

GENERIC STRUCTURES OF NIGERIAN AND SOUTH AFRICAN QUASI-JUDICIAL PUBLIC HEARINGS

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Abstract

A quasi-judicial public hearing is a public meeting which is created in order to obtain public testimonies or comments about the legal rights of specific parties. Thus, the discourse structure of the hearings are important in revealing the discursive patterns used in collecting information necessary in the pursuit of justice. Past studies on the language of quasi-judicial public hearings have focused on rhetorical, sociolinguistic and critical discourse aspects of the hearings but have not carried out comparative linguistic studies of the hearings. This paper focuses on the comparison of the discourse structure identified in the quasi-judicial public hearing on the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) administration in Nigeria and the discourse structure identified in the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) hearing, using centrally Halliday and Hassan's (1989) and Ansary and Babaii's (2005) Generic Structure Potential (GSP) models. The paper utilises ten hearing sessions of the FCT hearing in Nigeria and the hearing session of the South African TRC used by McCormick and Bock (1999).). Five macrostructures in the FCT hearing were similar to those of the TRC hearing, namely, Affirmation Order/introduction, Invitation of Perspectives/elicitation, Presentation/narrative, Interrogation/questions and Finis/concluding remarks. Affirmation, Interrogation Compliance, Prayer, Prayer Demand and Admission were not identified in the latter. This implicates the necessity for further in-depth comparative linguistic studies of quasi-judicial public hearings between African and other nations to establish the convergent and divergent structural and discursive patterns in the hearings.

Keywords: discourse macrostructures, South African TRC hearing, Nigerian 2008 FCT, administration hearing

1. Introduction

A public hearing is a public meeting which is created in order to obtain public testimonies or comments (Meinig, 1998). It is a process which involves oral presentations, written evidence and elicitation. Two types of hearing have been identified in the literature, namely, legislative and quasi-judicial. A legislative public hearing is a legislative process which is meant to obtain public input on legislative decisions on matters of policy while a quasi-judicial public hearing is a judicial process which involves the legal rights of specific parties, where interactants depend on words to present their evidence and convince the hearing panel to write recommendations in their favour (Meinig 1998). Extant literature on the hearings has tilted more to the former (see Gring-Pemble, 2001; Buttny and Cohen, 2007; and Simon & Jerit, 2007) than to the latter for the reason that while the former is a regular process in any country, the latter is an initiative only of a highly democratised society. Hence, more instances of quasi-judicial hearing are found in the West and South Africa than in Africa in general, inclusive Nigeria, which now is having a rising record of it having experienced about the 10th of such hearings in 2012.

In Africa, scholars have studied, from the grammatical, critical discourse and discourse-pragmatic perspectives, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearing in South Africa (Anthonissen, 2006; Bock et al, 2006; Verdoolaege, 2006; Lubbe, 2007; Bock, 2008; Verdoolaege, 2009a and 2009b) and the Nigerian quasi-judicial public hearing on the Federal Capital Territory administration (Unuabonah 2011, Unuabonah, 2012). From the discourse-pragmatic view point, the studies have analysed the generic structure and pragmatic functions of the discourses in the two cardinal locations separately but have not compared them to establish their convergences and divergences. Given that undertaking this task in respect of the two countries will be too demanding and impossible in a single article, we have focused only on the generic structures of the two in the present paper, concentrating on the 2008 hearing on the Federal Capital Territory in Nigeria and 1995 Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearing in South Africa.

2 The 2008 Hearing on the Federal Capital Territory and the 1995 Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa

Quasi-judicial public hearings, also known as investigative hearings, public inquiries or parliamentary inquiries, are usually conducted by the executive and legislative arms of government, and are handled by a committee chaired by senators, judges and elder statesmen. The hearings have the following basic structure: presentation of testimonies by witnesses, interrogation of witnesses by the committee chairman and members, prayers by witnesses, and a close.

