

# AN ANALYSIS OF REPARTEE STRUCTURE IN HAUSA NARRATIVE DISCOURSE

Sharon R. Rand  
Summer Institute of Linguistics

The objective of this paper is to examine the use of dialogue in Hausa narrative text and thus to look at aspects of the constituent structure of this type of discourse.

My primary focus is on the text Bàgwaarii dà Maalàmii 'The Gwari and the Teacher.' Application of the methods of surface and deep (notional) structure analysis described by Longacre (1983a) has revealed insights into this text, particularly as to how different elements of its structure contribute to its effectiveness as a story. As a second step, I have applied the insights gathered from the analysis of this text to the study of other texts containing dialogue.

Longacre (1983a) distinguishes two levels of analysis that can be applied to dialogue: surface level and deep, or notional, level. These levels would correspond, respectively, to two types of structures: dialogue and repartee.

Longacre analyzes dialogue mainly in terms of two types of utterance: an **initiating utterance** (IU) and a **resolving utterance** (RU). The initiating utterance may be characterized in the deep structure as one of three types of opening or 'bid': a **question** (Q), a **proposal** (Pro), or a **remark** (R). The options for the resolving utterance correspond to these openings and are, respectively, an **answer** (A), a **response** (Res), or an **evaluation** (Ev). These relations can be seen clearly in the following examples provided by Longacre:

- |                                |          |
|--------------------------------|----------|
| 1. What time is it?            | (IU,Q)   |
| It's four o'clock.             | (RU,A)   |
| 2. Come over here.             | (IU,Pro) |
| Okay, I'm coming.              | (RU,Res) |
| 3. The whole matter is absurd. | (IU,R)   |
| Yes, indeed.                   | (RU,Ev)  |

To these basic repartee structures may be added two other possibilities. The first is a **terminating utterance** (TU) which, in the case of 1. above could communicate either acquiescence (e.g., 'Good, thank you.') or rejection ('Impossible!') of the information communicated in the response. The other possibility is a **continuing utterance** (CU) as a response, which does not attempt either to resolve the issue raised by the IU or to terminate the interaction. The goal of this maneuver may be to take control of the interaction away from the first speaker, or it may be simply to clarify meaning. If the second speaker's goal is control, then s/he resorts to one of the options of the IU and offers a counter-question, counter-proposal, or counter-remark.

Perhaps the most striking fact about the folktale dialogues analyzed here is the frequency of skewing among the units of notional structure repartee. Under Longacre's analysis it is this phenomenon which produces such anomalies as rhetorical questions and proposals disguised as questions.

That these occur in Hausa conversation can be attested by the following exchange from the folktale Kùreegee dà Buushiyaa 'Squirrel and Porcupine' (see the Appendix for the text itself, I include only the relevant English translation here):

Porcupine greeted Squirrel and said, "I'm cold. Is there a place where I can find shelter?"

Squirrel said, 'Come on in! My hole is comfortable.'

That Porcupine's question is really a proposal ('Let me take shelter here'), disguised for purposes of etiquette, is shown by Squirrel's immediate choice of a reply consisting of a response rather than a direct answer to the question. Porcupine in this instance is not after information; she primarily needs shelter.

The frequency of this 'out-of-phasedness' is particularly evident in another folktale, *Bàgwaarii dà Maalàmii* 'The Gwari and the Teacher.' The following is the relevant portion of the text, with an analysis of its repartee structure:<sup>1</sup>

4. *Bàgwaarii ya cèè ma-sà, "Gàà àbinci nân, àmmaa kadà kà ci*  
*Gwari RC say to-him there-is food here but neg S eat*  
*kàree-na."*

dog-my

'The Gwari said to him, "Here's some food, but don't eat my dog." '

[IU:R(Pro).NegPro]

5. *Maalàm ya ceè, "Aì, àbinci màì kyaù nee, bà naà reenàà ba."*  
*teacher RC say food one goodness be neg F2 despise neg*  
*"The teacher said, "Why, the food is good, I won't despise it." '*

[RU:R.R(Res)]

