

**COHESION IN POEM**  
**A Case Study in ‘Marks’ and ‘the way and the way things are’**

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**Abstract**

*This study is a linguistic analysis on literary works, especially of poem. It is mainly based on the study of cohesion given by Halliday and Hasan (1976). The study intends to describe how the cohesion works in two poems ‘Marks’ and ‘the way and the way things are’ written respectively by Linda Pastan and Nila Northsun. This is in line with Halliday and Hasan (1974:328) that a “linguistic study of literature is not an interpretation of what the text means; it is an explanation of why and how it means what it does.” The cohesive devices realized in the poems were identified and the cohesive ties among them were, then, described to show why and how the two poems mean what they do.*

**Keywords:** *poem, cohesion, cohesive devices, and cohesive ties*

This study discusses the cohesion in poem. Poem is one of the written text types. Like other text types, poem is also meant to convey meaning by a poet. A poem is characterized by a specific way of writing. Lines, stanzas and sub-stanzas characterize the specificity of poem. Stanza or stanzas that are equal to sentences constitute poem as a text (Talib, <http://courses.nus.edu.sg/course/ellibst/lsl01.html>). They are bound together to create the whole meaning of a poem. To understand poem one should know the application of cohesive devices in creating the cohesive text. One should also know how they work in poem. I believe that understanding cohesive devices is not the only one factor in the ability to understand poem but it is one of the factors that plays an important role to uncover meaning within a poem.

Some students consider that reading and understanding poem are very difficult. They feel narratives are easier to understand than poem so they prefer to analyze narratives in their studies. Only few students dare to take risk to analyze poetry in their study. This might be due to the specific feature of poem. As it is commonly known, poems employ condensed language in their composition. Other feature of poem is that it has two levels of meaning. The meanings concern with the denotative meaning or surface meaning and the other is connotative meaning or deep meaning (Niederlander, <http://www.stlcc.cc.mo.us/fp/writingc/pdfs/poemhowto.pdf>). Understanding poem, in both levels of meaning, cannot be reached without understanding the meaning at the surface level. Surface or denotative meaning has to be gained first before going further into the deep meaning. The deep meaning concerns much on other poetic devices such as metaphor, symbol, etc. Sometimes, it is not that easy for students to understand poem even in the level of surface meaning. To understand deep meaning of a poem students must struggle harder since they have to relate what are written in poem –denotative

meaning— with metaphor, symbol, and other types of figurative languages. These are the potential causes for the students to misunderstand the meaning of a poem.

Written and spoken languages are two different ways of saying. “They are different modes for expressing linguistic meanings” (Halliday, 1994:92). They have their own specific features. Spoken language mode is characterized by lexical sparsity. On the other hand, written mode has lexical density. To fortify this idea Halliday (1994:61, 62) has presented some examples to contrast spoken and written modes. In short, Halliday asserts that written mode is not simply a spoken language written down and vice versa.

As stated previously that poem is a written text. Text, according to Halliday and Hasan (1976:2), is a “semantic unit” and it must not be considered as a “unit of form but of meaning”. It does not consist of sentences but it is “realized by” or “encoded in sentences”. A text is not determined by its length. It may be found in various forms including “spoken or written, prose or verse, dialogue or monologue” regardless its length.

As we consider a poem as a text, there must be parts of the building block of a poem that constitute its whole meaning. Poem is realized by lines, stanza, and sub-stanza. We understand the whole meaning of a poem by relating the whole parts that constitute it. The compounding parts are “bound together” to create meaning (Leech and Short, 1981:79,243-4). This is the way cohesion works to create the unified meaning of a text. Likewise, Halliday and Hasan (1976:4) assert that “cohesion refers to relations of meaning that exist within the text, and that define it as a text.” They also describe five grammatical and lexical strategies for showing how the meanings of parts of different clauses are related to each other such as reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction, and lexical cohesion (Johnstone, 2002:101). In contrast, Coulthard (1994:174) puts forward a conflicting idea by quoting a sample passage from Brown and Yule (1983) in which cohesive ties exist. He shows that the presence of cohesive ties does not guarantee the coherence of the text. In the sample passage applying an apparent cohesion (mainly lexical reiteration) he proves that the text is not coherent.

However, considering that the data in this study are poems written by the famous poets, it is worth to say that the poems are written in highly serious way to convey meaning. In addition, poets are the persons who are mastered in language use. They can play with language beyond ordinary people. Their ideas have also been considered well before deciding to express all parts of their texts (poems). Based on this reason, on the contrary to Coulthard’s idea, I believe that the application of cohesive devices in the poems can be traced in order to disclose their meaning.

The main concern of this study is to discuss how cohesion works in two chosen poems written by famous poets. The application of cohesive devices will be highlighted and traced to disclose meaning of poems. This research discusses the analysis of cohesion in two poems, ‘Marks’ written by Linda Pastan and ‘the way and the way things are’ written by Nila Northsun.

### **Research Problems**

Based on the above reasoning the research problem is formulated as “How is cohesion realized in poems to create the whole meaning in poem as text?” or in other words “how cohesive devices work together to create the whole meaning of poem.”

### **Objective of the Research**

In line with the research problem above, this research tries:

- a. to describe how the meanings in poem are created through the application of cohesive devices, and
- b. to find and to break up the cohesive devices applied in poems.

### **Significance of the Research**

There is a trend among the educational practitioners recently. They have more concern on teaching material development by using literary works in language study. This research is an effort to help anyone interested in applying discourse analysis in literary works especially poems to trace their meaning through cohesive devices. The findings of this study, of course, are of case specific for the examined literary texts. However, they may be applicable for other studies concerning other poems and different types of literary work.

### **REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE**

This study will apply cohesion developed by Halliday and Hasan (1976). Below are some essential concepts in the analysis of cohesion.

