

The structure of texts from herbalist-client encounters in Yoruba traditional medicine

WALE ADEGBITE

Abstract

Using data from Yoruba therapeutic communication, this paper describes the structure of texts from herbalist-client encounters in the practice of Yoruba traditional medicine. The study reveals, among other things, that some Yoruba traditional medicine texts have solely dialogical structures which are constituted by diagnostic and prescriptive transactions, while some others combine the dialogical structures above with monological narratives, descriptions, arguments and requests made in divinatory, incantatory and supplicating transactions. It also reveals that the herbalist controls the interaction in the practice of Yoruba traditional medicine and takes very long turns which are used mainly to give information and directives to clients in the practice.

Keywords: discourse structure; turntaking; moves; Yoruba traditional medicine.

1. Introduction

The practice of traditional medicine among the Yoruba people in Nigeria has been investigated by many scholars from different perspectives—sociological (Fadipe, 1970; Maclean, 1971), religious (Idowu, 1973; Dopamu, 1977), medical (Sofowora, 1982), etc. In some of these studies, the essential role of language usage has been recognised, sometimes in passing, in the practice of Yoruba traditional medicine. Sometimes, this role is recognised and described in terms of various forms of language use in the field. For example, Fadipe (1970: 296) observes the use of the *àfòṣẹ* 'spell' and *epe* 'curse' among the Yoruba to accompany medicinal preparations. Sanda (1978: 62) lists three forms of language, viz. *ofò* 'incantation', *àfòṣẹ* and *èpè* as instruments of the magical-religious method

of treatment in Yoruba traditional medicine. Although he recognises the method of divination, he does not identify any language form with this method in his study. Maclean (1971) in addition to the above form recognises conversation in the field. All these scholars merely highlight the above forms in their studies but do not attempt to investigate them further.

Some other scholars (e.g., Bascom, 1969; Abimbola, 1976; Akinnaso, 1982; and Olatunji, 1984) have described the structures of text in some Yoruba genres in folkloric, literary, socio-linguistic and stylistic studies. Many of these studies occasionally touch on some aspects of language use in Yoruba traditional medicine, but none of them has specifically described the linguistic features in these aspects; nor has any made a systematic study of the aspects themselves.

This writer (see Adegbite, 1991) has recently attempted a systematic study of features of language use in herbalist-client interactions. In a section of this study, I describe the structure of texts from the interactions using analytical tools provided by recent advances in studies on discourse/text structure. Presented in this paper is a description of the structure of some Yoruba traditional medicine texts that appear in the study. The presentation describes the patterns of turntaking and transactional activities of Yoruba traditional medicine participants represented by these texts. Apart from explicating text structure theory, the presentation gives information about the language and social behaviour of participants in Yoruba traditional medicine practice.

2. Data base of study

The presentation below uses data from the wider investigation mentioned above. The data derive mainly from three sources of speech encounters in Yoruba traditional medicine practice, viz. direct observation and recording of natural herbalist-client encounters; recording of scenes of herbalist-client encounters from television, plays; and elicitations and recording of direct interviews of some practitioners of Yoruba traditional medicine. In all, over fifty texts from diverse encounters are observed and seven texts representative of these are analysed. The structural features typical of the texts analysed are explicated with relevant extracts, and suitable references are made to extended texts presented in the work.

3. Text structure theory

The 'text' is a unit of language use which incorporates language form with situational factors of communication. It represents the analytical

unit of discourse in discourse-oriented studies. Although many scholars claim to describe the discourse when they describe verbal recordings of speech events, what they inevitably collect, observe and study is the text because it is virtually an impossible task to describe the actual occurrence of discourse in speech events. Whatever sophisticated equipment and research commitment are applied, the actual formal and situational features of discourse cannot be retained in the verbal recording of a speech event (cf. Brown and Yule, 1983). Thus, a study of texts is normally predicated on the assumption that there is 'alienation' of data (Burton, 1980) and consequently the displacement and distortion of the actual linguistic and situational features of discourse in naturally occurring talk. In view of the above constraint on the study of discourse, the study of texts has continuously enabled scholars to gain useful insights into the properties of language in the context of social use serving individual human needs. Even the alienated data can provide a ripe resource for the discourse analyst, as Burton (1980: 102) indicates:

... in each of these disciplines, observers and theorists argue convincingly that Alienation Devices enable analytical thought to penetrate the otherwise intangible aspects of the everyday world.

Because the data used in this study are alienated from the environment of their actual occurrence, we call them 'texts' rather than 'discourses'.

The analysis of text structure in this study hinges on three useful textual concepts: mode, synchronisation and structuration. The text mode is conceived in terms of three choices: dialogical, monological and 'polylogical'. While a dialogue or conversation represents an exchange of communication between two or more participants taking turns in an interaction, a monologue represents a unidirectional overt communication of experience by a speaker; and a polylogue combines the two in such a way that one occurs as a smaller structure within a larger structure of the other. The term polylogue, coined by this writer, is characteristic of the situational feature of complex discourse participation mentioned by Crystal and Davy (1969: 68-71).

The latter two concepts of synchronisation and structuration are used by Richardson (1981). Synchronisation is associated with turntaking, the means by which two participants in a conversation speak orderly and meaningfully even without any pre-determined specific position for them (cf. Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson, 1974). Richardson (1981) sees the turn as a speaker's exercise of the option 'talk' as opposed to 'no talk' in conversational interaction. The turns in an interaction can be seen in terms of the overt contributions of the participants. While the norm is for speakers to alternate contributions one after the other in turn-taking,

there is also room for parallel or overlapping contributions where speakers take turns at the same time or take turns in the middle of other turns.

The concept of structuration refers to the manner in which a text is described in terms of certain structural categories which occur as units and enter into various systemic relationships. A systemic base for structural description is provided by Sinclair and Coulthard's (1975) suggestion of five units of structure in a hierarchical order thus: lesson, transaction, exchange, move and act. The lesson is made up of transactions, a transaction made up of exchanges, an exchange made up of moves and a move describable in terms of acts. Three kinds of moves are recognised in the suggestion (cf. Coulthard and Brazil, 1979). The 'initiation' move (I) is the first move in an exchange and it sets up an expectation for a response. A 'response' move (R) follows an initiation and it does not predict any other move. Lastly, the 'feedback' or 'follow-up' move (F) supports an initiation or response but it is not predicted by either of them.

