

Textuality in Nnamdi Anumihe's *Chartered Messenger*

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Abstract

This paper undertakes a textual analysis of Nnamdi Anumihe's *Chartered Messenger*, examining how the author deploys linguistic and textual strategies to construct meaning around the themes of corruption, integrity and social justice in contemporary Nigeria. Using De Beaugrande and Dressler's (1981) seven standards of textuality as an analytical framework, the study investigates the novel's textual architecture. The analysis shows that Anumihe deploys cohesive devices such as: anaphoric and cataphoric reference, conjunction and lexical cohesion, which together create textual unity and guide readers' interpretation. Coherence is achieved through semantic field networks, temporal patterning, metaphorical consistency and structural parallelism that mirror the cyclical nature of moral choice in Nigeria. The paper also explores the novel's intertextual dimensions, tracing connections to religious narrative, Nigerian literary tradition, the 2004 banking crisis and popular culture. Anumihe's use of code-switching, banking discourse and multilingual references produce authentic characterisation while the use of occasional didacticism and binary moral categorisation limit textual complexity. The study concludes that *Chartered Messenger* achieves textuality through the strategic deployment of linguistic resources, functioning simultaneously as literary artefact and social commentary.

Keywords: Textuality, cohesion, coherence, text, intertextuality

1. Introduction

Nnamdi Anumihe's *Chartered Messenger*, situated in contemporary Nigeria, captures a landscape of pervasive corruption, exploitation, vaulting ambition and crime festering underneath the gloss of a deceptive corporate image. This article interrogates how the author deploys linguistic and textual strategies to construct meaning around the themes of corruption, integrity and social justice in Nigeria using De Beaugrande and Dressler's (1981) seven standards of textuality as an analytical framework. Text linguistics is concerned with the processes involved in the construction of utterances within context. It treats texts as communicative systems and seeks to uncover and describe the grammar of text, as opposed to the grammar of the isolated sentence. It moves beyond the traditional grammatical concern with well-formed sentences to consider the form of a text, its setting, and the manner in which it is situated within an interactional communicative event. Because text is the central concern of text linguistics, it is necessarily viewed in broad terms, encompassing an entire literary work and taking into account its form, whether written or spoken, as well as its syntactic and semantic interpretation.

What makes a text a text is the texture of the text. Texture is the basis for unity and semantic interdependence within a text (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). Any text that lacks texture would simply be a bundle of isolated sentences bearing no relationship to one another (Crane, 1994). A feature of texture is 'sequential implicativeness', as suggested by Schegloff and Sacks (1974). This refers to the property of language whereby each line in a text is linked from, or linked to, the previous line. In effect, the criteria of textuality refer to the features that define a text as a coherent and meaningful unit of grammar. De Beaugrande and Dressler (1981) describe a text as a 'communicative occurrence which meets seven standards of textuality', without any of which the text will not be communicative; non-communicative texts are treated as non-texts.

Textuality in texts can be described as the basic attributes that binds the elements of a text together. It is the set of structural, linguistic and contextual features that makes a written or spoken piece function as a unified meaningful text rather than a random collection of words. According to De Beaugrande and Dressler (1981) textuality in texts is achieved using seven standards which includes coherence, cohesion, situationality, intentionality, contextuality, intertextuality and acceptability. These are the essential quality that turns a text into an object of study. However, post-structural linguists treat textuality as open, plural and fluid. They emphasize that text boundaries and meaning are actively constructed by the readers' interpretation rather than fixed properties.

Textuality in African fiction often examines how authors encode their cultural worldview, identity and socio-political realities. It also features in how an author maps out characterisation and grammatical choices to create cohesive, culturally grounded literary meanings. In the Nigerian context, most studies on textuality investigate how authors adapt standard English through: local idioms, proverbs, code-mixing to reflect authentic cultural backdrops. In Nigerian novels, textuality features in how linguistic choices, lexical cohesion, transitivity patterns and cultural hybridity combine to construct meaning, themes and identity within the text: Nigerian prose authors explore dimensions of textuality by adapting the English language through: mother-tongue transfer, semantic extension and intertextuality (from folktales, myths, events, etc.), to establish a dialogic cultural framework. Despite considerable body of scholarship on textuality, in general, and on De Beaugrande and Dressler's seven standards in particular, comparatively little of these works have engaged book-length prose fiction from contemporary Nigeria. Most studies prefer shorter genres such as: news reports, political speeches and folktales (Rahma et al., 2022; Umar et al., 2023). The substantive problem is that, no study has been conducted on the text under study, *Chartered Messenger*. This leaves a gap in the application of the textuality model to the Nigerian novel of social realism like, Nnamdi Anumihe's *Chartered Messenger*, a gap this study seeks to close. The objective of this article, therefore, is to interrogate Anumihe's use of linguistic devices to achieve textuality in *Chartered Messenger*, with particular attention to cohesion, coherence and intertextuality as the cohesive devices deployed by the author. This study adopts these parameters in analysing Anumihe's *Chartered Messenger*, examining the author's deployment of various literary devices in the achievement of textuality within the text.

2. Literature review

Scholarship on textuality has developed along two broad trajectories since De Beaugrande and Dressler (1981) first proposed their seven standards: theoretical elaboration of the model itself, and its empirical application to specific genres and languages. Halliday and Hasan's (1976) *Cohesion in English* remains foundational to the first trajectory, offering the taxonomy of reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction and lexical cohesion on which most subsequent cohesion-based analyses, including the present study, continue to draw. Werlich (1976) and Fowler (1991) extend the discussion of text typology and the ideological dimension of textual choice respectively, while Crystal's (1992) encyclopaedic treatment situates textuality within the broader discipline of linguistics. The second trajectory, empirical application, has grown considerably in recent years, though it remains unevenly distributed across genres.

Fettahoğlu (2022) applies the seven standards to Edgar Allan Poe's short story, *The Tell-Tale Heart*, demonstrating that even a brief, first-person narrative can be shown to satisfy every standard, with cohesion and coherence working together to sustain the story's psychological unreliability. Rahma, Chelsea and Agustina (2022) apply the same framework to news reporting of the Kanjuruhan stadium tragedy, finding that journalistic prose typically foregrounds situationality and acceptability because of its dependence on a shared, immediately recoverable context of occurrence. These studies confirm that the standards are not equally salient across genres: a genre's characteristic purpose tends to foreground certain standards over others, a pattern this study extends to the Nigerian social-realist novel, where intertextuality and coherence prove unusually prominent because of the text's dependence on a shared national memory of institutional failure.