In Nigeria, in the past few years, there has been a steady rise in the number of quasi-judicial public hearings, which may be linked to the return to democratic rule which encourages democratic processes such as public hearings. Some of these hearings include the Human Rights Violations Investigation Commission of 1999, the power sector probe of 2008, the public hearing on security exchange commission, the public hearing on the aviation sector of 2012, the 2012 public hearings on Dana plane crash and the oil subsidy.

The 2008 hearing has a historical antecedent in the creation of Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) of Nigeria in 1976. The creation was considered expedient because of the congestion in Lagos, the former FCT. The capital territory was carved out of three states, namely, Niger, Plateau and Kwara states. Owing to inadequate resources and the lack of respect for planning regulations on the part of the citizens who lived in Abuja at the time, the Master Plan of the territory was not followed. In 2003, the twelfth Minister of the FCT, Mallam Nasiru el-Rufai, was mandated to transform Abuja into a capital city by following the Master Plan. This led to demolitions and revocations of titles of lands (Makinde, 2008), the sale of government houses, and, consequently the ejection of civil servants from these houses, itself arising from Government's privatisation of public structures in 1999.

In 2008, the Nigerian Senate commissioned the Senate committees on FCT and Housing, led by Senator Abubakar Sodangi, the chairman of the Senate committee on FCT, to investigate the FCT administration between 1999 and 2007. The hearing panel was inaugurated on the 9th of April, 2008 and it completed its assignment on the 14th of May, 2008. Issues handled in the hearing included the ejection, demolition of property and revocation of titles of lands and property in the FCT. The committee received about two thousand testimonies from different persons who felt wronged by the past FCT administrations. Some of these persons appeared before the hearing panel and presented their cases; some officials of the FCT who were implicated in the complaints submitted were also invited to defend their actions.

The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearing was created by the Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act No. 34 of 1995 to promote national unity and reconciliation (TRC Report, 1998). The Commission consisted of three subcommittees: the Human Rights Violations Committee, the Amnesty Committee and the Committee on Reparation and Rehabilitation. The Human Rights Violations Committee (HRVC) organised public hearings in places where apartheid victims could come forward to give testimonies about their experiences during the apartheid regime. The HRVC gathered close to 22,000 statements, which covered 37,000 violations. Such violations included killing, abduction, or attempts of such, and conspiracies (TRC Report, 1998). In each of the South African regions, the HRVC selected a number of statements for public hearing. At the hearings, the victims were given a forum to talk about the human rights violations they had experienced during the period of apartheid. The testimonies revealed the degree to which apartheid had had a destructive effect on the lives of many South Africans (Verdoolaege, 2009a).

Initial, non-sworn or tape recorded statements were collected by statement takers who had carried out similar work in the past. These statements were handed over to the Investigation Unit for checking and corroboration. After the statements had been checked, the HRVC invited affected individuals to give testimonies at a local public hearing site at or near the place in which the violations had occurred. The people who accepted the invitation were first invited to preparatory sessions in which trained briefers explained to them the nature of the events at public hearings, and assisted them in the way their experiences would be structured, described and presented (McCormick & Bock, 1999).

3. The Current Study

Studies on the language and discourse of the TRC have focused on the transcription processes and ideological implications in the language behaviours at the hearings. Bock et. al (2006) analyse “what has been lost” in the interpretation and transcription process of two TRC testimonies. They contend that the official TRC records only allow access to a limited truth, as the records are inadequate in many ways and that a number of “truths”, which are narrative and factual in nature, have inevitably been lost through the interpretation and transcription process. They examine some significant omissions and errors in the official record of TRC and suggest that the inaccuracy not only compromises, to an extent, the goals of TRC, but also casts a measure of doubt on the value of some TRC scholarship. They recommend that researchers

using these should check them against the original testimonies in the language in which they were given. Although this study on TRC is related to the present study, it differs on the grounds that issues of interpretation and transcription do not arise in the analysis of the FCT hearing.