6. *Lookàcì-n dà ya gamà cii, Bàgwaarii ya kaawoo ruwaa, ya*  
*time-def rel RC finish eating Gwari RC bring water RC*  
*ceè, "`Ashee daà i-nàà ceèwaa mààlâmai baa sùu cì-n kàree."*  
*say previously P saying teachers neg P eating-of dog*  
*"When he finished eating, the Gwari brought him some water, and he said, "Wow, I*  
*always said that teachers don't eat dog!" '*

[IU:R]

7. *Maalàmî-n ya ceè, "Wànè maalàm ka ga yaa ci kàree?"*  
*teacher-def RC say which teacher RC see C eat dog*  
*"The teacher said, "What teacher did you see eat dog?" '*

[CU:Q]

8. *Bàgwaarii ya ceè, "Bàà kai nèè yànzù ka ci ba?"*  
*Gwari RC say neg you be now RC eat neg*  
*"The Gwari said, "Aren't you the one who ate it just now?" '*

[RU:Q(A)]

9. *Maalàmî-n ya ceè, "`Ashee kàree nèè? Kaa k'i gayàà minì!"*  
*teacher-def RC say dog be C refuse telling to-me*  
*"The teacher said, "Why, was it dog? You didn't tell me!" '*

[CU:Q(R).R(Q)]

<sup>1</sup> Here I indicate both the notional and surface structures where they differ, with each sentence presented separately. Thus [IU:R(Pro).NegPro] in 4. states that this is an initiating utterance which has the form of a remark (serving notionally as a proposal), followed by a negative proposal.

10. Bàngwari ya cèè, “Af, ai dà gànga-n ka ci.  
 Gwari RC say with recklessness-def RC eat  
 Na gayàà ma-kà, ‘Kadà kà ci kàree-na.’”  
 RC tell to-you neg S eat dog-my  
 ‘The Gwari said, “Huh! You ate with abandon. I told you, ‘Don’t eat my dog.’”’

[RU:R.R(A)]

The reason for all this skewing between form and function is not immediately apparent. Some of it is most probably simply a culturally acceptable way to perform some types of speech tasks (e.g., ‘Here’s some food’ = ‘Please eat some of this food’). Since courtesy norms often limit the use of imperatives to specific types of people in specific situations, skewing of proposals is not itself surprising.

However, a different motivation seems to govern most of the Gwari’s skewing of speech. The mismatch of syntax and meaning in his conjoined opening utterance (4) seems to be a deliberate attempt to conceal the information he presents and thus to fool and ridicule the teacher. His repartee is a game that seeks to gain an advantage.<sup>2</sup>

The teacher has an interesting pair of utterances in (9). His question is in reality a remark (since he has just received the information he appears to be requesting), and it is followed by a remark that has the impact of a question requesting explanation. His motivation for this encoding is probably a type of ‘softening’ intended to mute his expression of surprise at the Gwari’s revelation, as well as his own indignation that the information had been withheld. A question such as ‘Why didn’t you tell me?’ would communicate an accusation as well as indignation.

Following this preliminary analysis, I next attempted to apply this type of analysis to a longer, more complex dialogue found in an argument passage from the novel *Magana Jari Ce* ‘Talk is Wealth’ (Kraft 1973). In this portion, the chief’s vizier urges him to go onto a war footing. Musa is the chief’s only son and heir, and Mahamudu his grandson; the vizier hopes to separate the two by having Mahamudu sent off for military training, so that Musa can easily be killed and he himself will accede to power and wealth. Diagram 1 shows the analysis of this portion and illustrates that the technique of repartee analysis can be applied to larger units (by the indentation of the appropriate labels, I have attempted to represent the hierarchical structure involved). However, the facts in Diagram 1 still fail to reveal any significant insights resulting from the analysis; a more detailed investigation is called for.

Longacre mentions that a discourse with extensive repartee will have a line of repartee development that can be analyzed in the same manner as the participant-line and event-line of a narrative. In order to test this proposal that repartee resembles narrative structure, I attempted to find evidence for an equivalent for Peak in this text portion.

A perusal of the notional structures present in this portion reveals that one type of structure is largely absent: instances of Proposal are highly limited. The text is composed almost completely of Questions and Remarks, with the only instances of Proposal placed close together in the second half of the text (S17-S20).

