Halliday and Hasan (1976) identify three main types of reference: personal, demonstrative and comparative.

As a second type of cohesive device, conjunctions differ from the other grammatical cohesive devices. Instead of backward or forward reference, conjunctions function within the context in which they are used in a text (Gueliane 2016): That is “conjunctive elements are cohesive not in themselves but indirectly by their specific meaning; they are not primarily devices for reaching out into the preceding (or following) text, but they express certain meaning which presupposes the presence of other components in the discourse” (Halliday & Hasan 1976: 226).

Gueliane (2016) extends Halliday and Hasan’s (1976) four sub-categorization of conjunctions into ten, including additive, contrastive, amplifying, exemplifying, causal, alternative, explanatory, excluding, temporal and summary ones. This new extension is used as a reference point in analyzing conjunctive relations in this work. The reason for adopting Gueliane’s (2016) classification is its higher degree of granularity.

As for ellipsis, Gueliane (2016) conceptualizes it as the omission of a linguistic element because the meaning of that omitted element is easily understood from the context in which it is used. Nunan (1993: 25), on the other hand, defines ellipsis as a situation “when some essential structural element is omitted from a sentence or a clause and can only be recovered by referring to an element in the preceding text”. In other words, ellipsis occurs when a grammatical item is deleted from, but still presupposed in, a text (McCarthy 1991).

Unlike ellipsis, Halliday and Hasan (1976) define substitution as the replacement of an item that has been previously mentioned in a text, and is used to prevent repetition in the text. Halliday and Hasan (1976) further posit that substitution is a relation on the lexical level, unlike reference, which is a semantic relation. Like ellipsis, substitution can be nominal, verbal or clausal.

With regard to repetition, Adeyemi (2017) considers it the act of achieving cohesion through the repetition of lexical items already mentioned by the speaker or the writer in a given text.

Another subtype of lexical cohesion is synonyms, i.e. words with closely related meanings (Yule 2006). Because synonyms are words that are nearly identical in meaning, they can be used with cohesive effect (Adeyemi 2017).

### 3.2. *Contrastive rhetoric*

Contrastive Rhetoric (CR) poses itself as an area of research in second language acquisition, aiming to identify challenges in the text composition of non-native speakers of English. It also uncovers the rhetorical strategies of the first language and attempts to explain them (Connor 1996). To be more specific, CR refers to “a comparison of the writing convention of various languages and cultures, and this is often linked with research on how they differ from the perceived norm of writing in America or British English, for typically in CR Anglo-American English patterns are considered as the norm” (Pietila 2007: 6). CR is premised on “the view that language and writing are cultural phenomena” (Connor 1996: 10).

This research paradigm, as stressed by Cumming (2013), can be traced to the seminal work on discourse analysis by Kaplan (1966), who considers it “a pedagogical solution to the problem of L2 organizational structures” (Matsuda 1997: 45). CR, therefore, does not regard the text as a static entity, but rather as what Connor (2002: 493) refers to as a “functional part of dynamic cultural contexts”. CR is a field of study that has recently become independent (Matsuda 2003) and has expanded its focus to include four main areas. These four areas, as stressed by Connor (1996), include:

1. Contrastive text linguistics concerned with the differences and similarities in discourse features between different languages and cultures.
2. Applied linguistics which considers writing as an educational and cultural endeavor that primarily explores the process of literacy learning, the impact of literacy progression on one's native language and culture as well as the influence of L1 literacy development on L2 literacy.
3. Classroom-based contrastive studies which explore cross-cultural structures in teacher-student classroom discourse.
4. Contrastive genre analysis concerned with academic and professional writing.

This study is situated within the first area, being concerned with the differences and similarities in the cohesive strategies used by writers from two different unique backgrounds.

#### **4. Methods**

##### *4.1. Design, corpus and procedures*

The study employs the qualitative research design because the analysis and mode of data collection procedures are highly descriptive. However, the study also relies on quantitative data for the interpretation of its findings.

For materials, we collected 50 abstracts from the book of abstracts for the 2017 joint 30<sup>th</sup> WALC/10<sup>th</sup> LAG Conference held at the University of Education, Winneba. The non-probability sampling procedure specifically, the purposive sampling, was used to select 25 abstracts, each written by both Anglophone and Francophone writers from the West African sub-region. Non-English abstracts were excluded from the sample.

