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Contextual and Textual Features of Folktales in Chinua Achebe's Fiction

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Abstract - This paper explores the contextual and textual features of folktales in Anglophone African literature, with a focus on Chinua Achebe's prose fiction. After overviewing the register and Theme theories, it applies them to analyze ten (10) stories identified in the five novels published by the late Ibo writer. The findings reveal very high rates of circumstantial and hypotactic markedness, which are held up as distinctive features of a carefully written mode. On the other hand, the equally high rates of nominal un-markedness, verbal markedness and additive paratactic introduction of Themes are proved to indicate casually spoken mode. It is thus concluded that, though the tales initially belong to the orature mode, the writer has succeeded in incorporating them into thewritten one by keeping some balance between spokenness and writtenness.

Keywords: folktales, contextual, textual, Theme, Thematic structure, markedness, discourse mode.

Résumé - Cet article explore les caractéristiques contextuelles et textuelles des contes tirés de l'œuvre romanesque de Chinua Achebe. Après avoir passé en revue les théories de registre et de structure thématique, le chercheur s'est évertué à les appliquer pour analyser dix contes tirés des cinq (05) romans de l'écrivain Ibo. Les résultats montrent des taux très élevés de thématisation circonstancielle et hypostatique, qui sont considérées comme traits distinctifs du mode écrit et formel. Par contre, l'absence de la mise en relief des Participants, mais la forte présence de celle verbale, jumelée par une écrasante majorité de Thèmes introduits par la conjonction additive '***et***' confèrent à ces contes des traits du mode parler informel. Il y a donc lieu de conclure que, bien que ces contes appartiennent à priori à l'oralité, l'auteur a pu les incorporer au mode écrit en créant un certain équilibre entre le parler et l'écrit.

Mots clés : contes, contextuel, textuel, thème, structure thématique, rupture thématique, mode de discours.

NB: *abbreviations: TFA (=Things Fall Apart); NLE (=No Longer at Ease); AOG (=Arrow of God); AHS (Anthills of the Savannah).*

INTRODUCTION

One of the distinctive features of modern linguistics is its priority to spoken language over the written one (Saussure, [1916]1983; Aitchison, 1986). It thus becomes imperative for linguists of literature to pay as much attention to such aspects of orature as proverbs and folktales incorporated in modern written literature as they do to those of purely written ones. Indeed, while traditional

African folktales are at priori viewed to belong entirely to the spoken mode and might be expected to exhibit its distinctive features, their incorporation into modern written literature might confer to them features of this mode as well.

This paper analyses a score of folk-stories from Chinua Achebe's fiction in order to reveal both their contextual and textual features and to decide which mode, spoken or written, they can be said to belong to. As the topic relates to such systemic functional linguistics' concepts as register/context of situation and textual meaning grammar, these notions have been overviewed before the analysis properly speaking. The paper is divided into three major sections, excluding the introduction. The first section overviews the theoretical framework (2.1), readdressing some of conceptual issues that have not been clearly addressed in Amoussou (2016), and refines (2.2) the methodology proposed by Amoussou (2016: 217-8). The second section applies the theories to ten folktales extracted from Chinua Achebe's five novels (1958, 1960, 1964, 1966, and 1987). Section 4 sums up the salient findings and briefly concludes.

1. Theoretical Framework: Register and Thematic Structure Theories.

Applying linguistics-oriented theories to literary texts has always generated the need for linguists of literature to provide relevant information about the theories and the texts they are applied to. As Benveniste (1973: 119) puts it: "*It has been recognized that language must be described as formal structure, but that this description required, as a pre-requisite, the establishment of adequate procedures and criteria, and that in the final analysis, the reality of the object was not separable from the method chosen to define[analyze]* it.". It is thus difficult to discuss such notions as Thematic structure without referring to their-related language function and register variables and the other two functions and grammars.

Though definitions abound (Halliday,1974: 95, 97; Matthiessen, 1995:20; Eggins, 2004: 298; Wang, 2010: 256), Halliday and Matthiessen (2004:30,) after briefly defining'*the ideational metafunction*', '*the interpersonal* one' and '*the textual one*' respectively as '*language as reflection/clause as representation*', '*language as action/clause as exchange*' and '*clause as message*' (pp.29-30), set to comprehensively define the last one in such a way as to show how the first two depend on it:

> But the grammar also shows up a third component, another mode of meaning which relates to the *construction of text*. In a sense this can be regarded as *an enabling or facilitating function*, since both the others –*construing experience* and *enacting interpersonal relations* –depend on being able to build sequences of discourse, organizing *the discursive flow* and *creating cohesion* and *continuity* as it moves along. This too appears as a clearly delineated motif within the grammar: we call it the ***textual*** metafunction (p.30)

Thus defined, such aspects as Thematic structure, information structure, tactic structure, cohesion and coherence, etc. are the major components of the grammar of textual meaning. Analysing Thematic structure will thus involve breaking the texts under study into numbered clauses, defining the Theme-Rheme boundary in each, identifying the Theme-type/class and typologically quantifying the data (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004: 87-92; Amoussou, 2016: 217). The same scholars (2004) offer a definition that should help to allay all confusion on this matter, as it takes into account most aspects of the others:

> The guiding principle of Thematic structure is this: the Theme contains one and only one of these experiential elements. This means that the Theme of a clause ends with the first constituent that is participant, circumstance or process. We refer to this constituent, in its textual function, as the topical Theme. There may, however, be other elements in the clause preceding the topical Theme. These are elements which are either textual or interpersonal in function, playing no part in the experiential meaning of the clause" (p.79, my emphasis)

As those textual and interpersonal-function playing elements occurring before the obligatory Topical head have no function in transitivity, they become optional and cannot qualify as determinants of Theme-typology and boundary. The most important thing to look for in *Thematic structure* analysis is *the topical Theme*: "Every clause ***must*** contain one and only one topical Theme" (Eggins, 2004: 302). Indeed, the theorists offer other progressive definitions to step by step help readers grasp the basics of Theme-identification:

> (i.)"As a general guide to start off with, we shall say that the Theme of a clause is the first group or phrase that has some function in the experiential structure of the clause" (Halliday & Matthiessen; 2004:66)
> (ii.)"The most common type of Theme isa participant, realized by a nominal group. Such Themes are sometimes announced explicitly, by means of some expression, such as 'as for…', 'with regard to…', 'about…'; this has the effect of focusing the Theme. For example: As for Pope John Paul himself, + he is known to be very keen on sport" (Halliday & Matthiessen; 2004:67)
> (iii) "We can now approximate more closely to the identification of the Theme: the Theme of a clause extends from the beginning of the clause up to, and including, the first element that has an experiential function –that is either Participant, Circumstance or Process" (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004: 85; Halliday, 1994: 53).

