JETAL: JOURNAL OF ENGLISH TEACHING & APPLIED LINGUISTICS

VOLUME (7) Number (2) Page (279-286) E-ISSN: 2714-9811

LEXICAL COHESION IN MAHER ZAIN'S FORGIVE ME ALBUM: A DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Bella Puspita[1], Rulik Setiani[2]
[1,2]Universitas Muhammadiyah Kotabumi
Email : 2288203011@umko.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This study investigates lexical cohesion in four selected song lyrics from Maher Zain's second studio album Forgive Me (2012): Forgive Me, I Love You So, Number One for Me, and My Little Girl. Adopting Halliday & Hasan (1976) lexical cohesion framework, which classifies lexical cohesion into reiteration and collocation, as the theoretical basis, this study identifies seven sub-types of lexical cohesion as adopted in subsequent linguistic research: repetition, synonym, antonym, superordinate, meronym, hyponym, and collocation. The data source of this study are the written lyrics of the four selected songs, obtained from official lyric publications. Data were collected through systematic documentation by reading each lyric carefully and identifying all lexical items that demonstrate cohesive relations. The data were analyzed following Creswell & Creswell (2017) qualitative analysis steps: organizing the data, reading through all data, coding each lexical item by its cohesion subtype, generating categories, and reporting findings. The validity of the analysis was ensured through careful re-reading and cross-checking of each datum against the theoretical criteria established by (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). The analysis identified 238 lexical cohesion items. Collocation emerged as the most dominant type with 71 items (29.8%), followed by repetition (56 items; 23.5%), synonym (28 items; 11.8%), hyponym (26 items; 10.9%), antonym (23 items; 9.7%), meronym (19 items; 8.0%), and superordinate (15 items; 6.3%). Among the four songs, My Little Girl yields the highest number of lexical cohesion items (66 items; 27.7%). The dominance of collocation reflects the formulaic devotional register characteristic of Islamic nasheed, distinguishing Maher Zain's lyrics from mainstream pop music where repetition typically dominates. These findings confirm that Maher Zain's song lyrics operate as linguistically cohesive discourses that employ diverse lexical mechanisms to achieve semantic unity and emotional impact.
Keywords: *Lexical Cohesion, Song Lyrics, Maher Zain, Nasheed, Discourse Analysis, Halliday & Hasan*

INTRODUCTION

Language is fundamentally a system of meaning-making through which human beings express ideas, emotions, beliefs, and identities. As (Yule, 2020) observes, language is not merely a vehicle for information transfer but a structured social resource through which speakers construct and negotiate meaning within their communities. A central concern in linguistics is how texts achieve coherence, how individual words and sentences combine to form meaningful wholes that readers and listeners can interpret as unified discourse. Cohesion, as a textual property, is the mechanism by which this unity is realized. Among the types of cohesion identified in the literature, lexical cohesion occupies a particularly significant role because it operates through the semantic relationships between words, enabling meaning to accumulate and persist across a text (Halliday & Hasan, 1976).

Halliday & Hasan (1976), in their seminal work, *Cohesion in English*, establishes that a text is not merely a sequence of sentences but a semantic unit realized through cohesive ties. Among the types of cohesion they propose, lexical cohesion plays a central role by establishing semantic connections between lexical items through repetition, synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy, meronymy, and collocation. These lexical ties enable readers or listeners to perceive continuity of meaning and thematic consistency throughout a discourse. Halliday and Hasan's framework has remained the cornerstone of cohesion studies for nearly five decades, demonstrating its enduring relevance for analyzing both written and spoken texts. (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014) later extended this systemic functional framework, reinforcing that the textual metafunction realized chiefly through cohesion is indispensable for understanding how clauses combine into coherent and unified wholes.

Expanding this foundation, Tanskanen

(2006) demonstrates that lexical cohesive devices function as systematic strategies that guide interpretation and reinforce conceptual unity, with repetition serving as the most frequent cohesive device across discourse types an insight particularly relevant to song lyrics, where repetition carries both structural and emotional weight. Paltridge (2012) further situates cohesion within discourse analysis, emphasizing that lexical choices function communicatively within specific cultural settings, a principle central to the present study's focus on Islamic nasheed lyrics.

