



Reference and Appositive Repetition in Mariama Ba's So Long a Letter

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Abstract - The concepts of coherence and cohesion have both been widely studied in linguistics and scholars are in no disagreement that they are both principal ingredients in creating a text. By text we mean a piece of utterance, whether spoken or written, whose parts have been put together to form a unified semantic and syntactic whole. The former refers to a semantic property of discourses based on the interpretation of each individual sentence relative to the interpretation of other sentences, while the latter refers essentially to the relations of meanings generated by the coming together of clauses and sentences within a discourse. But our focus in this paper is on cohesion, which encompasses the relations obtaining among the components of a discourse. The discourse here is a piece of written literary text. In the present study we explore the use of both lexical and grammatical cohesive ties in the award-winning iconoclastic, epistolary masterpiece of Mariama Ba's So Long a Letter. At the end of the study, it is shown clearly that the novel, though the first by the author, was largely successful due to the smoothness, simplicity and accessibility of the language occasioned by the brilliant and appropriate deployment of the cohesive ties, most especially referential ties and the repetitive nature of language.

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Reference and Appositive Repetition in Mariama Ba's *So Long a Letter*

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I. INTRODUCTION

The concept (of cohesion) refers essentially to the relations of meanings generated by the coming together of clauses and sentences within a discourse. It encompasses the relations obtaining among the components of a discourse. The relations are principally signalled by certain grammatical and lexical features reflecting textual structure on the semantic level. In line with the views of Olowe (1988), we believe that the concept of cohesion is a semantic one; it refers to relations of meaning that exist within the text and which define it as a text. Cohesion occurs where 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 recourse to it. When this happens, a relation of cohesion is set up, and the two elements, the presupposing and the presupposed are thereby, at least, potentially integrated into a text.

According to Halliday and Hassan (1976) cohesion is a semantic relation between an element in the text and some other element that is crucial to the interpretation of it. Its location in the text is in no way determined by the grammatical structure. The two

elements, the presupposing and the presupposed may be structurally related to each other or they may not; it makes no difference to the inherent meaning of the cohesive relation.

Cohesion is part of the systems of a language. The potential for cohesion lies in the systematic resources of reference, ellipsis and so on, which are built into the language itself. The actualisation of cohesion in any given instance, however, depends not merely on the selection of some option from within these resources, but also on the presence of some other elements which resolve the presupposition that this sets up. Cohesion again refers to the range of possibilities that exist for linking something with what has gone before. What cohesion has to do with is the way in which the meaning of the element is interpreted. Where the interpretation of any item in the discourse requires making reference to some other item in the discourse there is cohesion. This concept of cohesion accounts for essential semantic relations whereby any passage of speech or writing is enabled to function as text. It must be noted, however, that the extent to which a piece of writing can be said to be adequately cohesive is dependent upon such factors as the linguistic ingenuity of the writer, the nature of the discourse itself, and the pragma-stylistic features governing the tenor of discourse. These three factors we have found have combined to stand out our selected text of analysis.

a) Cohesive Relations

Since cohesive relations are not concerned with structure, they may be found just as well within a sentence as between sentences. They attract less notice within a sentence, because of the cohesive strength of grammatical structure. If a sentence hangs together already, cohesion is not needed in order to make it hang together but the cohesive relations are there all the same e.g.

If you happen to see Mr. Johnson, don't tell him his ship's gone down.

In the above sentence, the presence of the subordinate and the main clauses has made the sentence a grammatical structure of English, but the presence of *him* and *his* in the main clause are there to underscore the genitival relation between them and *Mr Johnson* earlier mentioned in the dependent clause, and not because they have made the sentence a structure. We can as well have the sentence as

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If you see Mr Johnson, don't say that the ship's gone down.

in which case *the* has conveniently replaced the personal pronouns, though the possession of the ship has been hidden.

Cohesion, like other semantic relations, is expressed through the strata organisation of language. Language can be explained as a multiple coding system comprising three levels of coding or strata: the semantic (meaning) lexico-grammatical (form) and phonological/orthographical (expression). Meanings are realized (coded) as forms; forms are realized in turn (decoded) as expressions. To put this in everyday terminology, meaning is put into wording and wording into sound or writing. The popular term of wording refers to lexico-grammatical form, the choice of words and grammatical structures. Within this stratum, there is no hard and fast division between vocabulary and grammar; the guiding principle in language is that the more general meanings are expressed through grammar and partly through vocabulary; the more we have a text that is cohesive. We can therefore say that cohesion can be divided into two: *grammatical and lexical cohesion*.