Within Nigeria context, Kehinde (2003) demonstrates the relevance of intertextuality to the evolution of contemporary African novel. He draws examples from few relevant novels to examine how the process of intertextuality revolves through specific texts. Similarly, Umar, Iliyasu and Bashir (2023), apply De Beaugrande and Dressler's constitutive and regulative principles to Biyi Bandele's *The Man Who Came in from the Back of Beyond* and *Burma Boy*, arguing that the intratextual unity of both novels is sustained by reference-antecedent chains and by a repeated lexical field of war, and that this internal cohesion in turn licenses the two novels' status as a loosely connected pair. Their study, like the current one, foregrounds cohesion and coherence as the most textually demonstrable standards, while treating intertextuality and acceptability as emergent properties of a shared authorial preoccupation with Nigeria's socio-political history. Nwankwo and Eme (2026) investigate the deployment of lexical cohesive devices in Liwhu Betiang's *Beneath the Rubble* (2009), with a view to examining how antonymy, synonymy, and repetition contribute to textual cohesion and the construction of socio-cultural meanings. They affirm that limited scholarly attention has been paid to the role of lexical cohesive devices in contemporary Nigerian fiction.

Studies of cohesion and coherence in African oral narrative traditions offer a further point of comparison. Boychuk and Yakovlev's (2025) account of cohesion and coherence in African tales shows that orally derived narrative forms rely heavily on rhythm, repetition and ellipsis to achieve textual unity. This resonates with Anumihe's use of proverbial and idiomatic Pidgin

speech to bind character and community in *Chartered Messenger*. Taken together, this body of work establishes that De Beaugrande and Dressler's model, though nearly half a century old, continues to generate productive readings across genre, medium and cultural context; what remains comparatively under-explored is its application to a single, full-length Nigerian novel that foregrounds institutional corruption as its central theme, a gap that the present study addresses through a close reading of *Chartered Messenger*.

The present study departs from these precedents chiefly in scope rather than in method: where Fettahoğlu (2022) and Rahma et al. (2022) analyse short, self-contained texts, and Umar et al. (2023) draw comparative data from two novels considered together. This study analyses a single full-length Nigerian novel following all the seven standards. This article contributes to knowledge by extending the seven standards of textuality to a Nigerian novel of social critique, demonstrating how the model illuminates not only the internal linguistic construction of the text, but also its social and cultural embeddedness in Nigeria.

3. Theoretical framework

The study adopts De Beaugrande and Dressler's (1981) seven standards of textuality, namely: cohesion, coherence, intentionality, acceptability, informativity, situationality and intertextuality, as its analytical framework. The framework is often subdivided into constitutive principles, which are indispensable to a text's status as a communicative occurrence (cohesion, coherence, intentionality, acceptability, informativity and situationality), and regulative principles, which control textual communication more generally (efficiency, effectiveness and appropriateness) (Umar et al., 2023). This study foregrounds the constitutive principles since they most directly govern how meaning is produced and received within *Chartered Messenger*.

Cohesion concerns the grammatical and lexical means by which the surface components of a text, the actual words, phrases and clauses encountered by the reader, are connected in sequence. It is realised through devices such as: reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction and lexical cohesion (Halliday & Hasan, 1976), and constitutes the most observable, text-internal standard, one that is readily amenable to close linguistic description. Coherence, by contrast, concerns the underlying continuity of sense that allows a reader to construct a unified mental representation of a text's content. Whereas cohesion inheres in the surface text, coherence resides in the textual world constructed by the reader through inferencing, world knowledge, and the relations of cause, time and consequence that link the events and propositions of a text (Neubert & Shreve, 1992). A text may be only loosely cohesive at the surface level and yet remain highly coherent, provided the reader can supply the missing connective inferences; conversely, a text replete with grammatical cohesive ties may still fail to cohere if its propositional content resists integration into a sensible whole.

Intentionality reflects the producer's attitude that the set of occurrences should constitute a cohesive and coherent text instrumental in fulfilling the producer's communicative purpose, while acceptability reflects the corresponding attitude of the receiver, namely that the text should

constitute a cohesive and coherent instrument having some use or relevance for the receiver. Informativity concerns the extent to which the occurrences of a text are expected or unexpected, known or unknown, with texts of very low informativity risking tedium, and texts of very high informativity risking incomprehension. Situationality concerns the factors that render a text relevant to a recoverable situation of occurrence, while intertextuality concerns the factors that make the reception of one text dependent on a receiver's prior knowledge of one or more previously encountered texts.

Applied to *Chartered Messenger*, the model illuminates how Anumihe's novel operates simultaneously as a linguistic artefact and a social document. Cohesion and coherence are examined through the novel's deployment of reference, conjunction, semantic fields, temporal patterning and structural parallelism; acceptability and situationality are addressed jointly, since the novel's relevance to its Nigerian readership is inseparable from the socio-cultural situation, namely: the failed-bank crisis, examination malpractice and Pidgin usage, that it recreates; and intertextuality is traced through the novel's religious, historical and popular-cultural allusions. This selective emphasis follows recent applications of the model to prose fiction and news discourse, which likewise foreground cohesion, coherence and intertextuality as the standards most productively illustrated through close reading (Fettahoğlu, 2022; Rahma et al., 2022; Umar et al., 2023).

4. Synopsis of the text

Chartered Messenger is a narrative of the life of Fred, a young boy growing up in a Nigerian urban community. Anumihe explores in the novel the themes of corruption, exploitation, fraud and crime in the educational and banking sectors. He tracks the route of corruption from childhood orientation to adulthood using his characters, Fred, Kekere and Benji. While Fred, the major character, grows up in a peaceful and loving home with a father who instils strong moral upbringing and a love for education, Kekere is raised by an illiterate, alcohol-addicted father whose ideology of life is survival of the fittest: 'sharp brain, sharp move, quick cash, sharp sharp'. In the Nigerian English usage, the terms 'sharp sharp', 'sharp brain', 'sharp move', and 'quick cash', may have negative and positive connotation. On a positive side is the literal usage which implies brilliant (sharp brain), smart (sharp move), quick cash (instant cash withdrawal). While the negative connotation implies scheming, dubious and impatient, especially in business and personal relationships. Contextually, Kekere's father is a reflection of his ideology of life- a get-rich-by-all means mentality. Benji was spoilt by his parents and grows up a bully. While Fred adopts the path of hard work in his educational pursuit despite the misfortune his family suffered as a result of the failed bank scheme (his father was retrenched and lost all his investments in shares). On the other hand, his peers, Kekere and Benji, opt for the miracle examination centre (a centre where certain amount of money is paid for examinations to be written for students by hired persons).

