

## Discourse stylistics and poetry: A study of the strategies in a selection of Ushie's poetry

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### Abstract

Studies in discourse analysis and discourse stylistics, most notably Halliday and Hasan (1976), Carter and Simpson (1989), Olateju (2004) and Yule (2006), have tended to focus disproportionately on data sourced from prose narrative texts possibly because the chief graphological devices of cohesive and coherent discourse such as end punctuation and in-line anaphora, cataphora and deixis are more common in prose narratives. This study takes a different view. It interrogates these assumptions by focusing exclusively on the intra-and inter-textual discourse properties of poetry. Poetry, despite its seeming 'disjointed' exterior provides some of the most involved linkages in language. And the poetry of Joe Ushie exemplifies this in a remarkable way. It is not for nothing that Ushie is widely referred to as the people's poet. Scanning through his poetic oeuvre, this research interrogates the ways in which Ushie's thematic concerns in selections from *Hill Songs* (2000), *A Reign of Locusts* (2004), and *Yawns and Belches* (2018) are seriated through anaphoric, cataphoric, deictic, dialogic and presuppositional connections. The paper concludes that his poetry, through a complicated interplay of the dialogic, the dramatic, the cohesive, and the coherent discourse strategies, presents a seriated but continuous interaction between the poet and his readers.

**Keywords:** Cohesion, coherence, discourse stylistics, dialogic, deictic, presupposition.

### 1.0 Introduction

#### 1.1 Discourse stylistics and discourse analysis

Discourse stylistics is a term that became popular in the 90s even though the sense of discourse from which it is derived can be traced more appropriately to the 80s. Stylisticians

owe the term to the title of the seminal collection of essays by Carter and Simpson (1989). It is a term that covers ‘all those aspects of communication which involve not only a message or text but also the addresser and addressee, and their immediate context of situation.’ This kind of stylistics sees a literary work in terms of communication between a writer and his readers. And as Wales (2011) observes, a poem also engages in discourse or can also be part of a larger discourse. Thus, discourse stylistics marked a novel approach to stylistics away from formal analysis to ‘contextualised, discourse-oriented approaches’ which include sociolinguistics. Carter (1989) believes that discourse stylistic analysis aims to be more rigorous and linguistically detailed and more inclusive than Practical Criticism in the kind of textual features it examines; and its procedures offer at least an *initial method* for undertaking analysis and interpretation (Carter and Simpson, 1989, p. 70).

But discourse itself boasts a longer history. Zellig Harris, in his 1952 article entitled *Discourse Analysis*, states that ‘discourse analysis is a method for the analysis of connected speech or writing, for continuing descriptive linguistics beyond the limit of a simple sentence at a time’ (1952, p. 2). According to him, two issues are important when describing discourse and they are the examination of language beyond the level of the sentence and the relationship between linguistic and non-linguistic behaviour. Harris was particularly concerned with discourse accounting for how the features of language are organised and structured within a text and the ways in which they are combined in particular kinds and styles of texts.

Jaworski and Coupland (1999, p. 3) note that ‘discourse analysis is not only language reflecting social order and shaping the individual’s interaction with society. It is an indispensable concept for understanding society and human responses. It is also a key to understanding language itself.’ Discourse analysis plays a crucial role in creating and recreating social bonds. It transcends the individual user and enables the single individual to exist and co-exist with other individuals of a given society in a communal way. Discourse, in its interaction with society, describes the way in which what we know about language shapes the way we talk, write and do things.

According to Carter and Simpson (1989) discourse analysis is that branch of linguistics most directly concerned with the ways in which texts create contexts with their organisation at the suprasentential level and with their operation as part of a dynamic process between participants. Discourse stylistics, then, refers to stylistic analysis beyond the level of the sentence or the single conversational exchange. It examines those broader contextual properties of texts which affect their description and interpretation. In discourse stylistics, it has become increasingly clear that style is neither inherently and exclusively textual as seen in formalist stylistics nor solely reader-centred as advocated by Fish and other reader-response theorists. Instead, it can be characterised as effectuated in, by and through a range of interactional processes between the text and the reader.

Weber (1996) points out that meaning and stylistic effect are not fixed and stable, and so cannot be dug out of the text as in an archaeological approach. They invariably have to be seen, he argues, as a potential which is actualised in a (real) reader's mind, the product of a dialogic interaction between author, the author's context of production, the text, the reader and the reader's context of reception -- where context includes all sorts of socio-historical, cultural and intertextual factors. But it is the view of this paper that the text remains the centre of the communicative event, and it may occur in 'a range of places and timescales which may include the producer and the recipient'. In discourse stylistics, therefore, the text is seen as a discourse event, rather than a fixed artefact whose meaning is invariable.

## **2.0 The Relationship between cohesion and coherence**

Two of the concepts which discourse analysis is interested in are cohesion and coherence. Cohesion is the glue that holds words together. In other words, if an essay is cohesive, it sticks together from sentence to sentence and from paragraph to paragraph. As Halliday and Hasan (1976) opine, a speaker of English who hears or reads a passage of language which is more than one sentence in length can normally decide without difficulty whether it forms a unified whole or it is just a collection of unrelated sentences. Thus, a unified text is achieved by the use of cohesive devices. Therefore, cohesion is the linear

connectivity which takes place between, as well as within, sentences. They go on to observe that:

The concept of cohesion is a semantic one: it refers to the relations of meaning that exist within a text, and that define it as a text. Cohesion occurs where the interpretation of some element in the discourse is dependent on that of another. The one presupposes the other, in the sense that it cannot be effectively decoded except by recourse to it. When this happens, a relation of cohesion is set up, and the two elements, the presupposing and the presupposed, are thereby at least potentially integrated into a text (Halliday and Hasan, 1976, p. 4).

