

# A DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF THE HAUSA FABLE 'THE HYENA AND THE DRUM'

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## 0. INTRODUCTION

The first matter to be addressed in analyzing any text is its type. The analyst has to know what sort of text s/he is dealing with, because certain phenomena are characteristic of certain text types. Longacre (1983a.1) observes: 'So determinative of detail is the general design of a discourse type that the linguist who ignores discourse typology can only come to grief.' To ascertain a text type, Longacre posits two basic parameters, which can be seen as binary features: [contingent temporal succession] and [agent orientation]. In addition to these two, two other parameters are given to make further distinctions: [projected time] and [tension]. Texts which are [+agent orientation] and [+contingent temporal succession] are narrative in their notional type. Texts which are [+agent orientation] and [-contingent temporal succession] are considered behavioral in their notional type. The term **notional** refers to the deep or semantic structure of the text. **Surface** structure types are similar to the notional types. Thus a text may manifest patterns of participant reference ([+agent orientation]) and chronological linkage ([+contingent temporal succession]) also in its surface form. In such a situation the text is narrative in its surface structure as well.

The text 'The Hyena and the Drum' is undeniably narrative in both its notional and surface structure. The agent orientation is clear; this is a story about a hyena. Contingent temporal succession is evident in that the story moves along a time line, events in the story follow one another. However, it is important to note that the story is a fable. Fables can be contrasted to other narrative types in that they contain some kind of behavioral element, they teach a moral. Longacre (1983b.11) suggests that fables are notionally behavioral texts which are skewed on their surface structure as narrative. However, such a treatment seems to overlook the fact that fables are narrative in their notional structure as well.

With a respectful departure from Longacre's analysis of text types, I draw from Fleming's stratificational approach to resolve this quandry. The stratificational approach carefully separates the communication situation from the semantic structure, and within the communication situation there is author's intent. By thus separating author's intent from semantics, the idea of a fable as a notional as well as a surface structure narrative can be maintained while behavioral structure as manifested in the intent of the author to influence behavior is not lost. In this regard it is worth noting the role of fables in Hausa culture. Undoubtedly fables are told sometimes for entertainment, but fables differ from stories that are merely entertaining in that a lesson is being taught. These lessons are oblique at times, especially to the non-native analyst. Nevertheless, the fact that the text is a fable needs to be borne in mind in that it does impact the structure of the text.

In dealing with 'The Hyena and the Drum', I am approaching it simply as a narrative. This analysis does not attempt to account for author intent, because that information requires interaction with the culture and people which is not available to me. Some observations can be made about how the moral surfaces in the text and where the moral slot is found in the text (it is the presence of a moral which contrasts fables

with other narrative types). But having identified 'The Hyena and the Drum' as a narrative allows the text to be analyzed in terms of phenomena that are common to all narrative types. The reader is referred to the actual text in the Appendix in conjunction with the discussion which follows.

## 1. THE TEXTURE OF 'THE HYENA AND THE DRUM'

### 1.1 PATTERNS OF PARTICIPANT REFERENCE

There are three participants in this narrative: a hyena, a rabbit, and a drum. The participants are analyzed along the three characteristic dimensions: participant reference resources, ranking of participants, and patterns of participant reference (Longacre, personal communication). The main participant is the hyena. She is introduced in the text in the first sentence as *wata kuuraa* 'a hyena'. Thus it appears that a noun without qualifiers is used in Hausa as the participant reference resource (PRR). In addition, the hyena is certainly a major character and in fact ranks central in the text (see discussion below). In terms of patterns of participant reference, it is significant that the hyena is mentioned first. For the most part, the other references to the hyena are simply in the person-aspect marker of the verbs; after being introduced, the hyena remains grammatical subject until the fifth sentence, though not mentioned explicitly. When the chain of reference is interrupted in the sixth sentence, the hyena is reinstated as subject in the seventh sentence by the use of the simple nominal *kuuraa* 'hyena'.