However, many young researchers still identify the Theme in such a way that it can be tentatively postulated that some '*three-mania*' is still at work on their mind .Indeed, the fact that in SFL there are three register variables (field, mode, tenor) which frequently evoke or are evoked by three metafunctions (ideational/experiential, textual, interpersonal) and usually collocate with three grammars (Transitivity, Theme, Mood) seems to set all minds on some kind of threesomeness or '*trinocular perspective*' (Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004: 31). Maybe be the fact that three types of subjects are theorized to exist (grammatical, logical and psychological) also leads to '*Subject-Theme*' confusion (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004: 53-62; Eggins, 2004: 136) and fixes most minds on '*three.*'

Moreover, the use of such phrases as '*textual Theme*' and '*interpersonal Theme*' (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004: 79-86; Eggins, 2004: 300-317) may have made some practitioners believe that these are other types of Themes independent of the obligatory topical One. Let us look at it this way: '*if a clause must contain only one Theme, which is the obligatory topical Theme*,' then how can this very clause contain another textual or interpersonal Theme?' This would be similar to making such contradictory statements like '*there is only one God but my God is better than yours*'

That is why Amoussou (2016: 216-17) has suggested that the phrases '*textual Theme*' and '*interpersonal Theme*' should be replaced by '*textual component/item*' and '*interpersonal component/item*' of the Theme, and proposed a structure-based classification, as not all Themes are uniquely made up of the obligatory topical Theme. However, encouraging reactions generated by Amoussou (2016) from the national, regional and international research communities have triggered the much-felt need to bring some improvements, particularly regarding the Themes of classes '***e***' and '***f***' (Amoussou, 2016: 216-17). Indeed, while these classes concern structural topical Themes, the distinction between them has not been made that clear at the time for lack of insight. Indeed, these represent the two classes of rank shifted clauses: defining and reporting ones. As a result, a '*which-question*' would be a most accurate check-test for the identification of class '***e-***Themes' but a '*what-question*' would for that of class'*f-Ones'*. Indeed, '***e***-Themes' would appear in defining relative clauses while '***f***-Ones would characterize reporting and projecting clauses, as in these examples: []

(1)The man [*who came*] was Uncle Tom; ***(2)*** The car [*that you bought yesterday*] has just overturned]
(3)The house [*in which he lived*] has been damaged; ***(4)*** He thought [*that he would never see her again*]
(5)They wondered [*how old* Sam was]; ***(6)*** We got the report [*that you were held as a political prisoner*].

The which-question applies to n^{0s} 1, 2, 3 and 6 while the what-question does to n^{0s} 4, and 5. As a result the Themes in the bracketed sections of the former group would be classified under '***e***' while those in the latter would under '***f***'.

Before closing this section, the issues of '*multiple Theme*' and '*marked topical Theme*' need addressing as they re-stress the relevance of the proposed classification. Indeed, when two or more textual [*Themes*] *components* or/ and interpersonal [*Themes*] *components* occur before the obligatory topical Theme, the combination is known as a '*multiple Theme*' (Eggins, 2004: 307; Halliday &Matthiessen, 2004, 79-84). These are some of the examples given to illustrate the point:

(7) "Well at least she didn't get blown up, Simon (Eggins, 2004: 307)
(8) "No, well, I mean they don't know" (Eggins, 2004: 307)
(9) "Well, but then surely Jean, wouldn't the best idea be to join in?" (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004: 81)
(10) "Your Majesties, Your Royal Highness, Distinguished Guests, Comrades and Friends, today, all of us do, by our presence…. confer glory and hope to newborn liberty" (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004: 84)

These Themes mostly belong to classes *(b)*, *(c)* and *(d)* in my classification, which confirms its user-friendliness. Indeed, a look at my classification (Amoussou; 2016: 217, 218-19) or at the refined one earlier helps to see many Themes of classes '*b*', '*c*' and '*d*' fit the definition of multiple Themes, as the analysis confirms later in this paper.

The notion of '*Thematic markedness*' is related to similar stylistic artifacts as '*foregrounding,*' '*topicalization,*" or '*thematization'*, terms used to refer to "the movement of an element to the beginning of a clause/sentence so that it can act as its Theme" (Crystal, 1995: 459). Halliday and Matthiessen (2004: 67) have this to say about the cases of markedness:

> The Theme of a clause of frequently marked off in speech by intonation, being spoken on a separate intonation group; this is especially likely when the Theme is either (i) an adverbial group or prepositional phrase or (ii)a nominal group not functioning as Subject –in other words, where the Theme is anything other than that which is most expected".

Thematic markedness must thus be seen as a deviational device used by writers/speakers to express emphasis, psychological priority and authority (Eggins, 2004: 136, 319, 339). A key concern in exploring the textual metafunction is thus to observe such deviations in Theme-patterns as the inversion of word-order, logical connectors and the construction involved in the hierarchies of clauses, all of which must serve some aesthetic or poetic function. As Martin (1992: 12) puts it, "the different patterns and meanings made by the choice of Theme can be manipulated and exploited, consciously or unconsciously, by the writer in order to convey their 'angle' or viewpoint'".

Finally, though '*Context*' is viewed to be tripartite (situational, cultural and ideological) (Eggins, 2004), only the situational or register component is relevant here as folktales belong to a known genre or cultural context and they are transferrable from one teller to another for various ideological inclinations. Indeed, the register theory holds that three major aspects of situational context make a difference in language use: Field, Mode and Tenor (Halliday, 1978; 1994; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004; Eggins, 2004). While '*Field*' has to do with '*what language is being used to talk about*' in terms of experience, '*Mode*' refers '*the form of language being used or the role it is playing in the interaction*'. As for '*Tenor*', it is

related to '*the role relationship between the interactants*' (Eggins, 2004:90). These three determinants are called register variables (Eggins, 2004:90) and each is theorised to have an effect on each of the three meanings simultaneously conveyed in a clause. These variables are all relevant to the study of folktales as each story focuses on a given aspect of life, involves a teller, an audience and participants and is conveyed in a given manner at a particular time and place.

2. Methodological Perspective

For the analysis of the context of situation, the researcher has tried to identify from the narrative environment of each story: its setting (place & time of telling), its tenor (the relationship between the teller and the audience and between the story characters), its field (the topic or theme or moral lesson) and its mode of transmission. After that, the textual features are analyzed through Thematic structure patterns. For that purpose, each story is broken down into its constituent clauses. Each clause is numbered and each Theme-type is underlined, labelled according to an adopted classification (see the appendix). Plain numbers –i.e. (1) (2)– show ranking clauses while these numbers followed by a dot and other numbers –i.e. (1.1) (2.1.2)– indicate rankshifted clauses, a rankshifted clause being a complete clause carrying out the function of a qualifier/modifier/within the noun phrase. Moreover, Halliday & Matthiessen (2004:462) wrote: "As in quoting, there is a paratactic relationship between the reporting clause and the projected one; they have independent status, as opposed to the hypotactic one between the two in reporting". These criteria are abided by for clause-ranking as the tales contain patterns of quoting and reporting.

On the whole, the Theme-identification is carried out following the criteria laid down by prominent SFL theorists (Halliday, 1994: 53; Eggins, 2004: 302; Halliday & Matthiessen; 2004:66; 67; 79; 85) but adopting the structure-based classification proposed by Amoussou (2016: 217), which is slightly refined here (Table 1).