After this, we used Halliday and Hasan's (1976) cohesive theory as the framework to identify the cohesive devices employed in the sample. Abstracts by Anglophone writers amounted to a corpus of 5,273 words, while that of the Francophone writers was made up of 5,220 words. To ensure analytical validity, two raters apart from the present authors analyzed the abstracts. The 25 abstracts written by the Anglophone writers were given to a PhD candidate in Linguistics at the University of the Western Cape, while the other 25 abstracts written by the Francophone writers were given to a lecturer of Communicative Skills at the Ho Technical University in Ghana.

These two raters were tasked with identifying the cohesive ties employed in the abstracts that they were given. The inter-rater reliability score for the abstracts written by the French speakers was 80% while the score for those written by the Anglophone writers was 85%. The differences that came up in the raters' analysis and that of the present authors were noted, and corrections were made where necessary.

#### **5. Results and discussion**

This section presents interpretation of the findings of the study. Table 1 summarizes the types and frequencies of cohesive devices identified in the two sub-corpora.

Table 1: Types of semantic ties and their frequencies across the two sub-corpora

<b>Cohesive Devices</b>	<b>Anglophone Writers</b>	<b>Francophone Writers</b>	<b>Total</b>
References	276(37.05%)	508(55.41%)	784(47.17%)
Conjunction	313(42.01%)	281(30.64%)	594(35.74%)
Repetition	129(17.32)	101(11.01%)	230(13.83%)
Ellipsis	10(1.34%)	18(1.96%)	28(1.70%)
Synonym	15(2.01%)	07(0.76 %)	22(1.32%)
Substitution	02(0.27%)	02(0.22%)	04(0.24%)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>745(100%)</b>	<b>917(100%)</b>	<b>1,662(100%)</b>

Table 1 reveals that writers from the Anglophone and Francophone settings use similar cohesive devices. These devices include conjunctions, references, ellipsis, substitution, repetition and synonyms.

Across the two sub-corpora, the results reveal reference as the most frequently used connective agent. In descending order of frequency, reference relations are followed by the use of conjunction, repetition, ellipsis, synonym and substitution.

Despite the similarities between the two groups as far as *types* of cohesive devices are concerned, there were differences in the frequencies with which the devices are used. Altogether, the Francophone West African writers use more cohesive devices than their Anglophone West African counterparts do. In total, there are 917 instances of cohesive devices in the Francophone part of the corpus, but only 745 instances in the Anglophone part. The significance of these differences is discussed below.

### 5.1. Grammatical cohesion

As evident in Table 1, four grammatical cohesive devices featured in both parts of the corpus, viz references, conjunctions, ellipsis, and substitution.

#### 5.1.1. Reference

Table 1 shows that reference is the most frequent device in both parts of the corpus, but one that occurs in different proportion in the two sub-corpora. Out of the 784 reference relations across the two sub-corpora, 508 (55.41%) instances feature in the Francophone writers' abstracts, while 276 (37.05%) appear in the Anglophone part. The findings further show that the use of reference manifests itself in three main forms in both sub-corpora: personal, demonstrative and comparative. Frequencies are listed in Table 2.

Table 2: Types of reference relations identified in the two sub-corpora

Types of Reference	Anglophone Writers	Francophone Writers	Total
Personal	78(28.26%)	317(62.44%)	395
Demonstrative	176(63.76%)	170(33.46%)	346
Comparative	22(7.98%)	21(4.1%)	43
<b>Total Reference Usage</b>	<b>276(100%)</b>	<b>508(100%)</b>	<b>784</b>

Table 2 shows that the Francophone writers use more personal reference than their Anglophone West African counterparts. In contrast, the Anglophone writers use more demonstrative reference. However, comparative reference, as evident in Table 2, is used almost with the same frequency in the two sub-corpora.

Examples are given below;

#### *Instances of reference usage in the abstracts*

1. *The paper discusses segmental phonology focusing on Dagbani dialects (Tomosili, Nayahili and Nanunli), a Gur language spoken in the northern part of Ghana. It aims at describing Dagbani dialects within the framework of Lexical phonology (AGA 14).*
2. *Conversation and interviews with some informant witnesses are the instruments we use to collect data from the field (FRA 4).*

Example 1 shows the use of personal reference, with *it* used as an anaphoric reference to the noun phrase *the paper*. In example 2, the personal pronoun *we* is an exophoric reference to the writers.