Cohesion is a semantic relation between sentence elements which presuppose an element in another sentence. Thus, it is difficult to interpret a sentence when it is isolated from the context in which it occurs. The potential for cohesion lies in the systematic resources of reference, ellipsis and so on that are built into the language itself.

Cohesion is an important part of what makes a text. Texts must have a certain structure which depends on factors quite different from those required in the structure of a single sentence. Therefore, cohesion is the internal aspect of textuality. This is another way of approaching the notion of a tie. As Yule (2006) points out, the analysis of cohesive ties within a text gives us some insight into how writers structure what they want to say, and may be a crucial factor in our judgment about whether a piece of discourse is well-written or not. The units of a text must be implicitly or explicitly bound together; they should not be a random collection of sentences. The connectivity of the elements of a text is essentially a matter of reference and meaning.

There are several instances of cohesion. These include cross references and linkage. Those which create cross references are *as, he, it, that, one, do*, etc. Linkage on the other hand occurs as elements of cohesion in various types of conjunction such as:

1. a. **co-ordinating conjunctions:** *and, or, but, neither... nor, either ... or, etc.*
- b. **linking adverbials:** *also, for, so, however, therefore, etc.*

Cohesion can be anaphoric or cataphoric if it is within a text, or deictic if it is external. Anaphoric cohesion is the identity between what is being said now and what has already been said. It is a kind of reference which is backward looking. Here, the analyst has to look backwards to get the intended meaning. Anaphoric ties include *here, there, it, this, that, he, she, they*, etc. The examples provided by Halliday and Hasan (1976) are from well-known nursery rhymes:

2. a. Three blind mice, three blind mice  
See how they run! See how they run!
- b. Doctor Foster went to Gloucester in a shower of rain  
He stepped in a puddle right up to his middle and never  
went there again.
- c. There were two black birds on a tree.  
Another came, and there were three.

In (a), *they* refers to three blind mice; in (b) *there* refers to Gloucester, and in (c) *another* refers to bird. Reference is a specific nature of the information that is signalled for retrieval. Therefore, cohesion lies in the continuity of reference whereby the same thing enters the discourse a second time. In ‘see how they run!’, ‘they’ means not merely ‘three blind mice’ but ‘the same three blind mice that we have just been talking about. In the following example of anaphoric reference:

3. Susan went to the pharmacy.  
She was angry because it was closed.

*she* refers to Susan and *it* refers to the pharmacy.

Cataphoric reference, on the other hand, is forward-looking. It occurs when a word or phrase refers to something mentioned later in the discourse. Here, the reader can only retrieve the desired meaning by looking forward. It is a reference in which a word, phrase or sentence refers to something that will be found only after it. The delay of referents in cataphora is a classic device for engaging the reader's attention. For example, in:

4. During his life time, he was in and out of political detention yet Gani Fawehinmi remained undaunted.

the analyst has to look forward in order to find out who the *his* and *he* refer to, namely, Gani Fawehinmi.

Deixis refers to a situation in which the meaning of an expression is extra-textual (outside the language). Here, the referential meaning cannot be located in a given text, but in its physical context. For instance, in the body of a text, a statement by a contemporary American airline passenger such as:

5. Phones were prohibited on flights after September 11.

requires that the reader or analyst know that September 11 refers to arguably the worst terrorist incident in the history of the United States of America. It was the day when four aircraft were hijacked and crashed into four different US targets with immense loss of life. Therefore, it is expected that the analyst here looks outside the text for the full meaning of the date in reference. Hence, exophoric reference is often used to refer to a word shared by sender and receiver of the linguistic message regardless of cultural background. As an exophoric reference, it indicates assumed or shared knowledge between the speaker or writer and the receiver.

Coherence, unlike cohesion, however, does not exist in words or structures, but in people. It is people who make sense of what they read or hear. It describes the way in which

anything such as a text, passage or discourse hangs together. If something has coherence, its parts are well connected and all heading in the same direction. Without coherence, a discussion may not make sense or may be difficult for the audience to follow. Whereas coherence refers to the ‘meaningfulness’ or ‘senseness’ of a text or discourse making it semantic and contextual, cohesion occurs in the individual physical words and phrases, and is thus a grammatical or syntactic feature. It is achieved when sentences and ideas are connected and flow together smoothly.

Coherence is the link in a text that connects ideas and makes the flow of thoughts meaningful and clear for readers. For Halliday and Hasan (1976, p. 23) ‘coherence refers to the elements internal to a text which consist of cohesion and register’. It means that coherence is virtually the same with cohesion, because coherence refers to elements in cohesion. It is the linguistic devices employed by writers to create unified and meaningful texts. To produce a coherent text, writers establish semantic relations between pairs of ideas. Kehler (2002, p. 15) sees ‘the theory of coherence as a relation between utterances. The reason is when we come to comprehend a discourse, we do not merely interpret each utterance within it, but we attempt to recover ways in which the utterances are related to one another’. He also argues that the attempt to identify syntactic and semantic relationships when presented with sequences of words in discourse is the attempt to identify the coherent relationships. Zemach and Rumisek (2005, p. 82) posit that ‘coherence is the arrangement of ideas in a clear and logical way. When a text is unified and coherent, the reader can easily understand the main points’. It means that the paragraph is easy to read and understand because the supporting sentences are in some kind of logical order and the ideas are connected by the use of appropriate transition signals.

We use coherence to cover both the extent to which a text hangs together meaningfully, as it were, and the various linguistic and structural means of achieving this coherence. Coherence can be achieved in several ways. Oshima and Hogue (2007, pp.39-50) suggest the following four:

6.
  - a. repeating key nouns;
  - b. using consistent pronouns;
  - c. using transition signals to link ideas; and,
  - d. arranging ideas in logical order.