<sup>2</sup> Kraft 1973:334 points out another interpretation, viz. that the Gwari people are known for their poor ability in speaking Hausa, so the teacher was not expecting the tones to be correct. Thus the misunderstanding of *kàree-na* ‘my dog’ as (*kadà*) *kà reenàà* ‘don’t despise’.

The notion that this limited distribution of Proposal is significant is confirmed by the fact that its presence is accompanied by other signs of heightened tension in the text. First, the marker *sai*, which seems to be identified with Peak in Hausa, occurs three times in this section: introducing the first Proposal (S17), emphasizing the introduction of a new participant (S18), and then, again, introducing the second Proposal (S20). In addition, a second construction that appears abruptly in the text at this point is the quote formula. Other than the initial lead-in to the dialogue, there has been no introduction of utterances other than the identification of the participant and the formula *ya cèè* 'he said'. Now, however, there is a reference to Musa as an observer and then his dynamic interruption of the flow of the dialogue. Then the next speaker, the vizier, responds with the first non-verbal activity of this portion of the text, a gesture which emphasizes his opposition to Musa, and which he immediately follows with an amplification-type utterance.

These converging features thus reinforce the notion that this point in the text is the repartee peak, and the distinction between the types of notional structure found in the repartee analysis itself has a role in building up to it and announcing it.

However, one shortcoming of this notional/surface structure analysis is that there is no means of distinguishing among types of Remarks serving different functions in the text. Although we can see the progression of IU-CU-RU, the line of development within each speaker's utterance in an argumentative dialogue such as this one is not apparent. However, if Longacre's notion of paragraph analysis (Longacre 1980) is applied, the structure can be more clearly seen. In general, this type of analysis is used for monologue, but since the more complex utterances in this text resemble short monologues, its usefulness can be anticipated. The results are displayed in Diagram 2.

Using this approach an even clearer view of the buildup of Peak is afforded. It can be seen that the text consists of two **build-up** (BU1 and BU2) interchanges, followed by what appears to be the **Peak**. Each BU in turn consists of a **thesis** (T) and **antithesis** (A) (in BU2 the antithesis becomes a thesis), with some internal structure identified as well. Each utterance can thus be seen as paired with an opposite and contradictory utterance as the first participant, the vizier, puts forward and defends his thesis. After he has withstood all of the chief's arguments, his performance culminates in the presentation of his plan and his argument with Musa over it (the beginning of the Peak). Finally, he is defeated, and the dialogue is wrapped up by Musa's reiteration of his opposition, which is then ratified by the chief (the end of the Peak).

As is evident from the uncertainties still evident in Diagram 2, this is only a tentative analysis of this dialogue. The area of repartee analysis has not been widely explored up to now, but as this preliminary study shows, it is clearly a discipline which could yield much in the way of new insight into the structure of human discourse.

## Diagram 1

Magana Jari Ce, 'The Vizier Urges Preparation for War' (Kraft 1973.259-260)  
Repartee Analysis

