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A Study of Cohesive Devices in 'Death of a Son'

Asst. Lect. Rand Zuhair Al-Ashqer

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1. Introduction

A discourse, whether spoken or written, is not just a text, as some might think. When going deeply within the lines of a discourse, one would find some significant ties that make it relate one piece to another. Cohesion is that technique used to achieve unity in any text.

Cohesion is the most important criterion of textuality. Thus, when the interpretation of one textual element (a word located in one sentence) depends on another item in the text (a word usually but not necessarily in another sentence), Cohesion plays the role of connecting one element to the other (Hameed, 2008: 1).

To make any text coherent, it is necessary to use certain devices that would bind the different phrases and sentences of the text. So, cohesive markers may not accurately acquire without referring to other surrounding text features (i.e. linguistic or nonlinguistic), which singly or jointly constrain and influence the selection of cohesive features as well as their deployment in the text.

After showing the method used to achieve the aim of this study, it presents a theoretical view about text, cohesion and cohesive markers. Then, the study illustrates how these markers make any text coherent, as examined in the sample of this study.

2. Methodology

This paper investigates cohesion in any discourse. It adopts Halliday and Hasan's model (1976) of cohesive devices. This model proposes that cohesive devices are of five main types: Substitution, Reference, Conjunction, Ellipsis, and Lexical cohesion, each with other subtypes. The sample of study is Silkin's

Death of a Son, a poem describing the father's sad feeling about his disabled boy.

The poem is grouped into eleven parts to be analysed clearly. Following the model mentioned above, the cohesive devices in this poem are obtained and tabulated in a full description in a later table. Thus, every cohesive device attributed to its main and sub type and also its function. Then, another table summarises the frequencies of these tools, showing the more and the less common devices used in this study.

3. Aim of the Study

The present study investigates how the text under study follows these standards to achieve unity and thus the aim of communication.

This study attempts to explain how the text is made coherent.

4. Theoretical Background

4.1 What is a Text?

The text is one of the main elements which play a significant role in communication. When communicating, people do not do that simply using individual words or fragments of sentences but using texts. One may speak, read, listen to, write, and even translate a text. Furthermore, the text is the basis for any discipline such as law, religion, medicine, science, politics, and so forth. Each of these manifested in its own language, i.e. it has its special terminologies.

The texture is a matter of meaning relations, and this is what distinguishes a text from something that is not a text. The text should function as a unity concerning its environment. Also, a tie is used to link a pair of cohesively related items. It occurs as a reference or repetition (Brown and Yule, 1983:6).

By using text whether orally or in writing, we generally express our needs, feelings, attitudes, and so forth. Thus, cultural traditions are transferred to other people via texts. For Halliday and Hassan (1976: 1-2), a text in linguistics is any passage, spoken or written, of whatever length, that does form a unified whole. A text is a unit of language in use. It is not a grammatical unit, like a clause or a

sentence; and it is not defined by its size. A text best regarded as a semantic unit; a unit not of form but meaning. The text is also defined by Beaugrande and Dressler (1981: 63) as a naturally occurring manifestation of language, i.e. as a communicative language event in a context. The surface text is the set of expressions actually used; these terms make some knowledge explicit, while other knowledge remains implicit, though still applied during processing.

It is possible to agree with Neubert (1992:50), cited Via the net, 1) who indicates that texts are used as tools and, at the same time, they reveal the tool-user. They communicate something and about someone. McCarthy (2001: 97) proposes that the text, not a container full of meaning which the reader simply downloads. How sentences relate to one another and how the units of meaning combine to create a coherent extended text is the results of the interaction between the readers' world and the text.

Thus, a text is an essential element of communication. It could be literary, expressive, scientific, informative, and so forth. All types of texts ought to address certain receivers who read/listen to them for different purposes. Therefore, texts are means of communication which serve of the various communicative aims. So, one important issue is that how and for what reasons these forms are produced and received. Another point is that what standard these texts must have to fulfil the communicative aims. Participants are surely there in any communication. However, if the text itself does not meet certain standards, it could not achieve the objective of communication.

4.2 What is Cohesion

As a matter of discursive elements, writing and reading are viewed as an interactive process of communication between writers and readers through the text. A text has textual features which collectively constitute its “texture” and distinguish it from non-texts. A text needs to be unified and related. Therefore, the speakers have to organise the structure and the content of what they want to say (discourse) and express everything in a coherent way, as well as by what they suppose their listeners know or don’t know (Brown

&Yule,1983:22). According to Morris and Flirts (1991:76): "cohesion is the textual quality responsible for making the sentences of a text seem to hang together."