The above suggestion has been tested on conversations from diverse contexts and the categories further developed to cater for features of different kinds of conversation (cf. Coulthard and Montgomery, 1981). In Burton's (1980 and 1981) formulation, the structural units mentioned above are presented in terms of their classes and the systemic positions of the elements constituting them. The term 'interaction' substitutes the 'lesson' as the highest unit of conversation made up of transactions. A transaction has an optional explicit 'boundary' exchange and an obligatory 'conversational' exchange. The boundary exchange occurs at the openings of transactions and it has either a 'frame' or 'focus' move or both moves plus a supporting move. Both the frame (Fr) and focus (Fo) involve acts that are essentially attention-getting or pre-topic items: such acts include marker, preface, starter, summons, greeting, meta statement and conclusion. The conversational exchange is made up of opening, challenging, supporting, re-opening and bound-opening moves. An opening move (O) is transaction-initial and it makes no anaphoric reference to a preceding utterance. A challenging move (C) holds up the progress of topic or topic introduction via an unexpected response or reaction or silence. A supporting move (S) facilitates the topic presented in a previous utterance. A re-opening move (Ro) occurs after a preceding opening or bound-opening move is challenged. And a bound-opening move (Bo) occurs after a preceding opening or re-opening move has been supported; it has no separate topic content but is bound to the content of an opening move. The move itself is accounted for in terms of such acts as summoning, eliciting, checking, accusing, directing, accepting, replying, reacting, informing, etc.

Burton's classification of exchanges above differs, though not in a fundamental way, from Akindele's (1986: 158) suggestion of three kinds of exchanges in his description of family conversations in English. While we intend to use Burton's terms mainly in this study to support the earlier traditional categories of initiation, response, etc., we shall use Akindele's 'prefatory' instead of Burton's 'boundary' exchange because the former avoids the possible confusion of the terms 'boundary' and 'bound' of an exchange and move respectively. The prefatory, like the boundary exchange, has moves constituted by summons, greetings and other permission-getting acts. It has no content information as far as the business of talk is concerned; but it provides an opportunity to make participants available for more talk in the discourse.

Lastly, in describing the structure of monologues, three broad units proposed by Coulthard and Montgomery (1981: 31-39) become relevant for us, viz. transaction, sequence and members. Transaction is the unit of monologue identified by the focusing activity that occurs at its boundaries; it has a structure suggested as prospective focus, informing members and retrospective focus. The informing members in a transaction combine into sequences of topic units which develop a series of content information. In this study we refer to a topic unit as 'motif'. Thus, a transaction necessarily has a content which is describable in terms of motifs.

4. The structure of Yoruba traditional medicine texts

In general Yoruba traditional medicine texts exhibit two types of structures: the dialogical and polylogical structures. While some of the texts are dialogical because they solely present the conversational mode of communication, some are polylogical because they present monologues within their primary dialogical structure. The complexity of the structure of polylogical texts as opposed to the simple structures of dialogical texts can be attributed to the complex nature of problems in the speech events which the texts represent. While the dialogue between a herbalist and his client is, for instance, employed for a minor case of headache or cold or cough, the polylogue, in which herbalist conversation is accompanied by herbalist's consultations of supernatural powers, is used if the headache or cough or barrenness is persistent or has indications of preternatural causation.

Meanwhile, a common feature of the two groups of texts identified here is that both of them are marked by dialogue. But while this property is the sole feature of the first group, it is only the primary one of two sub-structures fused together in each text of the second group. In spite of this difference, dialogue still remains the basic feature of all Yoruba

traditional medicine texts, while polylogue is a defining property of some of the texts.

4.1. *The turn-taking devices in Yoruba traditional medicine texts*

Although dialogue in Yoruba traditional medicine texts normally alternates between two recognised participants—a herbalist and a client, there is no limit to the number of people who may participate in the dialogue, as those on some occasions may include the herbalist's attendant who supports the herbalist, the client's relations and friends who support the client and co-clients who may support either the herbalist or client.¹ No matter the number of participants in a dialogue, it is observed, however, that the dominant speaker from the point of view of synchronisation is the herbalist. Apparently, he plays more roles in the communication than any other participant, acting in his capacity as a doctor, dispenser and, quite often, a counsellor. The herbalist very often takes the longest turns in a Yoruba traditional medicine text. In fact, a turn by the priest in one of the texts accounts for about 25 per cent of the length of the dialogue which has a total number of 64 turns. Similarly, his turns are often the most numerous in a text that has more than two participants. For example, the frequency of turns made by participants in three texts from our data is shown in Table 1.

The dominance of a herbalist in Yoruba traditional medicine communication is most emphasised in a text that has a polylogical structure. In such a text the herbalist may use his right of one or more turns to present monological expressions which may be short or long. Although these monologues will necessarily relate to the purpose of the dialogue, the client is temporarily cut out of the communication which may narrate a mythological event or assert certain unerring principles based on observations of nature or request a wish (or wishes) from some supernatural beings. The dialogue can only resume when the herbalist gives the cue, like asking the client a direct question, calling him or commenting on the content of the monologue in such a way as to invite a response from

Table 1. *Herbalist's turns in Yoruba traditional medicine*

Text	Turns	Participants	Herbalist's turns	% of turns herbalist	% of excess
A	42	4	20	48	23
B	103	3	37	36	3
C	65	4	28	43	18

the client. The polylogical structure is very typical of Yoruba traditional medicine texts that have one or more of the transactions of divination, incantation or supplication in them; but it is more pronounced when a text combines more than one of these forms of expression with the diagnostic and, possibly, prescriptive transaction. The constitution of Yoruba traditional medicine texts can be understood better after the discussion of their constituent transactions below.