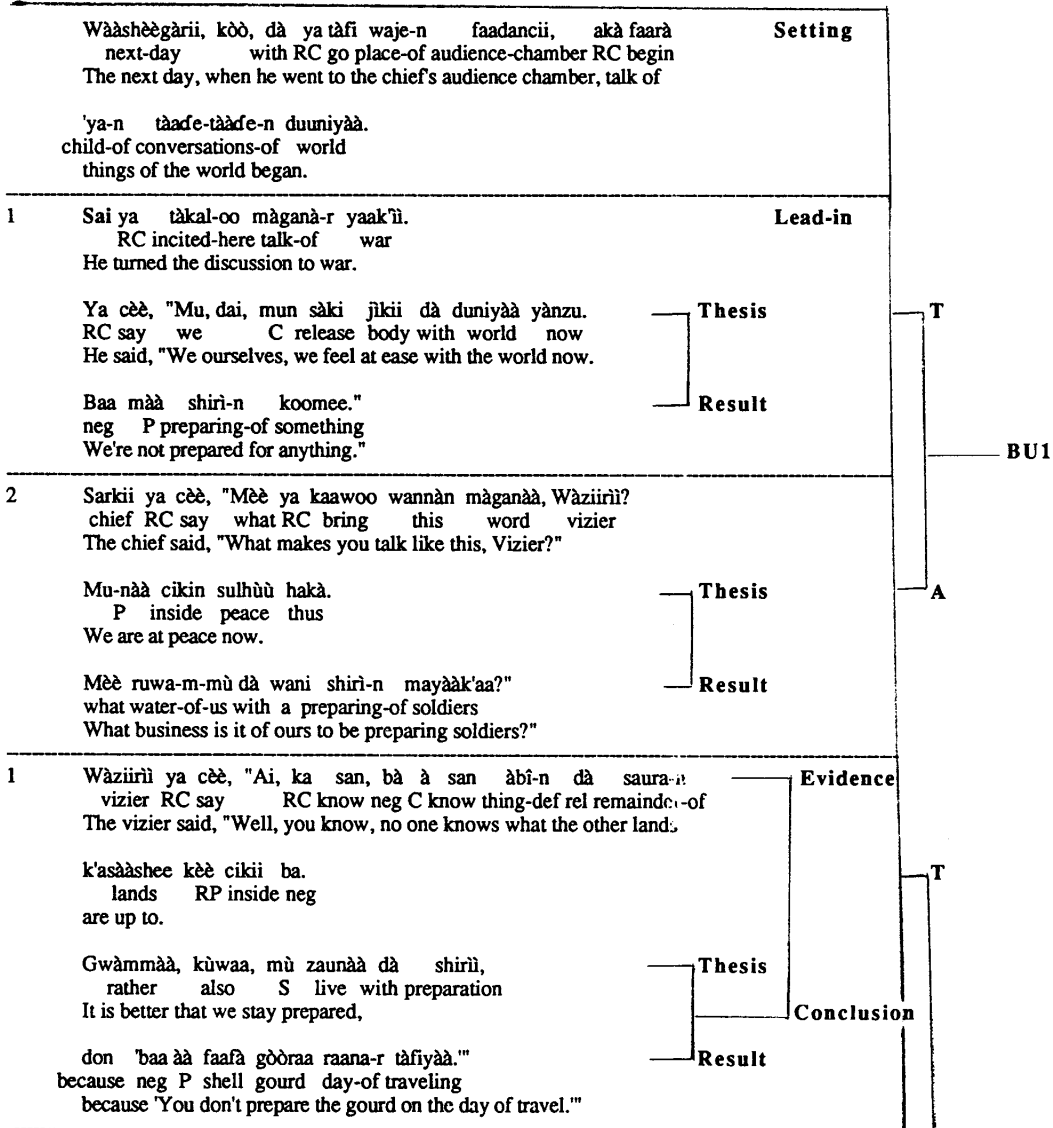
- S1 **Wààshèègàrii, kòò, dà ya tàfi waje-n faadancii,** IU:DirQS  
next-day with RC go place-of audience-chamber  
The next day, when he went to the chief's audience chamber, INTRO  
**akà faarà 'ya-n tàafe-tààfe-n duuniyàà.**  
RC begin child-of conversations-of world  
talk of things of the world began.
- S2 **Sai ya taakal-oo màganà-r yaak'ii.** LEAD-IN  
RC incited-here talk-of war  
He turned the discussion to war.
- S3 **Ya cèè, "Muu, dai, mun sàki jikii dà duniyàà yànzù. R**  
RC say we C release body with world now  
He said, "We ourselves, we feel at ease with the world now. R
- S4 **Baa màà shiri-n koomee."** R  
neg P preparing-of something  
We're not prepared for anything."
- S5 **Sarkii ya cèè, "Mèè ya kaawoo wannàn** CU:Q[Ev?]  
chief RC say what RC bring this  
The chief said, "What makes you  
**màganàà, Wàziirii?**  
word vizier  
talk like this, Vizier?
- S6 **Mu-nàà cikin sulhùù hakà.** R  
P inside peace thus  
We are at peace now.
- S7 **Mèè ruwa-m-mù dà wani shiri-n mayààk'aa?"** Q[R]  
what water-of-us with a preparing-of soldiers  
What business is it of ours to be preparing soldiers?"
- S8 **Wàziirii ya cèè, "Ai, ka san, bà à san àbì-n** CU:A  
vizier RC say RC know neg C know thing-def  
The vizier said, "Well, you know, no one knows  
**dà saura-n k'asààshee kèè cikii ba.**  
rel remainder-of lands RP inside neg  
what the other lands are up to.
- S9 **Gwàmmàà, kùwaa, mù zaunàà dà shiriì, don** R  
rather also S live with preparation because  
It is better that we stay prepared, because  
**'baa àà faafà gòdraa raana-r tàfiyàà.' "**  
neg P shell gourd day-of travel  
'You don't prepare the gourd on the day of travel.' "