From structural point of view, discourse analysis focuses on the explicit connections between sentences that create cohesion or on the elements of textual organisation that are typical of different text types (storytelling, commentary, instructions, opinion, expressing, and so forth)

Many linguists have tackled cohesion with many details. For Halliday and Hasan (1976: 4-18), the concept of cohesion in the text is related to semantic ties or "relations of meanings that exist within the text, and that defines it as a text". Within the text, if a previously mentioned item is referred to again and is dependent upon another element, it is considered a tie. Without semantic ties, sentences or utterances would seem to lack any type of relationship to each other and might not be considered text. This intertextual link referred to as "the presupposing" and "the presupposed". For example,

"Wash and core six cooking apples. Put them into a fire proof dish."

If one looks beyond the sentence will notice the word "them" presupposes "apples" and provides a semantic tie between the two sentences, thus creating cohesion. Thus, cohesion is the set of possibilities that exist in the language for making text hang together.

Beaugrande (1980: 19) states that cohesion subsumes the procedure whereby surface elements appear as regular occurrences such that their sequential connectivity maintained and made recoverable. Crystal (2003:85) defines cohesion simply as the means used by linguists to refer to the property of larger units than the morpheme to bind together in construction.

Hameed (2008: 1-4) claims that Cohesion relates to the "semantic ties" within a text whereby a tie made when there is some dependent link between items that combine to create meaning. Thus,

Cohesion creates interdependency in the text. Azzouz (2009: 23) adds that there are two types of cohesion: Grammatical cohesion (using grammar to lead the reader) and Lexical cohesion (using words and phrases to lead the reader).

To summarise, cohesion is the network of lexical, grammatical, and other relations which link various parts of a text. These relations organise and, to some extent, create a text, by, for instance, requiring the reader/listener to interpret words and expressions by reference to other words and expressions in the surrounding sentences. Cohesion is a surface relation, and it connects together the actual words and expressions that we can see or hear. It refers to relations of meaning that exist within the text, and that defines it as a text. In fact, cohesion results in the sense of the flow of how individual clauses and sentences, like a piece of the puzzle, fit together as moving from familiar to new information. A non-cohesive text may result in the reader or listener losing their concentration. The recipient will not be able to obtain the message intended if the information conveyed to him/her is not linked together. This in turn will lead to a lack of communication.

4.3 Cohesive Devices

Cohesive devices are the words and phrases employed to make the ideas of a text clear and meaningful to the reader. It is important to note, however, as Widdowson (2007:43) claims, that cohesive tools make the new content understood about the context that has established in the reader's mind by what has said before. Renkema (1993: 40) proposes that the interpretation of a discourse element is dependent on another item that can be pointed out in the discourse.

Many linguists have classified cohesive devices. The model adopted in this study is Halliday and Hasan's (1976), which is a suitable category of five main types with their subclasses, as shown below with some explanations of other linguists:

3.3.1 Reference (Semantic Level)

The term *reference* traditionally used in semantics for the relationship that exists between a word and what it points to in the real world. As a cohesive device, instead of denoting a direct

connection between words and extra-linguistic objects, *reference* is limited to the relationship of identity which exists between two linguistic expressions (Halliday & Hasan, 1976).

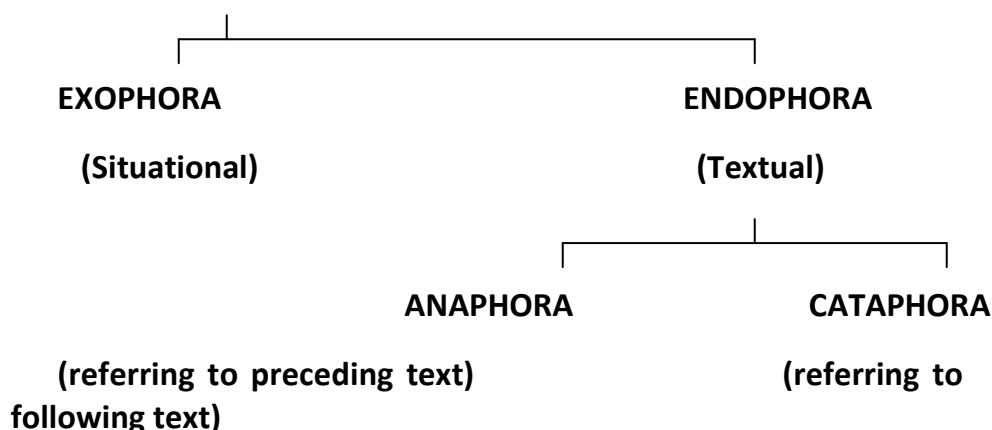
For example, in

Mr Smith has resigned. He announced his decision this morning.