#### *Instances of reference usage in the abstracts*

3. *Genre studies has proved to be a good aspect of material development for language use in specific contexts, and this has made it much popular in various fields of study (AGA 8).*
4. *It is rather highly motivated. Hence, at the inception of the novel, one can see a well-written section. Curiously, the same section is reformulated containing this time neither punctuation nor capital letter (FRA 20).*

Example 3 shows the use of the demonstrative pronoun *this* to anaphorically refer to the content of the preceding clause.

Example 4, on the other hand, is an instance of comparative reference, with *same* used as a means of creating a semantic tie. The comparative reference *same* relates the two sections of the novel as equal in terms of meaning.

#### 5.1.2. Conjunction

Instances of conjunctions include ten different forms, shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Frequency of conjunctive relations

Conjunction Relations	Anglophone Abstracts	Francophone Abstracts	Total	Per. (100%)	Rank
Addition	218(69.66%)	201(71.53%)	419	70.54%	1
Temporal Arrangement	26(8.31%)	18(6.41%)	44	7.41%	2
Contrast	19(6.07%)	16(5.69%)	35	5.89%	3
Alternative	13(4.15%)	12(4.27%)	25	4.21%	4
Cause Effect (Causal)	10(3.19%)	13(4.63%)	23	3.87%	5
Amplification	13(4.15%)	08(2.85%)	21	3.54%	6
Exemplification	11(3.51%)	03(1.07%)	14	2.36%	7
Summary/Conclusion	02(0.64%)	04(1.42%)	06	1.01%	8
Explanation	00(0.0%)	04(1.42%)	04	0.67%	9
Exclusion	01(0.32%)	02(0.71%)	03	0.50%	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>313</b>	<b>281</b>	<b>594</b>		

Table 3 shows that nine out of the ten conjunctive relations identified by Kennedy (2003) are present in the two sub-corpora. Only explanatory conjunction appears 4 (1.42%) times in the Francophone abstracts but not in the Anglophone ones. The findings further reveal that the additive type of conjunctive relation is the dominant connective agent across the two sub-corpora. Table 3 further reflects that the difference in the frequency of additives is moderate.

Temporal arrangement, on the other hand, features as the second-most frequent conjunctive relation across the two sub-corpora. In descending order of frequency, temporal arrangement is followed by adversative (contrastive) conjunction. This type of conjunction, like that of addition and temporal arrangement, appears almost at the same frequency in the two sub-corpora.

Similar to the use of adversative conjunction, other conjunction types that semantically *signify* cause-effect, alternative, amplification and summary/conclusion feature almost at the same frequency within the two groups of abstracts. The only conjunction type with marked differences in frequency in the two sub-corpora is exemplification conjunction (see Table 3).

Some instances of the use of conjunctions are given below;

1. *Based on the outcome of the test results, the paper concludes that most Nigerian L2 users of English are not proficient in the use of non-auxiliary verb questions. **Also**, the paper concludes that this aspect of English grammar which is problematic to these bilinguals requires close attention through intensive teaching and drills (AGA 4).*
2. *The National policy on Education recognizes the teaching of indigenous languages in Nigerian schools, particularly at the primary and secondary levels. **However**, the ethnic diversity of Nigeria made it practically impossible for the teaching of all indigenous languages, especially in highly heterogeneous communities (AGA II).*
3. *Applying Fishman's Sociology of Language and Religion and Castell's Identity theory, the paper examines the role of their language and performance in the construction of identities*

*in the sermons of Christian Pentecostal Pastors in Nigeria. Specifically, it explores the creativity in the appropriation of linguistic and extra linguistic resources such as body language, pitch, gestures in the delivery of their sermons (AGA 6).*

4. *This previous approach has neglected the investigation of the discrete morpho-semantic features of coordination. Therefore, this paper concentrates on special types of coordination in Igbo, which are represented by morpho-semantic features of the language (FRA 1).*

Example 1 indicates the use of *and* to show addition. Here, the writer uses *and* to present another important finding of the research he undertook. This additional finding is linked to the need for non-auxiliary verb questions to be taught by means of intensive teaching and drilling to Nigerian L2 users.