#### **A Note on Texture**

In Halliday's grammar, the analysis of cohesion is closely related to the analysis of Theme-Rheme and given-new, as all these features are connected to the textual metafunction of language. Theme-Rheme and given-new combine in the grammar of English to form what Halliday calls the structural component of texture, which is defined as ‘the property of’ being a text’. The other component of texture is the cohesive, which is the non-structural component. The concept of texture should thus consist of the following features:

#### **A. the structural component of texture**

1. thematic structure: Theme & Rheme (Chapter 3 of Halliday’s Introduction to Functional Grammar)
2. information structure and focus (Chapter 8 of Halliday’s Introduction to Functional Grammar)

#### **B. the cohesive (non-structural) component of texture** (Chapter 9 of Halliday’s Introduction to Functional Grammar)

1. reference
2. ellipsis and substitution
3. conjunction
4. lexical cohesion

As stated previously, this study highlights on cohesive devices (non-structural) texture so that the review of the related literature focuses on cohesion and cohesive devices.

### **A Prior Note on Coherence**

Cohesion must be distinguished from coherence. A cohesive text may not necessarily be coherent to the reader, and a text, which is coherent to someone, may be lacking in certain crucial cohesive elements. A text is cohesive according to the language it is written or spoken in, and it is coherent to the individual reader or hearer. Cohesion is thus dependent on the resources of a particular language, whereas relevant psychological and other variable extra-linguistic factors are needed for the realization of coherence. A physics text-book for example, may be written using all the necessary cohesive devices of the language, but it may not be *coherent* to someone who does not have the necessary background knowledge (which is needed for the realization of coherence) even if he has a very good command of the language.

### **HALLIDAY AND HASAN'S MODEL OF COHESION**

Cohesion in English, in Halliday and Hasan's (1976) view, is defined as what occurs when the interpretation of some elements 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 resource to it.

Halliday and Hasan (1976) identify that cohesion is achieved by any of the five ways below:

- reference,
- substitution,
- ellipsis,
- conjunction, and
- lexical cohesion

#### **1. Reference**

Halliday and Hasan (1976) define reference as a participant or circumstantial element introduced at one place in the text, which is either taken as a reference point for something that follows, or as a basis for comparison. Let us consider the following example [1] below:

[1] I cannot buy *a laptop*. *It* costs too expensive.

*It* in example [1] is a reference cohesion tie because it shares the same referent as, refer back to, *a laptop*.

There are three ways by which referential cohesion can be realized namely personal, demonstrative, and comparative. The category of personal reference includes:

- (a) Personal pronoun: *I, me, you, we, us, him, she, her, they, them, and it.*
- (b) Personal determiners (the possessives): *my, mine, your, yours, his, her, hers, their, theirs, its*
- (c) Relative pronouns: *who and which*

The category of **demonstrative reference** includes:

- (a) Determiners: *the, this, there, that, and those.*

(b) Demonstrative adverbs: *here, there, and then.*

**Comparative references** include:

(a) Comparative adjectives: *same, identical, equal, other, different, more, better, etc.*

(b) Comparative adverbs: *similarly, differently, more, less, etc.*

## 2. Substitution

Substitution cohesion is a relation of sense identity rather than a relation of reference identity. It is also subdivided into three types that cover nominal, verbal, and clausal substitutions.

### a. Nominal Substitution

Nominal substitution occurs when the presupposed element is a noun or noun phrase, as in the example below:

[2] The laptop is so expensive that I cannot buy *one*.

The presupposing element is *one*.

Halliday and Hasan (1976:98), furthermore, explain that beside functioning as substitute the word ‘one’ sometimes functions as personal pronoun called **generic person**, for example, “**One** never knows what might happen.”

### b. Verbal Substitution

Verbal substitution occurs when the presupposed element is a verb or a verb phrase. The presupposing element which denotes the substitution is usually the word *do* and its various forms, e.g. does, did and done, as in the following example [3] taken from Halliday and Hasan (1976:112):

[3] “... the words did not come the same as they used to **do**.”

*Do* substitutes the verb phrase *come the same*.

### c. Clausal Substitution

Clausal substitution occurs where the presupposed element is an entire clause (simple-sentence-like structure). The words used in clausal substitution are **so** and **not**. The examples are shown below (Halliday and Hasan, 1976:130, 133)

[4] Is there going to be an earthquake? Yes, it says **so**.

[5] Has everyone gone home? – I hope **not**.

*So* in [4] replaces the whole sentence that ‘There is going to be an earthquake.’

*Not* in [5] at the same sense substitutes ‘Everyone has gone home.’

## 3. Ellipsis

Ellipsis is a term that refers to ‘something left out’ because it is already understood. It is closely related to substitution in the sense of ‘substitution by zero’. Consider this example (Halliday and Hasan, 1976:144):

[6] “Joan brought some carnations and Catherine some sweet peas.”

The structure of the second clause is Subject and Complement. It is agreeable that Predicator is supplied from the preceding clause ‘brought’.

There are three types of ellipsis cohesion depending on the syntactic category of the presupposed elements. They are nominal, verbal, and clausal ellipsis.

#### a. Nominal

Nominal ellipsis occurs when a noun or noun phrase is presupposed, as shown below:

[7] “Four other Oysters followed them, and yet another four” (Halliday and Hasan 1976:148).

In the second clause it should be “... and yet another four Oysters.” but the word ‘Oysters’ is left out.

#### b. Verbal ellipsis

Verbal ellipsis occurs where a verb or verb phrase is presupposed, as in:

[8] “Have you been swimming? –Yes, I have”

[9] “What have you been doing? –Swimming” (Halliday and Hasan, 1976: 167)

From the above examples given by Halliday and Hasan, the two verbal groups in the answers, *have* (in *Yes I have*) in [8] and *swimming* in [9] are both instances of verbal ellipsis. Both can be said to ‘stand for’ *have been swimming*.

#### c. Clausal ellipsis

Clausal ellipsis occurs when both a noun and noun phrase and a verb, or at least part of a verb phrase, is omitted. It is mostly seen in dialogue in yes/no questions, as in the examples below

[10] “What was the Duke going to do? -- Plant a row of poplars in the park.”

[11] “Who was going to plant a row of poplars in the park?” -- The Duke was.”

In [10], the answer should be “The Duke was going to plant a row of poplars in the park” but the Modal elements (**subject** and **finite** operator ‘was’) are left out. In the answer in [11], there is omission of the Complement, the Adjunct and lexical verb ‘plant’. The verbal element ‘going to’ (non-finite tense operator) is also omitted in both examples.