The distinction between the two should not be unnecessarily stretched since both are significant for any semantic interpretation of a text. Also, what is taken, as been grammatical ties may sometimes be used as lexical and vice versa. For instance, repetition, which is commonly categorised as an example of lexical cohesion, can at times be grammatical. So also are conjunctions, which are usually, referred to as grammatical ties but which almost always have lexical implications. When we talk of cohesion as being grammatical or lexical, we do not mean that it is purely formal relation, in which meaning is not involved. Grammatical ties are items, which can be viewed as belonging to the closed systems of the language, while the lexical ones are those that can be subsumed under the open class.

Grammatical ties are broadly categorised as *reference*, *substitution* and *ellipsis* while lexical ties can be sub-divided into *repetition* or *reiteration*, the use of *synonyms* or *near synonyms*, *antonymy* and *collocation*, *hyponymic relations*, *idiomatic expressions*, and *polysemy* (See Halliday and Hassan, 1976 for details). In this paper, we will try to explore both grammatical and lexical cohesive ties with particular emphasis on reference (grammatical) and repetition (lexical), in Mariama Ba's iconoclastic masterpiece – *So Long a Letter*.

Reference, as a cohesive device, occurs when an item recurs to something else for its interpretation. It is a semantic relation, that is, a relation based on meaning. Put more clearly, the information to be retrieved is the referential meaning and cohesion lies in the continuity of reference, whereby the same item

reoccurs in the discourse a second time. A reference tie could either be exophoric (situational) or endophoric (textual). While exophora is a reference outside of the text which does not name anything but helps to give meaning to the text, endophora is a reference to something within the text. It is either anaphoric (reference preceding text) or cataphoric (reference following text). Phoric is the referential property of a text.

It is possible for a reference item to combine both exophoric and cataphoric properties in a given text. However, what is essential is that the thing referred to has to be identifiable somehow. Endophoric reference alone is cohesive. Correspondingly, exophoric reference contributes to the creation of a text and its meaning by linking the language to its context of situation. Nevertheless, it is not directly connected with cohesion, in that, it does not integrate the various parts of a text and therefore will not be considered in this essay. Endophoric reference alone will be given prominence, as in these sentences

- a) I saw *the woman* in the market. *She* was buying oranges.
- b) *This* is the man. It was *his* car that was stolen.

Both sentences are endophoric, but while (a) is anaphoric, (b) is cataphoric. In (a) the personal pronoun *she* refers backward to the woman in the preceding sentence. In (b) the demonstrative *this* refers forward to 'the man' whose car was stolen. It is interesting to note that while 'this' is cataphoric to 'the man', the possessive pronoun 'his' refers anaphorically to the same antecedent 'the man'. In this case there is the use of both cataphoric and anaphoric references in the same text.

Substitution and ellipsis are devices for abbreviating and avoiding repetition. In effect, they are useful means of avoiding monotony that arises by the constant repetition of grammatical items in a discourse. Substitutes or proforms operate within and across sentence boundaries and are usually unstressed. The two devices are essentially the same process. Substitution is the replacement of one item by another. It is a means of representing a given piece of information in the environment of a new piece. Ellipsis on the other hand, is that type of substitution that replaces by nothing. Put more clearly, ellipsis is simply 'substitution by zero', or the omission of an item that can be recovered by recourse to an earlier sentence or parts of a sentence. Ellipsis implies that something is left 'unsaid' but that the 'unsaid' is understood. Substitution and ellipsis occur in structurally unrelated sentences and are normally unstressed. Let's consider the three versions of the sentence:

1. *The man bought the big box.*
 - a. The wife the small.
 - b. The wife *chose* the small *one*.
 - c. The wife bought the small box.

Each of the three alternatives (a-c) involves some repetition. The first choice is elliptical in repetition. It omits the verb 'bought' and the object 'the big box'. Thus, in (a) we have a minor sentence. The second repeats but by substituting the empty slot with 'chose' and 'one', while the final alternative is the repetition of the full form.