To reflect the depth of decay and corruption in the educational system, Kekere and Benji actually made good results, just like Fred. Both proceeded to a higher institution with the same

mindset of cheating the system to get their desires met, confirming Kekere's father's ideology of 'sharp sharp' moves and Mr. Ajayi's mantra of 'garbage in, garbage out'. The shocking reality confronting most upright, law-abiding people in a society riddled with corruption is the challenge of maintaining integrity in the face of difficulty. Even though Fred graduated with a First-Class result in accounting, he was unable to secure a job. Whereas his peers got good jobs. All his efforts to get employed proved futile, so he resorts to driving an *okada* (commercial motorcycle). He even considers working for Benji at his examination miracle centre. He finally gets invited to an interview for a bank job, and emerges the overall best candidate. Once again, the scourge of corruption in the system does not spare him as he is replaced by another candidate connected to a high-profile personality. In the course of following up on the outcome of his interview, he meets Chimdia, who plays a part in his eventual employment at the Ideal Bank, though in a lower position. He is offered the post of messenger, a position far below his qualification. After much consideration, and persuasion by his father and Chimdia, who encourages him to accept the offer as an entry point into the organisation, he agrees to work in that position for the next six years, during which he upgrades his qualification to that of a chartered accountant.

The author highlights the theme of exploitation and fraud in the banking sector during the failed bank consolidation and recapitalisation of the central bank. Through the activities of Kekere, Senior Accountant, Mr. Damiro, and the entire high-ranking chain of fraudulent officers, customers are exploited and defrauded, compelled to part with large sums of their deposits merely to have their cash lodged in the bank. When Fred poses a threat to the scam, they set him up in a bank robbery that results in his being shot, hospitalised and detained. The author also foregrounds the theme of spiritual influence on the physical realm; a major belief system in most African societies. Mr. Ibeabuchi gives his life in exchange for that of his son, Fred. Just before he dies, he keeps muttering, 'a life for a life', the same words Fred hears on his sick bed, after which he recovers. Subsequently, the culprits involved in the armed robbery operation are arrested, among them Fred's childhood friends, Kekere and Benji. In effect, the plot revolves around the triumph of good over evil.

5. Textual analysis of the text

This study adopts a textual analysis of Anumihe's novel, *Chartered Messenger*, highlighting the parameters of cohesion, coherence, acceptability, situationality and intertextuality.

5.1 Cohesion

Cohesion describes the ways in which the components of the sentences of a text, that is, the words we actually read and use, are mutually connected, grammatically and lexically. The concept of cohesion refers to how verbal text is strung together to communicate meaning. Aboh and Uduk (2017, p. 95) note that cohesion is a text property that accounts for the organisation of the text. As a Hallidayan coinage, it occurs when the interpretation of one part of a text is

dependent on another (Renkema, 1993, p. 40), and may also be referred to as the 'semantic tie' within a text, whereby the content of the surface text is mutually linked and connected in sequence to show semantic relationships that produce meaning. It is evident that if a text is to be considered as having textual quality, cohesion accounts as one of the factors for its consideration, as Halliday and Hasan (1976) confirm that cohesion makes and defines a text. It can therefore be deduced that, to derive meaning from a text, several related linguistic segments must be strung together lexically and grammatically. Cohesive devices are categorized into grammatical cohesion (ties created through grammatical structures examples are conjunction, reference, substitution and ellipsis) and lexical cohesion (ties created through vocabulary choices examples are repetition and collocation).

5.1.1 *Grammatical cohesion*

Are ties created in a text through structural ties and links hold a text together, using grammar to connect sentences and clauses. It ensures that a text flows logically and makes sense to the reader, preventing it from reading like a random list of unrelated sentences. Examples are reference, substitution, ellipses, and conjunction.

5.1.1.1 *Reference*

Reference as a cohesive device involves the introduction of a new item in the text and the subsequent referral to that same item by means of another, popularly known as a 'pro-form'. Pronouns, demonstratives, comparatives, a variety of lexical constructions, and even adverbs and adjectives, are used for this function. Osisanwo (2008) identifies two main types of reference, exophora and endophora, the latter further categorised into cataphora and anaphora.

Exophoric reference signals that a reference point lies outward of the text. Anumihe uses exophoric reference to link the text to its environment, making reference to 'some Policemen', 'Civil Defence' and 'Vigilante groups racing to catch the criminals' who 'emerged at Redemption Street' (p. 3), and to 'No. 24 Redemption Street Oshodi', 'Bariga', 'Ajegunle', 'Mushin', 'Wuse', 'Suleja' and 'Gwagwalada in Abuja' (p. 49). Elsewhere, he describes 'a premiership game... going on... and three young men in Man U, Gunners and Barca face caps... arguing with another who was making a spirited defence of the Blues' (p. 135).

Endophora, by contrast, refers to how information is retrieved before or after a stretch of text, and is divided into anaphora and cataphora. Anumihe uses the endophoric reference to keep the characters identifiable as they are introduced and re-introduced across the narrative.

In the evening when Mr. Ibeabuchi returned from work, he sat on his passage with his friend, Mr. Ajayi... He would send for his children and tell them stories on how to succeed in life, Fred, my son... for those of us not born with a golden spoon... (*Chartered Messenger*, p. 5).

The underlined phrases above illustrate cataphoric reference: 'his friend' makes a forward reference to 'Mr. Ajayi', just as the appositive 'Fred' indexicalises 'my son'. He also makes use of anaphoric reference devices to emphasise the positions of the characters, as in the following passage in the passage above, there are anaphores; where the underlined pronouns 'his', 'he' and 'himself' anaphorically point back to Fred; the pronoun 'them' in the second and third lines anaphorically refers to Fred's sisters, and 'they' and 'them' later in the passage refer anaphorically to Kekere, Benji and the other playmates. However, at page 12, anaphora is the dominant device in the extract:

.. Fred only understood the word school. His sisters, Linda and Sarah, went to school every morning. He felt that his father would be happy if he joined them, but the problem was that he was just too little, too young to start nursery school. He resolved to follow them to school one day and see what it was all about. After all, Kekere, Benji and other playmates were in school, and although they all were his seniors, yet none of them was more intelligent than himself. He knew that because everybody in the neighbourhood praised him for being a smart and sharp kid. (*Chartered Messenger*, p. 12).