Utilising critical linguistic and critical discourse analytic theoretic perspectives, Lubbe (2007) carries out a comparative analysis of the reportage in the South African press in respect of the Guguletu 7 events in 1986 and the 1997 amnesty application. He suggests that the ideological milieu in the mid-eighties can be described in terms of a state of emergency, Soviet expansionism, racism, fear and rage, while that of the nineties can be described in terms of a new cluster of themes, namely, democracy, non-racism, equality, reconciliation, nation building and compensation. This study differs from the present one not only because it focuses exclusively on the ideological implications of the setting that served as a background to issues handled in the TRC sessions but also because it does not address the generic structure of the interactions.

Bock (2007) carries out a discourse analytic study of the South African TRC hearing, using the theories of genre, appraisal, transitivity and periodicity. She argues that within multilingual contexts such as the one in which the TRC was situated, code-switching functions as an appraisal resource. She also describes the macro-generic structure of the TRC testimony and explores the social discourse testifiers drawn on in the construal of identities in the interactions. She argues that while the activists share a collective social identity, they select differentially from the discourses available for this construal, and infuse these with their own individual identities to create testimonies which are distinctive and unique even though they refer to common experiences. This study connects partially with the present one at the level of generic structure, but it separates from it in respect of the limited range of macro structural elements identified and the aspects of the sociolinguistic contents explored.

Verdoolaege (2009) examines TRC hearings from the perspective of critical discourse analysis and asserts that it is through the discursive level that the TRC has exerted, and is still exerting, an enduring impact on the South African society. She opines that the TRC provides a discursive forum for thousands of ordinary citizens and, that by means of testimonies from apartheid victims and perpetrators, the TRC comprised an officially recognised archive of the apartheid past. She adds that the reconciliation discourse created at the TRC victim hearings formed a template for talking about a traumatic past, and opened up the debate on reconciliation. The point of separation between the present study and Verdoolaege's lies in the latter's concentration on the sociological significance of the TRC hearing, whereas the former handles the generic structures of the TRC and the FCT hearings.

In Nigeria, Unuabonah (2011) undertakes a critical discourse analysis of the 2008 national quasi-judicial public hearing on the Federal Capital Territory in Nigeria using van Dijk's sociocognitive approach. She opines that the event models of the interactants feature global topics and local semantics, together with argumentative and rhetorical strategies. These are influenced by protective, suppressive, defensive and restorative ideologies. Unuabonah (2012) examines the interactional formats and pragmatic roles of language in the hearing. She identifies ten discourse macrostructural elements in the hearing, and traces communicativeness in the sessions to shared knowledge of public hearing procedures, shared knowledge of landed property law, shared knowledge of government involvement and shared knowledge of the Abuja metropolis. She also posits that thirteen pragmatic acts characterised the language. In her concluding remarks, she attempts to establish some parallels between the generic structure of the TRC and that of the FCT, but this effort is preliminary and non-exclusive when compared to the present research.

3.1 Genre and Generic Structure

Genre analysis is the study of situated linguistic behaviour in institutionalised academic or professional settings (Bhatia, 1997). For Bhatia (2002:5), a generic description can serve as a resource of "knowledge of procedures, practices and conventions that make the text possible and relevant to a particular socio-rhetorical context." Two linguistic theoretical engagements in which genre is integrated are Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) (Halliday and Hasan, 1989; Henry and Roseberry, 1997; and Ansary and Babaii, 2005 and 2009) and the Specific Purposes approach (Swales, 1990; Bhatia, 1997 and 2002). They deal with the identification of the recurring patterns used in organising the content of a genre and the relation of these patterns to specific linguistic features (Bruce, 2009).