### 4. Conjunctive cohesion

This type of cohesion is different from the other types mentioned above in that it does not need a specific element in a situational context or text for its interpretation. It has its own intrinsic meaning. As Halliday and Hasan (1976:222) point out:

conjunctive elements are cohesive not in themselves but indirectly, by virtue of their specific meanings; they are not primarily devices for reaching out into the preceding (or following) text, but they express certain meanings which presuppose the presence of other components in the discourse.

[12] He left the post office *after* he posted the letter.

The word 'after' suggests a sequence, signaling that what is expressed in the first clause followed what is expressed in the second one.

Furthermore, words such as *hence* and *so* indicate that there is a preceding segment of text presenting a cause or reason, and a following segment presenting a result. In other words, the relation between the two segments will be one of reason-result.

## 5. Lexical Cohesion

**Coherence** can also exist without the use of cohesive conjunctive tie as in

[13] Fast learners learn quickly. Slow learners take their time.

Cohesion, an inter-sentential property of a text, is achieved through texture, through specific features given to it by the text (Halliday and Hasan, 1976) as shown in [13].

Example [13] above is also full of lexical cohesion, which is "the cohesive effect achieved by the selection of vocabulary" (Halliday and Hasan, 1976:274). Here for example *fast* and *slow* are antonymous (they bear a relation of semantic contrast).

Lexical cohesion is the final type of cohesion dealt with in Halliday and Hasan (1976). In lexical patterning, consecutive sentences can be expected to exhibit some relationships through their vocabulary. To Halliday (1994: 310, 330), "lexical cohesion comes about through the selection of [lexical] items that are related in some way to those that have gone before." More specifically, lexical cohesion can be achieved through one of these means below:

1. through repetition of a word or a phrase;
2. synonymy (words of almost the same meaning, e.g. commonly, popularly);
3. antonym (the relation of semantic contrast, e.g. fast, slow);
4. hyponym (the semantic relation between a more general expression and related specific relation, e.g. animal, bird, eagle);
5. collocation (words which tend to occur with one another in certain contents, e.g. education, school, classroom, etc.).

[See Halliday and Hasan (1976: 274-292)]

## RESEARCH METHOD

### Method of Research

Qualitative approach was applied in examining the poems based on the model of cohesion proposed by Halliday (1985) and Halliday and Hasan (1976).

### **Object of Research**

In this research, I analyzed cohesion in two short poems written by famous poets – Linda Pastan and Nila Northsun. Summarizing of what Halliday and Hasan call as cohesion is a relation between identifiable elements of text regardless of the distance. The relation contributes to the meaning of the text. Thus, the elements of cohesive devices should be analyzed to find out the ties among them in constituting the whole meaning of text.

### **Unit of Analysis**

Since the objects of the study are poems in which clauses are orthographically written in lines, the analysis focused on the ties among cohesive devices realized within the lines of verse.

### **Technique of Data Collection**

The data were obtained from anthology and some sources in the internet. There were large numbers of poems that have already been written by famous poets. In this study, however, only two poems were chosen to be analyzed. The chosen poems were copied and typed as there were shown in their original orthographic writings to maintain the nature of the data

### **Data Analysis**

After transferring the data, then, they are analyzed by identifying the cohesive devices to show the cohesive bonds between them. The nature of cohesive devices realized in each line of the poem was then explained based on their types. At the same time the relation among the cohesive devices were broken up to show how the meaning was intertwined.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

As stated earlier, the discussion deals with the analysis of cohesion in two poems written by famous poets. There are poems that will be take into account in this analysis namely, ‘Marks’ (written by Linda Pastan), ‘the way and the way things are’ (written by Nila Northsun). The poems are discussed one by one respectively.

### **The Analysis of Linda Pastan’s Poem ‘Marks’**

This poem consists of 13 lines including the title. The line numbers are added in the poems started from the title for the analysis. The analysis of cohesion is conducted line by line to show the cohesive ties among the lines.

1. Marks
2. My husband gives me an A
3. for last night's supper,
4. an incomplete for my ironing,
5. a B plus in bed.
6. My son says I am average,



7. an average mother, but if
8. I put my mind to it
9. I could improve.
10. My daughter believes
11. in Pass/Fail and tells me
12. I pass. Wait 'til they learn
13. I'm dropping out.

### **An analysis of cohesion in Lines 1 through Lines 13**

L(Line)1, *Marks*: This is an exemplary of instantial lexical cohesion. Specifically, it functions as the device of naming in that it names the whole text that follows. It is therefore a cataphoric reference to the entire poem. It is the point of departure of the entire poem since it is superordinate to some lexical items followed

L2, *My (husband)*: This is a cataphoric possessive determiner which functions as a personal reference to 'I' (L6, 8, 9, 12 and 13). Likewise, it is applied here as a cohesive device of instantial semblance; as such, it is lexically cohesive to 'I' as the speaker in this poem.

L2, *husband*: This is an instantial lexical cohesion. It has a cohesive tie with some words that followed such as 'son' (L6), 'daughter' (L10). These words are under the superordinate (hyponym) word of 'family'.

L2, *me*: This is pronominal reference which refers to the speaker, 'I' (L6, 8, 9, 12 and 13).

L2, (*an*) *A*: This is lexically cohesive to 'Marks', found in the title of the poem as it is a superordinate word for 'A'. This also has lexical cohesive relation to 'B plus' (L5) as it is subordinated to 'Mark'.

L2, *gives*: This word is a lexical cohesion of naming. It is used to express an action of marking/grading. This is lexically cohesive to 'says' (L6) and 'believes' (L10).

L3, (*last night's*) *supper*: This is cohesive lexical item. It has cohesive chain since it collocates with several words related to household works found in L4 ('ironing'), L5 [refers to action in ('bed')].

L4, *incomplete*: This is lexically cohesive to 'Mark' (L1, the title) as its superordinate. 'Incomplete' has cohesive relation with 'Mark' because this word is also a used to give 'Mark'.

L4, *my (ironing)*: It is a possessive pronominal reference that refers to 'I', the speaker, in the poem (as found in L2).

LL4, *ironing*: It is an example of lexical cohesion, which is tied under the superordinate 'household work'.