The other two participants, the hare and the drum, are treated much the same in the text. Both have the same ranking, and in fact it appears that they are simply props. The only difference in this regard is that the hare is animate and the drum is not. Both are brought on stage in the text by the appearance of a modified noun referring to them, found in the direct object slot of the sentence. The modification for the hare is a clause ('he is sleeping at the base of a tree'), and the modification for the drum is a prepositional phrase ('at hanging from a tree'). However, in both cases, the first reference is found in the direct object position. Now, in examining reference to the hare, it can be determined that the hare is the object also of a future-aspect verb in the second sentence (in this instance a pronominal reference is found). In sentence 4 the hare is again the object except this time the NP referring to him contains a definite marker. The hare is the subject of both clauses in sentence 6 ('the hare woke up, he ran at running'); in this first instance as subject, the definite marker is again used in the NP.

The drum is treated in a manner very similar to that of the hare. The drum is introduced in sentence 3. In sentence 4 a pronoun *shi* 'he' is used to refer to the drum. The nominal which refers to the drum carries the definite marker in sentence 5, where it appears as subject of the sentence. It is interesting that in both of these instances a masculine form is used, a form of reference somewhat unexpected in that *gàngaa* 'drum' is usually a feminine noun.

It is striking that the drum and the hare are the only participants which are found with the definite marker. This is conspicuous also in that they receive the definite marker in the peak episode of the text (see the discussion of peak phenomena below). The presence of the definite marker in this context may be indicating the integration of the characters into the story as central in that one episode of the text. Under that hypothesis the drum and the hare become the focus of the text in its peak.

In summary, then, the main participant in 'The Hyena and the Drum', the hyena, is introduced first in the text with the indefinite *wata* 'a'. Reference to the hyena as subject continues for a series of sentences, and when interrupted reference is re-established by use of the simple nominal *kuuraa* 'hyena' as subject. The other characters, the hare and the drum, are not true participants; they are simply props. Both are introduced with a modified NP in direct object position. In this text, only references to the props ever carry the definite marker, and they receive it in the peak episode. This distribution of the definite marker is certainly conspicuous and warrants further study in other texts.

## 1.2 THE EVENT-LINE

The event-line of a text is the series of events of the narrative that explicitly moves the story forward (Longacre 1983b.2). Longacre observes that language with tense-aspect systems normally mark the event-line by means of the completive aspect. In Hausa, it is the relative completive aspect which carries the story forward. By extracting the relative completive events from 'The Hyena and the Drum' we come up with the following event-line:

<b>ta ga zoomoo</b>	she saw a hare
<b>ta yi shiri-n</b>	she prepared (to seize him)
<b>ta ji gan-gan-gan</b>	she heard gan-gan-gan
<b>ta ga gàngaa</b>	she saw a drum
<b>ta ceè</b>	she said
<b>ta k'yaalè zoomô-n</b>	she ignored the hare
<b>ta yi tsallee</b>	she jumped
<b>ta jaaw-oo shì</b>	she pulled it
<b>gàngâ-n ta faad-oo k'asà</b>	the drum fell to the ground
<b>zoomô-n ya farkàà</b>	the hare woke
<b>ya gudù à gùje</b>	he ran at running
<b>kuuraa ta saà hak'oorii ta huudàà</b>	hyena placed teeth she pierced
<b>ta ga hòdoo</b>	she saw a hole
<b>ta ceè</b>	she said

The above event-line accounts for all the relative completive aspects in the text except for the one in the subordinate clause in sentence 3 ('when she looked up'). What is immediately apparent is that the event-line verbs make up almost the entire text. This is not surprising in such a short narrative; the verbs have to move the story forward in a short text, so by and large only salient verbs are used except for those used to refer to background activities (see below).

## 1.3 BACKGROUND ACTIVITIES

In addition to the event-line verbs, verbs which are off the event-line are also present in narrative text. In 'The Hyena and the Drum' backgrounded activities are expressed with the relative completive (but in subordinate clauses only, the relative completive in main clauses being reserved for verbs on the event-line), progressives, and future aspects. The subordinate clause is found in sentence 3:

<b>dà ta duubàà samà...</b>	when she looked up
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I have excluded this use of the relative completive as indicating event-line. The presence of *dà* subordinates the clause to an adverbial function; I interpret *dà* as indicating an event that is co-occurring with the event-line relative completive of the following independent clause:

**ta ga gàngaa**

she saw a drum

The fact that the clause is subordinated in a sentence whose main event relates that the hyena sees the drum indicates that the activity of the hyena's looking up is to be temporally linked with the subsequent event of seeing the drum. It is also worth noting the semantic link between the verbs 'look up' and 'see'. It seems quite impossible both to look up without seeing something, and to see something above one without looking up. Thus, the activity of looking up adds little if anything to the event-line. Viewed another way, the looking up is script-predictable, and is a necessary activity which must occur before the hyena sees the drum. The reason the subordinated *dà* clause occurs in sentence-initial position is to provide cohesion between sentence 3 and sentence 2. Previously the hyena was looking at a hare. To see the drum, it is necessary for Hyena to look up. The looking up is a response to the stimulus of the sound of the drum; by having 'look up' in sentence-initial position, the link with the sound stimulus is maintained. Further, by having the 'look up' event subordinated with *dà*, its subordinate relationship to the main-line event of seeing the drum is maintained, but the focus of the sentence is still the event of seeing the drum. Longacre (1983b.14) suggests that such events which are cohesive in function and script-determined are demoted and off the event-line. In 'The Hyena and the Drum', *dà* followed by the relative completive marks such events syntactically.

The use of the progressive (continuative) and future aspects indicates background activities which are off the event-line. The use of the progressive in 'The Hyena and the Drum' indicates an activity which continues for an extended period of time. The first use of the progressive is found in the first clause of the text; Hyena has a feeling of hunger, *ta-nàà jì-n yunwàà*. This use of the progressive indicates a state that continues throughout the text; it is not an event as such. The progressive is found also in the clause describing the hare as sleeping (sentence 1); this is also a durative, one which continues until the hare wakes up in sentence 6. Thus both of these instances of the progressive are used to describe a state. Such states make up the background band when viewed in terms of a salience scheme (Longacre 1983b.15); I return to this matter below.

The future aspect is found in sentence 2: *zaa-tà kaamàà shi* 'she will seize him'. The future in this instance indicates an activity not yet realized, one which is in fact a mere possibility. Longacre (1983b.15) describes such information as collateral, or more recently as irrealis (Longacre, personal communication). Such events are considerably off the event-line in a cline of relative salience and indicate possibilities but not actualities. Information indicating background is regarded as more salient than information which is collateral (see below).

#### 1.4 A SALIENCE SCHEME

Drawing together the above information regarding the distribution of aspects in Hausa text, a cline of relative salience can be posited for 'The Hyena and the Drum'. The purpose of such a scheme is to illustrate that information given in a text has varying degrees of relevance to the main thrust of the text: the more important the information to forming the backbone of the text, the more salient the information. Note that in Longacre's scheme information is not merely on or off the event-line; rather, information can be off the event-line to varying degrees (Longacre 1983b.10). It goes without saying that such a scheme cannot be based solely on a single text; nevertheless, a hypothesis based upon the fable 'The Hyena and the Drum' can be set forth to be tested against further data. The applicability of this scheme to other Hausa narratives can only be

established after analysis is done on other texts from other sources, and of course modifications are to be expected. With such considerations in mind, the following scheme can be proposed for 'The Hyena and the Drum':

I	Relative Completive
Event Band	
II	Progressive
Background Band	
III	Future
Collateral (Irrealis) Band	
IV	dà + Relative Completive
Cohesive Band	

Note that the bands listed here are only the ones present in 'The Hyena and the Drum' and are not intended to be exhaustive. In particular, other verb aspects need to be accounted for, as well as non-verbal clauses. Such further investigation would possibly yield more bands and change the above ordering.

### 1.5 PEAK PHENOMENA

The term peak is used to refer to an episode set apart by special surface structure features, corresponding to the climax and denouement in the notional plot structure (Longacre 1983a.24). The peak episode of 'The Hyena and the Drum' consists of sentences 4 through 6. In summary, the hyena ignores the hare, jumps up to get the drum, the drum falls to the ground waking the hare, the hare runs away. In the text peak is marked in its surface structure by the following:

- the use and distribution of **sai**
- the occurrence of a predominant sentence type not found elsewhere in the text
- the promotion of minor participants to more major roles

Each of these will be discussed in turn.