Song lyrics constitute a legitimate site for discourse analysis. They consist of organized linguistic units designed to convey meaning, emotion, and ideology, and circulate globally through streaming platforms and social media, influencing audiences across linguistic and cultural boundaries. Within this broader linguistic and cultural framework, the present study investigates lexical cohesion in selected song lyrics from Maher Zain's second studio album, Forgive Me (2012), a Lebanese-Swedish singer, songwriter, and producer widely recognized for integrating contemporary pop music with spiritual and humanitarian themes. According to his official biography published by Awakening Records (2023) https://www.awakening.org/artist/maherzain , he has achieved multi-platinum certifications in several countries and developed a substantial international fan base. His global popularity is further reflected in his digital presence; his official YouTube channel has accumulated billions of views YouTube (2024) https://www.youtube.com/@MaherZain. As noted in Wikipedia (2024b) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maher_Zain). Maher Zain is regarded as one of the most influential contemporary Muslim artists whose music combines accessible pop arrangements with messages of faith, gratitude, and family devotion. His second album, Forgive Me, released in 2012 under Awakening Records, consists of fourteen tracks exploring themes such as repentance, love, gratitude toward parents, and spiritual reflection Wikipedia (2024a) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Forgive_Me_(Maher_Zain_album). The album achieved commercial success, particularly in Southeast Asia and the Middle East, strengthening his global reputation. Unlike albums that focus solely on devotional worship, *Forgive Me* intertwines personal introspection, romantic affection, filial gratitude, and paternal love. This thematic diversity suggests the presence of varied lexical fields, making the album linguistically rich for cohesive analysis.

Despite Maher Zain's international prominence and the thematic depth of *Forgive Me*, previous research has not sufficiently examined lexical cohesion in his works. Several studies have investigated linguistic aspects of Maher Zain's lyrics from different angles. Purwanti (2020) analyzes derivational and inflectional morphemes in the same album, focusing on morphological structure rather than discourse-level cohesion. Dewi & Hermawan (2024) similarly examine free and bound morphemes in Maher Zain's song lyrics, concentrating on word formation processes. More recently, Khasanah & Rahmat (2024) analyze the contextual meaning of deixis in selected Maher Zain songs, demonstrating ongoing scholarly interest in his lyrics from pragmatic and semantic perspectives. Crucially, none of these studies address how lexical items work together to create textual unity the cohesive dimension that is foundational to understanding how the lyrics construct meaning for their audiences.

Beyond studies focused specifically on Maher Zain, lexical cohesion in song lyrics and Islamic devotional discourse has attracted growing scholarly attention. (Siadari et al., 2023) analyzed lexical cohesion in the song "Kill Bill" by SZA, finding collocation among the prominent cohesive devices in contemporary pop music. (Dewi, 2023) examined lexical and grammatical cohesion in the song "Clouds," demonstrating that multiple cohesion types co-occur systematically in a single lyric text. In the Indonesian context, Sapna and (Sapna & Astuti, 2022) investigated lexical cohesion in three songs by Rhoma Irama, while (Astuti & Hadziiq, 2023) analyzed cohesion in songs by Ebiet G. Ade. (Indah Nuraini, 2024) examined lexical cohesion in an Islamic motivational speech, finding that repetition and collocation are the dominant devices in Islamic devotional discourse directly relevant to the present study's focus on nasheed lyrics. (Telaumbanua, 2021) examined both lexical and grammatical cohesion in Ed Sheeran's album, establishing the applicability of cohesion analysis to globally circulated popular music.

These studies collectively reveal a clear and significant research gap: while lexical cohesion has been applied to various genres, languages, and cultural contexts, no study has systematically examined lexical cohesion specifically in the work of Maher Zain, despite his status as the most widely recognized contemporary artist of the nasheed genre. This gap is significant because nasheed Islamic devotional popular music represents a distinctive register with

its own lexical conventions, formulaic devotional phrases, and thematic configurations that differ substantially from mainstream pop. (Biber & Conrad, 2019) establish that register variation the systematic co-occurrence of linguistic features tied to situational context determines which lexical resources are foregrounded in a given genre, making register-specific analysis essential for understanding nasheed's distinctive collocational patterns. Understanding how lexical cohesion operates in this genre requires targeted analysis, which the present study provides for the first time. The contribution of this study is therefore twofold: it fills an empirical gap by documenting lexical cohesion patterns in Maher Zain's Forgive Me album, and it advances theoretical understanding of how cohesion theory applies to the specialized register of Islamic nasheed in English.