L5, (*a*) *B plus*: This is co-hyponym with 'A' (L2) and 'incomplete' (L4) above.

L5, *in bed*: This phrase is lexically cohesive as it refers to the superordinate word household works (affairs)

L6, *My (son)*: This is a possessive pronominal reference as in lines 2 and 4 above that also refers to the speaker (personae) in the poem.

L6, *I*: This is a singular pronominal reference, indicating the speaker in the poem, to which all the possessive pronominal references refer.

L6, *average*: As stated above that 'Marks' in the title can be expressed in various ways. [A]verage is also one way of giving 'Marks'. Thus, it is subordinate to 'Mark' and is cohyponym to 'A' (L1), 'incomplete' (L4), 'B plus' (L5). This word is reiterated in the following line (L7).

L7, *(an) average (mother)*: This is the repetition of the word 'average' in L6. It functions as the modifier to 'mother'.

L7, *mother*: This is an example of naming, in lexical cohesion, as it is to name something/someone to which 'I' (L6, 8, 9, 12, and 13) refer. It has an instantial cohesive tie to 'I' (the speaker), which in turn has ties to 'my' in L(2, 4, 6, 8, and 10)

L7, *but*: This belongs to a simple contrastive/adversative conjunction. It contrasts the former condition 'I am average' with 'I could improve' if she (the 'I' or the speaker/mother) puts her mind to the mark given by her son

L8, *it*: It is tied anaphorically to the mark given by her son in the L7, 'average mother'.

L10, *daughter*: It is tied lexically cohesive to 'husband' (L2) 'son' (L6), and 'mother' (L7) as these lexicons are under the superordinate 'family members'.

L11, *Pass/Fail*: These words are tied lexically, under the word 'Marks', as it is the way of 'marking'.

L12, *pass*: It is a lexical repetition of the same lexicon in L11.

L12, *they*: This is anaphoric pronominal reference that has ties to the preceding lexicons such as 'husband' L2, 'son' L6 and 'daughter' L10.

L13, *dropping out*: It has a lexical cohesive tie to the common terms related to school. This word has a contradictory meaning (antonym) with continue 'learn(ing)' (L12).

### **The chains which continue from lines 1-13**

#1. Marks (L1) → entire following text (L2-L13) → (an) A (L2) → (an) incomplete (L4) → (a) B plus (L5) → average (L6) → (an) average (mother) (L7) → it (L8) → Pass/Fail (L11) → pass (L12)

#2. (My) husband (L2) → (My) son (L6) → (My) daughter (L10) → they (L12)

#3. last night's supper (L3) → ironing (L4) → in bed (L5)

#4. My (husband) (L2) → me (L2) → my (L4) → My (L6) → (an average) mother (L7) → I (L8) → my (L8) → I (L9) → My (L10) → me (L11) → I (L12) → I (L13)

#5. gives (L2) → says (L6) → believes (L10)

#6. but if/ I put my mind to it (L7 and 8) → I could improve (L9)

#7. Wait t'till they learn (L12) → I'm dropping out (L13)

### Discussion of the entire lines

After analyzing the cohesion in 'Marks', the following discussion presents how cohesive bonds in the whole lines constitute the meaning. As it was shown in the above line-by-line analysis, 'Marks' is used as an umbrella of all following lines. It is cataphorically used to refer to the activity of evaluation. The subordinate cohyponym of 'marks' (L1) were found in the next lines such as (an) A (L2), (an) incomplete (L4), (a) B plus (L5), average (L7 and 8) and Pass/Fail (L11 and 12). This shows various levels and types of mark given.

The activity of evaluation or giving mark, of course, is accompanied by the person who evaluate and the person to be evaluated. Some lexicons such as 'husband', 'son', 'mother', 'daughter' are hyponyms. They are lexically cohesive tied under the superordinate noun phrase 'family member'. These lexicons are subdivided into the persons who gave evaluation (e.g. husband [L2], son [L6] and daughter [L10]) and the person who received the evaluation (e.g. 'mother' [L7]). Some pronominal references found in the poem are 'my' (L1, 4, 6, and 8), 'me' (L2, and 8) and 'I' (L6, 8, 9, 12, and 13). They refer to the speaker who is a wife and 'mother' (L7) and, at the same time, refer the person to be evaluated.

There are various types of giving marks presented in the poem. Firstly, marks indicated by A, B+, and I (for incomplete) in lines 2, 4, and 5 are given by the speaker's husband. Secondly, mark indicated by 'average' (L6 and L7) is given by the speaker's son and, thirdly, 'Pass/Fail' (L11, 12) given by the speaker's daughter.

Other chain of lexical cohesion is *household activities* such as (last night's) 'supper' (L3), 'ironing' (L4), and 'in bed' (L5). These lexicons are hyponyms under the superordinate phrase 'household activities' done by the speaker which are evaluated by her husband.

The words 'gives' (L2), 'says' (L6), and 'believes' are also lexically cohesive since they are used to express the actions of giving mark (evaluation) by her husband, son and daughter to the speaker (a mother/housewife). They are hyponyms under the superordinate phrase 'giving evaluation.'

There is a contrastive conjunctive cohesion 'but' found in L7. This is to contrast between the real condition in which speaker is an average (mother) and the effort she might do to improve her mark. The past conditional sentence found in L7, L8, and L9 '... if/ I put my mind to it/ I could improve' indicates the possibility of being better 'could improve' if only she 'put her mind to it.' In other

word, in fact, she did not put her mind so that she got ‘average’ mark or she might get ‘excellent mark’ if she ‘put her mind to it.’ The pronominal ‘it’ here refers to the mark ‘average’ which is in turn related to the action of giving mark (evaluation).

In line 12 a pronominal referential cohesion ‘they’ occurs. This anaphorically refers to the speaker’s ‘husband’ (L2), ‘son’ (L6), and ‘daughter’ (L10) who keep on evaluating her by their own marking systems.