Repetition is essentially a literary term, which has been adopted in linguistics to describe a reiteration of linguistic items across the major or minor grammatical boundaries in a discourse to create certain effects such as emphasis and emotional impact in literature. It can be partial, full or appositive, as is almost always the case in the novel we are studying (as we shall soon show in this paper). The use of synonymous words, whether in juxtaposition or with intrinsic semantic colouration is another signal for lexical cohesion. Synonyms are different phonological words that have the same or very similar meanings. Though there are many instances of this and many entailing lexical items as well as some idiomatic expressions, the focus of this paper shall be on repetition as a lexical cohesive tie, and reference as a grammatical cohesive tie in the novel.

II. BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Mariama Ba was born in Dakar, Senegal in 1929 and attended the French Berthe Maubert School in Dakar and later the Ecole Normale in Rufisque. She was brought up by her maternal grandparents and during the holidays she studied the Koran under the supervision of the then Chief Imam of the Central Mosque in Dakar.

The author's western education and Islamic religious traditions form the two major influences that manifest in her work. It is not amazing therefore, why there are lots of echoes of Islamic teaching sounding recurrently in her novels. This is more evident in *So Long a Letter* where the major theme focuses on religion and its influences on the educated woman.

Mariama Ba was one of the great prose masters of our generation. This is evident in her first novel. Although she appeared on the literary scene for a short time before the 'almighty' reaping hand of death snatched her away, she nevertheless made an impact on her world. Her first novel *So Long a Letter*, brilliant, sensitive and trilling, won her the much-acclaimed Noma award for publishing in Africa in 1980. The novel was acknowledged throughout the world as a unique innovation in post-colonial African fiction. Its precursor: Samuel Richardson's *Pamela and Clarissa* had been published outside the shores of Africa in 1740. Though the African-American, Alice Walker equally published an epistolary novel – *The Color Purple* in 1982, the publication of *So Long a Letter* two years earlier, had carved a niche for Ba as a force to be reckoned with in African literary arena. Like a 'colossus' she gained the

attention of the African literary world. However, this glory was short-lived as death snatched her away six months after her return from Frankfurt. Before her death, she had written her second novel *Scarlet Song* which was published in 1981. This confirmed Ba as a prolific writer and one of the spokespersons of women in a patriarchal African society.

Mariama Ba was a schoolteacher, an active member of the Senegalese Feminist Movement, and she fought for the cause of the women, especially those in the developing society through her weapon of writing. In *Scarlet Song*, she depicts the ordeal of Murielle, a French woman who married an African and was caught in the throes of tradition of a male influenced society. Murielle was left abandoned, humiliated, isolated in a world foreign to her. Mariama Ba died in August 1981.

a) *So Long a Letter: An Overview*

So Long a Letter is a radical novel which adopts the form of a long letter. That is, as earlier said, the novel takes the pattern of epistolary, conversational style. It was told and written completely in the form of a letter. This is a deliberate device of writing used in unfolding to us the inner workings of the chief character's mind. The brilliancy of her work owes a lot to this and in fact, the emergence of great writing cannot but require idiosyncrasy. This is because since Mariama Ba debuted with this iconoclastic masterpiece, very few writers have succeeded in imitating the style. The novel was originally written in French language and later translated into English by Modupe Bode-Thomas, a Nigerian. It is our belief that the translation has really brought out Ba's fluid use of language and her dexterity in composing powerful cohesive texts.

A novel tells a story and the story in *So Long a Letter* is a daily diary of events after the death of Ramatoulaye's husband, Modou. It is a letter written by the widowed heroine, Ramatoulaye, to her childhood friend Aissatou. This is evident in the excerpt below (p. 3):

Modou Fall is indeed dead, Aissatou. The uninterrupted procession of men and women who have learned of it, the wails and tears all round me, confirm his death. This condition of extreme tension sharpens my sufferings and continues to the following day, the day of interment.

It is a series of reminiscences of their lives from childhood to adulthood. It focuses on their joys and grieves and the shared experience of their husbands' marriages to other wives, younger than themselves. The story is set in a polygamous Senegalese African Society, which is reinforced by Islamic religion. Ramatoulaye frequently uses the technique of flashback in order to explain the present state of affairs and we see the events from her point of view, that is, she is the narrator in the novel. She describes her terrible experiences of disappointment, neglect, insincerity and intense

loneliness in a way that invokes our sympathy and at the same time condemnation of men's, nay, her husband's behaviour.