The SFL model, found most relevant to the current research, considers the interaction between linguistic patterns and context in its description of any genre. Halliday and Hasan (1989) opine that the context of a text consists of the context of situation and the context of culture. The context of situation refers to register, which is made up of field, mode and tenor. The field refers to the 'kind of activity in which language is playing a role. The tenor of discourse refers to is the individuals taking part in the discourse, the nature of the participants, their statuses and roles as well as the speech roles and relationships they are involved in. The mode is concerned with the role language is playing in the discourse. It looks at the symbolic organisation of the text, the status that it has and its function in the context (see also Martin and Rose, 2003).

The Generic Structure Potential (GSP) is a condensed statement of the conditions under which a text is considered appropriate to a specific Contextual Configuration (CC). The CC is ‘an account of the significant attributes of a social activity’ (Halliday and Hasan 1989:63). It expresses the total range of optional, iterative and obligatory elements, together with the way they are ordered in a text. Halliday and Hasan (1989) examine a set of spoken shop interactions with related discourse elements and establish the GSP of a ‘Shop Transaction’ catalogued below:

$$\begin{array}{c}
 \Downarrow \quad \Downarrow \\
 [(G).(SI)^{\wedge}][\{(SE.)^{\wedge}\{SR^{\wedge}SC^{\wedge}\}^{\wedge}S^{\wedge}\}] P^{\wedge}PC^{\wedge}(^{\wedge}F)
 \end{array}$$

The round brackets () in the GSP indicate the optionality of enclosed elements. The dot between the elements means ‘more than one’ option in sequence (.). The square brackets [] specify the restraint on sequence, i.e. neither SE nor SR may follow P. The arrows (\Downarrow) show iteration while the braces with curved arrows { } indicate that the degree of iteration for the elements in the square brackets is equal. In other words, if SR occurs twice, then SC must also occur twice. The caret sign (^) shows the sequence of the elements. In addition to the symbols recognised by Halliday and Hasan (1989), Ansary and Babaii (2005) propose the subscripts (_n) and (_m), which refer to the iteration of sets.

It is possible to express the total range of obligatory, optional, and iterative elements and their sequence in such a way that all the possibilities and/or potential of text structure for every text appropriate to a specific CC may be exhausted. Thus, it is possible to state the GSP of any genre. The notations proposed by Halliday and Hassan, together with the additions by Ansary and Babaii, are adopted in this study.

3.2 Methodology

The data for this study consist of video recordings, obtained from African Independent Television (AIT), Alagbado, Lagos. Ten hearing sessions of the 2008 FCT quasi-judicial public hearing and the South African hearing session utilised by McCormick and Bock (1999) were selected. Conversations in the sampled videos were transcribed. Both these and the texts available from the sampled discourse from South Africa were analysed with insights from the Generic Structure model. This analysis was complemented with aspects of collocation, sentence types, affixation and vocabulary types to determine the textual properties of the discourses. A full discussion of each of these items has been attempted in Unuabonah (2012). The structures of the two hearings were compared to establish their connection and separation.

4. Analysis and Findings:

4.1 The GSP of the Quasi-judicial Public Hearing on FCT Administration

Ten generic structural elements have been identified in the FCTPH: Affirmation Order (AO), Affirmation (A), Invitation of Perspectives (IP), Presentation (P), Interrogation (I), Interrogation Compliance (IC), Prayer Demand (PD), Prayer (Pr), Admission (A), and Finis (F). The generic structure potential (GSP) of the hearing has been catalogued as follows:

$$\begin{array}{c} \Downarrow \Downarrow \\ AO \wedge A \wedge IP \wedge [P_{(Pr)}] \wedge \{I \wedge IC\}_n \wedge (PD) \wedge (Pr) \wedge Ad \wedge (F) \end{array}$$

PD, Pr and F, being in round brackets, are optional while AO, A, IP, P, I, IC, and Ad, are obligatory; I and IC, bounded by braces, are recursive. In other words, both I and IC occur twice. The subscript $_{(n)}$ indicates the number of times a set is repeated. The subscript $_{(Pr)}$ indicates that Prayer can occur as part of Presentation. The square brackets specify the restraint in the sequence. This means that Prayer can either be a part of Presentation or can occur after PD. It cannot occur after AO, A, IP, I or IC.