Example 2 also shows the use of the conjunction *however* to show contrast. With this, the writer indicates two contrasting views in the sentence. The first provides an idea about the recognition of the *National Policy on Education* on the teaching of indigenous languages in Nigerian schools, while the second aspect gives an adversative view on how the ethnic diversity in Nigeria inhibits the teaching of Nigerian indigenous languages at the various academic levels, especially at the primary and secondary levels. Thus, the adversative view in question relates to the failure of teachers in Nigeria to teach the indigenous languages as a result of the numerous ethnic groups that abound in Nigeria.

In example 3, the lexical item *specifically*, denotes amplification. By using this conjunct, the writer reechoes the focus of the research work he intends to undertake. In other words, the writer amplifies the focus of the research he intends to conduct. Moreover, the conjunction, *therefore*, as evident in example 4, is a typical instance of causal conjunction. The writer uses the conjunction, *therefore*, as a means to connect what is left undone about the topic he seeks to explore and his research focus, which seeks to fill the gap that previous scholars have not addressed.

### 5.1.3. Ellipsis

Ellipsis appears as the fourth-most frequent cohesive agent among the six cohesive devices that feature in the data set. Across the two sub-corpora, ellipsis occurs 28 (1.70%) times out of the 1,662 instances of the use of cohesive devices. It features 18 (1.96%) times in the abstracts of the Francophone writers whilst it appears 10 (1.34%) times in that of the Anglophone writers. These statistics show that the Francophone writers rely more on ellipsis than their Anglophone counterparts do. However, in percentage terms, it is clear that the differences in frequency is minimal.

Interestingly, nominal ellipsis is the only ellipsis type that is found in each group of abstracts, with verbal and clausal ellipsis being completely absent from the corpus. Ellipsis as a cohesive device is known to occur in dialogues or spontaneous conversations and is rarely used in formal writing (Halliday 2000), so the absent instantiation in the corpus is not surprising. Instances of ellipsis in the data are presented in the examples below:

1. *Cross-linguistic realizations of topic and focus structures have generated several **studies** in information structure. However, few [ ] have been done regarding topic constructions in Mabia languages (AGA 13).*
2. *The findings show that the male students predominantly made use of marked themes in the introduction sections of their essays. On the contrary, their female counterparts subscribed to the unmarked [ ] (FRA 17).*

3. *The results confirm three main challenges that make students unsuccessful in their quest to become good readers. The first [ ] relates to the poor reading habit of students whilst the second challenge relates to lack of reading materials in most schools (AGA 19).*

The examples above clearly show some instances of how nominal ellipsis are used as a means of creating semantic ties in the abstracts written by the writers from the two cultural backgrounds. Thus, nominal elements like *studies*, *themes* and *challenge* have been ellipped in Examples 1, 2 and 3 respectively. However, the deletion of these nominal elements in the excerpts above does not affect their (excerpts) meanings. This is due to the fact that the deleted nominal elements can be deduced from within the text.

For instance, in Example 1, the word *studies* should have been repeated after the lexical item *few* but the writer did not do so in that readers can retrieve the deleted noun from the previous sentence. The same issue applies to Example 2, where the lexical item *themes* should have been repeated after the lexical item *unmarked* in the last line of that example. However, the writer did not repeat the word *themes* but the meaning of that sentence is not distorted. The reason for this is that the ellipped noun in the form of *themes* can be retrieved from the first sentence of example 2.

#### 5.1.4. Substitution

As evident in Table 1, substitution is the least frequent cohesive device identified in the two data sets. Out of the altogether 1,662 instances of cohesive devices in the two sub-corpora, substitution features just 4 (0.24%) times: 2 (0.27%) times in the Anglophone abstracts and 2 (0.22%) times in the Francophone abstracts. This proves that the writers with these two cultural backgrounds rarely use substitution as a cohesive agent in their abstracts. The results further reveal that the two groups of writers use only nominal and verbal substitution. No instances of clausal substitution occur in the data.