The theme of the novel is polygamy and it is closely tied to the Islamic religion. Islamic ideology reflects in almost every page of *So Long a Letter*. Ramatoulaye in the novel tells the story of her husband's sudden marriage to Binetou, a friend to Daba – her first daughter, in other words, somebody of her daughter's age. This he did after their twenty-one years of happy marriage that was crowned with twelve children. The protagonist cannot see the reason why her husband should engage in such an act of disavowal and this makes her to questionably lament (p. 12):

Madness or weakness? Heartlessness or irresistible love? What inner torment led Modou Fall to marry Binetou? And to think that I loved this man passionately, to think that I gave him thirty years of my life, to think that twelve times over I carried his child.

Ramatoulaye therefore sees the husband's second marriage as a betrayal of trust and loyalty, degradation and an outright rejection of their family. Modou is portrayed as a responsible man who suddenly turns out undependable by abandoning his family for a new house, which he buys with the joint savings of Ramatoulaye and his. There he lives in luxury with his new wife and her mother. Not only that, he borrows money to pay for Binetou's parents' visit to Mecca and he also sets aside a monthly salary for Binetou which she would have earned if she were working. Binetou and her mother live a life of total dependence on Modou without ever giving a fleeting thought to the fact that something could happen to their benefactor. Thus, Binetou and her mother are left with nothing to fall back on after the death of Modou Fall as a result of his sudden heart-attack. The house in which they live then is given to Daba.

The heroine inwardly seeks for liberation and fulfillment while holding strongly to her Islamic beliefs. She rejects polygamy and this is evident in her rejection of all the men that come to marry her after her husband's death. She also explores the virtues of informal education – orally received education – and also formal education or western education. To Ramatoulaye the latter is meant to get rid of superstitions and enhance civilization. Furthermore, the problems of drugs, sensuality among youths and the despising attitudes to traditional crafts are also examined.

So Long a Letter is an educative story. It deals subtly with the way mothers should handle the behaviours of their children. The writer, through the characterization of the heroine advocates recreational centres for children and this emphasis is made more realistic when one of her boys who is playing by the road side is knocked down accidentally by a cyclist.

She highlights the need for sex education as a means of reducing unwanted pregnancy and she feels that boys and girls should be allowed to discover themselves without feelings of guilt and secretiveness. This is illustrated in her reaction to Aissatou's pregnancy and to her boyfriend Ibrahima Sall. She constantly digresses to comment and recommend solutions on the problems of modern women, circular work and children upbringing.

Generally, *So Long a Letter* is about the problems and place of women in a Muslim society. Two cases are used as examples – the marriage between Modou and Ramatoulaye and that between Madou and Aissatou. Each ends in disaster mainly because the man takes a second wife. Ramatoulaye and Aissatou are unable to accept the indignity of living with a second wife. When Aissatou can bear it no longer she writes Madou to break the relationship between them (pp. 31–32):

I cannot accept what you are offering me today in the place of happiness we once had. You want to draw a line between heartfelt love and physical love. I say that there is no union of bodies without the heart's acceptance, however little that may be... I am stripping myself of your love, your name. Clothed in my dignity, the only worthy garment, I go my way.

Ramatoulaye on the other hand decides to remain with Modou as long as possible even though Modou had deserted her and her social problems multiplied after his death. She struggles very hard not to abandon her marital home and shows a grim determination not to succumb to the wishes of those who want her to quit. In a nutshell, *So Long a Letter* is a beautiful, militant, sensitive novel on which Mariama Ba was very abstract, poetic and almost mystical.

III. TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

a) *The Lexical Device of Repetition*

Repetition and the grammatical tie of reference are the most noticeable cohesive devices used in the novel. The lexical device of repetition is however the more powerful of the two. Examples are in the excerpts below:

1. My friend, my friend, my friend. (p.1)
2. One does not fix appointments with fate. Fate grasps whom it wants, when it wants. When it moves in the direction of your desires, It brings you plenitude. But more often than not, it unsettles, crosses you. (p. 2).
3. Modou, friend of the young as of old... Modou, the lion-hearted, champion of the oppressed... Modou, at ease as much in a suit as in a caftan... Modou, good bother, good husband, good Muslim... May God forgive him... May he regret his earthly stay in his heavenly bliss... May the earth rest lightly on him!