Table 1: Refined Theme-classification, adapted from Amoussou, 2016: 217

Theme classes	**structure/composition of the Theme**
(a)	'only a transitivity-label item or topical Theme'
(b)	'textual item+ topical Theme'
(c)	'Interpersonal element+ topical Theme'
(d)	'textual item +Interpersonal item+ topical Theme'/'Interpersonal item+ textual item + topical Theme'
(e)	'structural item : relative clause'
(f)	'structural/reporting '*that*'+ Topical theme'/'textual item+ reporting 'that' + topical Theme

For space constraints, only 05 of the 10 stories are displayed in the appendix.

3. Analysis of Contextual and Textual Features of the Folktales.

3.1. Analysis of Contextual Features of the Folk-stories

Drawing on the register theory overviewed earlier, table$_2$ is produced to sum up the various contextual factors surrounding the telling of the identified stories. Such factors related to the place and time of telling, the identity of the teller and listener, the tenor relationship between the teller and the listener, the characters involved in the story proper and the topic/theme/field of the story.

Table 2: Contextual Features of the folktales

N^{0s}	**setting**	**Teller-listener**	**Teller-listener Tenor**	**Characters**	**Theme/Moral lesson**
[*1*]	mother's hut: night	Nwoye's mother– Nwoye	Mother vs. Son	Sky vs. Earth (Men +Vulture)	Conflict and reconciliation
[*2*]	mother's hut: night	Ekwefi – children	Mother **vs**Children	Tortoise ***vs.***Birds & Parrot	Trickery & rebellion: why tortoise shell is rough
[*3*]	Mother's hut:night	Okonkwo's Mother – Okonkwo	Mother vs. Son	Mosquito ***vs.***Ear	Why Mosquito goes by Ear
[*4*]	Man's room evening:	Uchendu– children	An elder – younger men	Mother Kite& Daughter Kite ***vs.***Hen& Duck	Never Kill a Silent Person
[*5*]	Home: night; classroom: daytime	Obi's mother – Obi; Obi –Class	Mother – Son; Pupil –Class	Leopardess***vs.***sheep & lambs	Wickedness & wit
[*6*]	parlour: afternoon	Nathaniel – other guests	guest – other guests + host	Tortoise***vs.*** tribesmen	A man cannot avoid the responsibility of his mother's funeral
[*7*]	Parish: daytime	Moses – other converts	Church elder – young Christians	Python**vs.** tribesmen	Some Ibos worship the python as a deity: they must not harass or kill it.
[*8*]	Clan meeting: night	Ezeulu– clansmen	Chief Priest– tribesmen	Great Wrestler***vs.***Men& Spirits	A man does not challenge his chi to a fight

[*9*]	Political Meeting: evening	Hezekiah Samalu – politicians	Elder–young politicians	Hunter*vs.*Two Vultures	necessity to wipe out the established political parties
[*10*]	Hotel yard; 'tonight'	Village elder–city tribesmen	Tribal leader – tribal city men	Leopard*vs.*Tortoise	Need for political struggle

It is noted in table$_2$ that most of the stories are initially told at home in the evening or at night, even though some are spatially and temporally displacedto serve educational and political or ideological purposes (n^{0s} 7, 8, 10). Indeed, though many of the tales are initially told by mothers to their children (n^{0s}1, 2, 3, 5), and by elders to younger men (n^{0s}4, 6, 7, 8, 9), most are communicated to the reader through male characters' memory and mouth.Indeed there are linguistic clues revealing the teller's and listener's reactions as well as the narrator's judgment on the context in which each story is told or delivered.

Story [***1***], for instance, is included within a number of mental processes – '*remembered, knew, preferred, loved, knew, knew, feigned, cared not*'– presenting Nwoye not only as a vehicle of focalisation but of ideology as well. Indeed, while the first process on the list shows him as the focaliser, the others encode, despite his father's insistence that he should listen to violent masculine stories, his inclination to feminine tales. In the second story, though the verbal processes – '*she began*', '*said Ezinma*', '*replied her mother*'– show both the narrator's presence and the interaction between the teller and a listener, the perceptive mental process '*reached Okonkwo*' shows that despite his dislike for feminine stories, he is the vehicle of focalisation. The third tale is also conveyed to the reader through the stream of consciousness, a directly experienced mental process (Fowler, 1986: 137). Though Story [***4***] is directly delivered by the teller to the audience, it begins and ends with ***04*** behavioural processes '*ground, burst out, ground, burst out*'– which indicate both the narrator's presence and the storyteller's rebuke to people with a contradictory behaviour to the story's moral lesson. The fifth story has initially been told by Obi's mother to her children, including Obi, but the current version is recounted by the latter in a classroom and is now recalled by the same. In the initial home context, the story must be taken to play an entertainment function, which shifts to a formal educational one when retold in the broad day classroom context. The storyteller's reaction is expressed through such mental processes as '*loved, feared, loved, knew none, knew, and trembled*' and these verbs indicate that the story is being transmitted to the reader through a stream of consciousness. The audience's reaction, encoded in the causative behavioural process '*made…. laugh,*' shows that they know the original story and helps the reader to be fixed on the real version. In addition, the Ibo rendering of '*once upon*

a time'– '*Olulu ofu oge…*' (*NLE*: 53) – means that the tales are originally told in local language before being later translated into English, which might have required some stylistic adjustments.

The processes surrounding Story [***6***]– '*was heard, embarrassed, had not meant*' – show that though it is told out of context and is not initially intended for Obi, the teller's voice is inadvertently or intentionally raised to shock Obi who finds himself in the same position as Tortoise who refuses to attend his mother's funeral. Though Story [***7***] has no introduction, it ends with a didactic question whose answer serves as its moral lesson. The eighth story is interspersed with both mental processes – *'had heard, had forgotten'*–and behavioural ones –'*nodded, smiled, smiled*'– showing not only Oduche as the vehicle of focalisation but also the broad audience's reaction as to indicate the popularity of the story. As the concluding sentence of Story [***9***] indicates, it is a wildlife narrative used to make a political stand: the need for the Hunter, standing for the Youth Party, to eliminate the two established parties, referred to as the '*two vultures/dirty thieves*'. The tenth has initially been told by an old wise man to an audience including, Ikem Osodi, a central character (*AHS*: 128), which the latter later remembers and uses to give a political lecture entitled '*The Tortoise and the Leopard*' (*AHS*: 153). In its initial version, the story is introduced by a direct verbal process showing the purpose of its telling and ends with another. As the vocative '*my people*' entails, the teller invites the audience to understand that, though he knows he will be defeated, he finds it necessary to put up some resistance: "*Even an animal taken to the slaughterhouse offers resistance*" (Ngũgĩ, 2006: 553, 668).