The infrequent occurrence of substitution across the two data sets is not surprising since “substitution is a speaker/writer choice, and not a compulsory feature, especially in written discourse” (McCarthy 1991: 43). The four instances of the usage of ellipsis as a means of creating semantic ties in the abstracts are listed below:

1. *This is so because of the increase rates at which **nations**, and particularly developing ones have continued to perpetually make use of colonial languages at the detriments of the ones indigenous to them (AGA 4).*
2. *Writing is considered as one of the complex language skills of ESL students and the literature review shows that it is not only non-native speakers who demonstrate weakness in writing. However, native speakers also do (AGA 12).*
4. *We also claim that *mu* is a plural **definite determiner** like “*les*” in French which commute with the singular one, a [+NAS] consonant (FRA 3).*
5. *The non-native English students to a very large extent show mastery in the use of verbless clauses whilst the EFL students also do (AGA 23).*

From the examples above, it is clear that writers from the two geographical settings use only nominal and verbal substitutions as agents in creating semantic ties in their abstracts. Examples 2 and 4 indicate how verbal substitution has been used as an agent of creating semantic tie in the abstracts of

the writers whilst examples 1 and 3 represent cases of nominal ellipsis.

In Example 1, the nominal substitute *ones* is used to replace the noun *nations* whilst the verb *do* in Example 2 substitutes the expression *demonstrate weakness in writing*. With respect to example 3, the nominal substitute *one* replaces the noun phrase *definite determiner*, whilst the verbal element *do* in Example 4 also substitutes the grammatical structure *show mastery in the use of verbless clauses*. These instances of substitution clearly indicate the writers' attempt to avoid unnecessary repetition.

## 5.2. Lexical cohesion

The results reveal two main types of lexical cohesion in each of the two sub-corpora. The two lexical cohesive devices that are recognized as means of creating semantic ties in the abstracts of the two groups of writers include repetition and synonymy. It is further revealed that there is no difference in terms of the types of lexical cohesion that the two groups of writers employ in writing their abstracts.

### 5.2.1. Repetition

Repetition is confirmed as the third-most frequent cohesive device, occurring 230 (13.83%) times. Within the Anglophone corpus, repetition is used 129 times (17.32%). Similarly, in the Francophone Corpus, repetition features as the third-most frequent cohesive device, with 101 (11.01%) occurrences.

This frequency shows that the Anglophone writers use repetition more frequently than their Francophone counterparts do. Typical instances of the use of repetition in the two sub-corpora are illustrated in Examples 1 and 2.

1. *Language is a potent weapon of societal integration and development no doubt. This is evidently true of **proverbs** from one generation to another. **Proverb** is one of the avenues through which the social and cultural background of the people could be known and understood. To this end, this paper examines only flora and fauna in Bassa Nge **proverbs**. Since **proverbs** are context dependent, culture specific and exclusive to certain environment, to understand the prevailing context of **proverbs**, the linguistic, sociocultural and physical contexts must be accounted for. Hence, the main thrust of this paper is to adapt aspects of Austin (1962) theory of pragmatics for the analysis with a view to identifying societal integration and development in aspects of flora and fauna in Bassa Nge **proverbs**. The methodology involves **proverbs** obtained from audio recording of some elders of Bassa Nge through social gatherings. Besides, the writer's observation, introspection and intuitive knowledge are deployed. The paper reveals how aspects of **proverbs** that reflect flora and fauna foster societal integration and development (AGA 1).*
2. *This paper is part of an ongoing investigation of **coordination** in Igbo. It seeks to extend the erstwhile focus on the syntax of conjunctive **coordination**, to the morpho-semantic features of **coordination**. This previous approach has neglected the investigation of the discrete morpho-semantic features of **coordination**. Therefore, this paper concentrates on special types of **coordination** in Igbo, which are represented by morpho-semantic features of the language. The investigation adopts a purely descriptive approach, which focuses on the link between language use and cognitive experience. The recorded natural conversations of the speakers of the Nnewi, Nsukka and Onitsha varieties of Igbo provided the data for the study. The findings reveal that Igbo has four major types of special **coordination**. These include the –gàsi representative **coordination**, which marks the **coordination** of several similar items; the –zì augmentative **coordination**, which marks the **coordination** of cumulative activities; and the*

*nàkwà emphatic **coordination**, which represents the **coordination** of the highlights of an event. The fourth type, which is the *na* comitative **coordination**, has four sub types including the *-gbà* comitative marker, the *jì* verbal **coordinator**, the *sò* locative **coordinator** and the *nò kwírú* copulative **coordinator**. The investigation concludes that Igbo morpho-semantic features are operationalized in determining **coordination** in Igbo (FRA 1).*

In Example 1, the word *proverb*, which is mostly accompanied by the plural marker *-s* as *proverbs*, has consistently been repeated. There are eight instances where *proverb* has been used in Example 1 and, in all these instances, it has the same semantic connotation. Another instance of repetition is also evident in Example 2. In this example, the word *coordination* has consistently been repeated. Sometimes, its form changes from *coordination* to *coordinator*. The repetition of the words *proverb* in Example 1 and *coordination* in Example 2 by the writer helps him maintain text unity and, to a large extent, creates cohesion and coherence.