For analytical focus, this study examines four selected songs: "Forgive Me," "I Love You So," "Number One For Me," and "My Little Girl." These songs were purposively chosen because they represent diverse yet interconnected thematic domains: repentance, universal love, filial gratitude, and paternal affection, allowing a broader exploration of lexical relations. As Cassell et al. (2018) Note in *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Business and Management Research*, purposive sampling in qualitative research enables researchers to select cases rich in information relevant to the research focus. Following this principle, the selection of these four songs ensures thematic diversity while maintaining analytical depth within a manageable corpus. Other tracks in the album were not selected because they emphasize narrower devotional themes or multilingual adaptations that may limit the range of lexical variation observed.

The aim of this study is to identify and describe the types of lexical cohesion found in four selected song lyrics from Maher Zain's album Forgive Me (2012), namely Forgive Me, I Love You So, Number One for Me, and My Little Girl. Based on this aim, the research questions addressed are: (1) What types of lexical cohesion are found in the four selected song lyrics? (2) Which type of lexical cohesion is most dominant? (3) How does lexical cohesion contribute to the construction of meaning and message in the songs?

METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative research design. According to Creswell & Creswell (2017) qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem, involving emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in naturalistic settings, and inductive analysis building from particulars to general themes. In this study, the descriptive qualitative method is used to identify, describe, and analyze the types of lexical cohesion found in the song lyrics without manipulating or controlling the data.

The data source of this research is the written lyrics of four songs by Maher Zain; Forgive Me, I Love You So, Number One For Me, and My Little Girl obtained from official lyric publications. These songs were selected purposively because they represent varied thematic contexts: repentance and spiritual plea (Forgive Me), love and devotion to God (I Love You So), filial affection and gratitude toward a mother (Number One For Me), and paternal love (My Little Girl). The selection of these four specific songs is justified by their thematic diversity: together, they cover the full spectrum of the album's devotional register, from spiritual guilt to familial love, providing a richer and more varied dataset for lexical cohesion analysis. Other tracks were excluded because they overlap thematically with the selected songs or feature multilingual elements that fall outside the scope of this English-language cohesion analysis.

The theoretical framework applied in this study is the theory of lexical cohesion proposed by Halliday & Hasan (1976). According to this theory, lexical cohesion is divided into two major types: reiteration and collocation. Reiteration itself consists of six sub-types: repetition, synonym, antonym, superordinate, meronym, and hyponym. Collocation refers to pairs or groups of lexical items that regularly co-occur in language use. This framework served as the analytical lens for classifying and interpreting all lexical cohesion items in the data.

Data were collected through systematic documentation (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Each lyric was read carefully and examined line by line to identify all lexical items that demonstrate cohesive relations. Each identified item was assigned a datum code using the following system:

Datum : S.[song number]/Ln.[line number]/LC/[sub-type code]

Where S.1–4 refers to the song number 1-4 (Forgive Me - My Little Girl), Ln. refers to the line number in the lyric, LC indicates Lexical Cohesion, and the sub-type codes are Rep (Repetition), Syn (Synonym), Ant (Antonym), Sup (Superordinate), Mer (Meronym), Hyp (Hyponym), and Col (Collocation). For examples, *datum S.1/Ln.8–11/LC/Rep* indicates a Repetition item in Song 1 (Forgive Me), lines 8–11; *datum S.4/Ln.1–2/LC/Syn* identifies the synonym pair

"miracle"–"blessing" in My Little Girl; and datum *S.3/Ln.4,11/LC/Ant* marks the antonym pair "child"–"grown up" in Song 3 (Number One For Me) line 4 and 11. This coding system allows systematic classification and facilitates replication.

In terms of data management, no specialized qualitative analysis software was employed in this study. All data were managed manually using Microsoft Word, in which the lyrics of each song were presented in tabular format with each identified lexical item recorded alongside its datum code, cohesion sub-type, and brief analytical note. This manual approach is appropriate for the small-scale, focused nature of the corpus (238 items across four songs) and enabled the researcher to maintain close, iterative engagement with the textual data throughout the coding process.