Coherence is achieved when sentences follow each other in a logical order and are linked together by transitions.

A paragraph is coherent if its sentences are woven together or flow into each other. If a paragraph is coherent, the reader moves easily from one sentence to the next without feeling that there are gaps in the thoughts, puzzling jumps, or points not made. When a person is reading a text, the person expects the feeling that a text hangs together, that it makes sense, and is not just a jumble of sentences. Therefore, ‘there must be a semantic property of discourse based on the interpretation of each individual sentence relative to the interpretation of other sentences’ (van Dijk, 1989, p. 93). A text makes sense because there is a continuity of sense from the expressions of the text. This continuity of sense is coherence. Coherence involves text and reader-based features. Text-based features are cohesion (the connection between words, sentences, and paragraphs) and unity (sticking to the point), while the reader-based features are the interaction of the reader with the text through prior knowledge of the text’s content. A condition for continuity of sense is that the connected concepts are also related in the real world, and that the reader identifies the relations. A text must be coherent enough for the interlocutor to be able to interpret. This coherence is achieved either through cohesion, for instance, marker and clues in the speaker’s texts, or through the employment of the user-centred textuality standards of intentionality, acceptability, informativity, situationality and intertextuality. Coherence involves inferences based on background knowledge and discourse constraints. This background knowledge is experiential involving common activities such as scripts, social interactions, and spatial settings.

Osisanwo (2003) observes that cohesion is the linguistic means by which a text functions as a single unit. For him, cohesion accounts for how actual texts are held together lexically and grammatically using certain linguistic devices which relate segments and bits of a text to one another. Bloor and Bloor (2004) define cohesion in terms of ties. They posit that cohesive ties can be classified into reference, ellipsis, substitution, conjunction and lexical cohesion. Reference, for them, is when two or more expressions in a text refer to the same person or thing. Accordingly, substitution occurs when a speaker or writer wishes to avoid repetition of lexical items and is able to draw on the grammatical resources of language to replace the items. Ellipsis, on the other hand, is the omission of words, groups, or clauses. Connectives are described as ties between clauses or sections of a text in such a way as to demonstrate a meaningful relationship between them. They add that lexical cohesion refers to the cohesion effectuated through the use of lexical items in a discourse, where the choice of an item relates to the choices that have gone before. These devices, according to them, constitute the concept of textual cohesion.

In their seminal work on cohesion, Halliday and Hasan (1976) extensively discuss the notion of cohesion. They see instances of cohesion in terms of ties in a text. Ties refer to relations between two lexical items which are members of a text. They recognise two types of ties: immediate and remote ties. The immediate tie is one in which the presupposed item is the immediately preceding sentence while in a remote tie, the presupposed item is several sentences away. For them, a tie is a single instance of cohesion, and this happens when two items in a text exhibit co-referentiality, in that for one to make interpretation, one must have recourse to the other. They submit that the concept of cohesion is a semantic one, referring to relations of meaning that exist within a text that define it as a text.

Halliday and Mathiessen (2004) add that cohesion revolves around the lexico-grammatical systems that have evolved as resources for transcending the boundaries of a clause. They further claim that these lexico-grammatical systems are rooted in the textual metafunction and are collectively known as the system of cohesion. They argue that conjunction, reference, substitution, and ellipsis are cohesive resources within the

grammatical zone while lexical cohesion operates within the lexical zone of a language, and this is primarily achieved through the choice of lexical items. There are four components of cohesion: relevance, order, linking words, and repetition of keywords. Relevance means that the meaning of the subsequent sentences should be related to the previous one. Order is that each sentence must be a continuation of the central idea and all sentences within a paragraph should relate to the main idea. Linking words serve as transitions that help paragraphs flow more smoothly. The repetition of keywords related to the main idea of the work makes ‘an invisible rope’ for readers to follow. Collins and Hollo (2010) add that what gives a random collection of sentences the property of textuality is the combination of text-internal links. This, according to them, is referred to as cohesion. They add that:

Cohesion is the type of organization in a text that is created by the presence in each sentence, of distinctive, recognizable linguistic items which relate it to preceding and following sentences. It is an internal property of texts, an objective matter, capable of automatic recognition (p. 18).

They further add that on the macro level, cohesion is achieved by deictic, generic, and logical signposts which contribute to the overall shaping of a text on the micro level. It is achieved by co-reference, substitution, ellipsis, and the use of connective words, phrases, and the various patterning of lexis, signs, and visual effects.

Referring to the relationship between cohesion and coherence, Tanskanen (2006) claims that although coherence without cohesion might be possible, it may actually be quite uncommon to find a coherent text having no cohesive links in real language data. Hasan (1984) insists that perceived coherence depends upon the interaction of cohesive devices called cohesive harmony; the denser the cohesive harmony of a text, the more coherent it will be judged. The role of cohesive ties in a text is that they predispose the reader to find the coherence, and ultimately to interpret the message. Thus, cohesion and coherence are independent but are intertwined to create more comprehensible texts.

### 3.0 Poetry

We have already referred to the view of Wales (2011) that a poem also engages in discourse or can also be part of a larger discourse. Poetry itself is the genre which studies the composition of poems. As a written composition for performance by the human voice, it is often written in verse stanzas, is characterised by concentrated language in which words are chosen for their sound and suggestive power as well as for their sense, and involves metre, rhyme and rhetorical tropes (Ufot, 2013). Stallworthy (1997, p. 1103) goes as far as relating the exploration of verse, especially its phonological sequence, to the appreciation of music, and posits as follows:

The most satisfying reading of a poem involves a simultaneous engagement of eye, and ear: the eye attentive not only to the meaning of words, but to their grouping and spacing of sounds. The more one understands of musical notation and the principle of music composition, the more one will understand and appreciate a composer's score. Similarly, the more one understands of versification, the more one is likely to understand and appreciate poetry and, in particular, the intimate relationship between its form and its content.