- S10 **Sarkii ya cèè, "Wàné shiriì ya fi** CU:Q[Ev]  
 chief RC say which preparation RC surpass  
 The chief said, "What sort of preparation can surpass  
**wàndà mu kèè dà shii yànzù?**  
 that-which RP with it now  
 that which we are doing now?
- S11 **Gàà Sarki-n Yaak'ii. Gàà Bardee. Gàà maàdaakii. R**  
 there-is chief-of war there-is (officer) there-is (officer)  
 There's Sarkin Yaki. There's Barde. There's Madaki.
- S12 **Ciki-n-sù koowànee ya yi kuuka-n kuuraa, R**  
 inside-of-them everyone RC do crying-of hyena  
 Among them, everyone is crying like a hyena  
**sai à baa shi hanyàà.**  
 S give-to him road  
 for opportunity."
- S13 **Wàziirii ya cèè, "Wàdànnan, ai, duk sun tsuufa. CU:R**  
 vizier RC say these all C age  
 The vizier said, "Well, they are all old.
- S14 **Gàà Sarki-n Yaak'ii yànzù. R**  
 there-is chief-of war now  
 Take Sarkin Yaki for instance.
- S15 **`Ak'allà yà baà sàbà'in baayaa. R**  
 at-least S give 70 back  
 He is at least 70.
- S16 **Wàndà ya kèè hakà, tun dà Allàà ya nùfee shi R**  
 that-which RP thus since God RC ordain him  
 One who is like that, given that God has ordained  
**dà saamù-n magààjii, yaa kàmaatàà yà huutàà.**  
 with getting-of heir C be-necessary S rest  
 that he have an heir, he has to retire.
- S17 **Dàbaaràà-t-aa--sai Màmàmudù yà koomàà gida-n-sù, Pro**  
 plan-of-my S return house-of-their  
 Here's my plan: let Mahamudu return home,  
**ùba-n-sà yà rik'à kooyàà ma-sà al'amurà-n yaak'ii."**  
 father-of-his S do-repeatedly teaching to-him affairs-of war  
 and let his father educate him in the techniques of warfare."
- S18 **Muusaa dà kèè nan, sai ya tsoomà bààkii. CU:(Quote**  
 RP here RC dip mouth Formula)  
 Musa was there, and he interrupted.
- S19 **Ya cèè, "In, dai, don à òfukè Màmàmudù nee, R**  
 RC say if so-that S take be  
 He said, "If Mahamudu is going to be taken,

- à bar ni--nii kafai-- nii bà-n yàrda ba.  
S leave me I only I neg-C agree neg  
and I left all alone, I don't agree.
- S20 **Sai, dai, mù jee, à kooyàà ma-nà tààre.** Pro  
S go S teach to-us together  
Let us both go and be taught together.”
- S21 **Wàziirìi ya kau dà kai, ya k'utà.** CU:(Quote  
vizier RC move with head RC “tsk” Formula)  
The vizier shook his head and made a noise of disapproval.
- S22 **Ya cèè, “`Inaa ruwa-n-kà dà kòoyo-n yaak'ii-- Q[R]**  
RC say where water-of-you with learning-of war  
He said, “What business is it of yours to learn war--  
**kai dà zaa kà saà à jee, à yi ma-kà?”**  
you rel F cause S go S do for-you  
you who will cause others to go and carry it out for you?”
- S23 **Muusaa ya cèè, “Nii, dai, bà-n yàrda mù ràb-u ba.” RU:R**  
RC say I neg-C agree S separate-PASS neg  
Musa said, “Well, I don't agree to our being separated.”
- S24 **Sarkii ya cèè, “Tun dà Muusaa bà-i yàrda ba, RU:R**  
chief RC say sin neg-C agree neg  
The chief said, “Since Musa doesn't agree,  
**dàbaarà-r-kà bà tà yi ba kèè nan Wàziirìi.”**  
plan-of-you neg C do neg RP here vizier  
we won't pursue your plan, Vizier.”