Regarding coding reliability, this study did not employ formal inter-rater reliability procedures or triangulation, as it was conducted as a single-researcher qualitative analysis with a relatively small and well-defined corpus. The validity of the classification was ensured through two mechanisms: (1) careful re-reading and systematic cross-checking of each datum against the definitional criteria established by Halliday and Hasan (1976), and (2) the application of a three-tier classification — items classified as "valid" (both relational lexical items explicitly present in the text), "debatable" (included with supporting argumentation), and "forced" (excluded, as the cohesive relationship depends on information outside the text). Future studies are encouraged to employ inter-rater reliability checks to further strengthen analytical objectivity.

The data analysis procedure follows Creswell & Creswell (2017) qualitative data analysis steps: (1) organizing and preparing the data for analysis; (2) reading through all data to obtain a general sense of the information; (3) coding the data by segmenting and labeling each lexical item according to its cohesion type; (4) generating categories and themes from the coded data; (5) representing and reporting the findings; and (6) interpreting the meaning of the findings. The validity of the analysis is ensured through careful re-reading and cross-checking of each datum against the theoretical criteria established by (Halliday & Hasan, 1976).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

FINDINGS

This section presents the research findings from the lexical cohesion analysis of four song lyrics by Maher Zain. The analysis identified 238 lexical cohesion items across all four songs. The following table presents the complete statistical overview of all types of lexical cohesion found in the data.

Table 1. Statistical Overview of Lexical Cohesion in Maher Zain's Song Lyrics

Song Title	Rep	Syn	Ant	Sup	Mer	Hyp	Col	Total	Percentage
Forgive Me	12	5	6	3	4	6	16	52	21.8%
I Love You So	14	7	5	4	5	6	19	60	25.2%
Number One For Me	16	7	7	4	4	6	16	60	25.2%
My Little Girl	14	9	5	4	6	8	20	66	27.7%
Total per Category	56	28	23	15	19	26	71	238	100%
Percentage	23.5%	11.8%	9.7%	6.3%	8.0%	10.9%	29.8%	100%	—

Note: Rep = Repetition; Syn = Synonym; Ant = Antonym; Sup = Superordinate; Mer = Meronym; Hyp = Hyponym; Col = Collocation

As shown in Table 1, collocation is the most dominant type of lexical cohesion across all four songs with 71 items (29.8%), followed by repetition (56 items; 23.5%), synonym (28 items; 11.8%), hyponym (26 items; 10.9%), antonym (23 items; 9.7%), meronym (19 items; 8.0%), and superordinate (15 items; 6.3%). Among the four songs, My Little Girl yields the highest number of lexical cohesion items (66 items; 27.7%), while Forgive Me yields the fewest (52 items; 21.8%). The higher item count in My Little Girl reflects its thematic complexity: as a song that simultaneously addresses paternal love and spiritual devotion, it generates multiple intersecting lexical fields. The relatively lower count in Forgive Me reflects its focused thematic structure a single sustained plea for forgiveness with a more restricted vocabulary. These quantitative patterns provide the basis for the qualitative interpretation presented in the Discussion section below.

DISCUSSION

The following discussion interprets the meaning and significance of the findings for each

type of lexical cohesion, situating the results within existing cohesion theory and the specific genre conventions of Islamic nasheed. Rather than merely restating the frequencies already presented, this section focuses on what the patterns reveal about how Maher Zain's song lyrics construct spiritual meaning, emotional impact, and communal identity through lexical choice.

Repetition, which involves the recurrence of the same lexical item to create cohesion Halliday & Hasan (1976), is the second most dominant type in this study with 56 items (23.5%). The highest frequency is found in Number One For Me (16 items), reflecting that song's structural dependence on refrain repetition to build emotional intensity. The example datum S.1/Ln.8–11/LC/Rep illustrates this: the phrase "Forgive me" appears 10 times throughout the song as the main chorus refrain, while "repent" is tripled within a single line ("repent, repent, repent") for emphatic effect. Both instances are classified as formal repetition the lexical item remains unchanged which Halliday & Hasan (1976) identify as the most straightforward case of lexical cohesion.