4. Was it madness, weakness, irresistible love? What inner confusion led Modou Fall to marry Binetou? (p. 11, repeated on p. 12).
5. I think of all the blind people the world over, moving in darkness. I think of all the paralysed the world over, dragging themselves about. I think of all the lepers the world over, wasted by their disease....I think of the blind man who will never see his child's smile. I think of the cross the one-armed man has to bear. I think.... (pp. 11 – 12).

But the use of repetition in the novel assumes a somewhat striking regularity with the preponderance of appositive repetitions, especially in the early chapters of the novel. Two phrases are in apposition when they are logically equivalent and in the same grammatical relation to the rest of the sentence. It is a way of explaining a word or phrase, or giving additional information about it:

I spent my holiday in my favourite city, Lagos.

When we put the two phrases – 'my favourite city' and 'Lagos' – in apposition; the second phrase explains the first.

I will like to read a novel by Wole Soyinka, the 1986 Nobel Prize Winner in Literature.

'The 1986 Nobel Prize Winner in Literature' is in apposition to Wole Soyinka.

Usually but not always, apposition requires commas around the appositional phrase:

The Christmas of 1999, the most memorable I have ever had, was the grandest in the century.

The relationship underlined apposition is an intensive one. However, we can have full and partial apposition.

There are many instances of the use of appositive repetitions such as the examples given above in the novel. By the profuse use of this type of repetition, there is a kind of semantic reiteration that runs through the novel, such that the reader is immediately reminded of what has just been said by way of subtle or blatant re-statement. Thus, if the first mention of a point is unclear, the second mention, within the same grammatical slot, etches the meaning into the mind automatically. The pedagogical implication of this technique of writing is that the message of the novel is easily understood at the first reading of the novel, and the salient points discussed almost unforgettable. It has also made the narrative technique most gripping and factual. Here are some examples from the novel:

1. We walked the same paths from adolescence to maturity, where the past begets the present (p.1). – Partial Apposition.
2. ... heart massage, mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, ridiculous weapons against the divine will (p.2). – Full Apposition.

3. Death, the tenuous passage between two opposite worlds, one tumultuous, the other still (p.2). – Full Apposition.
4. ...his noble hands, hands of an absolute delicacy, supple hands used to tracking down illness (p.3). – Full Apposition.
5. ...all parts of the country, where the radio has relayed the news (p. 3). – Partial Apposition.
6. The seven metres of white muslin, the only clothing Islam allows for the dead (p. 3). – Full Apposition.
7. The *Zem-Zem*, the miracle water from the holy places of Islam (p. 3). – Full Apposition.
8. ...us, the widows (p. 4). – Full Apposition.
9. They are there, his childhood playmates on the field of football ground (p. 5). – Full Apposition
10. They are there, his classmates (p. 5). – Full Apposition.
11. They are there, his companions in the trade union struggles (p. 5). – Full Apposition.
12. ...cola nuts, judiciously mixed, the first offerings to heaven for the peaceful repose of the deceased's soul (p.5) – Full Apposition.
13. ...you Falls, grandchildren of Damel Madiodio (p. 7). – Full Apposition.
14. ...purifying baths, the changing of my mourning clothes every Monday and Friday. – Full Apposition.

b) Grammatical Cohesive Ties: Reference

For our discussion of the grammatical cohesive ties, with particular reference to *reference*, we will use the following excerpt from page 3 of the novel:

Modou Fall is indeed dead, Aisatou, *the* uninterrupted procession of men and women who have 'learned' of *it*, *the* wails and tears all around *me*, confirm *his* death. *This* condition of extreme tension sharpens *my* suffering and continues till *the* following day, *the* day of interment. What a seething crowd of human beings come from all parts of *the* country, where *the* radio has relayed *the* news. Women, close relatives, are busy. *They* must take incense, eau-de-cologne, cotton-wool to *the* hospital for *the* washing of *the* dead one. *The* seven metres of white muslin, *the* only clothing Islam allows for *the* dead, are carefully placed in a new basket. *The* *Zem-Zem*, *the* miracle water from *the* holy places of Islam religiously kept by each family, is not forgotten. Rich, dark wrappers are chosen to cover Modou. *My* back propped up by cushions, legs outstretched, *my* head covered with a black wrapper, *I* follow *the* comings and goings of people. Across from *me*, a new winnowing fan bought for *the* occasion receives *the* first alms. *The* presence of *my* co-wife beside *me* irritates *me*. *She* has been installed in *my* house for *the* funeral, in accordance with tradition....