The GSP presented here is a condensed statement suggesting that a hearing session in a Nigerian quasi-judicial public hearing starts with an Affirmation Order which is followed by the Affirmation itself. From this point, the chairman invites the complainants/defendants (C/D) to make their own presentations and are complied with in Presentation. Then, the hearing panel interrogates the C/D and he/she complies by answering the questions raised. The questioning continues until the hearing panel is satisfied that all questions have been asked and answered. The chairman of the hearing panel then demands that a prayer be made, which is complied with. However, defendants do not state any prayer. In addition, some complainants are not allowed to say their prayers because the hearing panel knows that these prayers are already written in their submissions. Thus, this makes PD and Pr optional elements. Thereafter, the written presentations and other documented evidence such as court orders, certificates of occupancy and pictures are admitted by the chairman of the hearing panel. Thus, Admission is an obligatory element. Finis is an optional element which occurs after Admission. Here, the chairman may thank the C/D for appearing at the hearing. He may also make promises, comments and, sometimes, ask last minute questions, after which the hearing session comes to an end.

FCTPH texts are characterised by plain words, and legal, property, political, financial and medical jargons; fixed and free collocations; antonyms and synonyms; affixes, compounds, abronyms, and clips; and interrogative, declarative, and imperative sentences. These linguistic features and their mappings with specific stages of the generic structure have been fully discussed in Unuabonah (2012) and Unuabonah (forthcoming). A table is presented below to show a summary of the linguistic patterns in the hearing.

Table 1. Lexical and Grammatical Features of FCTPH texts

Macro-rhetorical Elements	Lexical patterns	Grammatical features
Affirmation Order (AO)	Plain words	Imperative, interrogative, declarative
Affirmation (A)	Plain words	Imperative, declarative
Invitation of perspectives (IP)	Plain words	Imperative, declarative
Presentation (P)	Plain words, political, legal, medical, property and financial jargon; fixed and free collocations; antonyms; affixes, abronyms and compounds	Declarative, interrogative
Interrogations (I)	Plain words, political, legal, property, medical and financial jargon; fixed and free collocations; affixes, clipping, abronyms and compounds	Interrogative, declarative, imperative
Interrogation Compliance (IC)	Plain words, political, legal, property medical, and financial jargon; fixed and free collocations; synonyms; affixes, clipping abronyms and compounds	Declarative, imperative,
Prayer Demand (PD)	Plain words	Interrogative, imperative
Prayer (Pr)	Plain words, political jargon, property jargon; affixes	Imperative
Admission (Ad)	Plain words, political jargon	Declarative, imperative
Finis (F)	Plain words, legal jargon; affixes	Declarative, imperative, interrogative

4.2 The comparison of the TRC and the FCT hearing studies

As mentioned earlier, only one of the studies on the TRC has analysed its discourse structure. This study, carried out by McCormick and Bock (1999), analysed the data using Labov's (1972) theory of personal narratives. It identifies the following structural elements: introduction, elicitation, narrative, questions and concluding remarks. 'Introduction' captures the chairperson's welcome address, invitation of the witness to take the oath, and the

introduction of the facilitator. ‘Elicitation’ matches with the facilitator’s introduction of the topic and the invitation of the witness to speak; ‘Narrative’ is similar to ‘Presentation while questions’ correlates with ‘Interrogation’. ‘Concluding remarks’ is the same as ‘Finis’ in FCTPH.