'Fred' is named once, in the opening sentence, and is thereafter referred to only by pronoun. 'His', 'he' and 'himself' all point back to him, so the whole passage is anchored to a single consciousness and the reader is never told again whose perspective is being narrated. Anaphora also sorts the other characters into groups. 'Them' in 'joined them' and 'follow them' refers back to Fred's sisters, Linda and Sarah. 'They' and 'them' in 'they all were his seniors' and 'none of them' refer back to Kekere, Benji and the other playmates. Anaphora here has two functions. Cohesively, it links sentences into a continuous chain without repeating names. Logically, it sets the singular, recurring 'he/himself' for Fred against the plural 'they/them' for the sisters and playmates. This individualises Fred and presents the others as a collective background against which he measures himself. The reflexive 'himself' is especially revealing in 'none of them was more intelligent than himself', Fred is both the subject and the object of the comparison, which foregrounds his self-perception and prepares for the moral contrast between him and Kekere and Benji later in the novel.

5.1.1.2 Conjunction

Conjunctions use signal words to establish logical relationships (like addition, contrast, cause, or time) between sentences and clauses. It acts as a roadmap for the reader. It indicates exactly

how a new sentence or thought modifies, expands, or challenges the previous one. Anumihe in the extract below uses it to guide the reader by explicitly signaling logical, causal, or chronological relationships.

Fred my son, he said one day, “for those of us not born with a golden spoon in the mouth, our only hope of survival is through getting education and using it to carve a successful career. So you must read hard and pass all your examinations without relying on anybody. You must have confidence in yourself and that comes only from your industry. Above all, you must have courage, yes, determination to succeed. Don’t envy others who seem to be luckier than you. Don’t be jealous of any rich person because you do not know how he acquired his wealth. (*Chartered Messenger*, p.5)

The conjunctive elements underlined- ‘through’, ‘and’, ‘so’, ‘without’, ‘above all’, ‘who’ and ‘because’, are cohesive devices that serve to ‘reinforce and highlight the relationship between other elements of the text’ (Donnelly, 1994, p. 105), binding the clauses of the passage into a single, logically ordered unit. Fred’s father uses the conjunctive elements to juxtapose the effects of human actions and consequences (“do not be jealous of any rich person because you do not know.”), choices and results (“read hard’ and “pass all”). The theme of action and consequence saliently runs through the text as portrayed in the choices Fred (good) and his friends made (bad) made in their careers.

That's why many of our citizens migrate to these countries for greener pastures. We continue writing of their debts while subjecting our own citizens to untold hardship. It is an insensitive leadership that treats its citizens so badly. It is unfortunate that our country has come to this. But I am not surprised. What can we expect when even barely literate councilors elected into the local government councils earn twice the salary of professors in university? What about teachers in primary and secondary schools? The paltry thing called salaries is a

disgrace to the nation. And I tell you this is the basic cause of the fall in the standard of education in this country. (*Chartered Messenger*, p.59)

5.1.1.3 *Ellipsis*

Ellipsis is the omission of a word or phrase that is structurally required but can be easily understood from the surrounding context. It speeds up the rhythm of speech or writing. From the text extract above, the clausal ellipsis "What about teachers in primary and secondary schools?"- The text omits the full predicate "...earn compared to professors or councilors?" or "What do they earn?". Because the previous sentence established a comparison of salaries, the reader automatically fills in the blank. The author uses ellipsis to create a punchy, rhetorical question that heightens the emotional tone.

5.1.1.4 *Substitution*

Substitution replaces a specific language item with a filler word to avoid repeating the exact same word. From the extract above, "But I am not surprised." is a type of clausal substitution (implicit). While the statement operates on an implicit "not surprised that it is so." It acts as a transitional bridge, substituting the reader's expectation of shock with a cynical validation of the country's reality.

5.1.2 *Lexical cohesion*

Beyond reference and conjunction, lexical cohesion is central to the novel's textual unity. Lexical cohesion is achieved through repetition, synonymy and collocation of related items across a text, so that a reader continually re-encounters a bound set of vocabulary that reinforces a given theme (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). In *Chartered Messenger*, the repeated collocation of 'sharp', as in 'sharp brain, sharp move, quick cash, sharp sharp', ties Kekere Senior's philosophy of survival to Kekere's own later conduct as a bank fraudster, so that the reader recognises continuity between the child and the adult purely through the recurrence of a single lexical item. Similarly, banking terms such as 'lodgement', 'consolidation' and 'recapitalisation' recur across widely separated episodes of the novel, lexically binding the domestic tragedy of Mr. Ibeabuchi in the early chapters to the corporate fraud that later entraps Fred, even though the two episodes are separated by several years of narrated time.

There is one sure way to do it; chat up the most senior accountant, Mr. Damisa, who was reputed to be omnivorous; he could eat anything with relish. He had an enormous appetite and usually finished two large food flasks of assorted delicacies every day. He

was so partial to the most expensive delicacies, spiced with pepper; that the entire canteen valued him as a customer to be constantly wooed. (*Chartered Messenger*, p.67)

The above passage from *Chartered Messenger* exhibits several types of lexical cohesion, which is the cohesive effect achieved through the selection of vocabulary.

5.1.2.1 *Reiteration*

Reiteration defines the reappearance of words and concepts. It links sentences together by repeating a word, using a closely related word, or using a word that belongs to the same semantic family and is exemplified as repetition or synonyms. Repetition (same word). In the text extract above, "Delicacies" is repeated twice ("assorted delicacies" and "expensive delicacies"). This keeps the reader focused on the specific quality of the food he eats. The second occurrence narrows the first from varied food to costly food.

