

**A PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF SELECTED TABOO FOLKTALES IN  
YORUBA LANGUAGE**

**BY**

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BENIN CITY**

**OCTOBER, 2025**

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**A PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF LINGUISTICS  
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AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF ARTS (BA) IN LINGUISTICS  
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## CWETIFICATION

I, **Precious Favour AGBALE**, a student in the Department of Linguistics Studies, University of Benin, Benin City with Matriculation Number **ART2100719** has completed the requirements for the coursework for the Bachelor of Arts degree of the University of Benin. The work embodied in this project is original and has not been submitted in part or whole to any other University or Institution.

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## PLAGIARISM CERTIFICATE

I, **Precious Favour AGBALE** with the Matriculation number **ART2100719** declare that this project work titled, **A PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF SELECTED TABOO FOLKTALES IN YORUBA LANGUAGE** has successfully passed the anti-plagiarism test and does not violate any copyright regulations

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this project to God Almighty, my dependable source of love, courage, and direction. To my beloved parents, the late Mr. Odion Agbale and Mrs. Maris Agbale, whose sacrifices, prayers, and care have shaped me into the person I am today.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<b>PAGES</b>
Title Page - - - - -	i
Certification - - - - -	ii
Plagiarism Certification - - - - -	iii
Dedication - - - - -	iv
Acknowledgement - - - - -	v
Table of Contents - - - - -	vii
Abstract - - - - -	x
<b>CHAPTER ONE: BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY</b>	
1.0 Introduction - - - - -	1
1.1 The Language, Culture and Taboos of the People - - - - -	2
1.2 Statement of Problem - - - - -	3
1.3 Research Questions - - - - -	4
1.4 Aim and Objectives of the Study - - - - -	5
1.5 Methodology - - - - -	5
1.5.1 Method of Data Collection - - - - -	5
1.5.2 Method of Data Analysis - - - - -	6
<b>CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW</b>	
2.0 Introduction - - - - -	7
2.1 Conceptual Review - - - - -	7
2.1.1 Folktales - - - - -	8
2.1.2. Types of Folktales - - - - -	11
2.1.3 Functions of Folktales - - - - -	15
2.1.4. Taboos in Folktales - - - - -	17
2.1.5 Pragmatic Approaches to Folktale Analysis - - - - -	19
2.1.6 Yoruba Folktale Tradition - - - - -	20
2.2 Previous Studies - - - - -	22

2.3	Concern of the Present Study	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	24
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**CHAPTER THREE: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND DATA PRESENTATION**

3.0	Introduction	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	26
3.1	Speech Act Theory	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	26
3.1.2	Development of Speech Act Theory	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	29
3.1.3	Application of Speech Act Theory to Selected Yoruba Taboo Folktales								36
3.1.4	Relevance/Justification of the Theory			-	-	-	-		38
3.2	Politeness Principle	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	39
3.2.1	Application of Politeness Principle to Selected Yoruba Taboo Folktales								44
3.2.2	Relevance/Justification of the Theory			-	-	-	-		45
3.3	Data Presentation	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	47
3.3.1	Religious and Ritual Purity Taboos	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	47
3.3.2	Behavioral & Environmental Taboos	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	55
3.3.3	Health & Pregnancy-related Taboos	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	61
3.3.4	Social & Moral Conduct Taboos	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	64

**CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS**

4.0	Introduction	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	66
4.1	Data Analysis	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	66
4.1.1:	The application of the theories to extract 1 from Story 1					-	-		66
4.1.2	The application of the theories to extract 2 from Story 2					-	-		68
4.1.3	The application of the theories to extract 3 from story 3					-	-		69
4.1.4	The application of the theories to extract 4 from Story 4					-	-		70
4.1.5	The application of theories to extract 5 from story 5					-	-		72
4.1.6:	The application of the theories to extract 6 from story 6					-	-		73
4.1.7:	The application of the theories to extract 7 from story 7					-	-		74
4.1.8:	The application of the theories to extract 8 from story 8					-	-		75
4.2	Discussion of Findings	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	77