Gray (1742) says that the language of the age is never the language of poetry; Hopkins observed that poetic language should be the current language heightened, to any degree heightened and unlike itself, but not...an obsolete one (Leech, 1969, p. 8). Leech also observes that there is no other variety of language in which originality is so prized and dogged orthodoxy so despised, suggesting that poetry is the mode of composition which is creative par excellence and in which rules are made only to be broken (p. 12).

Corroborating a discourse stylistic view of poetry, Wales (2011, p. 323) remarks that poetic language is popularly regarded as the most creative of discourses, original in its ideas

and inventive in its forms, and goes on to add that critics as diverse as Samuel Johnson, William Wordsworth and T.S. Eliot argued for the situability of poetry for themes universal and permanent; and the medium also best suited for intense emotion (p. 324). Wales also concludes somewhat sweepingly that the function of poetic language was to arouse the feelings of its readers or listeners in a way that scientific language, mainly referential, did not (p. 324).

#### **4.0 The discourse stylistic features of Ushie's poetry**

Discourse stylists employ the notions of cohesion, coherence, deixis and presupposition to refer to the connectedness of literary language. Of course, connecting relations also holds among elements of structure within grammatical units such as word, phrase, clause and sentence. But these intra-sentential relations are different in kind because they are determined by phonological and grammatical rules, and described, among other things, as syntactic-semantic relations of valency, dependency, constituency, and modification. Cohesion operates inter-sententially, and coherence as key notions in text and discourse. Deixis operates as physical context, and presupposition as semantic and interpersonal connectivity. In the following sections, this paper exemplifies and interrogates these four discourse strategies in selections from three volumes of Ushie's poetry. The selections are as follows:

- 7. Volcano 2**  
Tall and invincible  
Are the hills;  
Low and fragile  
Are the vales;  
But the volcano  
Which chokes  
The Vales  
Also wrecks  
The crown of the hills

*(Hill Songs, p. 19)*

8. **Encounter**

In innocence  
I made a U-turn  
At the wrong place

‘Hay you! Hoi! You!  
Stop there!  
So you’ve  
Taken the law  
Into your hands!  
Stop!’

In fright, I breathed deep  
Into my left pocket  
And then breathed out

And he left  
Taking  
The law from my hands  
Into his right pocket.

*(Hill Songs, p. 20)*

9. **The he-goat**

Mocked, ridiculed  
for displaying in the open  
his over-sized scrotum,  
the he-goat fires back:  
‘Why should I be ashamed?  
Is mine the first  
hernia of the testicle?’

And so he parades  
before the eyes  
of the world  
his odd scrotum,  
a feature of his times,  
a disease of his clime.

(*Hill Songs*, p. 25)

10. **Coffin maker's matins**

Thank you, Lord  
For giving me  
Yet another day

I pray not, O my Lord,  
That any soul should pass away  
But, Lord, may my business bloom

Ah men!

(*Hill Songs*, p. 54)

11. **Tombstones**

Since it dawned on me  
Some day I'll be buried  
I've in lines of verse  
Buried myself daily  
Crafting wreaths, raising  
Mountains of tombstones  
Not to be interred with me.

These to ring my name  
These to wipe your tears  
These to wait with you  
In that stretch of silence

(*Hill Songs*, p. 59)

12. **A Reign of Locusts**

Our spades filled with curses  
We laid to rest last dusk  
Those ogres of our night of horror.

But the locust-choked sky  
Darkens the infant rays  
Of our rising sun.

Now is a rain of locusts  
In a chewing race,  
An endless eclipse for the wingless

Blister your knees  
At your Faith's prayer ground  
Or they munch down our fences

These locusts.  
(*A Reign of Locusts*, p. 18)

13. **Song of the Thief**  
If I steal my neighbour's chick  
They'll shout aloud my name

If I pinch my wife's pin  
They'll pin my name on doors

If I steal a whole bank  
They'll tell the tale  
With name withheld

If I pocket the nation's purse  
They'll tell the tale  
With name withheld.  
(*A Reign of Locusts*, p. 29)

14. **From 'Mobile Caskets'**  
Tyred caskets cascading on our roads  
Deeds of the occupants sealed,  
We cannot peep into their locked thoughts  
Nor see their wrapped sweatless skins.

Passing, they giggle at us in scornful silence.  
Turn in our direction, brother;  
Open your fixed lips,  
Open your cocooned world.  
How do we look, brother,  
From inside your darkened *liprousine*?

How can our hunger-bleached  
Sheets of skin show  
On this opaque mirror  
Of your iron centaur?  
(*A Reign of Locusts*, p. 30)

15. **From 'Letters on the Streets'**

Many idle moons have marched past now and the  
Tongues blister my ears still with their shots:  
'It's been long we haven't heard from you!'  
It was a long, endless season, weird and way ward in every way  
This was when the quill lost its crown to the street on which  
Dances now the usual quill-ruled letters and images of awe.

We know not when it happened, when poetry, prose and drama  
Leapt out of the quill to maim the streets with their pounding feet  
Making the quill a fallow fountain watching hyperbole on the street.