In the last line (L13) verbal phrase ‘dropping out’ occurs. This phrase is used to contrast meaning of the clause occurred in the L12, ‘Wait ‘til they learn.’ The word ‘They’ (L12) as stated earlier refers to the other family members that keep on evaluating the speaker for her household works. A question, then, arises. Why should the speaker ‘drop out’ while she gets ‘A’ (L2) in serving the ‘last night’s supper’, ‘incomplete’ (L4) in ‘ironing’, ‘B plus’ (L5) in serving her husband ‘in bed’, ‘average’ (L6 and L7) and ‘pass’ (L12) for her household works? Considering the ‘marks’ given by the family members, the speaker should continue her role as a housewife or as a mother for her son and daughter.

The speaker’s ‘dropping out’ has instantial cohesive tie with the action of giving marks done by her husband, son, and daughter. It can be understood from the clause in line 12, ‘Wait ‘til they learn.’ The lexicon ‘learn’ refers to the action of giving marks (evaluation) ([‘gives’ L2], [‘says’ L6], [‘believes’ L10]) done by the speaker’s husband, son, and daughter. ‘[D]ropping out’ in school terminology is used to indicate a condition in which a student terminates his/her study before accomplishing it. Thus, it is not the ‘marks’ that causes the speaker’s ‘dropping out’ but the **action of giving marks** itself. This means that the speaker no longer cares about the action of giving ‘marks’ because her husband, son, and daughter have not learned (or will not try to learn) to appreciate her role as a housewife and a mother.

### **Nila Northsun’s poem “the way and the way things are”**

This poem was written by an American Indian writer. It consists of 28 lines including the title. For the sake of the analysis, the line numbers are added next to each line. This poem is transcribed as it appears in Clark ([www.melta.org.my/ET/1987/main9.html](http://www.melta.org.my/ET/1987/main9.html)). It is written in an unusual way as all the words are written in lowercases. The cohesion in each line is traced to show the cohesive ties among the lines.

#### **D.2.1. Transcription of the Poem**

1. **the way and the way things are**
2.     gramma thinks about her grandchildren
3.     they’re losing the ways
4.     don’t know how to talk indian
5.     don’t understand me when
6.     i ask for tobacco
7.     don’t know how to skin a rabbit

8. sad sad
9. they're losing the ways
10. but gramma
11. you told your daughters
12. marry white men
13. told them they would have
14. nicer houses
15. fancy cars
16. pretty clothes
17. could live in the city
18. gramma your daughters did
19. they couldn't speak indian anymore
20. how could we grandchildren learn
21. there are no rabbits to skin
22. in the city
23. we have no gramma there to
24. teach us the ways
25. you were still on the reservation
26. asking somebody anybody
27. please
28. get me tobacco

[Nila Northsun (1979) taken from Clark, 1987. online]

### Analysis of lines 1 through 28

- L1, *the way and the way things are*: As the title of the poem, it is the reference to which all the following lines refer in the poem. It functions as starting point from which the entire following lines are cataphorically interrelated.
- L2, *gramma*: It is the example of lexical cohesion. It has a cohesive tie with some following words such as grandchildren (L2), daughters (L11, 18). These words are under the superordinate (hyponym) word 'family'.
- L2, *her*: It is a cataphoric possessive determiner functioning as a personal reference to 'gramma' in the beginning of this line.
- L2, *grandchildren*: It is lexically cohesive to 'gramma' as the two words are hyponyms.
- L3, *they*: This is a referential cohesion that refers to the word 'grandchildren' in the preceding line 2.
- L3, *(are) losing*: This is an example of lexical cohesion in the sense of missing something. The following words (phrases) such as 'don't know' (L4, 7), 'don't understand' (L5) indicate the similar sense with 'losing'.
- L3, *ways*: It is lexically cohesive to the word 'way' as it is repeatedly used in L1 (twice).
- L3, *losing the ways*: This is a cataphoric lexical cohesion. This phrase is meant to introduce some following phrases that have close meaning to it namely 'don't

know how to talk indian' (L4), 'don't understand me when/ i ask for tobacco' (L5,6), and 'don't know how to skin a rabbit' (L7).

L4, *don't know*: It is a lexical cohesion to the word 'losing' (L3). The use of negation marker 'don't' in the phrase 'don't know' indicates that it has the same meaning as 'losing' (L3).

L4, *talk indian*: This exemplifies lexical cohesion to the word 'the way' that is previously stated in the title {L1}, and 'the ways' (L3). The phrase is cohyponym to the word 'way' and 'ways' as it is considered as one of 'the ways'.

L5, *don't understand*: It is lexically cohesive to 'losing' in L3 as they are cohyponym. The word 'understand' also has close meaning (synonym) to 'know' in the preceding line (L4).

L5, *me*: It is an example of referential cohesion that refers to 'gramma' L2. It is also cataphorically refer to the personal pronoun [i] in the following line (L6).

L6, *tobacco*: It is an example of lexical cohesion to 'the way' (L1) and 'the ways' (L3) as 'tobacco' is one of the [i]ndian's ways. This word is very familiar to [i]ndian's life.

L7, *don't know*: same as L4. It is the repetition of the same phrase 'don't know' in L4.

L8, *sad*: It is a repetition as it is used twice at the same line.

L9, *they're losing their ways*: The similar clause has appeared in the preceding line 3.

L9, *they*: It is a referential cohesion. This personal pronoun anaphorically refers to grandchildren (L2).

L9, *losing*: Same as L3, *losing* above.

L9, *(the) ways*: Same as L3, *ways* above.

L10, *but*: It is an example of adversative conjunctive cohesion to show contrast.

L10, *gramma*: It is a lexical repetition of the same word appears in L2.

L11, *you*: This personal pronoun is a referential cohesion. It refers to 'gramma' appeared earlier in L10.

L11, *told*: It is lexically cohesive to the word 'ask' L6 since the two words have close meaning (synonymy).

L11, *your*: It is a personal determiner (the possessive personal pronoun) that refers to the preceding word 'gramma' in the same line (L11).

L11, *daughters*: It is a lexical cohesion since it is cohyponym with the word 'gramma' (L10) and 'grandchildren' (L2).