Synonymy (Different words with identical or near-identical meanings) as in "Appetite" and "Omnivorous": Omnivorous (eating everything) directly supports the concept of having an enormous appetite. "So partial to" echoes relish. The same trait is restated three times in different words. Hyponymy (Subordinates / Specific examples of a general class) as in "Food" / "Delicacies" → "Delicacies spiced with pepper": The general category of food is narrowed down to specific types of food (delicacies, pepper). "Mr Damisa" is later referred to as "a customer". This general noun re-labels the same person by his role in the canteen, after he was introduced by rank (the most senior accountant). "Food" is the superordinate for delicacies, pepper and spiced. Meronymy (Part-to-whole relationships) as in "Pepper" is a part/ingredient of the "delicacies".

5.1.2.2 *Collocation*

These are words that regularly co-occur in the same environment, commonly referred to as lexical chains. Collocation achieves cohesion through words that are associated with each other because they frequently appear together in common language usage or within a specific thematic domain. The Food / Eating Domain: "Omnivorous", "eat", "appetite", "food flasks", "delicacies", "pepper", "canteen". This strong network of culinary terms creates a dense texture of cohesion, immediately signaling to the reader that the central theme of this description is food and consumption. The Business / Commerce Domain: "Accountant", "customer", "Value", "customer", "wooed". These words co-occur naturally within commercial and professional contexts, linking Mr Damisa's professional title to his status at the canteen. Together these patterns bind the sentences into a unified whole and characterize satirically without explicit narrational comment.

5.2 *Coherence*

Coherence is arguably the central component of any textual study, since a text that is not fully understood cannot be said to have achieved a 'good' text. Neubert and Shreve (1992, p. 94) offer a useful definition: 'A coherent text has an underlying logical structure that acts to guide the reader through the text', so that 'it sticks together as a unit' (Hatch, 1992, p. 209) and creates the 'feeling that a text hangs together, that it makes sense, and is not just a jumble of sentences' (McCarthy, 1991, p. 26). Coherence therefore involves the study of language users' knowledge of the world, the inferences they make and the assumptions they hold, and, in particular, the way in which communication is mediated through speech acts. According to Halliday and Hasan (1976), a text is coherent if it satisfies two conditions: it must be consistent with the context in which it is created, and it must have cohesion, that is, all its parts must be connected by cohesive devices. To achieve coherence, Anumihe applies three principal devices: cause and effect, contiguity in time and space, and associative devices.

Mr. Ibeabuchi, better known in the neighbourhood as Accountant, was a popular personality as well as a revered dignitary. But that was before the failed banks phenomenon started and visited so many homes with penury, suffering and even death. Accountant was one of the victims. As a banker, he had intrinsic trust in the fidelity and sacredness of the banking industry's obligation to its customers... When the crash came, Accountant could not survive the shock. (*Chartered Messenger*, p. 17-18).

From the passage above, the author uses the cause-and-effect device to capture how the failed bank crash, Mr. Ibeabuchi's investment in bank shares and his unflinching confidence in the integrity of the banking sector together led to his bankruptcy. The short narrative gives a logical flow of causes that led to the family's misfortune, thereby creating coherence in the text. Likewise, the failure of the Government to enshrine quality control and maintenance in the educational system gave rise to short cuts like the 'miracle centers' which erodes the excellence associated with hard work by students. Conversely incompetence is heightened in the employment system with corresponding rise in nepotism, 'cash and carry' employments and favouritism. Conversely, the author achieves coherence through contiguity in time and space as reflected in the response of Mr. Ajayi when Fred was offered the position of Messenger in the bank despite being a graduate.

Have you forgotten that is why American visa lottery is so attractive?...they become mortuary attendants, washing corpses, feeding pigs..they come home, visit bureau de change, 'melt the dollars' become instant

millionaires... all it takes is patience and courage even for those who take to crime. Fred, your dad has run his course... it is now your turn with the whole world and your success will depend on the decisions you will take..it is a challenge, 'garbage in garbage out'. (Chartered Accountant, p. 58)

From the extract above, Mr. Ajayi sets the pace for the yet to unfold events in the text preparing the reader for further cause and effect of choices and decisions over time. The choices and decisions of Fred and his friends were tested by patience, honesty, family values (Fred) as against greed, impatience, and poor family values (as reflected in Kekere and Benji). His common line, 'garbage in garbage out' (by inference you can't give what you don't have) resonates through the text in the role of family values and parental responsibilities the upbringing of their wards. Fred's parents gave him and his sisters strict moral upbringing emphasizing on honesty, hardwork and patience. Whereas Kekere and Benji's parents were more on the 'quick cash', smart move' whatever it takes to get the money orientation.

5.3 *Acceptability*

Is concerned with the text receiver's attitude that the text should constitute useful or relevant details or information, such that it is worth accepting. The themes expressed in the story are relatable to contemporary Nigerian society. There are a good number of Freds, Kekeres and Benjis, as well as Mr. Ibeabuchis, Mr Ajayis and Kekere Seniors, in Nigerian society.

Some evenings when his father returned from work in a good mood, he would sit in the passage of his three-bedroom apartment chatting with his friend, Mr. Ajayi, a career Civil servant who and recently retired from the Civil service. Sometimes he would send for his children, Linda, Sarah and Fred and tell them stories of how to succeed in in life. (Chartered Messenger, p. 4-5)

The above captures the evenings of most middle-class Nigerian families which a lot of readers can relate to personally. This makes the story plot and characters believable and acceptable to the reader. Similarly, the failed bank crisis, and the corresponding consolidation and recapitalisation of banks, are real-time events that have occurred in Nigeria, and the conspiracies and exploitations depicted in the novel were also experienced by many Nigerians. It resonates more with the reader as the author causes the reader to relive the experience through his character, Mr. Ibeabuchi (Fred's father), who was a victim of the 'failed banks'.

But that was before the failed banks phenomenon started and visited so many homes with penury, sufferings and even death. Accountant (Mr. Ibeabuchi) was one of the victims... Accountant had invested all his resources in bank shares just as he had advised people in his neighbourhood to do... when the crash came, Accountant could not survive the shock. (Chartered Accountant, p. 17-18)

This social verisimilitude renders the text acceptable to its readers, who can relate directly to the issues the author raises. Also the allusion to the 'Miracle examination centres' by the author strengthens the acceptability and relatability of the text to the younger generation as they are not strangers to the special centers in real life. In the text the author explains what happens at the 'Miracle examination centres' through a conversation between Fred, Kekere and Benji.