### 5.2.2. Synonymy

Table 1 shows synonymy to be the fifth-most frequent cohesive device, appearing 22 (1.32%) times across the two sub-corpora, with 7 occurrences (0.76%) in the Francophone corpus, making this device the fifth-most frequent device in that sub-corpus. In the Anglophone sub-corpus, repetition features as the fourth-most cohesive device, appearing in 15 cases (2.01%). It can therefore be inferred from Table 1 that the Anglophone writers use more synonyms in their abstracts than that of their Francophone counterparts.

A possible explanation for this finding might be that the Francophone writers have French as their second language and might have a more limited vocabulary in English, putting restraints on their ability to varying their choice of words. Contrary to this, the Anglophone writers use English as a second language and as such may be assumed to master a richer vocabulary in English, enabling them to vary their choice of words. Instances of the synonymy from the data are provided below;

1. *The military and political crisis in Cote D'Ivoire is rooted in some form of identity politics. The **country** became polarized around the two leaders along both geographical and religious lines. This resulted in the 1999 military coup and the de facto division of the country in 2002. The root-causes of the crisis in this **nation** are to be researched elsewhere, namely in the ultra-nationalistic reading of identity in this former French. This paper seeks to debunk the idea that the recent crisis in this **state** is language-related and that plurality of languages cannot be a liability as claimed by some academics (AGA 5).*
2. *Using the “threshold level” hypothesis, this paper attempts to show the importance of early exposure of children to reading in the **native language**. The paper starts by highlighting the general importance of using **mother tongue** as a medium of instruction at the lower primary level. Thus, it focuses on the importance of using the **first language** of students as a medium of instruction in the lower primary level (FRA 14).*

In Example 1, specifically within the abstract of the Anglophone writers, words like *country*, *nation* and *state* are synonymous to each other. These words are synonymous to each other because they have the same semantic connotation within the context in which they are used. The writer strategically uses these synonyms to avoid unnecessary repetition. To be more specific, the three words – *country*, *nation* and *state* form ties because they are related to each other; hence, they create cohesion in the abstract.

In Example 2, the lexical items *native language*, *mother tongue* and *first language* are considered to be synonymous within the context in which they are used. Thus, these three expressions share a semantic tie and, as such, create cohesion in the abstract in which they feature.

## 6. Conclusion and implications

The study has explored the cohesive devices employed by writers from two cultural backgrounds – West African Anglophone and Francophone settings – to create cohesion in their conference paper abstracts. The findings show that these writers use similar cohesive means. Specifically, both groups of writers employ grammatical cohesive devices such as reference, conjunction, substitution and ellipsis, and they also rely on lexical cohesive devices like repetition and synonyms.

However, the findings reveal certain differences in the frequency with which cohesive devices such as references, conjunctions, repetition and synonyms are used in the two sub-corpora. The Anglophone corpus has more instances of conjunction, repetition and synonym than the Francophone corpus. On the contrary, references are deployed more frequently in the Francophone abstracts than that of the abstracts written by scholars from the Anglophone setting. The findings further reveal that the differences that are noticed in the use of ellipsis in the abstracts of the two group of writers are minimal.

Holistically, the two groups of writers use the same cohesive devices. This finding contradicts that of Hu (2010) and Xiao and Cao (2013), who found that differences in the cultural background of writers lead to differences in linguistic choice as far as the composition is concerned. On the contrary, the present study confirms the findings of earlier works like Afful and Nartey (2014), Seddih, Kafipour and Shokrpour (2009) and Suwandi (2016), who all found that differences in the cultural background of writers do not lead to any major differences in the linguistics choices of these writers in their abstract composition. Thus, the findings of this research also challenge the claim of Contrastive Rhetoric theory that cultural background has a significant influence on how writers structure their texts and the linguistic resources they dominantly employ in their text composition (Taylor & Tingguang 1991).

The findings of the present study have implications for further studies as it unlocks new research avenues and may serve as a source of hypotheses for further investigation of the use of cohesive devices across cultures.

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