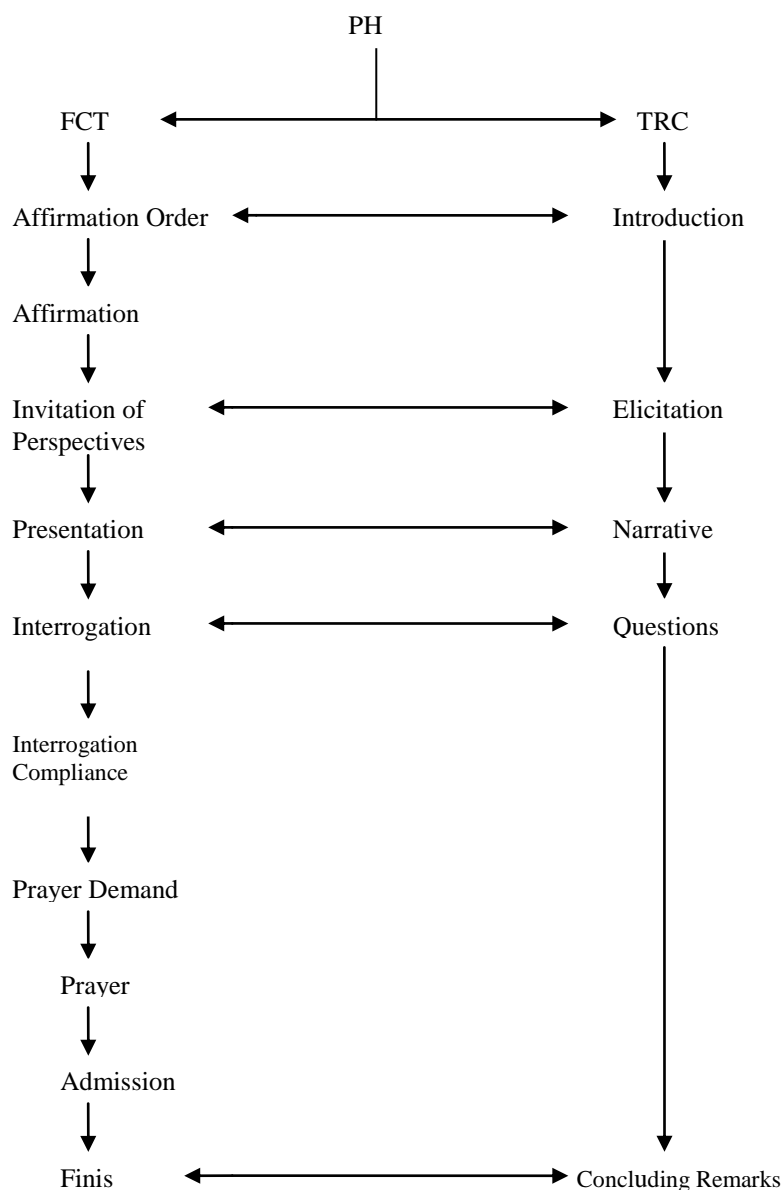


Figure 1: A chart showing points of convergence and divergence in the interactional

4.3 Structure of FCT and TRC hearings

Five points of convergence are identified in FCTPH and TRCH. The terms, *Compliance* and *Finis* are adopted from Halliday and Hassan (1989). For example, Halliday uses *Compliance* to

show the response to a question or demand while he uses *Finis* to classify the element that signals the closure of an interaction.

The term *Affirmation Order* in FCTPH is used to signify the order issued to take the oath. In the TRC study, *Introduction* is used to represent the order to take the oath and the oath-taking itself and this plays down the significance of the elements that make up the macrostructure. Also, the TRC study favours the use of the term *narrative*, considering that it uses Labov's (1979) theory of personal narratives. Also, the term *Interrogation* is used in the present study rather than *questions* because it is evident that during this stage, the hearing panel uses other functional sentence types such as statements and commands (See Table 1), which are meant to investigate the issues raised by the witnesses. Also, *questions* is not an adequate term to qualify the answers given by the witnesses. Thus, the term *Interrogation Compliance* is used. Although the authors of the TRC paper do not recognise *Affirmation* (the oath-taking stage), *Interrogation Compliance* (which focuses on the answers to the *questions*), *Prayer Demand* and *Prayer* in the TRC hearing, it is evident that these elements feature in the hearing (See table 2 and the discussion that ensues). *Admission* of submissions do not occur at all in the TRC hearing.