Kekere laughed, 'Mumu, listen, Miracle Centers are private examination centers in the cities which the proprietors established to help students pass their examinations. You see these proprietors are business people; they pay the examination people a lot of money to secure the center and ensure that students who register in their centers pass very well. In exchange they charge the students high registration fees and guarantee them success. (Chartered Accountant, p. 22)

In addition to being a relatable occurrence in real life, this establishes the theme of corruption early in the text as the duo Kekere and Benji continues on the path to cheat the system through nefarious activities to get their desires met. Again, the author juxtaposes the three friends' (Fred, Kekere and Benji) choices in life to thicken the plot of good over bad.

5.4 *Situationality*

Situationality concerns the factors that render a text relevant to a recoverable situation of occurrence (De Beaugrande & Dressler, 1981), and, as Trask (1995, p. 68) states, 'every text, that is, everything that is said and written, unfolds in some context of use'. This means that, in every situation in which language is used, the quality and effect of communication is determined by the contextual knowledge shared by its participants. From the first chapter of the text, Anumihe gave a detailed description of the neighbourhood where Fred and his friends grew up introducing the reader to the daily activities and surroundings of the characters.

It was lunch break, a very busy period during which workers in various offices in the neighbourhood trooped out for a few minutes of rest and food in the bukkas and small restaurants around. ... it was also midterm break for pupils in the neighbourhood schools. As usual the little boys gathered themselves and formed several street soccer teams using every available space in the courtyards, the frontage and even the side-walks as field. (*Chartered Messenger*, p.1-2)

The above description gives the reader a peep into the suburban mid-class environment which accommodates small scale business outlets, office spaces as well as residential houses. The author gives a more precise location of the environment Fred and his friends grew up when Chimdia came looking for him.

It was already nearly one hour since Chimdia had been searching for No. 24 Redemption Street, Oshodi, the address Fred had given her before he left their office... sipping her drink, she relaxed a little bit and looked around her. It was really a slum area. Dirt and garbage littered the streets. The buildings were old and many needed to be pulled down... (*Chartered Messenger*, p. 49).

In reality, Oshodi is a heavily urbanised, busy and densely populated commercial and transport hub on the Lagos mainland.

The above scenario captures the setting in which the main characters reside, while the author's choice of language also describes the context of the story. The variety of English spoken in Nigeria known as Nigerian English which is a fusion of English, Nigerian pidgin and the indigenous languages and is exemplified in the text in such words and expressions as 'Okada bike', 'Bukka', 'petty trading', 'Kiosk', 'Ogogoro', 'Man-die-go' and 'God Fatherism' (p. 35), 'Power Withholding Authorities' (p. 45), 'melt the dollars' and 'Bulala' (p. 58), and 'Ghana-must-go bags' (p. 103). These linguistic creativities exemplify Nigerians' use of English to express their socio-cultural experience. Similarly, Anumihe's use of Nigerian Pidgin English for Kekere Senior, the illiterate drunk, situates his character within a recognisable social stratum:

Accountant boo, person must to die of something. If e no be ogogoro, e fit be pie, e fit be diabeti, even malaria, high bp, low bp,

wetin dem de call that new one, HIV, ehen, accident nko? Even sef person fit die of too much Bukuru or too much fofoo. You no see your friend here. Dis wan na life im de live so? Nobi hunger dey wire am so? You no see as im mouth don de bend like cowtail. (*Chartered Messenger*, p. 10).

The author also draws on the register of the banking sector, with terms such as 'lodgement tellers', 'receiving clerk' and 'paying cashier', to situate the narrative firmly within and around the banking environment, a further demonstration of how situationality is achieved through lexical choice rather than through explicit authorial commentary.

5.5 Intertextuality:

This standard concerns the factors that make the utilisation of one text dependent upon knowledge of one or more previously encountered texts; if a text receiver lacks prior knowledge of a relevant text, communication may break down because the understanding of the current text is obscured. Intertextuality is the ability of a text to connect to other texts, to a global event, to popular culture, or to a major historical episode such as the failed bank Consolidation and Recapitalisations referenced by the author, a real-life experience that affected the economic stability of Nigerian families and the nation at large.

Fred pushed through the crowded doorway and entered the bank on Monday morning. It was the first day of the Consolidation exercise. There was an unusually large crowd of customers. Some had arrived as early as 5.30am. the rush was because of the rumour circulating in town. (*Chartered Messenger*, p. 93)

The author also references the Premier League, a popular culture shared among football enthusiasts across Nigeria.

The cashiers hardly ever noticed the TV sets. A premiereship game was going on and two girls and three young men in Man U, Gunners' and Barca face caps respectively, were arguing with another, who was making a spirited defence of the Blues. (*Chartered Messenger*, p. 135)

And, as noted by Umar et al. (2023) in Bandele's war novels, this reliance on shared national and popular memory ties the individual reader's experience to a wider communal history, tightening the plot while enriching the content of the text.

5.6 *Intentionality*

Intentionality concerns the text producer's attitude that the set of occurrences comprising the text should constitute a cohesive and coherent whole capable of fulfilling the producer's communicative intentions, whether that be to distribute knowledge or to attain a specified goal (De Beaugrande & Dressler, 1981). Anumihe's intentionality is signalled from the earliest chapters through the deliberate, symmetrical construction of Fred, Kekere and Benji as three parallel case studies in moral formation, a design that could only be achieved through sustained authorial planning rather than incidental storytelling.

Kekere was narrating the incident to his friend, Benji, aka Honourable Alhaji, Dr. Ben Jack, CEO, International Group of Companies. He was Kekere's biggest client in the money exchange business, so he felt equally threatened by the report of Fred's intransigence. He was ready to help Kekere to handle the problem. He used his favourite educated expression: 'let us cut the twerp down to size'. 'Yes, I agree but I want something drastic. I don't want to remain in that bank with that Chartered messenger. I want to go into politics as we discussed. All I need is money, big money and there is real big money waiting for the right guy, right there in the bank.' 'Don't worry when action starts, just cough three times...' (Chartered Messenger, p.132)

The novel's insistent return, at almost every narrative juncture, to the vocabulary of the integrity and corruption fields identified in the discussion above is itself evidence of intentionality: Anumihe is not merely narrating events but is visibly building an argument, and the lexical and structural patterning traced throughout this analysis is the linguistic residue of that argument-building intention. The author's stated aim, evident from the didactic tone that occasionally surfaces in the narration, appears to be corrective rather than purely descriptive: the text intends not only to represent corruption in Nigerian public life but to persuade its reader of the ultimate, if delayed, triumph of integrity over corruption, a persuasive intent that is carried by the very cohesive and coherence-building devices already discussed.