4.2. *The structure of transactions in Yoruba traditional medicine texts*

In terms of structuration, Yoruba traditional medicine texts represent interactional events constituted by two or more transactions. Each transaction is made up of a conversational exchange or a monological contribution. The first transaction of a Yoruba traditional medicine text normally follows a prefatory exchange which opens the text and the last transaction precedes another prefatory exchange which closes it. The structure of exchanges and monologues in Yoruba traditional medicine transactions is described below, based on texts that have the herbalist and client as contributors.²

4.2.1. *The prefatory exchange structure*

- (1) a. *Okúnrin:* *Àborúboyè ooo!* 1
Babaláwo: *Àboyèboṣiṣe. Aboyèboṣe se. Sòo bá mi lenu 're.*
Ire náà à sí se dódò re.
- Okúnrin:* *A-difú-ghogún-òkè!*
Babaláwo: *Èmi ni yèn.* 5
Okúnrin: *O mò kú ètò o. (Ó pe omọ wolé) Àlábí!*
Babaláwo: *Aa n e à sojú e.*
Okúnrin: *Àṣ. Àṣe. Àṣe*
Babaláwo: *Èni glèni ò ní gbaṣe re se.*
Okúnrin: *Àṣe. Àṣe. Àṣe.* 10
- *Man: *Àborúboyè* (a special greeting for diviners)! 1
Diviner: *Àboyèboṣiṣe. Aboyèboṣiṣe* (a special reply).
You meet me on the path of blessings. May
the blessing get to you.
- Man: One-who-divines-to-receive-prize-money!
Diviner: That's me. 5
Man: Greetings to you. (Calls his son in) Alabi!
Diviner: May the good things in your life happen in
your presence.

- Man: *Àṣẹ. Àṣẹ. Àṣẹ* (May it be so).
 Diviner: May another person not substitute you in performing your rightful duties.
 Man: *Àṣẹ. Àṣẹ. Àṣẹ.*
- b. *Obìnrin:* (*Láti ìta*) *Baba o! Baba!*
Onísègùn: (*Nínú yàrà*) *È wólè o. A à, sè dáada ni?*
Obìnrin: *A dúpé o*
Onísègùn: *Ilé ñkò o?*
Obìnrin: *Ilé wà dáada*
- 'Woman: (From outside) Father! Father!
 Herbalist: (Inside) Do come in. Ah, how are you?
 Woman: We thank Gr...
 Herbalist: How's your home?
 Woman: Home is fine.'
- c. (i) *Obìnrin:* *È sè o. O dabọ o!*
Onísègùn: *E. kílè o.*
- 'Woman: Thank you. Bye-bye!
 Herbalist: Greet your home.'
- c. (ii) *Onísègùn:* *Má a wólè o. Olórùn á wòò.. Olórùn á daa si.*
Obìnrin: *Amin mà. Ó dàbò o!*
- 'Herbalist: Mind your step. May God look after him. May God preserve his life.
 Woman: Amen. Bye-bye!'
- d. *Okùnrin:* (*Sàré wólè pèlù omọ lówó*) *Baba, ẹ gba mi!*
Babaláwo: (*Sàré díde ñilè*) *ki ló dé?*
Okùnrin: *E gbà mí ooo! E gbà mí ooo!*
(Babaláwo: gba omọ lówó okùnrin, ó yẹẹ wò)
- 'Man: (Runs in carrying child in his arms) Father, help me!
 Diviner: (Stands up hastily) What is wrong! What is wrong!
 Man: Help me! Help me!
 (Diviner receives child from the man and examines him)'

The rule for a co-occurring set of prefatory exchanges in Yoruba traditional medicine texts can be stated symbolically thus:

Fr S + (Fr S)ⁿ
 {greeting} accept greeting accept
 {summons}

10 The above rule applies to the normal occurrences of prefatory exchange in the texts as are described below.

1 Normally, every prefatory exchange has an obligatory frame and supporting move. However, because there can be a set of prefatory exchanges co-occurring, we thus recognise an opening frame move and a supporting move which are obligatory, followed by an optional set of frame and supporting moves which can recur in as many prefatory exchanges as co-occur in a text. The prefatory exchange starting a Yoruba traditional medicine text, for example (see examples [1a and b]), has an obligatory frame of a client initiation of greeting or summons act followed by a herbalist supporting response of acceptance of the greeting or summons.
 5 The greetings in the next prefatory exchange(s) after the first are then initiated by the herbalist⁴ and accepted by the client.

The prefatory exchange(s) closing a text has similar features to the one above (see example [1c]) except perhaps that either participant may initiate the greetings here. Meanwhile, the above exchanges differ from the prefatory exchanges in texts from emergency herbalist-client encounters in terms of the acts in the frame and supporting moves. In the latter exchanges (see example [1d]), the opening frame consists of a client summons for help and a prompt supporting move by the herbalist, accepting the summons through both verbal and non-verbal responses. The questions in the verbal reply in the first exchange in example (1d) may thus be seen to play a double role here. First, they show the herbalist's concern for the client and second, they try to elicit information in order to diagnose the problem of the latter.

4.2.2. *The transaction of diagnosis*

- (2) a. *Babaláwo:* (*Ó wokùn obìnrin, o rẹrìn-ìn*) *Şára lófẹ dáada?* 1
Obìnrin
ahoyùn: *Kò lófẹ kankan.*
Babaláwo: *E è ti jẹ? Kí ló dé?* 體訓
Obìnrin: *N ló jẹ n wá.*
Babaláwo: *È é sẹ o?* 5
Obìnrin: *N ò mọ bára mi sẹ ñ ri. Bí m bá sùn, gbàgungbà-gun lara ...*
Babaláwo: *Ààà! Baun ni. A mọ wá bée. Áááá!*
Obìnrin: *Wókowòko báyii laraà mi ri. Eyii tó wá sẹ mi*
ti tójò mèta ... 10