I haven't stopped writing poetry, I now tell the tale;  
The streets, envying the long monopoly of the Muse,  
Have invaded the abode of the Muse, raided it,

And poetry, like a long-locked prisoner, leapt  
out of the closet, fled into the open arms of the streets  
Singing on its own the refrains of Wall Whitman's song,....  
(*Yawns and Belches*, p. 9)

16. **Africa Today**

She is the blind bowl-bearing beggar  
Sitting on a roadside mound of gold  
Yawning all day, yawning all night

America arrives, cleaves a chunk of the gold, drops a coin  
and some affronts, and passes;  
Asia arrives, cleaves a chunk of the gold, drops a coin  
and some contempt, and passes;  
Australia arrives, cleaves a drunk of the gold, drops a coin  
and some chuckle, and passes;  
Europe passes, cleaves a chunk of the gold, drops a coin

and some insult, and retires;  
Then hail her own one-eyed leader:  
He clears the bowl of the dropped coins, blames her plight on her  
slothfulness,  
And passes, belching all the way as his beggar-land yawns.  
*(Yawns and Belches, p. 25)*

#### 4.1 Repetition

This involves the recurrence of a linguistic item in a discourse, which can help readers to identify the chain of information associated with a particular lexical item. Halliday and Mathessien (2004) state that repeated lexical items need to be in the same morphological shapes. They are either inflectional or derivational variants. Lexical repetition enhances the texture of a text, and it is a veritable tool for the enunciation of policies. Repetition is a device of emphasis and in journalistic writings, key ideas and words are often foregrounded through repetition for the purpose of creating a chain of information and imagery. In [7] for instance, Ushie employs repetition for purposes of foregrounding. He consistently foregrounds the hills as a place of refuge, a symbol of attainment, and the source of life. This is seen in the following words:

17. The hills...the hills  
The vales...the vales

Here ‘the hills’ and ‘the vales’ are repeated to foreground the poet’s concern for the environment. The repeated lexical items, underscored by the definite determiner ‘the’, form a link whereby linguistic items enter a discourse repeatedly thereby forming a link through which cohesion is achieved in the poem. We see this also in [11] as follows:

18. Me...me  
Buried...buried  
These...these...these  
To...to...to...to  
Of...of

Yet again, these words are repeated to create a chain of information in the text. In the two texts, the repeated items enable Ushie to foreground socio-ecological discourse in the poems through the establishment of cohesive ties. We see more items repeated in [8]:

19. I...I  
Hay...hoi  
You...you...you...your  
Into...into...into  
Stop...stop  
Taken the law...taking the law  
Breathed...breathed  
Pocket...pocket

The discourse here is the altercation between a policeman and a driver who has ‘in “innocence”’ committed a minor traffic violation leading to the usual extortion/bribery often witnessed on Nigerian roads. The repetition here also creates humour and of course satire, which are the poet’s ultimate goals.

The reader also notes the nonce word ‘innocence’, an instance of portmanteau neologism with the force of an oxymoron by which Ushie seeks to fill the gap created in his search for an appropriate expression for ‘innocence’ and ‘nonsense’. The persona has committed a minor (innocent) traffic infraction (nonsense), but the corrupt, extortionate, and oppressive policeman capitalises on it, a familiar feature of daily life in Nigeria. Also, in [14], there is another instance of portmanteau neologism in the item ‘*liprousine*’, a blend of ‘leprosy’ and ‘limousine’, in effect, ‘leprous limousine’, another oxymoron which refers to the ostentatious loss of soul of the elite. Yet again in [16] there are repeated items:

20. cleaves a chunk of gold...  
cleaves a chunk of gold...  
cleaves a chunk of gold....

which foreground Ushie's concern for the imperialist designs against Africa which culminate in the corrupt and oppressive tendencies of her leaders. In the four texts, the repeated items enable Ushie to foreground socio-ecological and socio-political discourse in the poems through the establishment of cohesive ties.

#### **4.2 Ellipsis**

This is a substitution by nothing. Textual cohesion can also be achieved through the use of ellipsis, where one presupposes something by means of what is left out. Aboh and Uduk (2017) opine that 'ellipsis describes a situation in which some essential elements omitted from a text can be recovered from the text by referring to a preceding item in a text'. This category is often employed to avoid repetition and to focus attention on what is new. On their part, Halliday and Hasan (1976) state that ellipsis implies that what is said is understood. It is any instance in which there is some information that the reader/listener has to supply based on contextual cues from his own evidence of the discourse structure and which presupposes some preceding item and which serves as a source for the missing information.

There are three types of ellipsis, namely, nominal, verbal and clausal ellipses. The nominal ellipsis is an omission which occurs within a nominal group and the source of the missing information is usually situated in a preceding nominal group. Verbal ellipsis is an omission within the verbal group, and clausal ellipsis occurs when an entire clause or part of it is elided or substituted with a yes or no response. Elliptical sentences presuppose that there is information to be retrieved from the preceding structure. For instance, in [9], there is an elliptical structure:

21. his odd scrotum,  
a feature of his times,  
a disease of his clime.

in which it is clear that ‘his odd scrotum’ which is supposed to be repeated in the next sentence has been elided in order to prevent that repetition. The use of this device indicates recourse to the preceding utterance for meaning. This enables sentence connection in the discourse. This device is employed by Ushie here to avoid repeating an already mentioned linguistic category, and it helps in bringing into focus what is new to cover a wide range of topics in the discourse. Ushie employs these devices to avoid superfluity while at the same time highlighting the topicality and currency of the discourse for his people.

### 4.3 Pro-forms

Pro forms refer to short words such as pronouns employed as simple substitutes for the proper name of a person, place, or thing. Each of the English personal pronouns shows us the grammatical person, gender, number, and case of the noun it replaces. Pronouns are the stunt doubles of grammar; they stand in for the entities who star in any piece of discourse. They enable a writer to speak and write with economy avoiding needless repetition of cumbersome proper nouns. In Ushie’s poetry pronouns create cohesion, deixis, and presupposition through the use of preceding lexemes without necessarily employing the main nouns. Consider the following examples of pronouns in [9]:

22. **his** over-sized scrotum  
the he-goat fires back:  
why should **I** be ashamed  
Is **mine** the first ...?

and in [14]:

23. ...cascading on **our** roads...  
**We** cannot peep into **their** locked thoughts  
Nor see **their** wrapped...  
Open **your**...  
Open **your**...  
...how do **we**...