Macro-rhetorical Elements	Sentential Examples: FCT Hearing	Sentential Examples: TRC Hearing
Affirmation Order (AO)/Introduction	Please can you affirm him with the Bible?	In a moment I am going to ask one of our Commissioners to assist you, but before that would you please stand for the taking of the oath.
Affirmation (A)	I Chika Okeke Okafor, do solemnly swear That the evidence that I shall give before this honourable committee shall be the truth the whole truth and nothing but the truth. So help me God	Duly sworn states
Invitation of Perspectives (IP)/ Elicitation Presentation(P)/ Narrative	Ok please tell us your name again and tell us your complaint. Eh my chairman, my own case is purely a case of demolition... in 1995, I was at the National Political Conference during the national eh service. I just woke up one day and they called me from my office anyway that both my office and the estate at Karu was being demolished...The Idu plot is still vacant plot. Nobody has put anything there.	Ms Cupido your son Clive was at school at Kasselsvlei Senior Secondary School in 1985, is that right? Well I was sitting, and me and my husband was sitting waiting for Clive to come home. Because that's the day that Boesak and Tutu had the march in Cape Town.Clive came home early – eleven o'clock the morning and then he told me this march is going to have a lot of trouble.
Interrogations (I)/ Questions	For how many years?	Thank you Ms Cupido. Now you told us that there was somebody else there when

Interrogation Compliance (IC) Prayer Demand (PD)	Almost eh ah four years now, nothing there. What is your prayer?	your son was killed, Errol van Rensburg? Errol van Rensburg. What is it that you would like the Truth Commission to do?
Prayer (Pr)	My prayer sir is that I should be entitled to the compensation	I feel that the truth must come out, people should know that it wasn't my son that kept the policeman, it was Lawrence Davids ... he must give a statement and - and Errol van Rensburg.
Admission (Ad)	So your submission is eh admitted as Exhibit eh 82.	---
Finis (F)/ Concluding remarks	So we want to thank you Chief. We wish you all the best.	I know it hasn't been easy for you to come and tell the story and it must of been hanging over you and now you have been very brave and done it, so thank you very much indeed.

Table 2: A comparison of discourse structures in the FCTPH and the TRC Hearing

The table above shows the similarities and differences between the structure identified in the McCormick and Bock's study of the TRC hearing and that in the FCTH. While the latter is identified with ten discourse macrostructural elements, using the generic structure approach (Unuabonah 2012), the former is associated with five discourse elements, using the narrative approach (McCormick and Bock 1999).

In terms of linguistic structures, the TRC differs from the FCTPH. For example, in 'elicitation' in the TRC study, there are a series of statements, questions and answers that make up this stage of the interaction. This is because there is a facilitator who helps the witness to give an account of past events. These statements and questions are meant to guide the witness in giving their testimony. Thus, 'elicitation' in the TRC study is made up of declaratives and interrogatives; on the other hand, 'Invitation of perspectives' in the FCTPH is made up of declaratives, interrogatives and imperatives. Imperatives occurred more often than declaratives or interrogatives in the FCTPH hearing. From the extract used in the TRC study, declaratives seem to occur more often than interrogatives. This shows the importance of carrying out a detailed analysis of the macrostructural elements that make up each stage of the interaction.

In addition, the generic structure approach used in the present study shows that I and IC are recursive in FCTPH; the TRC extract used in McCormick and Bock (1999) demonstrates that 'elicitation' and 'questions' are recursive. The narrative approach used by the authors did not show this feature. This is illustrated in the example below:

Extract 1: Elicitation

Facilitator: *Thank you Chairperson, hello Ms Cupido and welcome again.*

Witness: Hello and thank you very much for hearing me.

Facilitator: Ms Cupido your son Clive was at school at Kasselsvlei Senior Secondary School in 1985.

Is that right?