- Babaláwo:* *A máa wá báun. Sùúrù ló ghà. Un tó lójò ni, sùúrù ni. (Pelù àwádá) Q̄́ bá mí gógunmu kékeré kan koó tò lo ẹ̀n ẹ̀n?*
- Obìnrin:* *Babá dé nùu o jué.*
- Babaláwo:* *Ó daá, díde o fò òkè lèmmeta kí n wò ó.*
- Obìnrin:* *Aà.*
- Babaláwo:* *Áàà, arúghò. Ó daá, n ó fúu o ní òògun kékeré kan tóò moò lo. Mò r̄ . . .*
- Obìnrin:* *Ẹ̀n ẹ̀n ẹ̀n.*
- Diviner:* (Looks at woman's tummy and laughs) Is your body very sound?
- Pregnant woman:* It isn't at all.
- Diviner:* What is amiss? What's wrong?
- Woman:* That's what has brought me here.
- Diviner:* What has happened?
- Woman:* I don't know how I'm feeling. When I sleep, my body is so disorganized ...
- Diviner:* Ah! That's how it is. It normally happens like that. Ha ah!
- Woman:* My body is disordered. And I've been in this present condition for up to three days ...
- Diviner:* It sometimes comes like that. Patience is what it requires. Whatever has a time span requires patience. (Jokingly) You will help me pound a small herbal powder before you go, okay?
- Woman:* Father has come again with his teasing.
- Diviner:* All right, jump up three times and let me see.
- Woman:* Ah!
- Diviner:* Ah ha! Old woman. Okay, I'll give you one little medicine which you'll be using. Hold on for me.
- Woman:* All right.
- b. *Onísègùn:* *Sé kò sí o?*
- Obìnrin:* *(Iyá Omọ): Ó n̄ yòdí. Tò há ti n̄ yàgbé bàyí, ìdí ẹ̀ á wá yọ. Àfí taa bà sèṣè wá baa fowọ̀ tí sínu.*
- Onísègùn:* *Ìdí yìyọ̀ niyẹn. (Ó yẹ omọ̀ wò)*
- Obìnrin:* *Kí lẹ̀ pè ẹ̀?*
- Onísègùn:* *Ìdí yìyọ̀ niyẹn sẹ̀. Yòdí yòdí niyẹn. E ẹ̀ se n̄kan e ni.*

- Obìnrin:* *A á se n̄kan ẹ̀?*
- Onísègùn:* *E ẹ̀ se eghògi e. E lo mú un tẹ̀ fi kàgbọ̀ omọ̀ yin wa, kée sí ra ìgò m̄j̄í wá loun yẹn.*
- Herbalist:* Hope there is nothing wrong? 1
- Woman (mother of child):* He has piles. Whenever he passes excreta, his anus protrudes. Unless we use our hand to push it in. 5
- Herbalist:* That is haemorrhoids. (Examines child)
- Woman:* What do you call it?
- Herbalist:* That is haemorrhoids, I say. That is piles. You will need the antidote to it.
- Woman:* We shall get the antidote?
- Herbalist:* You will purchase the medicines for it. Go 10 and get a container for carrying the medicines, and also get two bottles from that place.
- c. *Babaláwo:* *È ẹ̀ tí jẹ̀ o? Sè kò sí n̄kan?* 1
- Obìnrin:* *Ẹ̀yin ni mo wá rí. E jẹ̀ n̄ báfá ní gbólòhùn.*
- Babaláwo:* *Ọ̀m n̄n̄. Báfá s̄rò. (Ó sùn opọ̀n Ifá s̄dò obìnrin.)*
- (Obìnrin s̄rò kẹ̀lẹ̀kẹ̀lẹ̀ sífá. Lẹ̀yin ìgbà díẹ̀, Babaláwo n̄ dífá.)*
- Diviner:* What is amiss? Hope there is nothing wrong? 1
- Woman:* It's you I've come to see. Let me communicate with Ifa.
- Diviner:* Here you are. Speak to it. (He pushes the divination tray to her.)
- (Woman speaks silently to the divination instruments. After some time, the priest performs divination.)*
- The structure of diagnostic transaction encompasses four motifs which are listed below and later discussed in exchange terms. The motifs are as follows:
- 1 a. Herbalist's elicitation of information about a client's problem, client's reply to the elicitation and herbalist's acceptance or reaction to client's reply;
- 5 b. Client's checking of herbalist's response and herbalist's restatement or confirmation of it;
- c. Client's clarification of his problem, herbalist's confirmation of it and assurance of a possible remedy;

- d. Herbalist's post-diagnostic directive and/or information of client to get things ready or make preparation for the next transaction.

Motif (a) is the central motif of a diagnostic transaction. It is obligatory and can occur alone. But often, it is supported by other motifs. Motif (d) is very common in the transaction. It marks the end of a diagnostic exercise by giving information and directives which are connected to the next transaction. Motifs (b) and (c) are optional in the diagnostic transaction and they extend the content of motif (a) above.

The conversational exchange in a diagnostic transaction always opens with a herbalist initiation move which elicits information about the nature and symptoms of a client's illness. This elicitation may also recur in consequent exchanges in the transaction in opening, bound-opening or re-opening moves (example 2a, lines 1, 3 and 5; 2b, line 11). Following this opening initiation is a response move supporting it by providing a reply to it (example 2a, lines 6-7, 9-10; 2b, lines 2-4). If the reply is a satisfactory one (example 2a, lines 9, 11-13; 2b, line 5), the herbalist makes a follow-up supporting move, accepting the reply and/or reacting to it—by going in search of objects of remedy. But if the reply is unsatisfactory, the herbalist either re-opens the elicitation or reacts to the reply by using pragmatic means to find out the problem or even reacts and elicits at the same time (see example 1d, line 2).

The herbalist's follow-up move to a satisfactory response by a client, sometimes, may serve as an incentive for the latter to initiate a bound-opening move where she provides more information to clarify her previous reply to the herbalist; and the herbalist very often supports her by confirming such clarification and assuring her that all will be well (example 2, line 8). Occasionally, however, a client may check her understanding of a herbalist's suggestion in a previous move in a diagnostic transaction. Such a checking may require the herbalist to repeat or restate his earlier proposition or it may just require the herbalist's confirmation of the proposition. The former checking can be said to realise a challenge while the latter realises a bound-opening move. The challenging move predicts the herbalist's re-opening move in which he repeats his earlier proposition (example 2b, line 7), while the bound-opening move predicts a support which confirms the client's echoic proposition (example 2b, line 10).

Other essential acts performed by herbalists in diagnostic transactions include giving appropriate directives and/or information that are relevant to the consequent transaction of either divination or medication (example 2a, lines 18-20; 2b, lines 10-12; 2c, lines 3-4). These acts most often realise a herbalist's opening which is supported by a client's reaction.

Note, however, that the divinatory transaction follows a diagnosis mostly when the latter means has not proved suitable for identifying a client's problem. Thus the structure of a diagnostic transaction may be truncated (in terms of not representing most of the motifs above) if there is a divinatory transaction following it (example 2c, lines 1-2).