The pronoun *he* points to Mr Smith within the textual world itself. As Azzouz (2009: 26) suggests, *Reference* in the textual sense occurs when the reader/listener has to retrieve the identity of what is talked about by referring to another expression in the immediate context. The resulting cohesion lies in the continuity of *reference*.

Halliday and Hasan (1976:33) present the following typology of Reference with examples below:

REFERENCE



Exophora:

(a child making noise) Mother: *Stop doing that here. I'm trying to work.*

Anaphora:

Three blind mice see how they run.

Cataphora:

I would never have believed it. They've accepted the proposal.

Another typology of *reference* is proposed by Ahmed (2008:55). It is of three types, as stated below with examples:

1. Personal – lexical items replaced with personal pronouns, possessive adjectives, possessive pronouns, for instance:

John has moved to a new house. He had it built last year.

2. Demonstrative – realised by deictic terms: demonstrative adverbs (here, now, etc.), nominal demonstratives (this, these, etc.), definite article (the), as in

I like the push-ups and the sit-ups. These are my favourites.

3. Comparative – by identity (same), similarity (such), difference (other, else), enumerative (more, less), epithets (better), for instance

Mary was a lady in mid-20s. Such people cannot change a flat tyre.

3.3.2 Substitution (Grammatical Level)

Unlike reference, Substitution is a grammatical strategy rather than semantic one in which an item is replaced by another item to avoid redundancy and repetition, as in:

- *Do you like movies?*
- *I do.*

In the above example, *do* is a substitute for *like movies* (Halliday and Hasan, 1976). The items commonly used in substitution in English include *do*, *one*, and *the same* (Quirk, 1985:72).

Substitution is classified into three main types, as stated by Halliday and Hasan (1976):

1. Nominal – *one*, *ones*, *(the) same*, as in:

My axe is too blunt. I must get a sharper one.

I'll have two poached eggs on toast. I'll have the same.

2. Verbal – *do*

Does Mary sing? No, but George does.

3. Clausal – so, not

Is there going to be an earthquake? It says so.

Has everyone gone home? I hope not.

3.3.3 Ellipsis (Grammatical Level)

It involves the omission of an item. This is a case of leaving something unsaid which is nevertheless understood. It is also a kind of substitution, defined as substitution by zero. For instance, in

Joan brought some carnations, and Catherine some roses.

brought in the second clause is ellipted but is still understood.

Halliday and Hasan (1976) identify Three types of ellipsis, as shown below:

1. Nominal: a word functioning as deictic, numerative, epithet or classifier upgraded from the status of a modifier to the situation of a head:

Did you get the first prize? – No, I got a third.

His sons went into business. Neither succeeded.

2. Verbal: The structure does not fully express its systemic features:

Have you been swimming? Yes, I have. (lexical ellipsis)

Has she been crying? No, laughing. (operator ellipsis)

3. Clausal: Clauses have a two-part structure: Model + Prepositional elements:

Who taught you to spell? Grandfather did.

3.3.4 Conjunction (Semantic and Grammatical Level)

It involves the use of formal markers to relate sentences, clauses and paragraphs to each other. Unlike reference, substitution, and ellipsis, the use of conjunction does not instruct the reader/listener to supply missing information either by looking for it elsewhere in the text or by filling structural slots. Instead, it signals the way the writer/speaker wants the reader/listener to relate what is about to be said to what has been said before (Halliday and Hasan, 1976).

Conjunctions can be classified into different categories:

1. Additive: and, or also, in addition, furthermore, besides, for instance; as in:

And in all this time he met no one.

2. Adversative: but, yet, however, instead, on the other hand, nevertheless; as in:

Yet he was hardly aware of being tired.

3. Causal: so, consequently, for, because, for this reason; as in:

So by night time the valley was far below him.

4. Continuative: now, of course, well, anyway, surely, after all; as in:

He was climbing for the whole day.

5. Temporal: as in:

Then as dusk fell, he sat down to rest.

3.3.5 Lexical Cohesion (semantic + grammatical level)

Lexical cohesion refers to the role played by the selection of vocabulary in organising relations within a text. A given lexical item cannot be said to have a cohesive function, but any lexical item can enter into a cohesive relation with other elements in a text.