5.7 Informativity

Informativity concerns the extent to which the occurrences of a text are expected or unexpected, known or unknown, relative to a reader's prior expectations (De Beaugrande & Dressler, 1981). A text of very low informativity, one that tells the reader only what is already known or entirely predictable, risks tedium and disengagement, while a text of very high informativity, one that departs too radically from expectation, risks incomprehension. *Chartered Messenger* manages informativity carefully by combining a broadly predictable plot architecture, readers familiar with Nigerian social-realist fiction will recognise the trajectory of the hardworking protagonist eventually vindicated, with locally unexpected detail that renews the reader's attention at key points. The revelation that Fred's own father sacrifices his life in exchange for his son's recovery, for instance, arrives with only the retrospective foreshadowing of the phrase 'a life for a life', so that its full significance is withheld until the moment of Mr. Ibeabuchi's death.

Chimdia held his hands tenderly: 'Fred what are you saying? She asked, bending down to his ears and listening carefully. 'what do you mean by.. a life for a life..? Fred opened his eyes, looked at Chimdia sadly: 'My father is dead' he announced with tears in his eyes. There was general disbelief. 'how can you say that?'. 'I saw him. He came to me a few minutes ago and released me from the casket in which I was lying and ordered me to go back home and take care of you, mama and my sisters'... the door opened, Mr. Ajayi and Linda walked in. the sad news was written all over their faces... Linda burst out crying, 'daddy is dead'... And his last words were, 'a life for a life'. (*Chartered Messenger*, p.144-145)

Likewise, the reader is given advance information about Kekere and Benji's fraudulent examination success partway through the novel, but the precise mechanism by which the ensuing bank fraud, and Fred's own frame-up in a robbery, will unfold, remains genuinely unknown until it happens. The ensuing conversation between Kekere and the Chief Accountant at the bank alerts the reader of the planned fraud and set up of Fred at the bank.

'Good one, first thing on Monday, confront him with his one-million-naira deal. Two, use your position as Chief Accountant and post him out from Consolidation to Strong Room Operations, especially to Bullion Runs. Let

him be in charge of that for at least one week.
That will give us enough time to finish all the
Consolation deals' (*Chartered Messenger*,
p.133)

This calibrated withholding and release of information sustains the reader's engagement across the length of the novel in a way that a purely predictable or a purely unpredictable narrative could not.

6. Discussion and finding

The analysis demonstrates that text linguistics, and De Beaugrande and Dressler's model in particular, provides valuable analytical tools for understanding how African literature constructs meaning, maintains cultural authenticity and addresses pressing social concerns. The preceding analysis suggests that Anumihe establishes coherence primarily through interconnected semantic fields that permeate the narrative from beginning to end. Chief among these is the semantic field of moral dichotomy, which runs throughout the text, with lexical items consistently reinforcing the opposition between integrity and corruption. On one side of this opposition are terms such as 'hard work', 'resilience', 'brilliant performance', 'best-behaved', 'award-winning', 'clean money', 'fidelity' and 'sacredness', all of which cluster around Fred and his father; on the other are terms such as 'sharp sharp', 'miracle centre', 'bullied his way', 'scam', 'exploitation', 'fraud' and 'failed banks', which are alluded to Kekere, Benji and the fraudulent banking establishment. What is significant is not merely that these two vocabularies exist, but that Anumihe never allows them to intermingle: characters associated with the integrity field are not permitted lexical contact with those in the corruption field, and vice versa. This is to ensure that the reader's very vocabulary for describing one camp becomes unavailable for describing the other. This lexical segregation is itself a coherence-building device, since it allows readers to track, at the level of individual word choice, which moral camp a given scene or actor belongs to, well before the plot confirms the allegiance explicitly. In Hasan's (1984) terms, this is 'lexical cohesion through reiteration and collocation', but its deployment here does more than tie sentences together: it functions as a running moral commentary that requires no explicit narratorial intervention, since the vocabulary itself performs the evaluative work.

Temporal structuring reinforces this dichotomy. Anumihe constructs coherence through a sophisticated handling of narrative time that mirrors the cyclical nature of corruption and redemption in Nigerian society, most visibly in constructions such as 'So, while Fred adopts the path of hard work in his educational pursuit despite the misfortune his family suffered as a result of the failed bank scheme... his peers, Kekere and Benji, opt for the miracle examination centre'. The temporal and concessive markers here, 'so, while... despite... his peers', do more than sequence events chronologically: they establish an ideological contrast between simultaneous, divergent responses to a shared misfortune, so that coherence is achieved not merely through the order in which events occur but through the parallel character development that the temporal structure makes visible. Each time the narrative pivots on such a marker, the reader is invited

to compare two morally opposed responses to the same circumstance, and it is this repeated comparative structure, rather than any single event, that carries the novel's thematic argument.

This temporal patterning is sustained by an equally deliberate metaphorical structure, built principally around the image of the journey. Fred's educational 'path' represents a moral journey; the 'miracle centre' functions as a shortcut, or a deviation, from the honest path; and the position of messenger, which Fred initially experiences as a humiliating demotion, becomes instead the starting point of an upward trajectory. These metaphorical patterns exemplify what Lakoff and Johnson (1980) term 'conceptual coherence', whereby abstract moral concepts, such as integrity or corruption, are consistently mapped onto concrete spatial and temporal experience, walking a path, taking a shortcut, ascending from a low position, so that the reader's embodied understanding of physical movement is recruited to make sense of the novel's ethical argument.

At the level of overall narrative architecture, this metaphorical patterning is reinforced by a systematic structural parallelism. The three central characters, Fred, Kekere and Benji, are each carried through an identical narrative sequence, moving from childhood origins, through educational choices, to career outcomes and, finally, to distinct destinies: Fred progresses from moral upbringing, through hard work and initial failure, to ultimate triumph; Kekere progresses from corrupt influence, through cheating and quick success, to criminal downfall; and Benji progresses from privileged spoiling, through bullying and easy advancement, to a criminal fate identical to Kekere's. Because all three characters are run through the same four-stage template, the reader is able to anticipate, and then to confirm, the trajectory of each character purely from the pattern the other two have already established, a structural repetition that van Dijk (1985) would describe as an instance of 'macrostructural coherence': a global pattern of organisation that operates above the level of individual sentences or scenes, and that binds the entire narrative into a single, comparative argument about the developmental consequences of moral choice.