From inside **your**...

The items *his, I, mine, our, we, their* and *their* are examples of possessive and subjective personal pronouns/determiners, which enable switches in the discourse narrative through changes in the deictic centre from the poet to the other voices. These pro-forms are decoded by reference to the poet and the 'he-goat'. The others refer to the oppressive elite and political leaders in sealed vehicles. Such usage is possible if the interlocutor or reader knows what thing or person the discussion is about. However, Ushie's use of this device plays the role of reference, giving texture to his poems and forming interlocutory links which make it possible for the reader to make cross references.

#### 4.4 Connectives

This is a cohesive relation or tie between clauses or sections of a text in a way to demonstrate a meaningful relationship between them. It is basically a device for linking ideas, events or other phenomena. Bloor and Bloor observe that this kind of linking is achieved by the use of connective adjuncts which are referred to as cohesive conjunctives. There are adversative, temporal, additive and causal conjuncts. Connective elements are not cohesive in themselves, but, indirectly by virtue of their specific meaning. They are not primary devices for reaching out to the preceding or following text, but they express certain meanings which presuppose the presence of other components in a discourse. This is seen in [7] and [15]:

24. **And...but...**  
**Also...**

...past now **and** the  
Tongues blister my ears...  
...weird **and** wayward  
...the usual quill-ruled letters **and** images  
...poetry, prose **and** drama

In the above texts, *and* is an additive conjunct which is internal to textual cohesion. It is used to introduce a new sentence or idea. *But* in [7], is an adversative conjunct employed to contrast the previous idea. This type of conjunction is internal to textual cohesion. *Also* is an additive conjunct employed in ‘Volcano 2’ to connect two ideas together. Ushie employs these cohesive devices to build up a dramatic discourse on socio-ecological as well as political ideas, and they enable readers not only to connect sentences or paragraphs either by contrast or addition but to partake in the discourse as active interlocutors. It is a means by which these different socio-ecological ideas and opinions are woven into one connected and coherent text by the poet.

## 5.0 Conversational exchange and presupposition

More significant are the intra- and intertextual conversational exchanges created in [12] and [15]. Whereas in [12], Ushie urges his readers to:

25. **Blister** your knees  
At your Faith’s prayer ground  
Or they munch down our fences...,

the readers in turn in [15] rather:

**blister** [the poet’s] ears still with their shots:  
‘It’s been long we haven’t heard from you!’

This festival of ‘blistering’, interactive discourse culminates in the following response from the people’s poet in [15]:

26. I haven’t stopped writing poetry, I now tell the tale;  
The streets, envying the long monopoly of the Muse,  
Have invaded the abode of the Muse, raided it,...

The operative lexical item here is ‘blister’, which is the poet’s reference to ‘persist’; ‘insist’; ‘importune’, i.e. ‘pray persistently’: ‘they complain persistently’, etc.

Similar exchanges occur in [8] and [9] when the traffic policeman barks at the persona:

27. 'Hay you! Hoi! You!  
Stop there!  
So you've  
Taken the law  
Into your [own] hands!  
Stop!'

But the poet responds in fear and says:

28. ...I breathed deep  
Into my left pocket  
And then breathed out....

The result is yet another instance of police extortion often witnessed on Nigerian roads. In [9], the he-goat is:

29. Mocked and ridiculed  
for displaying in the open  
his oversized scrotum,....

But the goat 'fires back':

30. 'Why should I be ashamed?  
Is mine the first  
hernia of the testicle?'

In [13], the poet continues this simulated discourse exchange between himself and the people:

31. If I steal my neighbour's chick  
they'll shout aloud my name  
  
If I pinch my wife's pin  
They'll pin my name on doors  
  
If I steal a whole bank.  
they'll tell the tale  
with name withheld  
  
If I pocket the nation's purse

they'll tell the tale  
with name withheld.

This further underscores in practical discourse terms how Ushie has ‘followed poetry to the streets’, watching its ‘bizarre dance and moves’. Significantly, a good deal of this discourse exchange is built on presuppositional inferences rather than explicit verbal intercourse.

Presuppositions, which refer to the discourse assumptions of the writer or speaker about the shared knowledge with his audience, can be existential, linguistic or pragmatic. It is existential if it assumes a universal, philosophical truth. For instance, when in [9] the he-goat is ‘mocked, ridiculed/for displaying in the open/his oversized scrotum’, the assumption is that the he-goat indeed possesses and displays an oversized scrotum. This is not asserted. It is assumed by the poet as the shared knowledge with his readers. What is asserted is the mockery part. Linguistic presupposition involves embedded clauses or groups in such sentences as:

32. i. The cow which has three legs has been sold.
- ii. The cow with three legs has been sold.

in which both sentences presuppose that there is indeed a cow which has three legs but assert that it has been sold. Pragmatic presuppositions refer to those relating to the immediate context and social relations of the discourse. Thus, the response to the quoted direct speech of the police extortion bid in [8] is dramatised by action, rather than verbalised, and is replete with humorous, contextualised, cohesive and pragmatic presuppositional repetition: ‘In fright, I **breathed** deep/Into my **left pocket**/And then **breathed** out/And he **left/Taking/The law** from my **hands/Into** his right **pocket**’. Similarly, the quoted verbal response of the he-goat in [9] follows an existential/pragmatic presupposition in the form of an indirectly narrated ridiculing accusation, rather than an asserted one: ‘Mocked, ridiculed/for displaying in the open/his oversized scrotum’. Both depend on presupposed assumptions, context and social relations. Ushie is clearly in social relations with his readers.