## **CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION**

5.0	Introduction	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	78
5.1	Summary of the Study	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	78
5.2	Findings	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	79
5.2.1	Speech Act in Yoruba Taboo Folktales	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	79
5.2.2	Politeness Principle and Social Functions	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	80
5.2.3	Folktales as Performative Acts of Culture	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	80
5.3	Conclusion	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	80
5.4	Areas of Further Research	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	81
	<b>REFERENCES</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	<b>82</b>

## **ABSTRACT**

This study examines the pragmatic aspects of Yoruba taboo folktales, with special focus on selected tales from Ogbomoso. While Yoruba folktales have often been explored for their literary and artistic merits, their pragmatic roles, particularly as acts of communication, have received less attention. The aim of this research is to investigate how taboo folktales function as speech acts and employ politeness strategies that uphold social, moral, and spiritual order in Yoruba society.

The study relied on eight taboo folktales, which were collected through oral interviews with competent Yoruba speakers and later translated into English. The data were analyzed using Speech Act Theory (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969) and Leech's Politeness Principle (1983). Direct and reported utterances from the folktales were examined at the locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary levels, and further classified according to Austin's and Searle's categories of speech acts. The politeness analysis assessed the cultural purposes of the utterances, as well as the ways in which they conformed to or violated conversational maxims.

Findings reveal that Yoruba taboo folktales are not merely entertaining stories, but performative acts that sustain cultural values. They preserve spiritual balance, instill discipline, and transmit ancestral wisdom across generations.

Further research can focus on the linguistic philosophy underlying Yoruba taboo folktales, with attention to the deeper cultural beliefs and worldviews they embody.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **BACKGROUND OF THE STORY**

#### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Folktales are fictional stories that have been orally passed down from generations to generations over hundreds, if not thousands, of years. The word 'folk' comes from the German word 'volk' which means 'people'. Folktales are thus stories for people. In many African traditions and society, it is an essential part of the oral tradition and society, that serves as a means of entertainment and also a means of passing down cultural values, morals, lessons and societal norms. These stories are told for entertainment during gatherings, to preserve histories and teach moral values and behaviors. Folktales are stories about everyday life and the day-to-day issues of humanity. Sometimes the stories involve supernatural elements or deities like Yeye Osun or even animals like Snail and tortoise.

African folktales, especially the Yoruba folktales, are anonymous, timeless stories of an African origin that embrace African tradition and culture. There are different types of folktales, such as fairy tales, fables and trickster tales. All folktales entertain listeners, but different types of tales serve different purposes. Some folktales are meant for entertainment; others are meant to teach moral lessons or instruct. They often tell life lessons and help differentiate good from evil.

This chapter provides a background study on Yoruba culture and taboos. It also states the problem being addressed, the objective of the study as well as research questions. It entails the methodology and the informants. This entire project work contains an in-depth pragmatic analysis of selected taboo folktales in Yoruba culture. Pragmatic is a branch of linguistics that studies how context contributes to the meaning, that is, how meaning can be interpreted in the context. To aid pragmatic analysis, various folktales were gathered from Yoruba culture, precisely from Ogbomosho.

### **1.1. THE LANGUAGE, CULTURE AND TABOOS OF THE PEOPLE**

The Yoruba culture, which is one of the three largest ethnic groups in Nigeria, concentrated in the Southwestern part. The Yoruba people inhabit part of Nigeria, Benin and Togo, these places are referred to as Yorubaland. Most Yoruba men are farmers, growing yams, corn(maize), beans, plantain and many more; cocoa is a major cash crop. Others are traders or craftsmen. Women do little of farm work but control much of the complex market system. The Yorubas have traditionally been among the most skilled and productive Craftsmen in Africa.