Intertextuality in *Chartered Messenger* operates on several distinct levels simultaneously, and it is this layering, rather than any single allusion, that gives the novel its cultural density. At the level of religious narrative, the text draws on moral frameworks familiar to Nigerian Christian readers. Kekere and Benji represent wayward paths, while Fred embodies something closer to the faithful son whose long-suffering is eventually rewarded. Mr. Ibeabuchi's declaration of 'a life for a life' directly recalls the lex talionis of Exodus 21:23, so that his sacrificial death is read by the Nigerian reader through an already-internalised biblical frame of substitutionary justice. At the level of national history, the novel extensively references verifiable Nigerian institutions and events: the 'failed banks phenomenon' directly evokes the collapse of numerous Nigerian banks during the 2004-2006 consolidation and recapitalisation exercise, making the text a case study in national economic trauma; the 'miracle centres' evoke the well-documented phenomenon of examination malpractice within Nigeria's educational system; and Fred's period of national service situates the character within the shared, recognisable experience of the National Youth Service Corps.

At the level of popular culture, references to 'Man U', 'Gunners', 'Barca face caps' and 'Blues' connect the text to the Premier League fandom that cuts across class and region in contemporary Nigeria. Finally, at the level of language, Anumihe's code-switching and multilingual references generate further intertextual connections: Kekere Senior's Pidgin speech connects the text to a wider oral tradition and to popular Nigerian literature that similarly employs Pidgin for characters of limited formal education, while names such as 'Kekere' (small, in Yoruba) and settings such as 'Bariga' ground the narrative within a recognisable Yoruba cultural geography, and the professional jargon of the banking sector creates intertextual links with financial journalism and economic discourse more broadly.

Anumihe's deployment of linguistic varieties, taken together, serves several artistic functions at once. The contrast between Mr. Ibeabuchi's standard English and Kekere Senior's Pidgin effectively establishes class distinctions and educational backgrounds without recourse to explicit exposition, and this linguistic stratification mirrors Nigeria's sociolinguistic reality with some precision. At the same time, the binary opposition the novel sets up between 'educated' standard English and 'uneducated' Pidgin risks reinforcing linguistic prejudice rather than celebrating Nigeria's genuinely multilingual heritage, since Pidgin is treated throughout as an index of moral and educational deficiency rather than as a legitimate register in its own right. Some of the novel's metaphors, moreover, remain underdeveloped: the 'messenger' metaphor, in particular, could have been more extensively exploited to explore themes of communication, mediation and social transformation, given that Fred's demeaning job title is precisely the position from which his eventual moral and professional vindication proceeds.

The author's incorporation of financial terminology serves both mimetic and thematic functions simultaneously. Terms such as 'consolidation', 'recapitalisation' and 'lodgement' create an authentic professional environment for the banking scenes, while also functioning as ready-made metaphors for moral and social process, since the 'consolidation' of the banking sector runs in ironic parallel to the moral 'consolidation', or lack of it, undergone by each of the three central characters. Anumihe successfully maintains consistency in Fred's educated, measured speech patterns, reflecting his moral stability and educational achievement, while Kekere's linguistic development, from childhood Pidgin influence to professional banking discourse, effectively tracks his social mobility even as it reveals his underlying moral stagnation. The author generally succeeds in creating believable speech patterns, though some exchanges feel artificially constructed to advance a thematic argument rather than to emerge naturally from character interaction, and the omniscient narrator allows for moral commentary while ostensibly maintaining narrative objectivity, enabling readers to draw their own conclusions about character choices even as the narrator's evaluative vocabulary, discussed above, has already substantially predetermined those conclusions.

Occasionally, this narratorial positioning becomes overtly didactic, particularly in passages describing Fred's virtue against his friends' corruption. This didacticism risks undermining reader agency in interpreting events that the text has, in effect, already interpreted on the reader's behalf. Nonetheless, the depiction of Lagos urban life, from slum areas to banking

districts, creates a convincing geographical and social authenticity that anchors the novel's moral argument within a recognisably contemporary Nigerian setting, lending the text the acceptability and situationality already discussed in the preceding section.

7. Conclusion

This study sets out to interrogate how Nnamdi Anumih's *Chartered Messenger* achieves textuality, using De Beaugrande and Dressler's (1981) seven standards as its analytical framework. The textual analysis confirms that the novel successfully meets the criteria for textuality, functioning as a coherent communicative event that achieves its intended artistic and social purposes. The novel's textual architecture effectively balances accessibility with complexity, creating multiple entry points for diverse readerships while maintaining thematic coherence and narrative unity. Anumih's sophisticated deployment of cohesive devices, reference, conjunction and lexical cohesion, demonstrates technical mastery of textual construction, achieving a seamless integration between surface grammar and deeper semantic structure, while the novel's intertextual richness positions it as a meaningful contribution to contemporary Nigerian literature, one that dialogues with established literary and religious traditions while addressing pressing social concerns.

This study concludes that *Chartered Messenger* is a textually accomplished, but an interpretively conservative novel. Its cohesive and coherence-building resources are deployed with genuine sophistication, and lexical segregation. The 'integrity' and 'corruption' fields identified in the discussion above, forecloses much of the moral ambiguity that a subtler treatment of the same subject matter might have sustained. The novel's textuality, in other words, is achieved partly at the expense of its complexity. The very devices that make the text so legible, the binary semantic fields, the recurring journey metaphor, also produce a somewhat predetermined moral universe in which outcomes are legible from the outset. This is not a flaw in textuality as such, but it does mark the limit of what the novel achieves as literary art, as distinct from what it achieves as social commentary. Greater linguistic nuance in character representation, a more sophisticated exploration of moral ambiguity, and a reduction in didactic intervention would, in the present writer's assessment, elevate the novel from effective social commentary towards a more enduring literary achievement.

Chartered Messenger exemplifies how a skilled author can deploy linguistic resources to produce a text that functions simultaneously as entertainment, social criticism and cultural preservation. The present study's contribution has been to demonstrate how textuality is achieved at the level of cohesion, coherence and intertextuality across a single, full-length Nigerian novel.

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