- L12, *white men*: It is a lexical cohesion. This word is used in the opposite sense of the lexicon '[i]ndian'.
- L13, *told*: Same as L11, *told* above.
- L13, *them*: This personal pronoun is a referential cohesion to refer to 'daughters' (L11).
- L13, *they*: This personal pronoun is also a referential cohesion to refer to 'daughters' (L11).
- L14, *nicer (houses)*: This is an example of comparative reference. It functions as a modifier to the following headword 'houses' (L14).
- L14, (*nicer*) *houses*: This word is cohesively tied to 'white man' (L12). It is the attribute given to the 'white men' (L12).
- L15, *fancy cars*: Similarly, this phrase is to attribute 'white men' (L12). The two phrases are collocations
- L16, *pretty clothes*: Again, this phrase is to attribute 'white men' (L12). The two phrases are collocations
- L17, *live in the city*: This phrase, in the same way, is collocated to 'white men' (L12).
- L18, *gramma*: Same as L2, L10, *gramma* above.
- L18, *your*: Same as L11, *your* above.
- L18, *daughters*: This is a lexical cohesion since it repeats exactly the same word in L11, *daughters*.
- L18, *did*: It is a verbal substitution. The word 'did' substitutes the word 'marry' (L12).
- L19, *they*: It is an example of referential cohesion and it refers to the word 'daughters' in L18.
- L19, *speak*: It is a lexical cohesion as it has the same meaning with the preceding word 'talk' (L4).
- L19, [*i*]ndian: It is a repetitive lexical cohesion. This word also appears in L4.
- L20, *we*: This is a referential cohesion as it cataphorically refers to the word that directly comes after it, 'grandchildren' (L20).
- L21, *rabbits*: It is a lexical cohesion. This word is the repetition of the similar word in line 7, 'rabbits'.
- L21, (*to*) *skin*: Similarly, it is the repetition of the similar word written in L7, '(to) skin'.
- L22, (*the*) *city*: Again, this word is a repetition of the same word '(the) city' in L17.

L23, *we*: This personal pronoun refers to ‘grandchildren’ previously written in L20.

L23, *gramma*: It is the repetition of the same lexicon as it appears twice in the preceding lines 2 and 10.

L23, *there*: This is a demonstrative pronoun indicating distance (far) that refers to ‘(the) city’ (L22).

L24, *teach*: This is an example of lexical cohesion as it has the contradictory meaning with ‘learn’ (L20).

L24, *us*: This personal pronoun refers to ‘grandchildren’ (L20).

L24, *the (ways)*: This definite article is a referential cohesion since its function is to specify [i]ndian ‘ways’ such as ‘talk [i]ndian’ (L4), ‘ask for tobacco’ (L6), ‘to skin rabbits’ (L7), and ‘speak [i]ndian’ (L19).

L24, *(the) ways*: This is an anaphoric cohyponym of the words (phrases) that refer to the [i]ndian ways such as ‘talk [i]ndian’ (L4), ‘ask for tobacco’ (L6), ‘to skin rabbits’ (L7), and ‘speak [i]ndian’ (L19).

L25, *you*: This personal pronoun is a referential cohesion that refers to ‘gramma’ (L2 and L10).

L25, *the (reservation)*: This definite article identifies the specificity of ‘reservation’ where the ‘gramma’ lived.

L25, *(the) reservation*: This is an antonymous lexical cohesion. This shows the contradictory meaning with ‘city’ (L22).

L26, *asking*: It is a repetitive lexical cohesion to the word ‘ask’ (L6). Furthermore, it is also synonymously cohesive to ‘told’ (L11 and L13).

L26, *somebody*: It is an example of indefinite pronominal reference. It is exophoric reference as it indicates non-specific person out of the text. This is usually used in the positive sentence.

L26, *anybody*: It is also an exophoric indefinite pronominal reference since it indicates non-specific person out of the text.

L28, *me*: It is a pronominal reference that refers to ‘gramma’ (L2, L10, L18 and L23).

L28, *tobacco*: This is a lexical cohesion, as it is also appeared in line 6, through the general repetition cohesive device.

### **The chains which continue from lines 1 through 28**

#1. the way things are → entire following lines in the text(L2-L28) → the ways (L3) → talk indian (L4) → ask for tobacco (6) → skin a rabbit (7) → the ways (L9)



- #2. *gramma thinks ... her grandchildren* (L2) → *losing the ways* (L3) → *don't know how to talk indian* (L4) → *don't understand me* (L4) / *when i ask for tobacco* (L5) → *sad sad* (L7) → *they're losing the ways* (L8)
- #3. *told your daughter* (L11) → *marry white men* (12) → *would have/ nicer houses* (L13, 14) → *fancy cars* (L15) → *pretty clothes* (16) → *live in the city* (17)
- #4. *your daughters did* (18) → *couldn't speak indian* (19) → *grandchildren* (L20) → *no rabbits to skin/ in the city* (L21, 22) → *no gramma ... to / teach ... the ways* (L23,24)
- #5. *gramma* (L2,10) → *still on the reservation* (L25) → *asking somebody anybody* (L26) → *get ... tobacco* (L28)
- #6. *her* (L2) → *they* (L3) → *me* (L5) → *i* (L6) → *they* (L9) → *you* (L11) → *they* (L13) → *your* (L18) → (L19) → *we* (L20) → *we* (L23) → *us* (L24) → *you* (L25) → *somebody* (L26) → *anybody* (L26) – *me* (L28)
- #7. *indian* (L4,) → *white men* (L12)
- #8. *city* (L17) → *reservation* (L25)
- #9. *know* (L4, L7) → *learn* (L20)
- #10. *teach* (L24) → *understand* (L5)

### Discussion of the entire lines in “the way and the ways things are”

The analysis of cohesion in “the ways and the way things are” presented above shows cohesive devices and chains among the lines. The following discussion will try to break down the cohesive bonds that, in turn, constitute the meaning of the entire poem. As shown in the line-by-line analysis above ‘the way things are’ is the main phrase to which all the lines refer.

The poem “the way and the way things are” conveys information about cultural conflict involving family members –gramma, daughters, grandchildren. This poem also delineates center on the role of grandmother figure, ‘gramma’ (L2, 10, 18, and 23). The narrator is the granddaughter. In the first stanza of the poem, she relates her “gramma’s” thoughts. In the second stanza, she reports her grandmother’s advice. In the third stanza, she reports the consequences of that advice, and in the final stanza, she repeats her grandmother’s request. Three generations of the family members are specifically referred to within the poem: ‘gramma’ (L2, 10, 18, 23), her ‘daughters’ (L11, 18), and her grandchildren (L2, 20).