Diagram 2

Magana Jari Ce, 'The Vizier Urges Preparation for War' (Kraft 1973:259-260)  
Paragraph Analysis



2	<p>Sarkii ya cèè, "Wàné shiriì ya fi wàndà mu kèè dà          chief RC say which preparation RC surpass that-which RP with          The chief said, "What sort of preparation can surpass that which we are</p> <p>shii yànzù?          it now          doing now?</p> <p>Gàà Sarki-n Yaak'ì. Gàà Bardee. Gàà maàdaakii.          there-is chief-of war there-is (officer) there-is (officer)          There's Sarkin Yaki. There's Barde. There's Madaki.</p> <p>Ciki-n-sù koowànee ya yi kuuka-n kuuraa, sai à baa shì hanyàà.          inside-of-them everyone RC do crying-of hyena S give-to him road          Among them, everyone is crying like a hyena for opportunity."</p>	<p>Thesis</p> <p>Evidence1</p> <p>Evidence2</p>	<p>A</p> <p>T</p> <p>BU2</p>
1	<p>Wàziirì ya cèè, "Wadànnan, ai duk sun tsuufa.          vizier RC say these all C age          The vizier said, "Well, they are all old.</p> <p>Gàà Sarki-n Yaak'ì yànzù.          there-is chief-of war now          Take Sarkin Yaki for instance.</p> <p>Àk'allà yà baà sàbà'in baayaa.          at-least S give 70 back          He is at least 70.</p> <p>Wàndà ya kèè hakà, tun dà Allàà ya nùfee shì dà saamù-n magààjii          that-which RP thus since God RC ordain him with getting-of heir          One who is like that, given that God has ordained that he have an heir,</p> <p>yaa kàmaatàà yà huutàà.          C be-necessary S rest          he has to retire.</p>	<p>Thesis</p> <p>Example</p>	<p>A</p>
--↑↓	<p>Dàbaaràà-t-a--sai Mähàmuudù yà koomàà gida-n-sù, ùba-n-sà yè          plan-of-my S return house-of-their father-of-his S          Here's my plan: let Mahamudu return home, and let his father educate</p> <p>rik'à kooyàà ma-sà al'amurà-n yaak'ì."          do-repeatedly teaching to-him affairs-of war          him in the techniques of warfare."</p>	<p>T</p>	<p>Peak?</p>
3	<p>Muusaa dà kèè nan, sai ya tsoomà bàakii.          RP here RC dip mouth          Musa was there, and he interrupted.</p> <p>Ya cèè, "In, dai, don à fàukè Mähàmuudù nee, à bar ni--nii kadai--          RC say if so-that S take be S leave me I only          He said, "If Mahamudu is going to be taken, and and I left all alone,</p> <p>nii bà-n yàrda ba.          I neg-C agree neg          I don't agree.</p>	<p>A</p> <p>T</p>	

	<p>Sai, dai, mù jee, à kooyàà ma-na tààre.  S go S teach to-us together  Let us both go and be taught together."</p>	
1	<p>Wàziirìl ya kau dà kal, ya k'utà.  vizier RC move with head RC "tsk"  The vizier shook his head and made a noise of disapproval.</p> <p>Ya cèè, "Inaa ruwa-n-kà dà kòoyo-n yaak'ìl--kai dà zaa kà saà  RC say where water-of-you with learning-of war you rel F cause  He said, "What business is it of yours to learn war--you who will cause</p> <p>à jee, à yi ma-kà?"  S go S do for-you  others to go and carry it out for you?"</p>	A
3	<p>Muusaa ya cèè, "Nii, dai, bà-n yàrda mù ràb-u ba."  RC say I neg-C agree S separate-PASS neg  Musa said, "Well, I don't agree to our being separated."</p>	A
2	<p>Sarkii ya cèè, "Tun dà Muusaa bà-l yàrda ba, dàbaarà-r-kà bà tà  chief RC say since neg-C agree neg plan-of-you neg C  The chief said, "Since Musa doesn't agree, we won't pursue your</p> <p>yi ba kèè nan Wàziirìl."  do neg RP here vizier  plan, Vizier."</p>	A