Witness: That's right.

Facilitator: Right, and in the evenings after school he used to go and study with a friend at the friend's house.

Witness: --- That's right.

Facilitator: Is that right, that friend was Albert van der Berg, is that right?

Witness: --- That's right.

Facilitator: *Yes, and so on that night of the 29th of August he was with his friend studying.*

Witness: --- That's right.

From this extract, it is evident that the facilitator makes use of a number of statements to help the witness narrate her story. This is because the facilitator had already obtained the information which the witness is expected to narrate. This makes the TRC hearing different from the FCT hearing as there was no facilitator to help the complainant/defendant. These statements, questions and answers are repeated until a point when the witness finally floods out the whole narrative and does not need the facilitator to encourage her to speak. This also shows that while elicitation in the TRC study is recursive, its equivalent in the present study, that is IP, is not recursive. In the FCT hearing (See Unuabonah, 2012), imperatives are mainly used i.e. *Yes Barrister, tell us your particulars and state your complaints.*

Extract 2: Questions

Facilitator: Thank you Ms Cupido. Now you told us that there was somebody else there when your son was killed, Errol van Rensburg.

Witness: Errol van Rensburg.

Facilitator: Was he a friend of your son's? [sic]

Witness: Not actually, but he was there, he is the key witness. And this chap that sat at the hospital, Lawrence Davids.

Facilitator: So Errol was with Clive when they were - was Errol also injured?

Witness: Errol wasn't injured.

From the extract above, it is evident that *questions* which also include the answers of the witnesses are recursive just as we have in the FCT study; however, the approach used in the TRC study did not indicate the recursive nature of these elements.

Also, Prayer Demand and Prayer which are identified in the present study are omitted in the TRC study. These elements do exist in the TRC hearing but were not identified by the authors. This is shown in the extract below:

Extract 3:

Facilitator: What is it that you would like the Truth Commission to do?

Witness: I feel that the truth must come out, people should know that it wasn't my son that kept the policeman, it was Lawrence Davids,... he must give a statement and - and Errol van Rensburg.

From this extract, the utterance of the facilitator corresponds to *Prayer Demand* while the utterance of the witness corresponds to *Prayer*. The authors apparently have integrated this with the *questions* point of the interaction. That is why the term *questions* is inadequate to cover a range of discourse macrostructures which fulfill different pragmatic functions in the hearing. *Admission* does not come up in the TRC hearing as legal documents may have been collected before the hearing itself. In the FCT hearing, documents are given to the hearing panel before the hearing and admitted during the hearing as shown in the example below:

Extract 4

Sodangi: So your submission is eh admitted as exhibit eh 82.

This type of situation did not arise in the TRC hearing extract.

5. Conclusion

In the foregoing discussion, a comparative analysis of the discourse formats of the 2008 national quasi-judicial public hearing on the Federal Capital Territory administration in Nigeria and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings in South Africa identified by McCormick and Bock (1999) has been conducted. The Generic Structure Potential model and the grammatical paradigm adopted have clearly established their similarities at Presentation/narrative and Finis/concluding remarks stages and differences at Affirmation Order/Introduction, Invitation of Perspectives/elicitation and Interrogation/Questions stages of the interaction.

Evidently, the convergences emerge from the universal nature and form of quasi-judicial public hearings. This implies that irrespective of setting or location, such features are

capable of occurring in the interactions. The divergences are largely a product of the localisation and adaptation of the procedures. In other words, the peculiarities exhibited in the hearings come alive as a result of the modifications done to the universal process in Nigeria and South Africa. It is this singular point that fully establishes the rationale for studying the interactional structure of the hearing in the two countries. Thus, further comparative linguistic analyses of, say, topic control and turn-taking patterns can be carried out on quasi-judicial public hearings in Nigeria and other parts of the world in order to have a clearer understanding of the discursive patterns in the interaction, especially in terms of how they have connected with or pulled off from the central procedure.

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