The moves and acts in the above discussion can be represented by the symbols below:

- | | | | | | | |
|----|-----------|--------|----------------|---------------|----------|---------------------|
| a. | O | S | S ⁿ | +O/BO | S | Herbalist initiated |
| | elicit | reply | accept | inform/direct | reaction | |
| b. | (Bo | S | S) | | | Client initiated |
| | {clarify} | | confirm | | accept | |
| | {check} | | | | | |
| c. | (C | Re | S) | | | Client initiated |
| | check | repeat | accept | | | |

4.2.3. *The transaction of divination*

- (3) *Babaláwo: Ifa,* 1
Elérii ipin!
Iwájú oṣun, o gbó o!
Èyin oṣun òun Olòkànràn òtún
Olòkànràn òsì 5
Ààrin oṣun gan-an nita òrun
Ilẹ̀ o gbó o, Ógégéré a-fokó-yeri
Ení o gbó o, Pàkiti Amú
Ibà èyin iyáà mi Oṣòròngà ...
Èyin lẹ̀ dá mi lódù lẹ̀ tẹ̀ mí nífá 10
E ní n màa jí bofá ní mo jí bofá
Bèyàn bá tí jí gbó tífá kò lẹ̀ síṣo o
Àgbàlagbà ìi dawò bojú ò purò.
Ire ni! (Babaláwo na òpèlẹ̀ mọ̀lẹ̀.)
Áá! Oṣétirètẹ̀! Aawọ eerin lomọ̀ yí 15
A à gbodò pa à
Bẹ̀ẹ̀ ní a à gbodò jẹ̀ẹ̀
Enìkan ò sí gbodò gbe e sọ̀nù.
Ibì ayé fojú sí, ònà ò gbabẹ̀ lọ.
Iree! (Ó na òpèlẹ̀ mọ̀lẹ̀) 20
Ááá, ire ni! A à, o kárèe!
Wọ̀n wí pé Olúṣogbó Olúṣogbó níi sọ̀mọ̀
Àjàáyàniwájìn
Tii sọ̀mọ̀ Ìwòrì Mésá

Ìwòrì Mèfà ìwọ̀ lo bí mí, ìwọ̀ lo rà mí
Mo tún derù oníwọ̀ Ìwòrì Mèfà 25
Ló dífá fún Àkátámágbò
Níjọ̀ tí ñ tinú iyá è bí ọmọ̀ tuntun wálè ayé
Ìwájú ò bá pón téré-téré
Awo ò le rí un ẹ̀
A, orí ọkà a já fún ọkà 30
Orí Àgbonmìrègún a já fún Àgbonmìrègún
Àsàsí ọkà níí pọkà
Àsàsí erè níí perè
Àkòtì kò gbọ̀dọ̀ pèètù ...
Arábinrin! 35

Obinrin

(Iyawo): Èn èn

Babaláwo: Fawọ̀ balẹ̀ o fi kànyà ẹ̀ nígbà méta; kóo pọ̀o kẹ̀lẹ̀dàá ẹ̀ kú oriire.

Obinrin: (Ó rọ̀ra sọ̀rọ̀) Mo kẹ̀lẹ̀dàá mi kú oriire o.

Babaláwo: Nghò o ó fi dẹ̀bí ọ̀rọ̀ rẹ̀ jù báun lo? 40

Obinrin: (Ó sọ̀rọ̀ sókè) Mo kí ọ̀ kú oriire ẹ̀lẹ̀dàá mi o.

Babaláwo: An-in o. Ó wá daá o. Àsàsí ni

Obinrin: Èḗ, èmi náá wí bẹ̀. Wọ̀n ọ̀n jẹ́ á wí ...

Ọkọ: Baba, àwa méta náá la wá nínu ilé. Orogúnun rẹ̀, 45
 Bọ̀lánílẹ̀, kí í ẹ̀ ẹ̀yàn burúkú. Èyàn dáada ni. Taa wá ní óó tuń mọ̀ sà síi?

Babaláwo: Baba, ẹ̀yin lẹ̀ ñ sọ̀rọ̀ bí ọmọ̀ kékeré báyii? Nbẹ̀ mọ̀ pé àjẹ̀ tí bá ñ pa ní wọ̀n ń rẹ̀jẹ̀ lẹ̀nu ẹ̀.

Ọkọ: Ọmọ̀ yii ò le díde. Kí ni n taa le lò fuń un báyii?

Babaláwo: N ñ wá dògún kan fuń yín báyii. È ẹ̀ bu epo pupa 50
 sínu àwo tó tẹ̀ báyii ...

'Diviner: Ifa,

The witness at the sharing of destinies!

The front of the divination tray, hear!

The back of the tray and Olokanran on the right

The Olokanran on the left 5

The centre of the tray exactly is the outside of heaven

Hear you Earth who used the hoe to till its head

Hear you Mat, Pakiti Amu

Homage is paid to you my mothers, Osoranga ...

It was you who taught me the Odu and Ifa 10
 divination

You said I should perform divination early in the morning and so I did

If one listens to Ifa first thing in the morning, he cannot talk nonsense

An elderly person does not cover his face with hand and tell lies

Blessings! (Diviner throws divination chain.)

Ah! Osetirete! Ah, an elephant skin is what this 15
 child is

It shouldn't be killed

So also it shouldn't be eaten

And nobody should throw it away

What one expects isn't what the events turn out to be.

Blessings! (Throws divination chain on the 20
 ground)

Ah, it's blessings! Ah, you're commended!

They said Olusogbo was the child of

Ajaayaniwajin

What was the child of Iwori Mefa

Iwori Mefa it was you who bore me, who bought 25
 me

I then became the slave of you Iwori Mefa 25
 Ifa divination was cast for Akalamagbo (Ground Hornbill)

On the day she was coming to the world as a baby in her mother's womb

If the front does not give red (danger) signals

The Ifa priest cannot have anything to do

Ah, the ori (personal god) of the cobra fights for 30
 the cobra

The personal god of Agbonmiregun fights for Agbonmiregun

The magic of the cobra kills the cobra

The magic of the python kills the python

No magical power can surpass the power of sacrifice ...

Woman! 35

Woman

(a wife): Yes.