## 5.1 Anaphoric cohesion

Anaphoric cohesion, as indicated already, occurs when we look back to the preceding discourse for the referent of an expression. It is the use of a linguistic item that depends specifically upon an antecedent expression. Anaphora is an important concept for different reasons and on different levels: first, anaphora indicates how discourse is constructed and maintained; second, anaphora binds different syntactic elements together at the level of the sentence; third, anaphora presents a challenge to natural language processing in computational linguistics, since the identification of the referent can be difficult; and fourth, anaphora partially reveals how language is understood and processed. It is a relation of situational identity known as ‘co-referentiality’. It is a relation between, for example, a pronoun and an antecedent noun phrase where the two are understood as being used to refer to the same thing. In discussing anaphora, we refer to deixis, which concerns itself with the use of expressions within and without some utterances to refer to some portion of the discourse that contains that utterance. The difference between anaphora and deixis is that while deixis introduces a referent, anaphora refers to the same entity thereafter.

Anaphora covers any expression which the speaker uses in referring on the basis of which the hearer will be able to pick out the intended referent given certain contextual and co-textual conditions (Brown and Yule, 1983, p.215). Their definition suggests that other things or structure can realise anaphoric reference apart from pronouns. For example, in [7], this cohesive relation is evident in the following:

33. Tall and invincible  
Are the hills:  
Low and fragile...  
But the Volcano...  
The Vales  
Also wrecks...

In the text, ‘and’, ‘but’ and ‘also’ enable anaphoric cohesion. They create links between the succeeding expressions and what has gone before. We have the ‘but’ because of what has

been mentioned before, which is ‘tall and invincible...’. And we have ‘also’ because of ‘But the Volcano... the vales’. We see this also in [9] in ‘And so he...his odd scrotum...his times/his clime’. Ushie deploys these anaphoric devices to cross refer to discourse elements seen earlier which reflect the beliefs of his society. This creates a chain of social information related to those elements in the texts for both the poet and his readers.

## 5.2 Cataphoric cohesion

Again, as we have indicated already, cataphora is forward looking. It occurs when a word or phrase refers to something which occurs later in the discourse. It is an endophoric referent in which a word, phrase or sentence refers to something that will be found only after such a word, phrase or sentence. In English, cataphora is the stylistic use of a pronoun or other linguistic unit to refer ahead to another word in a sentence (i.e., the referent). Cataphora reverses the normal pattern of the pronoun by placing it first before the noun. The effect is that the reader is put into a state of suspense because he does not initially know to whom or what the sentence refers. This gives Ushie the opportunity to surprise the reader by associating the initial characterisation with an unexpected noun.

Unlike anaphoric cohesion, cataphoric cohesion is not a common feature of speech. Being essentially a formal, stylistic feature of prose writing, its occurrence in poetry is limited. Not surprising, therefore, Ushie’s poetry demonstrates very few instances of cataphora. Yet the closest examples of this kind of cohesion occur in [7] and [16] as complementary cataphora in which the descriptive expression (reference) occurs before the entity described (referent):

34. Tall and invincible  
Are the hills;  
Low and fragile  
Are the vales;

**She** is the blind bowl-bearing beggar  
Sitting on the roadside mound of gold.

...**her** own one-eyed leader:  
...**her** plight on her slothfulness

Here, ‘tall...invincible’ and ‘low...fragile’ are the references which precede their referents, ‘the hills’ and ‘the vales’ respectively. Ushie could have said:

35. The hills are tall and invincible  
The vales are low and fragile

in which case, we would have had an instance of anaphoric cohesion. But that would be less poetic and rhythmical especially as a focus on the descriptive expressions: ‘Tall and invincible’ and ‘low and fragile’ would have been blunted and their poetry watered down. Similarly, he could have said:

36. Africa is the blind, bowl-bearing beggar...

but it would have ruined the dramatic discourse suspense required to identify the referent of these pronouns as none other than the Africa of the poem’s title.

### 5.3 Deixis

Deixis, in practical terms, refers to the linguistic encoding of spatial and temporal relations between objects and entities (Jeffries and McIntyre, 2010), and it is often interpreted in relation to the speaker or writer, who is the **deictic centre** of the discourse. The deictic centre is central to the **deictic shift theory**. From the work of Levinson (1983), Jeffries and McIntyre (2010) identify five types of deixis, namely, **spatial** (*here, there, this, that*, etc.), **temporal** (*now, then, yesterday, today, tomorrow*, etc.), **person** (*I, you, he, she, his, her*, etc.), **social** (realised by choices between socially distant, formal titled names like *Mr Clinton, Professor Halliday*, etc., and socially proximal names like *Bill, Michael*, etc.) and **empathetic** deixis (realised by the choice between positive psychological attitude: ‘*this*

friend of yours’, and a negative one: ‘*that* friend of yours’). The deictic shift theory suggests that the writer, speaker or thinker in the text is the deictic voice which a reader can mentally project, and from which all other voices in the text flow. Jeffries and McIntyre (2010, p.159) point out that the theory ‘suggests that readers assume the spatial, temporal and social coordinates of deictic fields not to be egocentric and related to the discourse world, but to be anchored within the text world itself.’