While the women-told stories (n^{0s}1, 2, 3, 5,) focus on '*quarrel, trickery, wickedness*, etc.,' and portray such faunal characters as '*Earth, Sky, Vulture; Tortoise, Parrot/Birds; Mosquito, Ear; Leopardess, Sheep, Lambs; Kite, Hen, Duck*, etc.', the ones told by men (n^{0s}4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10) go beyond quarrel and trickery to embrace war and struggle, with such characters as '*Kite, Hen, Duck; Python, Python-Killers; Wrestler, Personal god; Hunter, Vultures, Leopard and Tortoise*'. Though Obi remembers a version of Story [***4***] as recounted to him by his mother (*NLE*: 80), the version told by Elder Uchendu (*TFA*: 98-99) seems to be more adapted for conflict prevention or resolution than the woman's version. This topical difference may reflect the major ideological clash between women, who are inclined to wily stories, while men are inclined to violent ones (*TFA*: 38). This means that both boys and girls are told both types of stories as children but as they grow up, they prefer one type or the other depending on their ideological inclinations, whether they are inclined to a peaceful approach to conflict resolution or to a violent one.

On the contextual level, though these tales mostly depict animal characters, they are used to symbolically express human relationships. Most of them are initially

told by parents to their children at home and in the evening, but some are displaced in place and time and used for formal educational and political and ideological purposes. Moreover, the reader appears at the third reception end of some of the stories: as young people have heard them from their parents (first level), remember and tell them to classroom or political audiences (second level) and relive them later when readers discover them (third level). This applies to stories (1, 3, 4, 5; 8; 10). This means that though these tales belong to the orature genre, most of them are transmitted to the reader through the stream of consciousness mode. However, the fictional audience's reaction is communicated to the reader through mental and behavioural processes, which helps to maintain the normal interactive mode of traditional story-telling.

After this brief register description of the tales, their Thematic Structure analysis is carried out to see which mode features, spoken or written, they exhibit more and why.

3.2. Analysis of the Thematic Structure of the Folktales

The data from the identification of Theme-classes are reported on table$_3$ below.

Table 3: Numerical and statistical distribution of Themes in the ten folktales

Theme-classes	*Clauses of occurrence*	*Quantity & rate*
(a)	1(+), 6(+), 8, 9(+), 12, 19, 20, 22(+), 23, 24, 28, 30, 31, 33, ***34***, 36, 38, 41, 42(+), 44, 47, 48, 49(+), 50, 51, 52, 55(+), 58, 59, ***63***, 64, 67, 68, 69, 73, 74, 75(+), 77, 79, 83, 87, 88, 89, 90, ***91***, ***92,93***, 95, 97, 100, 101(+), 102, 104, 105, 106, 108, 110, 115, 116, 116, 117, 119, 121, 123(+), 125, 126(+), 128, 131, 133, 137, 138, 143, 145, 148, 149, 150(+), 151 , 152, 153, 154, 156, 157, 158, 160, 161(+), 163, 166, 167(+), 168, 169, 170(+), ***171***, 174, 175(+), 176, 179(+), 181(+), ***182***, 183(+), 184, 188, 189(+), 194, 195, 196, 200, 202, 205, 206, 208, 211, 213(+), 214, 217, 219, 220, 222, 224, 225, 227, 229, 230(+), 232, 234, 239, 241(+), 244, 245, 247, 248(+), 250(+), 251, 253(+), 255, 256(+), 258, 260, 262(+), 264(+), 268, 270, 271, 276, 277, 278(+), 279, 281.	***148*** (***44.58***%)
(b)	2, ***3***, 4, ***5***, 7(+), 10, 11(+), 13, 14, 15(+), ***16***, 17, 18(+), 21, 27, 29(+), 32(+), 35, 37, 39, 40, ***43***, 45, 46(+), 53(+), 54, 56, 57(+), ***60***, 61, ***62***, ***65***, 66(+), 71, 72(+), 76, 78, ***80***, 81, ***82***, 85(+), 86(+), 94(+), 96, 97, 99, 103, 107, 109, 111, 112, 113, 114, 118(+), 120(+), 122, 124, ***127***, 129, 130(+), 132, 134, 135, 136(+), 139, 140, ***141***, 142(+), ***144***(+), 146, 147, 155(+), 159, 162, ***164***, 165, 172, 173, 174, 178, 180, ***185***, 187, 190, ***191***, ***192***, 193(+), 197, 198(+), ***199***,	125 (***37.35%)***

	201(+), ***203***, 204(+), 207(+), 209, 210(+), 212, 215, 216, 218, 221, 223, 228, 231, 233(+), 235, 236, 237(+), 238, 240, ***243***, 246, 254, 252(+)257, 259, 261, **263,** 265, ***267***, 269, 273, ***275***, 280(+), **282.**	
(c)	226, 266, 272.	03 (**0.09%**)
(d)	70, 84, 242, 249, 274.	05 (***01.51%***)
(e)	8.1, 17.1, 30.1, 51.1.1, 54.1, 63.1, 70.1, 82.1, 87.1, 87.2, 88.1, 115.1, 115.2, 119.1, 123.1, 135.1, 182.1, 183.1, 213.1, 218.1, 222.1, 228.1, 244.1, 247.1, 248.1.1, 255.1, 262.1,	27 (***08.13%)***
(f)	19.1, 29.1, 37.1, 51.1, 53.1, 104.1, 110.1, 141.1, 151.1, 156.1, 185.1, 188.1, 207.1, 208.1, 209.1, 211.1, 216.1, 216.2, 216.3, 229.1, 229.2, 245.1, 246.1, 248.1, 258.1.	25 (**07.53%**).

It emerges from table$_3$ that the 10 folktales analyzed contain about ***332*** clauses, thus ***332*** Themes (Eggins, 2004: 302). The most dominant proportion of Themes belong to class *'a'*(***44.58%***), meaning that a single constituent playing a transitivity-labelled function (Participant, Process, and Circumstance) acts as the topical or experiential Theme. In this class, four grammatical categories are found to function as topical Theme: Participants (noun phrases & pronouns), Processes (verbs), Circumstances (Prepositional or adverbial phrases) and existential '*there*' which normally has no function in transitivity but taken as Theme for methodological reasons (Eggins, 2004:313). Table$_4$ shows the distribution of the Topical Theme '***a***' among these categories:

Table 4: Category-based distribution of Class-'a' Topical Themes

Functional categories	***Clauses of occurrence^{0s}***	***Quantity & rate***
Participant (NPs & Pro.)	8, 12, 19, 20, 23, 24, 28, 30, 31, 33, 36, 38, 41, 44, 47, 48, 50, 51, 52, 58, 59, 64, 67, 68, 69, 73, 74, 77, 79, 83, 87, 88, 89, 90, 95, 97, 100, 102, 104, 105, 106, 108, 110, 115, 116, 116, 117, 119, 121, 128, 131, 133, 137, 138, 143, 145, 148, 149, 152, 153, 154, 156, 157, 158, 160, 163, 166, 168, 169, 174, 176, 184, 188, 194, 195, 196, 200, 202, 205, 206, 208, 211, 214, 217, 219, 220, 222, 224, 225, 227, 229, 232, 234, 239, 244, 245, 247, 251, 255, 258, 260, 268, 271, 276, 279, 281.	106 (***71.62%***)
Process (Verb)	42(+),49(+), 101(+), 125, 126(+), 161(+),167(+),170(+),175(+),179(+),181(+), 270, 278(+),	13 (***08.11%***)