Diviner: Place your hand on the ground and put on your chest three times; thank your stars for your luck.

- Woman: (Talking silently) I greet my stars for being lucky.
 Diviner: By the time you came here, your case was more than that? 40
 Woman: (Talking louder) I greet you my stars for your luck.
 Diviner: Yes. Okay now. It is a magical affliction.
 Woman: I too suspected that. They didn't allow us to talk ...
 Husband: Sir, there are only three of us in the house. Her co-wife, Bolanle, is not a bad person. She is a good person. Who can then be working magic against him? 45
 Diviner: Father, you're the one talking like a small child. So I suppose you know that a witch that kills someone, no blood ever shows on her mouth.
 Husband: This boy cannot stand up, what can we do to benefit him now? 50
 Diviner: I'll look for a medicine for you now. You will put palm-oil inside a hollow plate ...'

The two transactions pertaining to divination in Yoruba traditional medicine texts are then diagnostic divination and divinatory prescription. The structure of these transactions is described below.

The diagnostic divinatory transaction is a monological transaction constituted by four major parts: a focus, an opening, a series of informs constituting motifs and a conclusion. From the opening to the conclusion seven motifs can be recognised which correspond to the seven part structure earlier presented by scholars on this subject (cf. Akinnaso, 1983; Olatunji, 1984). The motifs are stated as follows, after the focus of the transaction.

- Focus: a. summons (diviner's invocation of gods);
 b. starter (diviner's acknowledgement of *odu* [Ifa configuration] and preview of content);
- Opening: a. citation;
 b. the protagonist involved and the problem tackled;
 c. medication (Ifa's reply in form of prescription or incantation or both);
 d. the client's (non-) compliance with prescription;
 e. the resolution or outcome of medication and client's reaction;
 f. intra-structural recapitulation;

Conclusion: comments on the greatness of Ifa and the need to obey his commands.

The boundary of a diagnostic divinatory transaction is marked by a focus made up of a summons, starter and conclusion. However, while the first two features are peripheral to the content of the transaction, the third is integrated into the content; thus the conclusion is accounted for as one of the motifs of the transaction. The summons represent invocations and chants of praises to some gods that should be invoked for the success of a divination exercise (example 3, lines 1–13). And the starter represents the diviner's acknowledgement of the *odu* that emerges on the board and his preview of the content of the *odu* (example 3, lines 14–21).

The content of an *odu* opens with a citation, which Olatunji (1984: 130) describes thus:

The citation can consist of the names of the *babalawo* followed by *awo* (priest for/of) and the names of their towns or clients ... The characteristic sayings of the *babalawo* (*alaje*) may be used to refer to them in the citation ...

This feature is characteristic of all instances of the diagnostic divinatory transaction, where it may be represented briefly, extensively or at different points in the transaction (example 3, lines 22–25).

Motif (b) in the structure identifies the protagonist of the Ifa narrative in the transaction and the problem encountered by him for which he requires solution (example 3, lines 26–29). The motif is very often signalled in divinatory texts by the phrase *dia fun* 'cast Ifa for'. On some occasions, however, other indicators may signal this section, for example:

- a. *Àwọn ní wọn kófá sàràsàrà lọwọ Ọ̀rúnmìlà ...*
 'It was they who learnt Ifa thoroughly from Orunmila ...'
 b. *Àwọn mètètèta gbèrù ní kòlè ọ̀run ...*
 'Those three packed their luggage in heaven ...'

Motif (c) indicates the feature of medication in the transaction. The term 'medication' is preferred here to 'prescription' which many scholars (e.g., Abimbola, 1976; Akinnaso, 1982; Olatunji, 1984) have used because, unlike the latter term, it covers any kind of treatment that may occur in divinatory transaction, whether it is a prescription, incantation or both. In example (3) above, for instance, the medication motif is realised by incantations (lines 30–34). An extract of a prescriptive realisation can be seen thus:

- c. *Ọ̀rúnmìlà bá ní kó rùbọ*
Ó ní irú ẹ̀bọ wo ní wọn ní kóun rú?
Ó ní wọn ní kó rùbọ ọ̀fò omọ

The first conversational exchange in the divinatory prescription transaction has the pair of moves of opening initiation and supporting response. In the initiation, the diviner tries to assure the client about the positive implication of the content of the previous narrative, while the latter reacts happily to the assurance (example 3, lines 37–39). It is observed that the content of the narrative recitation almost always has a positive implication for the client, no matter how serious the problem, provided that she is ready to carry out Ifa's instructions to her.

The other obligatory exchange in the divinatory prescription transaction is that in which the diviner initiates an opening or bound-opening move which informs the client about the content of the divination earlier performed by him (example 3, lines 42–49). The client supports this move and accepts the information. Note that the structure of this exchange may be recursive in the transaction.

In the optional exchanges, the choice of what kind of initiation the diviner makes depends on the extent of reaction of the client to his earlier assurance of her. He may initiate a challenge move here or initiate an opening or bound-opening move. If the client overreacts to the assurance, the diviner challenges her over-enthusiasm and cautions her to keep calm and listen attentively to the rest of the message, thus:

- b. *Obinrin:* *Mo ...ô dúpẹ́ o.*
Babaláwo: *Ọ̀ n kánjù. Aà! Ifá ti n sọ̀pọ̀ o. Ní sùúrúu*
 'Woman: I'm indeed grateful.
 Diviner: You're hasty. Ah! Ifa has started to talk. Have patience.'

If she reacts casually to it, the challenge becomes a reproach cautioning the client's ungratefulness (example 3, lines 40–41); the latter supports the diviner's challenge and reacts appropriately to the assurance.

An alternative to the exchange above is that in which the diviner elicits further relevant information from the client to facilitate the interpretation process, for example:

- i. *Babaláwo:* *Tuani ìwọ̀ ẹ̀ jọ da nkan pọ̀?*
Okúnrin: *Èmi ẹ̀nikankan ọ̀ da nkan pọ̀.*
Babaláwo: *O ọ̀ rańt i dádáda?*
Okúnrin: *Mii bááyàn da nkan pọ̀ ...*
 'Diviner: Whom do you have a deal with?
 Man: Nobody and I have a deal.
 Diviner: Won't you remember well?
 Man: I do not have a deal with anyone ...'