IV. DISCUSSION

The extract above gives a picture of overwhelming use of the reference items by Mariama Ba

So Long a Letter. From observation, it is clear that personal pronouns, personal possessives and determiners form the main block of grammatical ties in and across the sentences. There are forty endophoric reference items in the extract, out of which fourteen are instances of personal pronouns from which there are eleven personal possessives. There are also two instances of comparative referential items and an occurrence of a demonstrative reference item. There are twenty-five instances of determiners in the extract, which have been used as reference items, most of which are definite types. Only three of these determiners are indefinite. Out of the number, twenty instances are anaphoric, while five instances are cataphoric.

In addition, there are various types and modes of reference. We shall point out three types that are present in the above extract in particular and all through the novel in general: *definite reference*, *indefinite reference* and *generic reference*. There is no doubt that it is the definite reference which is the most crucial for the functioning of language, and by far has the highest number of occurrences in the extract. Let's consider the following sentences from the extract:

- a. *The seven metre of white muslin, the only clothing Islam allows for the dead, are carefully placed in a new basket.*
- b. *The Zem-Zem, the miracle water from the holy places of Islam....*
- c. *Across from me, a new winnowing fan bought for the occasion receives the first alms.*

The first *the* in (a) is both definite and anaphoric, while the second *the* is definite but cataphoric, referring back to 'white muslin' mentioned earlier. But both the first instances are semantically different from the third *the* in 'the dead'. This is because the third *the* has the reading which involves what is called *generic reference*, that is, reference to a class of referents. So also is the first *the* in (b) of which use is generic. However, the use of *a* as in 'a new basket' in (a) and 'a new winnowing fan' in (c) are both instances of indefinite reference.

The essence of indefinite reference is that the identity of the referent is not germane to the message: that is, nothing hinges on the individual features of the referent, only the class features indicated are presented as relevant. Notice also that this has nothing to do with whether or not either speaker or hearer is in fact able to effect a unique identification of the referent. Suppose someone complains of extreme boredom, and in response I pick up a book and offer it to them, saying either (i) *Here, read a book*, or (ii) *Here, read this book*. The difference is that in both cases, the identity of the book is clear to both participants. The difference is that in (i) the identity of the book is not germane, just the fact that it is a book, whereas in (ii), the identity of the book is presented as (a) important to the message (e.g. You're

bound to find this particular one interesting), and (b) accessible to the hearer. However, in the case of the examples from the extract, the introduction of the modifier 'new' in both nominal groups has introduced some specifications.

V. IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The epistolary form of the novel accounts for this cohesive and stylistic choice. The events in the novel are reminiscences of the Ramatoulaye's (narrator) life from childhood to adulthood and it was written at different time intervals. This literary style called for a cohesive device of continuity and conjunctive connectors that are replete in the novel.

In summation, anaphoric and cataphoric reference especially personal pronouns and personal possessives and determiners provide the most grammatical ties between sentences. Next in importance is the use of appositive repetitions, which have an enduring effect of reiteration and accessibility of the message. A critical observation of the study text reveals that lexical cohesion operates often in narrative and descriptive passages; where they function cohesively by reinforcing the entire passage. Apart from the linguistic effect of lexical cohesion in *So Long a Letter*, it also gives the passages the literary beauty of concreteness in details.

From the simple analysis attempted in this paper, it can be safely concluded that *So Long a Letter* fulfills the theoretical framework as given by Halliday and Hasan (1976). It also satisfies the descriptive framework we presented at introductory stage of the paper. It features both grammatical and lexical cohesion, though we have focussed on just reference as a grammatical tie, and repetition as a lexical tie. An examination of all the extracts in this study reveals that Mariama Ba's first literary prose – *So Long a Letter* – has a high proportion of cohesive items: referential, lexical and rhetorical items. Also the structural and textual functions of connectors cannot be overlooked, though they play more of structural roles than textual ones.

In general, the rhetorical elements, lexical item, and the tone of the novel give an indication of the author's Islamic background and values. In effect, the text *So Long a Letter* has a logical and an unambiguous structure as a result of the predominance of referential items, which are resolved within the text. This gives the prose work a simple, straight-forward and plain style; that makes for easy understanding and enjoyment of the text.

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