Circumstance (PPs &Adv.)	1(+),6(+),9(+),22(+),55(+),75(+),101(+),123(+),150(+),151,183(+),189(+),213(+),230(+),241(+),248(+), 250(+),252(+), 253(+),256(+),262(+), 264(+),277,	23 (***15.54%***)
Existential 'there'	34; 63, 91, 92, 93, 171,182.	*07* (***04.73%***)

The most dominant functional constituent acting as topical Theme in this category is Participant (***71.62%***), followed by Circumstance (***15.54%)*** and then Process (***08.11%***) and Existential '*there*' (***04.73%***). While the dominant proportion of Participant as topical Theme confirms the widely-shared view that "*the most common type of Theme is a participant*, realized by a nominal group" (Halliday & Matthiessen; 2004:67), the significant proportion of Circumstance as topical Theme and that of Process show that the language of the tales is to a great extent organized in less ordinary way, resulting in experiential markedness/foregrounding/thematization/topicalization (Crystal, 1995: 459). This should normally include Participant Thematization, Process-involved one and Circumstantial one. Though no Participant is marked in the tales, table4 shows that, except for n0s 125 & 270 where processes normally occur in Thematic position because they belong to imperative-mood clauses, all the other processes in Thematic position are foregrounded, occurring before the Sayer Participant. This verbal Thematization is generally associated with the spoken discourse, the dialogic structure of some stories obliging the narrator directly quote characters' locutions (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004: 445).

For the rate of this markedness to be accurately assessed, all the quote patterns in the stories need to be stock-taken. With the bolded numbers standing for the quoting clauses and the un-bolded ones for the quoted ones, the quote patterns in the tales are summed up as follows: (22–***23***); (41–***42***);(48–***49***); (63–***64***); (***99*** –*100*); (101 –***102***); (***103*** –*104*);(125 –***126***); (148 –***149***);(151 –***152***);(150 –***161***);(166 –***167***);(169 –***170***);(174 –***175***);(176-8 –***179***); (180–***181***);(***263*** –264); (***265*** –266);(270 –***271***);(277 –***278***);(***279*** –280). This means that of the ***21*** patterns identified in the stories, as many as ***17*** (***80.95%***) are '*information-prominent*', the quoted locutions coming before the quoting clauses, and only ***04*** (***19.05%***) are author/narrator/teller-prominent', with the reporting clauses coming before the reported ones. While the information-prominent style foregrounds the characters as originators of the locutions and backgrounds the storytellers, the choice of quoting, as opposed to reporting, offers the story-teller the advantage of keeping closer to his/her information source: "*The quoted material is closest to the reporter's news source whereas the reported material is already, at least potentially, at some distance from what was actually said*" (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004: 462). Moreover, over the ***21***

quoting processes, ***11/21*** (***52.38%)*** are marked, or over the ***13*** Thematic processes (*table*$_3$),***11/13*** (***84.61%)***, are marked: '*said the birds' (42), 'said Tortoise' (49), 'replied the man' (102), 'said the tortoise' (126), 'said Mother Kite' (161), 'replied the young kite' (167), 'said Mother Kite' (170); 'asked the old kite' (175), 'said the young kite' (179); 'said her mother' (181), 'asked the puzzled leopard' (281)*. In either case, the rate of verbal markedness is somewhat unprecedented and can, thus, be seen as an identity mark of folktales or spoken discourse. Interestingly, a study concludes: "In the spoken texts, paratactic projection of locutions is favoured over hypotactic projection –roughly 55% over 45% in all spoken discourse and *75%* over *25%* in casual spoken discourse" (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004: 444). In addition, the reporting clause is proclitically pronounced, with a slightly rising tone, when it appears pre-locution (n^{0s}99, 103, 263, 279) but is enclitically uttered, with falling tone, when it comes post-locution in normal '*Sayer + Process'* syntax' *(n^0 271)*. However, when it appears post-locution in the reversed '*Process*+ *Sayer'* syntax, as most cases do here (***n^{0s}*** 42$^{(+)}$, 49$^{(+)}$, 101$^{(+)}$,126$^{(+)}$, 161 $^{(+)}$,167$^{(+)}$,170$^{(+)}$,175$^{(+)}$,179$^{(+)}$,181$^{(+)}$, 278$^{(+)}$), it is sounded with a slightly rising tone (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004: 446). In particular, the tone is likely to rise higher in *(175)* and (281) as they continue the rising tone of (174) and (280), respectively. These predictable pronunciation distinctions must be seen as a feature of spoken discourse.

The other type of experiential Thematization is circumstantial. Apart from n^{0s} 151 & 277 in which '*Wh-elements*' normally occur in Thematic position because the clauses are in the interrogative mood, all the other circumstances in Thematic position (20/23: ***86. 96%***) are foregrounded, meaning that they are moved from the normal after VP-position to the initial before-Subject one for some aesthetic function (Martin,1992:12; Crystal, 1995: 459).Though this occurrence of circumstantial markedness helps to validate the view that "*the most usual form of marked Theme is* ***an adverbial group****…or* ***a prepositional phrase****…functioning as* ***Adjunct*** *in the clause*" (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004: 73), its extraordinarily high rate indicates that the language of folktales is likely to be circumstantially over-thematized/overtopicalized/over-marked.

The existential '*there'* is exceptionally found to act as topical Theme in a few clauses (n^{0s} 34; 63, 91, 92, 93, 144, 171,182; *229.1*) and appears in post-Thematic position in others because circumstantial elements precede them (n^{0s}183 & 213): "although the '*there'* does not in fact receive a Transitivity label, it is nonetheless described as topical Theme" (Eggins, 2004: 313). However, distinction must be made between this existential/structural/extrapositional '***there'*** and the circumstantial '***there'***. While the former is usually unstressed and has no transitivity label, the latter is generally stressed and bears a transitivity function (Eggins, 2004: 238; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004: 257). The only circumstantial

'*there*' occurs in Story [**2**]:$^{(120)}$[*And there* $^{(b+)}$ he stood in *his* hard shell full of food and wine....].The dominant proportion of the existential over the circumstantial '*there*' means that its expositional function is more likely to prevail over the circumstantial one in folktales. Interestingly, Halliday and Matthiessen (2004: 257) maintain that existential clauses act as '*presentative constructions*' as they serve to introduce central participants in the placement stage at the beginning of a story or to introduce plot-significant phenomena into the stream of narration.