At the turn of the 21st century, the Yorubas numbered more than 20 million and they speak a language of the Benue Congo branch of the Nigeria Congo language family, this language is called the Yoruba language. Although they may speak different dialects, the Yoruba language is shared by all Yoruba people. The Yoruba dialects continuum consists of several dialects, which can be classified into five major dialects which are: Northwest

Yoruba, Northeast Yoruba, Central Yoruba, Southwest Yoruba and Southeast Yoruba. Yoruba culture is deeply rooted in its history and mythology with a strong emphasis on family, spirituality and community. The culture is preserved through various means such as religious practices, artistic expression, social structures and oral traditions.

The Yoruba culture use the oral tradition as a means of persevering their culture which includes relying heavily on storytelling (folktales), passing down history, values and cultural wisdom through narratives and myths. Folktales can include taboos- known as 'ééwo' in the Yoruba culture which are strong prohibitions that are sacred or forbidden based on their moral judgement, religious, beliefs or norms. These taboos may be spiritual, religious or social and violating them might attract punishment, misfortune or shame. This study draws its data from the Ogbomosho people in Oyo State, South Western, Nigeria. It is the second largest city in Oyo State and it is known for its strong oral traditions among the older generation, which makes it suitable for authentic folktales.

## **1.2 STATEMENT OF PROBLEM**

The pragmatic analysis of taboo folktales in Yoruba investigation and understanding. Based on research, previous studies have mostly focused on their literal and anthropological dimensions. Akporobaro (2001) and Abrahams (1983) explored the narrative framework, themes and moral lessons contained in African culture, Bascom (1965) emphasized their roles in transmission of value and cultural education. These studies, as well as a few others, rarely tackle the linguistic mechanisms, particularly

pragmatic tools used to navigate taboo content. Few linguistic works have focused on the taboo language and euphemism in African languages (for instance Allan and Burridge, 2006) but just a few have directly linked these studies to oral natives or taboo folktales in Yoruba culture.

There is currently a lack of detailed research and academic analysis focusing specifically on the pragmatic analysis of Yoruba taboo folktales for Ogbomosho. Yoruba taboo folktales carry deep cultural significance, there is a need to explore the pragmatic aspect of these taboos to reveal underlying meanings and connections within the culture. This project work distinguishes itself by focusing specifically on the pragmatic analysis of selected taboo folktales in Yoruba language, in Ogbomosho.

### **1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The study attempts to answer the following questions in the relation to the objectives:

- (I) What are the taboo folktales in the Yoruba community?
- (II) What pragmatic strategies are used in these folktales?
- (III) How do these folktales reflect and reinforce Yoruba cultural values and taboo?

## **1.4. AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The aim of this study is to carry out pragmatic analysis on selected taboo folktales in Yoruba language. The set of objectives include to:

- (I) Identify and document taboo folktales in Yoruba community;
- (II) Analyze the pragmatic strategies used in these folktales;
- (III) Explore how these folktales reflect and reinforce Yoruba cultural values and taboos.

## **1.5 METHODOLOGY**

In order to present a thorough examination of Yoruba folktales that depict taboos, this study used a qualitative methodology. The majority of the main data used in the study came from proficient Yoruba speakers. The methodology is discussed under two subheadings: method of data collection and method of data analysis.

### **1.5.1 Method of Data Collection**

The present study relied mostly on primary data. The primary data consisted of taboo folktales collected through interviews with competent speakers and users of the Yoruba language. The oral data, which constituted the primary source, was obtained from three main informants: Mr. Samuel B. Ojo in Oyo State, Mrs. Alice Farayade in Ogun State, and Miss Praise Awoleru in the University of Benin.

These informants supplied a wide range of taboo folktales and were also relied upon for the translation of these folktales into the Yoruba language. The collected data were subsequently transcribed and documented in written form to serve as the basis for further analysis.