The optional exchanges above may co-occur in a transaction and the latter further has the property of recursiveness.

4.2.4. *The transaction of prescriptive medication*

- (4) *Onísẹ̀gùn:* *Tọ̀ọ bá ti délé, aṣọ̀ rẹ̀ ni kọ̀p lẹ̀ mọ̀dii.* 1
Okúnrin: *Aṣọ̀ rẹ̀ ni kí n lẹ̀ mọ̀dii?*
Onísẹ̀gùn: *O ọ̀ sí wà ní ihòòjò ọ̀mọ̀lúwàbí. O ọ̀ n gbọ̀ mí bí?*
Okúnrin: *Mò n gbọ̀.*
Onísẹ̀gùn: *O ọ̀ wàà gá le lóri, o ọ̀ fi kinni yíi pa á látórí dẹ̀sẹ̀.* 5
Okúnrin: *En ẹn ...*
 'Herbalist: When you get home her wrappers is what you should tie around your waist.
 Man: I should tie her clothes round my waist?
 Herbalist: And you will be stark naked. Are you listening?
 Man: I'm listening.
 Herbalist: You will then straddle her, you will use this thing 5
 to rub her from head to toe.
 Man: Yes ...'

The conversational exchanges in the prescriptive transaction can be seen from the herbalist-initiation or client-initiation point of view or both. The former viewpoint has the following structure:

O/Bo Sⁿ + (O/Bo S)
 direct, inform accept check reply

An obligatory herbalist opening or bound-opening initiation move with both direct and inform acts is supported by a client's verbal response and/or reaction (e.g. nodding) acts. This exchange may be recursive in the transaction (example 4, lines 5–6). Following the instructions given in the exchange(s) above, the herbalist may use some opening moves to check whether the client has understood his instructions or not. The client supports these moves by replying via verbal and/or non-verbal response (example 4, lines 3–4).

The structure of the exchange which a client initiates can be symbolised thus:

O/Bo S Sⁿ + (Bo S S)
 elicit direct, inform accept check confirm accept

The above rule states that an opening initiation of elicitation (see example 3, lines 49–51) invites a herbalist's supporting response of inform and direct acts, and a client's final supporting response of accept. Also there is a facility here for an optional exchange in which the client seeks clarification of the herbalist's instructions. The herbalist confirms the clarification and the client accepts the confirmation.

4.2.5. *The transaction of incantatory medication*

The incantatory transaction in Yoruba has two major monological subtypes: the *ofò* proper and the *Àyájò* (cf. Olabimtan, 1971; Olatunji, 1984). *Ofò* is the general name for all incantations, whereas *àyájò* is often used to refer to those *ofò* which derive from divinatory sources. However, apart from the mythical narratives and allusions or the *diá fún* 'cast divination for' phrase which often marks *àyájò* from other kinds of *ofò*, incantations generally seem to develop a basic set of motifs as follows (cf. Olatunji, 1984: 152–160):

- Focus: summons (enchanter's invocation of agents)
 Motifs: a. statement of problem
 b. assertions
 c. application

An example of *ofò* proper (an antidote to headache) is provided by the extract below:

- (5) *Òpàkànlaun (lẹ̀mẹ̀ta)!*
Òpàkàngbemi (lẹ̀mẹ̀ta)!
 Àáké òrìsà mú fún ọ̀ rẹ̀ é ọ̀
 Wọ̀n ò ní kóo fí lárí lágbaja ọ̀ } (lẹ̀mẹ̀ta)
 Igi ní wọ̀n ní koo fí là ọ̀
Má lán lágbaja ọ̀.

'Opakanlaun (3 times)!'
 'Opakangbemi (3 times)!

This is the axe the god has given you
 They don't say that you should break such-and-such's
 (name mentioned) head with it
 It is wood they ask you to break with it
 Don't break such-and-such person's head.' (3 times)

The focus of an incantatory transaction, like the citation in divinatory texts, refers to the summoning of agents (her incantatory agents) by their special and/or usual names. This feature is found in many incantatory transactions (e.g., example 5, lines 1–2), but it may not be realised in some others.

The problem motif normally starts the reason for an incantation. It is always found in incantatory transactions (example 5). In *àyájò* incantations, the problem is often stated after the *diá fún* phrase, as in the diagnostic divinatory transaction (example 3, lines 26–28).

Assertions and applications are the most central motifs in incantations.

Assertions here refer to expressions which argue the inevitability of certain occurrences based on some known, observed or assumed social truths or beliefs by the enchanters of incantations. There may be positive assertions of correlates of states and events in nature (example 3, lines 30–33; example 5, line 5); these are further clearly illustrated thus:

- a. *Efun ní bààwọ̀ osun jẹ*
Osun ní bààwọ̀ efun jẹ
Àtefun àtosun, èèdú ní bààwọ̀ wọ̀n jẹ
 'The white spoils the colour of the red
 The red spoils the colour of the white
 Whether white or red, the black contaminates them'

There may also be negative assertions of correlates (example 3, line 34; example 5, line 4); these are further illustrated thus:

- b. *Ijì kii já kò gbódó*
Ijì kii já kò gbólọ̀
 'The storm does not carry a mortar
 The storm does not carry a grinding stone'

Both of the positive and negative assertions may be expressed separately or together in a text; but whichever way they occur, the incontrovertibility of the facts in them within the culture and the mystic context of the enchantment is the reason why the people believe the incantation must operate effectively (cf. Olatunji, 1984: 754).

Lastly, the application motif in incantations refers to the expression of wishes, requests and appeals by the enchanter. These wishes are usually consequent upon the assertions mentioned above from which they partly derive the essence of their potency (see example 5, line 6).

4.2.6. *The transaction of supplication*

- (6) *Òrúnmílà ọ̀ gbọ̀ ọ̀!* 1
Èlẹ̀rìí lín!
Ajẹ̀giògùn!
Lágbájá ọ̀mọ̀ rẹ̀ ọ̀
Ó tí sọ̀rọ̀ sówó, ọ̀ fí lúrì 5
Ó sì fọ̀pẹ̀lẹ̀ bàà
Fọ̀n-ọ̀n nílẹ̀!
Rírì wọ̀n máa rí, wọ̀n rí Ìwòrì Ìrẹ̀kú
Wọ̀n sọ̀ eegun sí ọ̀
Wọ̀n sọ̀ ọ̀ta sí ọ̀ 10
O nawọ̀ gáná, ọ̀ mọ̀ta.