Themes of class '***b***' come second in ranking (***37.35%***), which means that 'the obligatory topical Theme' is preceded by either *one or two* coordinating conjunctions (paratactic) or a subordinating conjunction (hypotactic) or a combination of both. Indeed, of the ***125*** Themes of this class, 77 (***61. 60%***) are introduced by paratactic/coordinating conjunctions and 48 (***38.40%***) by hypotactic/subordinating conjunctions, even though both are combined in few cases (n^{0s} 11,18, 118, 130). The most frequently occurring paratactic conjunction is***'and'***, *49*(***66. 64%***) – (n^{0s}4, 10, 13, 21, 27, 29, 35, 40, 45, 53, 54, 56, 61, 76, 78, 82, 86, 92, 96, 99, 103, 109, 114, 120, 124, 129, 134, 139, 140 146, 147, 155, 159, 165, 173, 177, 178, 190, 197, 231, 235, 246, 252, 254, 257,261, 265, 269, 273)– followed by '***but'***: *12* (***15.58%***) – (n^{0s}17, 39, 70, 98, 122, 135, 144, 162, 198, 237, 259, 274)– then '***then'***,***03*** (***03.90%***) – (n^{0s} 180, 216, 236)– ending with '***so'*** (n^{0}37). The conjunction '***and'*** is also combined with others: '***and so'*** (n^{0s}2, 15, 71, 111, 132, 172, and 242); '***and then***' (n^{0s}112, 142, and 240). Two (***02)*** continuity adjuncts are also used to introduce the topical Theme: '*aha*' (n^{0}263) and '*yes*' (n^{0}282). All things considered, a dominant paratactic feature of these tales is the heavy occurrence of the conjunction '*and*', ***59*** times in all (***76.62%)***, as textual item to introduce the topical Theme, followed far behind by *'but'* (***15.58%***). In addition, the pervasive use of the conjunction '*and*' to link main clauses in the stories gives the impression of a recitation of events in the structure of a list, as much as a child might (do) in telling a story (Cummings & Simmons, 1983: 93),

The most frequent hypotactic conjunctions are temporals: '*when/whenever*' (n^{0s}7, 43, 57, 66, 72, 94, 107, 136, 164, 185, and 233); '*as/as soon as*' (n^{0s}14, 32, 60, 65, 84, 193, 249, and 275); 'before' (n^{0s}191, 199, 238, and 267); '*until*' (n^{0s}3, 141, and 215) and'*after*' (n^{0}85). Such combinations as '*but as*' (n^{0}11), '*and when*' (n^{0}18), '*but before*' (n^{0}118), '*but when*' (n^{0}130), '*because even after*' (n^{0} 280) and '*especially as*' (n^{0} 84) also occur. These ***06*** combinations, added to the ***10*** paratactic ones revealed in the preceding paragraph, show that the resulting Themes are strictly speaking multiple Ones (Eggins, 2004: 307). Temporal conjunctions therefore occur ***38*** times (***79.17%***) while others like '*because*' (n^{0s} 5, 62, 192, 280); '*that/so that*' (n^{0s}16, 80, 113, 127, 243); and '*if*' (n^{0}46) occur quite sparingly.

A glance back at table$_3$ shows that many Themes of class '*b*' bear the $^{(+)}$ label: n^{0s} 7$^{(+)}$, 11$^{(+)}$,15$^{(+)}$,18$^{(+)}$,29$^{(+)}$, 32$^{(+)}$, 46$^{(+)}$, 53$^{(+)}$, 57$^{(+)}$,66$^{(+)}$,72$^{(+)}$,85$^{(+)}$, 86$^{(+)}$, 94$^{(+)}$,118$^{(+)}$, 120$^{(+)}$

,130(+), 136(+) ,142(+), ***144***(+),155(+), 193(+),198(+),201(+), 204(+), 207(+), 210(+), 233(+), ***237***(+),252(+) ,280(+).This means that they are marked/foregrounded/thematized, which signals the possibility of Tactic Thematization, be it paratactic or hypotactic, in addition to the experiential one (Participant, Circumstance and Process) discussed earlier. Though there are few instances of parataxis-introduced *Thematization* (n^{0s}144, 182, 237& 252) in which a conjunction introduces a circumstantial element serving as a marked topical Theme– '*But there he stood...* (n^0 144); '*But in Obi's version*' (n^0 182), '*But this time*' (n^0 237); '*and at last*' (n^0 252)–most cases of tactic Thematization are hypotactic. Indeed, of the ***48*** hypotactic clauses, **29**(***60.42***%) are marked/foregrounded/Thematized. This means, in a macro analysis, that the whole clause introduced by the hypotactic conjunction serves as marked Theme for the following main clause, or in a micro analysis, that '*a conjunction* + *topical Theme*' combination serves as marked Theme for the very subordinate clause (Amoussou, 2016: 219; Eggins, 2004:315). In either case, this extraordinarily high proportion of marked hypotactic Theme must be an indicator of a highly formal written (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004:338; Eggins, 2004: 323). As most hypotactic clauses are circumstantial in function (Amoussou, 2016: 219; Eggins, 2004: 315), it entails that of the ***71*** circumstantial constituents (23+ 48), ***49*** (20+ 29), or ***69.01***%, are marked. This extremely high occurrence of circumstantial markedness/ foregrounding/ thematization/ topicalization confirms the over-topicalization of the language of folktales, as suggested three paragraphs earlier. However, distinction must be made between '*over-topicality*' and '*to be over-topicalization*'. Indeed, the fact that topical Themes are dominant in a text, as they always are and are expected to be (Halliday& Matthiessen, 2004: 2004:67) make its language *over-topical*, as a normal state. However, it is when there are quite a significant number of marked Themes that a text can be said to be overtopicalized/over-marked/over-foregrounded/over-thematized.

As hinted to earlier, this circumstantial over-markedness plays four major aesthetic functions. Not only does it stress the importance of the situational context in the description of participants and processes but it also reveals the speaker's/writer's psychological priority to this (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004: 55; Eggins, 2004: 136). In addition, it indicates the realisation of a careful written mode as the speakers/writers must have planned the rhetorical development of the tales to achieve this level of foregrounding (Eggins, 1994: 319). Moreover, the significant circumstantial Thematization shows that the information expressed in the tales is presented as non-arguable, a strategy to express the speaker's authority on the addressee (Eggins, 2004: 339).

Themes of classes '***c***' and '***d***' sparingly occur in the stories, which means the near absence of interpersonal adjuncts to maintain the tenor and interaction either between/among the characters or between the story-teller and the audience. As

for class '*e*' Themes, though their Thematic structure is theorized to be the same as that of their embedding clauses in a macro analysis and '*their Thematic contribution to the discourse is minimal and can therefore be ignored*' (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004: 100), in a micro analysis, they can be of tremendous contribution to the mode of the texts. Indeed, as rankshift/embedding requires some forethought in the construction of clauses, it is generally viewed, if significant, as a marker of formal, carefully written texts (Halliday, 1994:224). Themes of class '*f*' are hypotactic in nature and therefore contribute to the writtenness of the mode of discourse (Halliday, 1994:224). All in all, there appears to be interplay of the features of both spoken and written modes in the construction of the analyzed folktales. The next section sums up the salient findings from the analysis and concludes.