In order to identify the various participants in the discourse, it is useful to begin by looking at the considerable variety of pronominal reference, and how that reference changes from stanza to stanza, according to function and point of view. For example, the first stanza depicts the grandmother’s thought: “gramma *thinks* about *her* grandchildren” (L2). The existence of ‘thinks’ indicates that it is the ‘gramma’ that has the thoughts. This line (L2) can also be identified as an introduction to the grandmother’s thoughts and complaints about her

grandchildren. ‘Grandchildren’ is introduced in L2 but it is not enough to infer that ‘grandchildren’ is the narrator of this poem only from this line. The narrator can be apparently identified later in L20, ‘how could we grandchildren learn’. The possessive pronominal reference ‘her’ (L2) refers to the grandmother. The third person pronominal reference ‘they’ (L3) refers back to the grandchildren. This indicates that it is the grandchildren who are ‘losing the ways’ and it is the grandmother who complains ‘don’t understand me when i ask for tobacco’ (L5, 6).

In the second stanza, the grandmother is confronted, as indicated by abrupt use of adversative conjunction ‘but’ (L10), and the direct, second person ‘you’ (L11). The possessive form ‘your’ (L11) refers to the grandmother. The ‘daughters’ (L11) refers the daughters of the grandmother or the mothers of the grandchildren, but never in the poem are these women referred to in their role as mothers, but only as daughters; their role, or function, is pronominally indicated and suggest responsibilities and expectation as well. In this stanza, it is the daughters of the grandmother, indicated by the third person pronominal reference ‘them’ and ‘they’ (L13), who are suggested and expected to ‘marry white men’ (L12). ‘They’ (L13 and L19) refers to the daughters of the grandmother rather than the grandchildren.

Within the third stanza, ‘we’ (L20, L23) and ‘us’ (L24) refer only to the grandchildren. Other family members are pronominally excluded. In line 25, the pronominal reference ‘you’ reappears and it refers to the ‘gamma’. It is the grandchildren who report this. In the last line (L24), the pronominal ‘me’ refers back to the grandmother to indicate that she asks ‘somebody’ or ‘anybody’ to get her tobacco.

The final ‘asking’ (L28) of the poem now states a crucial question. Who, after all, is being asked? Is it a member of the family? The potential ‘getters’ of tobacco are anonymous: ‘somebody anybody’ (L26). ‘Somebody’ and ‘anybody’ are two indefinite pronouns. They refer to unknown persons. What is more significant here, however, is the sequence of the indefinite pronouns; ‘somebody’ precedes ‘someone’.

Attention should be given to the sequence of indefinite pronouns. ‘Somebody’ is usually used in positive sentence and ‘anybody’ in positive sentence and question (interrogative). Thus, this sequence of the two indefinite pronouns might be understood as the changing of the grandmother’s attitude from positive to negative (or unsure [?]) toward her descendents. First, the grandmother’s daughters becomes ‘somebody’ and later the grandchildren becomes ‘anybody’.

Different from the above explanation, Clark (<http://www.melta.org.my/ET/1987/main9.html>:2004) after looking up several dictionaries (e.g. ‘The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language’) says that ‘somebody’ is a bit more specific than ‘anybody’ but still unnamed. Furthermore, he argues that the sequence of ‘somebody’ precedes ‘anybody’ can be assumed as initial

request for tobacco is to somebody known by the 'gramma'. If the request is disobeyed, then 'anybody' might do. Likewise, it expresses the grandmother's hopelessness about her descendents that they do not understand Indian culture anymore.

After discussing the cohesion in 'the way and the way things are', conveyed through references, the following I try to discuss other cohesive devices that also exist in the poem. The attention on the referential cohesive suggests a look at other notions of cohesion as well. They are found in three instances such as: 'loosing' (L3, L9), 'have' (L13, L23), and 'get' (L28). Such lexical collocation suggests access to an 'associative potential' (Tierney & Mosenthal in Clark). In the first, for instance the line 'they're loosing the ways' (appears twice in L3, L9) refers to the inability to 'talk indian' (L4) or understand me/ when i ask for tobacco' (L5, L6) or 'skin a rabbit' (L7).

In the second stanza, the lexicon 'have' (L13) does not refer to ability, but to material things associated with being white men's wives who live 'in the city': 'houses' (L14), 'cars' (L15), and 'clothes' (L16). The occurrence of these lexicons is presented in list such as:

*nicer houses*  
*fancy cars*  
*pretty clothes.*

The adjectives (*nicer*, *fancy*, and *pretty*) indicate the ephemeral values suggested by the grandmother. These adjectives contradict the condition of the Indian life. In the third stanza, the lexicon 'have' (L23) reappears. In this line, 'have' reveals as the part of the 'sad sad' (L8) irony of the poem, that is, what the grandchildren do not 'have': grandmother (or anyone) to 'teach us the ways' (L24).

In other word, the word 'losing' (L3, L9) can be understood having association with other words such as 'don't know' (L4, L7), 'don't understand' (L5) and 'couldn't' (L19).

Other instance of lexical cohesion also revealed in this poem is, for instance, 'ways' (L1, L3, L9). This word is a superordinate cohyponym of the Indian's ways such as 'talk indian' (L4), 'tobacco' (L6), and 'skin a rabbit' (L7). The appearance of the three words stated above is enough for us to understand and conclude that they represent the Indian ways (cultures).

Similarly, the lexicons 'indian' (L4) and 'white men' (L12) are lexically cohesive as both words are antonymous to each other. These words appear to indicate the contradictory condition between the two ways of life. This also suggests the relationship between words 'city' (L17) and 'reservation' (L25). Both words are lexically cohesive, as they are antonyms 'City' (L17) indicates the place in which 'white men' (L12) live. On the other hand, 'reservation' (L25) indicates the place in which the grandmother (Indian) lives. It can be said that 'white men'/'city' and 'indian'/'reservation' have semantic (meaning) association.