Matthews (1997) describes deixis as the way in which the reference of certain elements in a discourse is determined in relation to a specific speaker and addressee and a specific time and place of utterance. This implies that deixis constitutes reference devices by means of which participants in a discourse are identified and the time and place of action specified. These devices enable participants in a discourse to give the reader a clear picture of the context in which language is used. The deictic centre in Ushie’s poetry infrequently shifts from poet persona to the he-goat, the coffin maker and the readers but essentially remains the poet. Stockwell (2002) summarises the patterns of shifts in the deictic voices into six stylistic devices, namely, **perceptual** shift (pronouns, noun phrases, etc.), **spatial** shift (locative and spatial adverbs), **temporal** shift (tense and aspect), **relational** shift (social relationships, names, addresses, evaluative adverbs, adjectives and verb choices, politeness, etc.), **textual** shift (materiality, text, utterance or thought, etc.) and **compositional** shift (generic tradition, intertextuality, lexicogrammatic register choices, etc.).

We see examples of deictic voices in [8], [9], [10], [13], [14] and [16] in which there are several shifts from the deictic centre of the poet to the police officer, from the poet to the he-goat, from the coffin maker to the poet, from the people to the poet, and again from the poet to the people:

37.     There, you, I, my, then  
          If I.../they’ll.../Why should I...  
          blister your.../...tongues blister my...,  
          Thank you, Lord...I pray not, O my Lord,...bloom/Ah men!

Here, *there* is an example of spatial deixis. It refers to the spot in which the extortion by the policeman occurs. But there is a shift both spatially and perceptually. *You, I* and *my* are examples of person deixis which refer to the speaker, and which in turn also applies to the people, the he-goat and the oppressive elite. *Then* is time deixis pointing to the moment of the utterance. *Lord* and *O my Lord* are examples of social deixis combining at once the characteristic proximal and distal qualities of religious discourse. These examples demonstrate that the text limits the number of possible interpretations of deictic voices, and facilitates the process of understanding for the discourse interlocutors and the reader, and thus is a condition for correct pragmatic presuppositional deduction in Ushie's poetry. More significantly, these features present Ushie as poet who is responsive to the socio-political needs of his readers

Deixis is also essentially extra-textual, i.e., not in the immediate text. In it, special words or grammatical markings are employed to refer to something in the context of the utterance or speaker. Crystal (2003, p.178) defines it 'as a term used by some linguists to refer to the process or result of a linguistic unit referring directly (i.e., deictically) to the extra-linguistic situation accompanying an utterance.' It is a situational group of references chiefly associated with the context of the speech, conversation, letter, etc. Its referent may be anything related to the outside world of the text that can be directly seen, or that is clearly known by the speaker/writer and the receiver. In [8] for example, the references to:

38. Hey you! Hoi! You!  
Stop there!

can be retrieved only in the physical discourse context. They underscore the same discourse stylistic properties which enable Ushie's poetry to be responsive to the sociological yearnings of his readers. Its dramatic, dialogic feature continues in [15] in which Ushie again dialogues with his readers:

39. 'It's been long... you!'  
I haven't stopped... tale

Here, in this simulated discourse, the subject matter of poetry has moved to the streets:

40. We know not when it happened, when poetry, prose and drama  
Leapt out of the quill... the street.

#### 5.4 Coherence

Coherence, as also indicated already, refers to the meaningfulness or 'senseness' of a text or discourse. All parts of the text must relate to each other in the context in which it appears and there has to be effective transition from one part of the idea to the next. Coherence in Ushie's poetry ensures that the bigger picture is foregrounded. It is achieved mostly through context. Text [10] for example:

41. ...I pray not, O my Lord,  
That any soul should pass away  
But, Lord, may my business bloom...

appears to demonstrate dialectical coherence. With very few cohesive devices such as 'Lord...Lord', 'my...my' and 'but', an adversative connective linking what has been said before, its special discourse stylistic device is in both the dialogue with God, and the paradox which seemingly renders it incoherent. The coffin maker, whose trade depends solely on human mortality, in his supplication, does not wish death on anyone but prays for a booming trade. Yet the discourse is coherent in the sense that apart from its surface logic, we are able to employ our knowledge of the context and relationship involved in the discourse to wrest its real thrust. We understand its logic thus: the coffin maker is not responsible for anyone's death yet his profession is, to many societies, an indispensable one. This interpretation is not linguistic but contextual for the reader, who understands the coffin maker's trade. We also note the poet's sarcastic pun at the end in 'Ah men!', which echoes at once the traditional

‘Amen’ (May it be so) at the end of a prayer and the poet’s humorous disapproval of such a prayer (What a man! What a prayer!).

## **6.0 Conclusion**

This study has revealed that the study of discourse stylistics offers discourse linguists a valuable critical resource in which their theories and hypotheses about the relationship between literary works and discourse analysis can be evaluated. It also reveals an important feature of Ushie’s poetry, namely, its discourse style in which the poet addresses his readers and is in turn addressed by them. The analysis of the texts which make up the scope of this study clearly shows that their discourse devices constitute linguistic items which enable ‘blister’ dialogue, existential/pragmatic presuppositions, endophoric and deictic connections and links in Ushie’s poetry. Ushie’s poetry is discursual, dialogic, humorous, satirical, and street wise. It finds echoes in the bosom of his audience, who respond with their yearnings. It employs repetition, anaphora, cataphora, deixis and existential/pragmatic presuppositions. These devices bring independent linguistic units into one unified seriated whole.

The discourse elements employed in Ushie’s poetry are elements which enable his poetry to explore several topical and people-oriented issues. His verses and stanzas function as one unified dialogic whole. How the elaborate prose-like features of cohesion, coherence, deixis, presupposition and dialogue fit into the concise and succinct graphological constraints of poetry accounts for its special stylistic contributions to linguistic theory. In conclusion, Ushie’s poetry exemplifies in the best possible way what can be termed the people’s poetry, which is conveyed in streetwise, socio-political, and socio-economic discourse cadences. In their conversational, colloquial tenor and links, the poems present a seriated picture of poetry leaping back and forth from ‘the quill to the main streets’.

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