What is significant about repetition in this nasheed corpus is not merely its frequency but its dual function. Structurally, repeated phrases such as "I'd like to put a smile on your face every day" (8 times in Number One For Me) and "my little girl" (8 times in My Little Girl) — function as lexical anchors that hold the lyric together thematically. Pragmatically, they function as devotional refrains: the repeated utterance of "Forgive me" enacts the act of seeking forgiveness rather than merely describing it, creating what (Tanskanen, 2006) would identify as an interpersonal cohesive function. The complete repetition dataset across all four songs is accessible via the supplementary data file *(see Supplementary Data: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/12A60hhRqKs0gVl-iZ1F9GqK6MH7JjUoN?usp=drive_link)*. This finding is consistent with (Indah Nuraini, 2024), who found repetition to be dominant in Islamic devotional discourse. In the nasheed genre, repetition thus operates simultaneously as a cohesive linguistic mechanism and as a spiritual speech act.

Synonym, in which a different lexical item with a similar or near-similar meaning is used to refer to the same concept Halliday & Hasan (1976), totals 28 items (11.8%) across the four songs. My Little Girl has the highest count (9 items), reflecting the richness of vocabulary used to describe the daughter's qualities and the father's feelings. The datum S.4/Ln.1–2/LC/Syn illustrates this: "miracle" and "blessing" appear in adjacent lines "You are a miracle" / "You are a blessing from above" and both function to attribute exceptional, God-given value to the daughter, maintaining cohesive continuity while providing lexical variation.

Synonym in this corpus serves two distinct functions depending on the song. In My Little Girl, synonymous pairs such as miracle/blessing, joy/pleasure, innocent/pure, and wonderful/beautiful function accumulatively — each near-synonymous descriptor adds a slightly different shade of meaning, creating an intensifying effect. In Forgive Me, by contrast, synonyms such as repent/change my life and prayer/call upon You function as structural bridges, connecting semantically similar concepts across structurally distant parts of the lyric. These genre-internal differences suggest that synonym in nasheed lyrics serves dual functions: a structural bridging function and an intensifying accumulation function, both contributing to semantic unity. Full synonym data including all 28 items with lyrical evidence is documented in the supplementary file *(see Supplementary Data: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1U0w9BpR9JJpae0EYppZ3x6VsNN_ehEul?usp=drive_link).*

Antonym pairs of words with opposite meanings creating cohesion through semantic contrast accounts for 23 items (9.7%). While antonym is not always listed as a separate sub-type in Halliday & Hasan (1976) original taxonomy, it is widely recognized in subsequent cohesion research as a distinct reiteration device (Tanskanen, 2006). The highest antonym count is found in Number One For Me (7 items), reflecting the unique narrative structure of that song.

Number One For Me is the only song in the corpus structured as a narrative of personal transformation. The datum S.3/Ln.4,11/LC/Ant illustrates the central pair: "I was a foolish little child" contrasts with "Mom I'm all grown up now," where "child" and "grown up" are antonyms representing opposing developmental stages. Further pairs cry/smile, lies/swear, taking for granted/number one for me systematically construct the before-and-after structure of the song. This demonstrates that antonymy in nasheed is not merely a stylistic device but can function as the primary structural and cohesive mechanism of an entire lyric, particularly when the lyric adopts a confessional or transformative mode rather than a purely devotional one. All 23 antonym items are available for inspection *(see Supplementary Data: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1QA-*

6izLaeZAclfjNg5xKIE5BpqcwF_gy?usp=drive_link).

Superordinate refers to a lexical relationship in which a more general word encompasses a set of more specific terms, creating hierarchical semantic cohesion (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). This is the least frequent type in the study with only 15 items (6.3%). The low frequency reflects the genre: nasheed lyrics are compressed and emotionally direct, tending to favor specific, concrete lexical items over abstract general terms. The datum S.4/Ln.7–12/LC/Sup illustrates the type: "being a father" serves as the superordinate encompassing all specific acts of fatherhood described in My Little Girl — holding the child, watching her grow, witnessing her first steps, raising her well.