Halliday and Hasan (1976) give two main categories of Lexical cohesion, as illustrated below:

1. Reiteration: As the name suggests, it involves the repetition of lexical items. A reiterated item may be a repeat of an earlier item, a synonym or near-synonym, a superordinate, or a general word, as in

There is a boy climbing that tree.

The boy is going to fall if he does not take care. (repetition)

The lad is going to fall if he does not take care. (synonym)

The child is going to fall if he does not take care. (superordinate)

The idiot is going to fall if he does not take care. (general word)

2. Collocation: As a subclass of lexical cohesion, it covers any instance which involves a pair of lexical items that are associated with each other in the language in some way, such as:

- Various kinds of opposites: e.g. boy/girl; love/hate; order/obey.
- Pairs of words from the same ordered series: e.g. Tuesday/Thursday; August/December; dollar/cent.
- Part-whole relations: car/brake; body/arm; bicycle/wheel.
- Part-part relations: mouth/chin; brake/ wheel.
- Co-hyponymy: red/green (colour); chair/table (furniture).
- Associations based on a history of co-occurrence: e.g. rain, pouring, torrential, wet; hair, comb, curl, wave; etc.

Also, it is possible to assume that a cohesive tie can be established in case of presence any of the following lexical relations:

SYNONYMY

(The meaning of the two lexical items is identical, as in: *buy – purchase*)

ANTONYMY

(the meaning of the two lexical items is opposite, as in *clean – dirty*)

HYPONIMY

(A relation that holds between a general class and its ordinate, as in animal – cow)

MERONIMY (The term refers to part-whole relation, as in tree – branch)

To sum up, cohesion can be established by different devices and strategies. Some of which are completely semantic while others are completely grammatical. Some others are utilised to achieve both aims. Cohesion is employed mainly to avoid repetition and vagueness and thus to achieve clarity and briefness. The next part tries to investigate the case of cohesion in a literary discourse.

4. Cohesive Devices in *Death of a Son*

This section is employed to observe how the cohesive devices are employed make the text unified and look like one piece. The sample for study is *DEATH OF A SON* by John Silkin (1954). In this poem, Silkin uses an extended metaphor to describe the observations and feelings of a father about the short, tragic life of a young mentally disabled boy, Who died in a mental hospital aged one.

Following Halliary and Hassan 's model (1976), the poem is grouped into eleven parts to be analysed clearly. Each part is given a number, and that number is given a whole space in the following table. Thus, all cohesive devices are obtained in the table and then identified as either grammatical, semantic devices or both, with their subcategories.

4.1. DEATH OF A SON by John Silkin

1. Something has ceased to come along with me.

Something like a person: something very like one.

And there was no nobility in it

Or anything like that.

Firstly, in this stanza, the writer (i.e. poet) uses three references (there, it, that) and two conjunctions (and, or) with one substitution (one). The aim of these cohesive devices is different, however, references and substitution used here to avoid repetition, while conjunction are used here to connect the ideas semantically and grammatically.

2. Something was there like a one year
Old house, dumb as stone. While the near buildings
Sang like birds and laughed
Understanding the pact

Then, in the second stanza, three cohesive devices are used here, one reference which is (there) for avoiding repetition and two conjunctions (While , and) to connect ideas semantically and grammatically.

3. They were to have with silence. But he
Neither sang nor laughed. He did not bless silence
Like bread, with words.
He did not forsake silence.

After that, in the third stanza, the poet refers to how cohesive devices showed the connected ideas within the poem if one looks to the meaning of the following cohesive (they, but, he , neither, nor) with one substitution (did).

4. But rather, like a house in mourning
Kept the eye turned in to watch the silence while
The other houses like birds
Sang around him.

Also, in the fourth stanza, the aim of cohesive ties are evident when scanning the whole stanza quickly. It is as follows: Two conjunctions are used which are (But, while, other) and one substitution which is (him) the aim of using these devices for semantic use is to extract a proper and complete meaning.

5. And the breathing silence neither

Moved nor was still

In the above stanza, three conjunctions are used semantically and grammatically for additive use to complete the structure and meaning of the stanza.

6. I have seen stones: I have seen brick

But this house was made up of neither bricks nor stone

But a house of flesh and blood

With flesh of stone

The poet refers to five conjunctions are used in the sixth stanza, for semantic and grammatical aim to frame the stanza with full meaning. Also there is one substitution to avoid repetition.