The most conspicuous indicator of peak is the occurrence of **sai**. **Sai** occurs elsewhere in the text in sentences 1 and 2. However, in sentence 4 **sai** occurs in sentence-initial position, and this is the only place in the text where **sai** is found in that position.

Aside from the initial clause introduced by **sai**, the sentences in the peak episode are made up of clause chains whose predicates are filled by verbs in the relative completive aspect. The peak episode is the only episode where such a clause chain is predominant.

Another indicator of peak is the use of **-n** as a definite marker. This is the masculine form of the definite marker, and it is found attached to nouns referring to both the hare and drum. It is crucial to note that the definite marker does not appear anywhere else in the text; it appears, therefore, that its presence is used to make the props more central in this episode.

Note that this is in marked contrast to the way in which the main participant (the hyena) is referred to. First, the hyena is never mentioned overtly in the peak episode. Further, the nominals referring to the hyena never carry the definite marker anywhere in the text.

## 2. THE MACROSTRUCTURE OF 'THE HYENA AND THE DRUM'

In broad terms, the **macrostructure** of a text is simply its abstract or summary. In a formal sense, the macrostructure is the product of macroprocessing, which may be defined as the hierarchical chunking of a text. Longacre (personal communication) proposes that one way to get at the macrostructure of a text is to begin with the event-line propositions. Starting from this backbone, the macroprocessing rules of van Dijk can then be applied (e.g. van Dijk 1979). Such a summary need not be arrived at formally, however; an intuitive approach may be used as well. Crucial is the notion that this summary or macrostructure be of such a nature that it gives an account of all the salient elements of the text, leaving no dangling strings.

If the procedures of Longacre are followed, an adequate summary of the events in the text can be ascertained. It remains to be seen if an event summary will yield an adequate macrostructure. As noted earlier, 'The Hyena and the Drum' is a fable, and as a fable, it has a moral. The moral is found in the last quoted speech of the text, where the hyena states that sound is not (the same as) meat. Thus this tale seems to be teaching something like the English proverb 'A bird in the hand is better than two in the bush.' An adequate macrostructure of a fable must account for the story's theme, its moral lesson. Thus, not only must the event-line be considered, but the theme-line must be taken into account as well.

If the event-line (see above) is taken together with the theme (the moral lesson) and abstracted, the following macrostructure is arrived at:

'The Hyena and the Drum' teaches us not to go after that which is elusive but greater, when the lesser thing is within reach. It does so by presenting a hungry hyena who ignores an obtainable hare in order to get a drum. The hyena had mistakenly thought that the noisy drum contained a lot of food. While trying to get the drum, the hyena let the hare escape. Only too late did the hyena realize her mistake.

## 3. THE CONSTITUENT STRUCTURE OF 'THE HYENA AND THE DRUM'

### 3.1 MACROSEGMENTATION

Macrosegmentation is the gross chunking of a text in which the surface structure of a narrative text is broken up into **pre-peak**, **peak**, and **post-peak** episodes. The surface structure corresponds to the notional structure of plot (Longacre 1983a.22). Because 'The Hyena and the Drum' is a narrative text, Longacre's scheme for surface structure is adhered to in this analysis. Because the text is also a fable, however, an additional element is needed, namely a moral structural slot. The moral slot is the place in which the moral lesson is found. It is characteristic of fables to have the moral slot occur in the closure of the text. For 'The Hyena and the Drum' the moral slot is found in the last reported speech of the narrative. (It is clear that this is not necessarily the case for all Hausa fables. The moral slot can in fact be a hortatory text found embedded within the narrative text, as illustrated in the fable 'The Tortoise and the Vulture' (see the Appendix).)

The macrosegmentation of 'The Hyena and the Drum' is as follows:

Surface Structure	Notional Structure	
Stage		Hyena feeling hungry
Episode I	Inciting Moment	Hyena sees a hare. Preparing to seize the hare, Hyena hears <b>gan-gan-gan</b> .
Peak Episode		She ignores hare, jumps up and pulls drum. Drum falls and wakes hare.
Peak' Closure	Denouement Moral	Hare runs away. Hyena says, 'Noise is not meat.'