The classification of superordinate items in this study followed a strict interpretive principle derived from Halliday & Hasan (1976): the superordinate term must be explicitly present in the lyric text for the relationship to count as a cohesive tie. Items where the general term was only implied or existed outside the text were excluded as "forced" classifications. This conservative approach explains the relatively low count and ensures analytical rigor. The complete superordinate dataset (15 items) is provided *(see Supplementary Data: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1VsogVWumdU6AnfSV5MRvBkZVzFBXYthv?usp=drive_link).*

Meronym is a type of lexical cohesion in which a word denotes a part of a larger whole, creating cohesion through the part-whole semantic relationship (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). A total of 19 meronym items (8.0%) were identified. The highest count is in My Little Girl (6 items). The datum S.4/Ln.2–4/LC/Mer illustrates this: "soul," "eyes," and "heart" appear in successive lines "You brought joy to my soul," "And pleasure to my eyes," "In my heart, I can feel it" and each is a meronym of the speaker's self, referring to spiritual, physical, and emotional dimensions of personhood.

What is theoretically significant about meronymy in this corpus is its rhetorical function. In both My Little Girl (soul, eyes, heart, steps, world) and I Love You So ("My love, my life, my days, my nights, my wealth, my prayers all for You"), meronymy operates as a "rhetoric of completeness": by enumerating the parts of the self, the lyrics imply the totality of devotion. This rhetorical strategy expressing wholeness through enumeration of parts is characteristic of Islamic devotional discourse, which tends to emphasize total submission through exhaustive self-enumeration. The full meronym dataset is provided for reference *(see Supplementary Data: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/15a6bkU-mIgB4BgDd252obPR3pZWgZINH?usp=drive_link*).

A hyponym is the reverse of a superordinate: it is the more specific term that falls under a broader category. Cohesion is created when specific lexical items are anchored to a general concept present within the same text (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). A total of 26 hyponym items (10.9%) were identified. The datum S.4/Ln.3–6/LC/Hyp illustrates this: "joy" and "pleasure" are hyponyms of the superordinate "feeling," which is explicitly present in the same verse ("an unexplainable feeling"). Both "joy" and "pleasure" are specific types of positive emotional states anchored to the general term "feeling," creating a cohesive hyponymic relationship.

The presence of hyponymy as the third most frequent type reflects the specificity of devotional language: nasheed lyrics consistently instantiate general spiritual concepts (faith, love, submission) through specific concrete lexical items. In Forgive Me, "temptation" is a hyponym of "mistake"; in Number One For Me, "cry" and "lies" are hyponyms of "pain." These hyponymic relationships create cohesion not only lexically but also thematically, by grounding abstract spiritual themes in emotionally concrete vocabulary. All 26 hyponym items with full lyrical evidence are documented *(see Supplementary Data: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1ipzLY9HocNwVG4k1V2s9E0pY-r6rDMsH?usp=drive_link).*

Collocation is a type of lexical cohesion achieved through the association of lexical items that regularly co-occur in language use (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). Unlike reiteration, collocation does not require semantic identity or hierarchy; cohesion is created through the conventional co-occurrence of words in the same associative lexical field. Collocation is the most dominant type in this study with 71 items (29.8%). The datum S.4/Ln.5/LC/Col illustrates this: "blessing from above," "ask God," "bless and protect," and "light up my world" are all conventional word pairings that regularly co-occur in religious and devotional language contexts.

The dominance of collocation is the most theoretically significant finding of this study. It stands in contrast to studies on mainstream pop music: (Sari, 2020) found repetition dominant in Adele's album, while (Siadari, 2023) found repetition and synonym prominent in SZA's "Kill Bill." In Maher Zain's nasheed corpus, collocation dominates because the genre draws extensively on

fixed conventional phrases from Islamic devotional language ("call upon You," "seek Your forgiveness," "guide her steps," "revive my soul") and from conventional English emotional register ("full of regret," "set me free," "turn back time"). This confirms Tanskanen's (2006) insight that collocational patterns serve not only a lexical function but also an interpersonal one, binding participants through shared cultural and spiritual reference. In nasheed, these collocations actively construct a shared spiritual community between lyricist and listener, performing the register of Islamic devotion through the repetition of its conventional formulae. This extends the application of Halliday & Hasan (1976) framework to Islamic popular music in English a domain their framework did not originally anticipate and suggests that collocation dominant cohesion may be a defining feature of formulaic devotional genres more generally. The complete collocation dataset (71 items) supporting this claim is openly accessible *(see Supplementary Data: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1Myu2o3I8mEABuitMYDaym3e541SbHFxO?usp=drive_link).*