The words, such as 'know' (L4, L7), 'learn' (L20), 'teach' (L24), 'understand' (L5). These words are collocations. It also can be understood by

'cause-effect relationship'. Someone 'knows' something because (s)he 'learns' it. 'Teach' and 'learn' are also cohyponym where there is a 'teaching', a 'learning' is also there. Finally, 'teach' and 'understand' also indicate relationship in which the effect of 'teaching' is 'understanding'. In other words, we 'understand' something because somebody (usually a teacher) teaches us about it.

To conclude the discussion of 'the way and the way things are' let us see the overall stanzas within the poem. In the first stanza, it is the 'grandchildren' (as the narrator in the poem) who are telling about their grandmother's thoughts on her grandchildren. By this line, in the point of view of grandmother, she complains about the condition of her grandchildren in which they are losing the ways. They do not understand Indian's ways of life (culture and tradition) anymore. The result of this condition is 'sad' (L8). The grandmother is sad knowing this condition.

In the second stanza, the narrator's point of view switches to the grandchildren. This stanza presents the grandchildren's opinion. The grandchildren report their grandmother's advice. According to the grandchildren, such condition is the consequence of the grandmother's advice to her daughters in the past time. The grandmother suggested her daughters to marry white men in order to live in the city, have nicer house, pretty clothes, and fancy cars. Her daughters did her advice. This is to confront the grandmother's complaint with her own suggestion to her daughters. The grandchildren deny to be blamed for such condition since their grandmother also contributes to it.

Following the grandmother's advice, now her daughter (whose the grandchildren's mother) and her grandchildren live in the city. They no longer live in the reservation (Indian Territory). They cannot learn the Indian ways since they live in the city and have no one to teach them 'the ways'. This third stanza is aimed at supporting the evidence why they (grandchildren) are losing the Indian ways.

In the fourth stanza, the grandchildren reported their grandmother who was still in the reservation. She has no daughters and no grandchildren there to get her tobacco; so she asked somebody or anybody to get her tobacco. The grandmother could not rely on her own descendants anymore. This stanza also intensively reflects the words previously stated 'sad sad' (L8).

## **CONCLUSION**

The above discussion shows how cohesive devices are realized in the texts of the two poems. The line-by-line identification of cohesive devices in the two poems gives a clear illustration on how they work together to create a coherent text. After identifying the cohesive devices, the ties among them can be traced. The realization of cohesive devices shows that every single cohesive device exists as the part of building block in creating the whole meaning of the texts (poems). Likewise, no single cohesive device realized in the texts exists independently. For instance, referential cohesion is used to refer to a person or thing appears previously. Sometimes it refers to something (someone) outside the texts (for

exophoric references), for example, the words ‘somebody’ and ‘anybody’ (L26) in ‘the way and the way things are’ above. The two words might refer to person outside the poem (probably the reader(s) as the participant(s) in reading poem. Pronominal referential cohesion appears 13 times in ‘Marks’ while 18 in ‘the way things and the way this are’.

Other types of cohesive devices that appear in the poems are lexical cohesion (naming, hyponyms, collocation, repetitions, and synonym), conjunction, and substitution. All types of lexical cohesion in ‘Marks’ appear 22 times whereas 33 times in ‘the way and the way things are’. Conjunctive cohesion appears once in ‘Marks’ as indicated by adversative conjunction ‘but’ (L7), whereas twice in ‘the way and the way things are’ as indicated by additive conjunction ‘and’ in the title (L1) and adversative conjunction ‘but’ in line 10. Substitutive cohesion does not appear in ‘Marks’, while it appears once in ‘the way and the way things are’ as indicated by the use of ‘did’ (L18) to substitute the phrase ‘marry white men’ (L12), ‘would have/ nicer houses/ fancy cars/ pretty clothes/ could live in the city’ (L13 – L17).

### **CONCLUDING REMARK**

This mini-research was conducted as one of the efforts to understand the text(s). By understanding the cohesive devices applied in poem, the poem readers will realize the cohesive bonds among them. They will find out that all the cohesive devices are tied together in constructing the unity and the whole meaning of a text. Certainly, it is not the only attempt to understand a text. There are still many attempts that the reader may conduct to explore deeper into a text (especially poem). As it is commonly known that a poem sometimes is written in usual way of writing, such as the way of writing in the poem ‘the way and the way things are’ presented above. In the poem ‘the way and the way things are’ above, we observe that all the words are written in lower cases regardless the position of the words in a sentence. This is also one aspect that the readers should consider if they want to go deeper into the meaning exploration. Everything written down in the poem is purposeful.

This is also an attempt to show how cohesive devices work together in the poem. In the field of second language (L2) learning, this attempt might also give some contribution to help the students understand poem because most students consider poem is difficult to understand.

### **SUGGESTION FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

As stated above, this research is not the only attempt than can be done to understand the meaning of a text. Considering that poem is one of the text genres used to express meaning, it is worth to say that it also has an inseparable relation to the language in use. For further research, it is worthy to conduct research on the other linguistic aspect such sociolinguistic aspect within poems. It will help the readers to go deeper into the broader meaning of poems.

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**APPENDICES**

**Marks** (Linda Pastan)

My husband gives me an A  
for last night's supper,  
an incomplete for my ironing,  
a B plus in bed.  
My son says I am average,  
an average mother, but if  
I put my mind to it  
I could improve.  
My daughter believes  
in Pass/Fail and tells me  
I pass. Wait 'til they learn  
I'm dropping out.

**the way and the way things are**

gramma thinks about her grandchildren  
they're losing the ways  
don't know how to talk indian  
don't understand me when  
i ask for tobacco  
don't know how to skin a rabbit  
sad sad  
they're losing the ways  
    but gramma  
    you told your daughters  
    marry white men  
    told them they would have  
    nicer houses  
    fancy cars  
    pretty clothes  
    could live in the city  
    gramma your daughters did  
    they couldn't speak indian anymore  
how could we grandchildren learn  
there are no rabbits to skin  
in the city  
we have no gramma there to  
teach us the ways  
    you were still on the reservation  
    asking somebody anybody  
    please  
    get me tobacco

[Nila Northsun (1979) taken from Clark, 1987. online ]