<i>Pé ọta kii kú</i>	
<i>Erún (èkúrò) kii rún</i>	
<i>Ọgirisákò kii rárún èsì</i>	
<i>Kì lágbájá ọ̀ mọ̀ kúú</i>	15
<i>Kò mọ̀ rún</i>	
<i>Kò mọ̀ sòfò</i>	
<i>Kó jìṣẹ̀ rẹ̀, Ọ̀rúnmilà Ajàná</i>	
<i>Kóo gbé e dèbì gígá</i>	20
<i>Kóo dákun Ọ̀sẹ̀tùrá ...</i>	
'Hear Orunmila!	1
The witness at the sharing of destinies!	
Ajegiogun!	
Such-and-such person who is your child	
He has spoken to some money and touched his head with it	5
He has touched the money with the divination chain	
Throwing the chain on the ground	
What do they see, they see Iwori Ireku	
They throw a bone at you	
They throw a stone at you	10
You stretch your hand and take the stone	
Saying the stone does not die	
The palm kernel never falls ill	
The ogirisako (young palm) tree never lacks growth in a year	
Let such-and-such person not die	15
Let him not fall sick	
Let him not suffer from loss	
Let him eat from his labour, Orunmila Ajana	
You should take him to the height of fortune	
Please Oseetura ...'	20

The supplicating transaction has a similar structure to that of incantation above. That is, it has a focus that consists of summons act and motifs of identification of problem, expression of assertions and expression of wishes. While only the expression of wishes is identified in prayer greetings in texts (see example 1a, lines 6–9), all the parts above are represented in extensive medicating supplications (see example 6).

While incantations and supplications are difficult to distinguish in terms of their composition, intuitively one notices a difference in the application of the two. In incantations the enchanter seeks to put the addressees (most often belligerent forces) under his control, while in supplications he submissively seeks the protection and guidance of benevolent divinities against the evil machinations of the belligerent forces. In

supplications one thus notices the explicit use of such items of appeal as *dakun* 'please', *sàánú* 'have mercy', etc.

5. Summary and conclusion

In the discussion above, it is observed that Yoruba traditional medicine texts are identified and classified in terms of the co-occurrences of dialogical and/or monological transactions in them. Some Yoruba traditional medicine texts (type 1 texts) have solely a dialogical structure which is constituted by various exchanges in the diagnostic and prescriptive transactions. Some other texts (type 2 texts) have the co-occurrence of the dialogical structure with the monological structure of narratives, descriptions, arguments and requests made in divinatory, incantatory and supplicating transactions.

Talking about the exchange structures, it is observed that the first and last transactions identified in Yoruba traditional medicine texts are bounded respectively at the beginning and end by prefatory exchanges which mark the starting and closing of Yoruba traditional medicine interaction. Conversational exchanges are, however, identified with only the diagnostic and prescriptive medication transactions. Meanwhile, it is also observed that the divinatory prescriptive transaction, following a diagnostic divinatory transaction, also has a prefatory and a series of conversational exchanges of its own whenever the divinatory transaction is present in a text.

In the conversational exchanges mentioned above, it is observed that opening and supporting moves are predominant, while the challenge move seldom occurs. The openings are very often initiated by the herbalist who either elicits, gives and confirms some information or gives directives to a client, while the supporting move is often made by the client who also gives information at some point in the interaction. The occasional occurrences of the challenge move are identified with some of the herbalist's contributions which may accuse or caution some of the client's replies and reactions. On the contrary, the client seldom challenges the herbalist unless the communication between them has broken down. Even on the few occasions when she checks the herbalist's moves, such checks most often seek confirmation or clarification of the information she has already got rather than attempt to caution, disagree with or ask protracting questions from him.

Generally, in Yoruba traditional medicine interactions involving the herbalist and client, whether such interactions are two-party or multiparty, it is the older participant, or oldest as the case may be in

terms of social status and/or age, who controls the interaction. The herbalist does have greater freedom to select from the options of moves and acts available to him at a particular time in the interaction; for example, he can challenge a client's previous response move or open and re-open initiations irrespective of whether the opening is supported or not. As a corollary to the above, older participants have greater freedom to challenge the moves of younger ones in the interactions. Our observations show that the herbalist can challenge the moves of any of the participants in an interaction; a mother can challenge the move of a daughter; a husband can challenge the move of his wife, etc.

Notes

1. It is observed that interactions in Yoruba traditional medicine may occur between different participants: herbalist-client, herbalist-herbalist, herbalist-trainee, etc. The term herbalist-client thus marks the major participants in the Yoruba traditional medicine interactions described in this study.
2. Note that although there may be many contributors in Yoruba traditional medicine interaction, the norm for Yoruba traditional medicine texts generally is to represent the herbalist and client as contributors since they are the only stable participants in the interaction. There is, however, enough evidence from our analysis to show that exchange structures in a multi-party diagnostic or medicating transaction will differ from a two-party transaction.
3. While the '+' sign marks exchange boundaries, the brackets () and braces { } indicate optional features; the symbol 'n' raised shows possible recurrence of features of an exchange; and lastly, the acts of respective moves symbolised are stated below the individual moves. Meanwhile, the marker of exchange boundary above does not in any way impose any co-occurrence restriction against exchange sequences. As it were, an exchange, whether obligatory in a transaction or optional in it, is independent in the transaction and can co-occur freely with any other exchange recognised by the specified rule.
4. It is generally considered honourable by the Yoruba that it should be the older participant who first asks about the welfare of the younger participant after a younger person has initiated greetings (see Akindele, 1990: 9).
5. The exchanges are meant to be stated together, but they are presented separately here because they cannot be contained on one line.

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Wale Adegbite is a lecturer in the English Department of the Obafemi Awolowo University, in Ile Ife, Nigeria. His areas of specialisation are English as a Second Language and the applied linguistics of Yoruba and English. He has published in the *Journal of English as a Second Language* and *African Languages and Cultures*; he is the co-author of *The Sociology and Politics of English in Nigeria*.