CONCLUSION

This study analyzed the types of lexical cohesion found in four song lyrics by Maher Zain; Forgive Me, I Love You So, Number One For Me, and My Little Girl using Halliday & Hasan (1976) framework, through a descriptive qualitative design following (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Seven conclusions can be drawn. First, all seven types of lexical cohesion; repetition, synonym, antonym, superordinate, meronym, hyponym, and collocation are present in the four songs analyzed. This confirms that Maher Zain's lyrics are linguistically complex discourses that employ a full range of lexical mechanisms to achieve semantic unity and emotional impact. Second, a total of 238 lexical cohesion items were identified. My Little Girl yields the highest count (66 items; 27.7%), reflecting its thematically layered vocabulary that simultaneously addresses paternal love and spiritual devotion. Forgive Me yields the lowest (52 items; 21.8%), consistent with its focused, single-register structure, single-register structure. The complete dataset for all seven sub-types across all four songs is made openly accessible to support transparency and further scholarly engagement *(see Supplementary Data: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1eicN7mFDH9u5UtkAuEd1O6xZzKdCH6xd?usp=drive_link).* Third, collocation is the most dominant type (71 items; 29.8%). This distinguishes the nasheed genre from mainstream pop, where repetition typically dominates. The dominance of collocation reflects the nasheed's reliance on formulaic devotional expressions that simultaneously achieve semantic coherence and construct a shared spiritual register between artist and audience. Fourth, repetition is the second most frequent type (56 items; 23.5%), functioning not only as a structural cohesive device but as a devotional speech act. The repeated utterance of phrases such as "Forgive me" and "I love You so" enacts the spiritual act itself, consistent with the interpersonal cohesive function identified by (Tanskanen, 2006). Fifth, antonym plays a structurally distinctive role in Number One For Me (7 items), where the entire narrative arc is built on temporal contrast between past irresponsibility and present devotion. This demonstrates that when a nasheed adopts a confessional or transformative mode, antonymy can become the primary cohesive and rhetorical mechanism of the entire lyric. Sixth, meronymy functions as a "rhetoric of completeness" in the devotional register of this album. By enumerating parts of the self (soul, eyes, heart; love, life, days, nights, wealth, prayers), the lyrics imply the totality of devotion, reflecting a characteristic feature of Islamic spiritual discourse. Seventh, this study acknowledges several limitations. The corpus is limited to four songs from a single album, and the analysis was conducted without formal inter-rater reliability procedures a limitation mitigated through a three-tier classification system and systematic cross-checking against Halliday & Hasan (1976) criteria. The analysis also focuses exclusively on the verbal mode. Future studies are encouraged to apply inter-rater reliability, expand the corpus to Maher Zain's other albums, incorporate grammatical cohesion alongside lexical cohesion, and examine the multimodal dimensions of nasheed as a form of musico-linguistic discourse.

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that Maher Zain's song lyrics, and the nasheed genre more broadly, are not merely aesthetic or musical texts but linguistically complex discourses that employ systematic lexical cohesion mechanisms to construct spiritual meaning, communal identity, and emotional resonance. The findings affirm the applicability of Halliday & Hasan (1976) framework as a productive analytical tool for devotional popular music and contribute to the growing body of research on lexical cohesion in non-canonical texts.

REFERENCES

Astuti & Hadziiq, M. (2023). *Lexical cohesion and Grammatical Cohesion in Song Lyrics "Untuk Kita Renungkan", "Lakon Anak-Anak Bencana"*

and "Kesaksian Anak Sampah" by Ebiet G. Ade. In Proceedings International Conference of Culture and Sustainable Development. Fakultas Ilmu Budaya. Retrieved from https://proceedings.undip.ac.id/index.php/icocas/

Biber & Conrad, S. (2019). Register, genre, and style (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.