4. Summary of Findings, Discussion and Conclusion.

This paper explores the language of folktales from Chinua Achebe's fiction with a view to finding out their contextual and textual features. On the contextual level, though most tales portray animal characters, they are used to depict human relationships and behaviour: friendship, betrayal, trickery, wickedness, quarrel, conflict and war. Though a slight topical difference is found to exist between women's stories and men's ones, both male and female children are exposed to both types but each child grows up to like this or the other type depending on the kind of person he/she would like to be or his/her ideological and idiosyncratic penchant in life. All the stories are first told in mother's or father's hut in the evening or at night but some are spatially and temporally displaced, remembered or recounted for educational, political and ideological purposes. In fact, 50%of the stories (n^{0s}1, 2, 3, 5, 10) are transmitted to the reader through the stream of consciousness mode. As a result, though most of the stories come to be written down, the presence of an initial audience is also shown through the occurrence of mental, behavioural and verbal processes showing the reactions of both the tale-tellers and listeners to the characters and their actions.

On the textual level, these tales exhibit unprecedented rates of three major types of foregrounding or markedness: verbal, circumstantial and hypotactic. Indeed, in class ***(a)***, though Participant appears as the most dominant topical Theme (***71.62%***), making the tales highly topical, no occurrence of nominal foregrounding is identified, meaning that the Participant function is unmarked or non-foregrounded. However, ***86. 96%*** of the circumstantial elements appearing in Thematic position are marked/foregrounded, resulting in circumstantial over-topicalization. This kind of foregrounding is not only held up as an indicator of the speaker's prioritization of the situational context (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004: 55; Eggins, 2004: 136) and his/her authority on

the addressee (Eggins, 2004: 339) but most importantly, a feature of a carefully written mode (Eggins, 1994: 319). In the same class, a significant amount of verbal markedness is found to occur, *52.38%* or *84.61%* depending on the calculation base used. This high rate of verbal or paratactic-quoting markedness is interpreted not only as a distinctive feature of a spoken mode but also as a way for the story-teller to keep close to his/her news source (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004: 444; 462). The occurrence of a significant amount of the presentative or existential '*there*' is also found to help to introduce participants in the stories. In class '***b***', paratactic conjunctions appear as '*textual components*' to introduce most topical Themes (***61. 60%***), with the additive '*and*' leading the show. While this is generally held up as a marker of children's story-telling (Cummings & Simmons, 1983: 93), it seems to be counter-balanced by the fact that ***60.42***% of the hypotactic clauses are marked/foregrounded/thematized. While Halliday and Matthiessen (2004: 338) unequivocally contend that "hypotaxis is generally more common in written text because dependency relations require more care by the writer to construct and more effort by readers to interpret than parataxis," Eggins (2004: 323) opines that this kind of high hypotactic foregrounding plays a dual function: "It indicates an amount of pre-planning that is less common in spoken than in written language. Thus is the text able to '*sound*' like written language, while remaining accessible by maintaining its closeness to spoken language" (Eggins, 2004: 323).

It can be concluded that although these tales initially belong to the spoken mode and generally require a live audience, as most orature does, the fact that they are now written down to be read confers to them features of both spoken and written mode. Indeed, while the dominant use of Participant as unmarked topical Theme is characteristic of ordinary, everyday discourse (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004: 55), the intense use of circumstantial markedness is found to be a feature of carefully written discourse (Amoussou, 2016: 219; Halliday, 1994: 224; Eggins, 2004: 339). Moreover, the dominant use of parataxis-introduced Themes, mainly through the prevalence of the additive '***and'***, is found to be a feature of spoken, childish discourse (Amoussou, 2016: 222; Cummings & Simmons, 1983: 93), but intense hypotactic markedness is associated with a carefully planned, written discourse (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004:462; Eggins, 2004:315).What is more, while verbal markedness is also found out to be a feature of spontaneous spoken discourse, their paratactic markedness through 'class-***a***' Themes, and hypotactic reporting, through the '***f***-class' ones, are both indicators of carefully, planned written and reported mode of discourse (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). Also, class '***e***' Themes, despite their sparseness, are generally held up as a feature of carefully planned, information-packed mode of discourse (Amoussou, 2016; Eggins, 2004). Folktales in written African literature can therefore be seen to

exhibit features of both spoken and written modes and African writers who have succeeded in encoding in a European language the indigenous contents without totally destroying its distinctive features or domesticating the language without its being entirely lorded over by the contents should be praised for their ability to keep the balance between domestication and Europeanization.

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Appendix: 5 Folktales fully Displayed over the 10 Analyzed

[**1**]"*Nwoye **knew** that it **was** right to be masculine and to be violent, but somehow he still **preferred** the stories that his mother **used to tell**, and which she no doubt still **told** her younger children –**stories of the tortoise and his wily ways**, and of the bird Eneke-nti-oba who **challenged** the whole world to wrestling contest and was finally thrown by the cat]. [He **remembered** the story she often told of the quarrel between Earth and Sky*: '(1)[Long, long ago(a+), Earth and Sky quarrelled].(2)[***And so*** Sky(b) withheld rain for seven years], (3)[**until** crops(b) withered](4)[**and** the dead(b) could not be buried](5)[**because** the hoes(b) broke on the stony Earth]. (6)[At last(a+)Vulture was sent to plead with Sky and to soften his heart with a song of the suffering of the sons of men]. (7)[**Whenever** Nwoye's mother(b+) sang this song], (8) [she(a)felt carried away to the distant scene in the sky](8.1)[where(e) Vulture, Earth's emissary, sang for mercy]. (9)[At last(a+)Sky was moved to pity], (10)[and he(b) gave to Vulture rain wrapped in leaves of coco-yam]. (11)[***But as*** he(b+) flew home](12)[his long talon(a) pierced the leaves](13)[**and** the rain(b)fell](14)[***as*** it(b)had never fallen before]. (15)[And **so** heavily(b+)did it rain on Vulture](16)[***that*** he(b) did not return to deliver his message](17)[but (he(b))flew to a distant land](17.1)[from where(e) he had espied a fire]. (18)[***And when*** he(b+)got there](19)[he(a) found](19.1)[that it(f)was a man making a sacrifice]. (20)[He(a) warmed himself in the fire](21)[**and** (he(b)) ate the entrails']. *[That was the kind of story that Nwoye **loved**, but now he **knew** they **were for foolish women and children**],[and he **knew** that his father **wanted** him to be a man].And so he **feigned** that he no longer **cared for** women's stories.]" (TFA: 37-8).*

[2]"*[Low voices, broken now and again by singing, **reached** Okonkwo from his wives' huts][as each woman and her children told folk stories]:... [It was Ekwefi's turn to tell a story]:*'(22)[Once upon a time(a+)' (23)[she(a) began.....(145)[Tortoise's wife(a) sent for him](146)[***and*** *he(b)*gathered all the bits of the shell](147)[***and*** (he(b)) stuck them together']. ***That is why Tortoise's shell is not smooth"*** (*TFA:* 67-70).