7. And bricks for blood. A house

Of stones and blood in breathing silence with the other

Birds singing crazy on its chimneys.

But this was silence,

In the seventh stanza, six cohesive devices used: three conjunctions (and, and, but) to connect the ideas and three references (other, its, this) for avoiding repetitions.

8. This was something else, this was

Hearing and speaking though he was a house drawn

Into silence, this was

Something religious in his silence,

In this stanza, two conjunctions (and, though) are used for connecting the ideas grammatically and semantically in the whole stanza .Furthermore five references (this, this, he, this . his) are used to avoid repetitions.

9. Something shining in his quiet,

This was different this was altogether something else;

Though he never spoke, this

Was something to do with death.

Here, in this stanza, five references are used, the aim of using these devices is for avoiding repetition. However (Altogether, else) are conjunctions used here to connect ideas. One substitution is used in the last line of the ninth stanza (i.e. do).

10. And then slowly the eye stopped looking
Inward. The silence rose and became still.
The look turned to the outer place and stopped.
With the birds still shrilling around him.
And as if he could speak

Before the last stanza (i.e the tenth stanza), eight conjunctions are used here for connecting the structure and completing the meaning of the stanza. Also, two references which are (he, him) are used in the stanza to avoid repetition.

11. He turned over on his side with his one year
Red as a wound
He turned over as if he could be sorry for this
And out of his eyes two great tears rolled, like stones,
And he died.

In the last stanza, the poet used eight references to avoid repetition; he also used four conjunctions to connect the idea grammatically and semantically in this stanza.

4.2. Data Analysis

The following table shows the cohesive devices used in this literary discourse to make a unified text with a meaningful story:

Part No.	The Device	Type of Device	Discussion	
			Level Category	Subclass (Function)
1	One	Substitution	Grammatical	Nominal
	And	Conjunction	Semantic and Grammatical	Additive
	There	Reference	Semantic	Demonstrative

	It	Reference	Semantic	Endophora-Anaphora
	Or	Conjunction	Semantic and Grammatical	Additive
	That	Reference	Semantic	Demonstrative
2	There	Reference	Semantic	Demonstrative
	As	Reference	Semantic	Comparative
	While	Conjunction	Semantic and Grammatical	adversative
	And	Conjunction	Semantic and Grammatical	Additive
3	They	Reference	Semantic	Endophora- cataphora
	But	Conjunction	Semantic and Grammatical	Adversative
	He(3)	Reference	Semantic	Endophora-Anaphora
	Neither Nor	Conjunction	Semantic and Grammatical	Additive
	Did	Substitution	Grammatical	Verbal
	But	Conjunction	Semantic and grammatical	Adversative
4	Rather While	Conjunction	Semantic and Grammatical	Adversative
	Other	Conjunction	Semantic and Grammatical	Additive
	Him	Reference	Semantic	personal pronoun
5	And	Conjunction	Semantic and Grammatical	Additive
	Neither Nor	Conjunction	Semantic and Grammatical	Additive
6	But (2)	Conjunction	Semantic and Grammatical	Adversative
	This	Reference	Semantic	Demonstrative

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	Neither Nor And	Conjunction	Semantic and Grammatical	Additive
7	And(2) Other	Conjunction	Semantic and Grammatical	Additive
	Its	Reference	Semantic	Endophora-Anaphora
	But	Conjunction	Semantic and Grammatical	Adversative
	This	Reference	Semantic	Demonstrative
8	This (3)	Reference	Semantic	Demonstrative
	Else And	Conjunction	Semantic and Grammatical	Additive
	Though	Conjunction	Semantic and Grammatical	Adversative
	He His	Reference	Semantic	Endophora-Anaphora
9	His He	Reference	Semantic	Endophora-Anaphora
	This (3)	Reference	Semantic	Demonstrative
	Altogether Else Never	Conjunction	Semantic and Grammatical	Additive
	Though	Conjunction	Semantic and Grammatical	Adversative
	Do	Substitution	Grammatical	Verbal
10	And (4) Around as Then	Conjunction	Semantic and Grammatical	Additive
	Him He	Reference	Semantic	Endophora-Anaphora

11	He (4) His (3)	Reference	Semantic	Endophora-
	This	Reference	Semantic	definite article Anaphora
	As (2) And (2)	Conjunction	Semantic and Grammatical	Additive

It could be noted that three types of cohesive devices employed in this sample with different functions: Substitutions (work on the grammatical level), References (work on the semantic level), and Conjunctions (work on the Semantic and grammatical level).