For the most part, the above analysis is fairly unambiguous, although analytical alternatives are possible. For example, defining the inciting moment as that point at which the planned and predictable is broken up (Longacre 1983b:21), there may be some debate on where the inciting moment occurs in the text. For example, Donna L. Fox (personal communication) holds that the inciting moment in this text occurs at the time when the hyena sees the hare. However, it seems to be more likely that the hearing of the drum is more arresting in this regard than the spotting of the hare. For this reason I have posited the inciting moment as the event in which the hyena first hears the drum.

### 3.2 MICROSEGMENTATION

Microsegmentation is the breaking up of a text into paragraphs (of course, paragraphs can be embedded within other paragraphs (Longacre 1980:5-22), as we will see below). The microsegmentation of the text 'The Hyena and the Drum' is as follows:

#### TEMPORAL PARAGRAPH

BU 1: wata kuuraa ta-nàà jì-n yunwàà, sai ta ga zoomoo ya-nàà barcii à gìndi-n wani itààcee.

BU 2: ta yi shiri-n zaa-tà kaamàà shi, sai ta ji gan-gan-gan.

BU 3: dà ta duubàà samà, ta ga gàngaa à rààtaye à bisà itààcê-n.

BU 4: QUOTE PARAGRAPH

QF: ta cèè

Quote: yaùwaa! Allàà sarki-n baiwaa! àbì-n dà ya yi mòòtsii hakà,  
lallee ya-nàà dà mai.

#### TEMPORAL PARAGRAPH

BU 1: SIMULTANEOUS PARAGRAPH

SIM 1: sai ta k'yaalè zoomô-n,

SIM 2: ta yi tsallee, ta jaaw-oo shì.

BU 2: gàngá-n ta faad-oo k'asà gan.

BU 3: zoomô-n ya farkàà,

BU 4: ya gudù à gùje.

BU 5: kuuraa ta saà hak'oorii ta huudàà,

BU 6: sai ta ga hòòroo.

BU 7: QUOTE PARAGRAPH

QF: ta cèè

Quote: àshee, dai, amoo bà naamàà ba nèè.

The microsegmentation as presented above also provides an account of the paragraph types found in 'The Hyena and the Drum'. However, in this instance, an analysis of the paragraph types seems to have little pay-off in the overall analysis of the discourse, again perhaps as a result of the fact that the text is so short. Longacre (1980:5) astutely observes that 'an inordinate amount of time invested in the taxonomic classification of paragraph types often diverts the analyst from the more weighty considerations of discourse analysis.'

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The study of 'The Hyena and the Drum' has uncovered certain characteristics of this Hausa fable/narrative which may prove to hold for Hausa narrative texts in general. Of particular interest is the difference in how *sai* and *dà* are used in discourse. It is suggested that *dà* indicates an activity which is script-determined and predictable; it has a cohesive function in the text, and the event introduced by *dà* is off the event-line. *Sai*, on the other hand, appears to be setting off key events in the discourse; its appearance signals a significant development in the story. Of special note is that when *sai* occurs in sentence-initial position, it marks the beginning of the peak episode.

Another characteristic of this text which may prove generally true of other texts as well is the use and distribution of the definite marker. In 'The Hyena and the Drum', among the participants of the text only nominals referring to the drum and the hare receive the definite marker; nominals referring to the main participant, the hyena, never do. This definitization occurs in the peak episode, and it seems to promote minor participants to a major role for that particular episode. The study of the distribution and use of the definite marker in other texts is called for.

In terms of general discourse theory, this study has shown that more needs to be done in examining fable as a text type. Fable is generally narrative, but it has the added dimension of having as its social function instruction in behavior. This behavioral component certainly has ramifications as to how to approach text analysis. For example, it was seen that the moral lesson of 'The Hyena and the Drum' needed to be taken into account in regard to text type, macrostructure, and macrosegmentation. However, it is worth noting that the fable as a form is not always explicitly characterized. Because of the bewildering ways a moral lesson can be introduced (in quoted speech, with formulaic endings, simply by example, etc.), more needs to be done in terms of establishing criteria by which to distinguish fable from simple narrative.