[**3**]"*Why do they always go for one's ears? When he was a child his mother **had told** him a story about it, but it **was as silly as all women's stories**:* '(148)[Mosquito (a), (149)[she(a) had said],

'had once asked Ear to marry him], (150)[whereupon(a+) Earfell on the floor in uncontrollable laughter]. '(151)[How much longer(a) do you think](151.1)[(that) you(f) will live?]' (152)[she (a) asked]. '(153)[You (a) are already a skeleton].' (154)[Mosquito went away humiliated], (155)[***and*** any time(b+) he passed her way](156)[he(a) told Ear](156.1)[that he(f) was still alive]" (*TFA*: 53).

[**4**]"*[Uchendu* ***ground*** *his teeth together. Then he* ***burst out.*** *'****Never kill*** *a man who says nothing: those men of Abame were fools; what did they know about the man? He* ***ground*** *his teeth again and told a story to illustrate his point*]: '(157)[Mother Kite(a)once sent her daughter to bring food].....(182)[There(a) is nothing to fear from someone] (182.1)[who(e) shouts].' *['Those men of Abame were fools', (he* ***burst out****)]*" (*TFA*: 98-9).

[**5**] "*There was one lesson which he* ***loved****and* ***feared****. It was* ***called*** *'Oral'. …. Obi* ***loved*** *these stories but he* ***knew*** *none which he could tell. One day the teacher called him to face the class and tell them a story. As he came out and stood before them he* ***trembled****: 'Olulu ofu oge', he began……But that was all he* ***knew****…Some weeks later Obi was called up again.* ***He faced*** *the class boldly and told one of the new stories his mother had told him]. [He even added a little touch to the end which* ***made*** *everyone* ***laugh****]:* '(183) [Once upon a time(a+), *there* was a wicked leopardess] (183.1)[who wanted to eat the young lambs of his old friend the sheep]. (184)[She (a)went to the sheep's hut] (185)[***when*** she(b) knew] (185.1)[(that) she(f) had gone to market] (187)[and (she(b)) began to search for the young lambs]. (188)[She(a)did not know] (188.1)[that their mother (f)had hidden them inside some of the palm-kernels lying around]. (189)[At last(a+) she gave up the search] (190)[**and** (she(b)) brought two stones to break some of the kernels and eat] (191)[***before*** going(b)], (192)[**because** she(b) was very, very hungry]. (193)[As soon as she(b+)cracked the first, (194)[the nut(a) flew into the bush]. (195)[She (a)was amazed]. (196)[The second (a)also flew into the bush]. (197)[***And*** the third and eldest (b)not only flew into the bush] (198)[***but***, in Obi's version(b+), (she) slapped the leopardess in the eyes] (199)[**before** doing(b) so] (*NLE*: 53-4)

[**6**]"*There was a lull in the bigger discussion and the voice of Nathaniel* ***was heard*** *telling a story:* '(200)[Tortoise(a) once went on a long journey.....*There was a long and embarrassed silence when Nathaniel finished his story. It was clear that he had not meant it for more than a few ears around him*". (*NLAE*:148-9)

[*7*]"'(213)[*Once* (a+)*there* was a great wrestler](213.1)[***whose*** back(e)had never known the ground]. (214)[He(a) wrestled from village to village](215)[***until*** he(b)had thrown everyman in the world]. (216)[***Then*** he(b) decided](216.1)[***that*** he(f) must go](216.2)[***and*** he(f)must) wrestle in the land of the spirits](216.3)[and (he(f) must) become champion there as well]. (217)[He(a) went], (218)[and (he(b) beat every spirit](218.1)[that(e) came forward]. (219)[Some(a) had seven heads], (220)[some(a)(had) ten]; (221)[but he(b)beat them all]. (222)[His companion(a)(222.1)[who(e) sang his praise on the flute] begged him to come away], (223)[but he(b) would not]; (224)[his blood(a) was roused], (225)[his ear(a)nailed up]. (226)[Rather than heed(c)the call to go home](227)[he(a)gave a challenge to the spirits to bring out their best and strongest wrestler]. (228)[So they(b) sent him his personal god, a little wiry spirit](228.1)[who(e)seized him with one hand](228.2)[***and*** (who(e)) smashed him on the stony earth].' *Men of Umuaro, why do you think our fathers told us this story? They told it because they wanted to teach us that no matter how strong or great a man was he should never challenge his chi." (AOG: 26-7).*

[*8*]"' [*Today there are six villages in Umuaro but this has not always been the case*:(229)[Our fathers(a) tell us](229.1)[**that** there(f) were seven before]…….(248)[From that day(a+)the

six villages decreed]$^{(248.1)}$[that henceforth$^{(f)}$ anyone $^{(248.1.1)}$[who$^{(e)}$killed the python] would be regarded]$^{(249)}$ [***as*** having killed$^{(d)}$his kinsman]'" (*AOG*: 48)
[**9**]"$^{(250)}$["*Once upon a time* $^{(a+)}$a hunter killed some big game at night]…….. *That hunter is yourselves* **–** *yes, you and you and you. And the two vultures,* ***POP*** *and PAP*] (*MOP*: 140)
[**10**]"*But we can go back to our people and tell them that we have struggled for them with what remaining strength we have:*$^{(262)}$['Once upon a time$^{(a+)}$ the leopard $^{(262.1)}$[who$^{(e)}$ had been trying for a long time to catch the tortoise] finally chanced upon him on a solitary road]. $^{(263)}$[Aha, he$^{(b)}$ said], $^{(264)}$[at long last$^{(a+)}$, prepare to die!]. $^{(265)}$[**And** the tortoise$^{(b)}$ said]: $^{(266)}$[Can I$^{(c)}$ ask one favour]$^{(267)}$[before you$^{(b)}$ kill me?]$^{(268)}$[The leopard$^{(a)}$ saw no harm in that] $^{(269)}$[**and** (he$^{(b)}$) agreed]. $^{(270)}$[Give$^{(a)}$ me a few moments to prepare my mind], $^{(271)}$[the tortoise$^{(a)}$ said]. $^{(272)}$[Again the leopard$^{(c)}$ saw no harm in that]$^{(273)}$[**and**(he$^{(b)}$) granted it]. $^{(274)}$[But instead of (Tortoise) $^{(d)}$ standing still]$^{(275)}$[**as** the leopard$^{(b)}$had expected,]$^{(276)}$[the tortoise$^{(a)}$ went into a strange action on the road, scratching with hands and feet and throwing sand furiously in all directions]. $^{(277)}$[Why$^{(a)}$ are you doing that?]$^{(278)}$[asked$^{(a+)}$the puzzled leopard]. $^{(279)}$[The tortoise$^{(a)}$ replied]: $^{(280)}$[because even after I$^{(b+)}$ am dead]$^{(281)}$[I$^{(a)}$ would want anyone passing by this spot to say], $^{(282)}$[yes, a fellow and his match$^{(b)}$ struggled here']. "***My people****, that is all that we are doing now, struggling. Perhaps to no purpose except that those who come after us will say: true, our fathers were defeated but they tried"* (*AHS*: 128).