4.3 Findings

Substitution is the least one of cohesive devices which used in this text. It involves two sub-categories : (2) verbal, (i.e. did, do) and (1) nominal (i.e. One). Conjunctions used (41) times; they employed more than substitution. They involve two sub categories: additives (31) and Adversatives (10).

While Reference occurs more than the two types, involving (33) devices. It includes four subtypes: (11) demonstrative, (20) Endophora which divided into subdivision ((19) Anaphora and (1) Cataphora), while comparative is (1) and personal pronoun just (1). These frequencies can be summarized in the following table:

No.	Type of Devices	Level Category	Subclass	No. of Freq.	Perc. %	Total
1.	Substitution	Grammatical	Verbal	2	2.5%	3
			Nominal	1	1.2%	
2.	Conjunction	Semantic and Grammatical	Additive	31	40.2%	41
			Adversative	10	12.9%	
3.	Reference	Semantic	demonstrative	11	14.2%	33
			Endophora (Anaphora 19 and Cataphora 1)	20	25.9%	
			Comparative	1	1.2%	
			Personal pronoun	1	1.2%	
	Total of Cohesive Devices				99.3%	77

Through this sample, one could state that any discourse or text involves considerable cohesive devices which make it united and meaningful. Some devices are observed only on a semantic level, like pronouns and demonstratives, while some others

observed on grammatical levels, like verbs. Others are seen on both levels, like conjunctions.

Conclusions

This study has come up with the following conclusions:

1. A piece of discourse must have a certain structure which depends on factors quite different from those required in the structure of a single sentence. The way in which sentences are linked up with each other to form a discourse is "**cohesion**".
2. Cohesive devices work on semantic, grammatical level, or both levels to achieve the unity of the text or discourse.
3. The study refers to the way we use vocabulary and grammatical structures to make an easy connection between the ideas within a text. It also refers to connections beyond the clause and sentence levels.
4. The study shows that substitutions are the least type employed, while references and conjunctions are the most kinds used for unity. This proves that these devices work as clues or ties which link the different parts of the discourse as one unit.
5. The study also shows that a piece of literary work is a discourse through which the writer communicates with the reader using such devices on the basis that the reader is aware of their use. Thus, the poem is meaningful, grammatical and purposeful.
6. One of the strategies of achieving cohesion is to repeat key nouns or key noun substitutes, use consistent pronouns and use transition signals to connect ideas.
7. Many devices are used to create cohesion within discourse such as reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction and lexical cohesion. The use of these devices is to guide readers or listeners and show how the parts of a discourse relate to one another.

8. Some inappropriate uses of grammatical cohesive devices are easily noticed concerning the total use of those devices. The misuse of such devices may lead to misunderstanding of the message intended to be conveyed.

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دراسة التماسك النصي في "موت الابن"

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المستخلص

تهدف هذه الدراسة الى توضيح كيف ان النص الخطابي يكون متماسكا وموحدا من خلال استخدام ادوات التماسك. إذ أن التماسك هو الطريقة المتبعة من قبل المتحاورين في اي خطاب لجعل الكلام يبدو مترابطا وذا مغزى. وبذلك فان البحث يبدأ باستعراض للنص بشكل عام ثم يتطرق الى مفهوم التماسك وادواته. بعدها يوضح أنموذج هاليدي وحسن (١٩٧٦) المتعلق بأدوات التماسك وهو الاسلوب المتبع في هذه الدراسة. ووفقاً لهذا الاسلوب فإن ادوات التماسك تقسم الى خمسة انواع رئيسية وهي البدائل، الاشارات، الروابط، الاختزال، والتماسك المعجمي (الدلالة)، ولكل نوع تقسيماته الفرعية. أما عينة الدراسة فهي قصيدة (موت صبي) والتي ألفها جون سلكن. وباتباع الاسلوب المذكور سلفا، فإن الدراسة توضح أن الانواع الثلاثة الاولى هي الأكثر استخداماً في هذه القصيدة. إن هذه الأدوات تجعل النص متماسكا وموحدا. بالإضافة الى ذلك، فإن البدائل هي النوع الاقل استخداما، في حين ان الاشارات والروابط هي الأكثر استخداما. وباستخدام مثل هذه الوسائل يصبح من السهل بالنسبة للمتحاورين الانتقال من فكرة الى اخرى بكل يسر. ومع هذا فإن سوء استخدام تلك الادوات قد يتسبب في فشل التواصل بشكل صحيح. ينتهي البحث بمجموعة من النتائج.