Cassell, C. C. (2018). Intersectionality and Qualitative Research. In The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Business and Management Research Methods: History and Traditions (pp. 429-461). *SAGE Publications Ltd*. Retrieved from https://uk.sagepub.com/en-gb/eur/the-sage-handbook-of-qualitative-business-and-management-research-methods/book248189

Cassell, C., Cunliffe, A., & Grandy, G. (2023). The SAGE handbook of qualitative business and management research methods: History and traditions. SAGE Publications. doi:https://doi.org/10.4135/9781526430212

Creswell, J. W. (2017). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches.* Sage publications. Retrieved from https://www.google.co.id/books/edition/Research_Design/EbogAQAAQBAJ

Dewi, I. &. (2024). Morphological analysis of free and bound morphemes in the album English song lyrics Maher Zain: Forgive Me. *Shibghoh: Prosiding Ilmu Kependidikan UNIDA Gontor*, 2 (1), 268-279. Retrieved from https://ejournal.unida.gontor.ac.id/index.php/shibghoh/article/view/11047

Fairclough, N. (2023). Critical discourse analysis. *In The Routledge handbook of discourse analysis (pp. 11-22). Routledge*. Retrieved from https://www.routledge.com/The-Routledge-Handbook-of-Discourse-Analysis/Gee-Handford/p/book/9780367862817

Halliday & Hasan, R. (1976). *Cohesion in English.* Longman.

Halliday & Matthiessen, C. M. (2014). An introduction to functional grammar (4th ed.). Routledge.

Indah Nuraini, E. (2024). Lexical cohesion in Shereen Salama's speech. . , 16(1), 39–45.

Khasanah, Y. (2024). The context meaning of deixis in Maher Zain selected songs. Retrieved from https://ejournal.unkhair.ac.id/index.php/edu/article/view/7639/4978

Paltridge, B. (2012). *Discourse Analysis: An Introduction (2nd ed)*. Bloomsbury Academic.

Purwanti, Y. (2020). An analysis on the use of derivational and inflectional morphemes in English song lyrics on Maher Zain's "forgive me" album. *Channing: Journal of English Language Education and Literature*, 5(2), 57-62. doi:https://doi.org/10.30599/channing.v5i2.758

Records, A. (2023). Retrieved from Maher Zain — Official biography: https://www.awakening.org/artist/maherzain

Records, A. (2024). Retrieved from https://www.awakening.org/artist/maherzain

Sapna, H. A. (2022). Lexical Cohesion in Song Lyrics of "Malapetaka","Bencana", and "Kemarau" by Rhoma Irama. *In E3S Web of Conferences (Vol. 359, p. 03006). EDP Sciences*. doi:https://doi.org/10.1051/e3sconf/202235903006

Sari, N. E. (2020). Lexical cohesion analysis on adele's songs lyrics in the album 25. *Ragam Penelitian Mesin*, 3(1), 22-28.

Siadari, N. A. (2023). A discourse analysis on the lexical cohesion through song lyrics 'Kill Bill' by SZA. *International Journal of Language Learning and Applied Linguistics,*.

Simpson, P. (2025). *Stylistics: A resource book for students.* Taylor & Francis. Retrieved from https://www.routledge.com/Stylistics-A-Resource-Book-for-Students/Simpson/p/book/9781032700434

Spotify. (2024). Retrieved from Maher Zain — Spotify artist profile: https://open.spotify.com/artist/6PUZZX4GCzeFS0GaDWxVwz

Tanskanen, S. K. (2006). *Collaborating towards coherence: Lexical cohesion in English discourse.* John Benjamins Publishing. Retrieved from https://benjamins.com/catalog/pbns.146

Telaumbanua, T. (2021). Grammatical and Lexical Cohesion in Ed Sheerans'song Lyrics in The "Plus" Album. *Jurnal Education and development*, 9(2), 656-660. Retrieved from https://journal.ipts.ac.id/index.php/ED/article/view/2964

Wikipedia. (2024). Retrieved from Forgive Me (Maher Zain album): https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Forgive_Me_(Maher_Zain_album)

YouTube. (2024). Retrieved from Maher Zain — official YouTube channel: https://www.youtube.com/@MaherZain

Yule, G. (2020). The study of language (7th ed.). Cambridge University Press.