### **1.5.2 Method of Data Analysis**

The collected data were analyzed using Austin's (1962) Speech Act Theory and Leech's (1983) Politeness Principle. With a focus on how these speech acts create taboos and direct cultural behavior, the chosen taboo folktales were analyzed to find utterances that serve as declaratives or directions. The foundation for comprehending how language in folktales serves to make declarations particularly in the establishment and transmission of taboos and how politeness techniques are used to uphold cultural norms was established by this analytical approach.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.0 INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter, a review of definitions of concepts that are paramount to this research is presented. This chapter is divided into three sections which are conceptual review or theoretical review, previous study which inspired this current study, and lastly, the concern of the present study.

#### **2.1. CONCEPTUAL REVIEW**

The following are concepts to be reviewed and extensively discussed:

- Folktales
- Types of Folktales
- Functions of Folktales
- Taboos in Folktales
- Pragmatic Approaches to Folktale Analysis
- Yoruba Folktale Tradition

### **2.1.1. Folktales**

Folktales are old stories told from generations to generations in the oral tradition. These are tales that people tell each other out loud, rather than stories in written form. As a matter of fact, every human society has its own folktales. These stories well known in the society, are passed down from one generation to another orally. These stories are passed down for the following reasons such as passing along knowledge, information and history.

For years, folktales have allowed people to retell tales of past heroes that have motivated young children all over the world. Common folktales are believed to have originated some 4,000 years ago, but these stories have been continuously told for a very long time. Folktales are conceived to have originated as an oral tradition. Folktales, which exist in many cultures and gave many social purposes, are an essential part of oral literature and traditional storytelling.

From a variety of angles, academics have tried to characterize folktales, highlighting its cultural, narrative and fictional aspects. Folktales are prose narratives which are regarded as fiction, according to Bascom (1965:4). They are said mostly for amusement and are not regarded as doctrine. Bascom went ahead to differentiate folktales from myths and legends by pointing out that they are fictional and that neither the audience nor the storyteller consider them to be true. According to Finnegan (1970) in her groundbreaking story oral literature in Africa, she pointed out that folktales are fictional oral histories passed down from generation to generation. She notes that although its main purpose is to

amuse, folktales frequently contain underlying educational or societal significance. This perspective emphasizes how folktales serve as both entertainment and instruction, especially in African countries where storytelling is a vital means of maintaining and transmitting traditional ethics and values.

According to Dauda (2012), the audience plays a critical role in determining the meaning of a folktale, particularly in how it contributes to children's moral and social development. In a related view, Patrick (2024) observes that African folktales employ humour and inventive language to captivate listeners while imparting moral lessons. Similarly, Akinrujomu (2024) underscores the educational value of folktales, describing them as pedagogical tools for shaping children's character and reinforcing societal values. In the same vein, Sone (2018) maintains that African folktales reflect cultural norms and instill virtues such as honesty, courage, and respect in their audience.

African folktales have a long history that originates from oral traditions, whereby elders frequently passed down stories to generations in order to entertain, impart moral lessons and maintain culture. These tales are told around a fire and frequently involve singing, drumming and performance during "tales by moonlight." The various cultures, ethnic groups and historical events of Africa are apparent in its folktales. Although geographical variances, the vast majority of African folktales have features in common like: Making use of animals (such as tortoise, lion and spiders) as symbolic figures, the

application of call and response rhythms and repetition, the existence of ancestral beings, cunning characters or wise elders and a heavy focus on social standards and morality.

Scholars like Finnegan (1970) and Bascom (1965) describe African folktales as having four main purposes which are:

1. To educate (that is to teach values, appropriate conduct and life lessons),
2. Provide pleasure and amusement which is known as entertainment,
3. Preserve culture which helps in transmission of values and beliefs and social control which helps in the process of encouraging appropriate behaviour and preventing deviation.

For example, the tortoise (known as Ijapa or Àjàpá in Yoruba) frequently appears as a trickster, teaching lessons about cunningness and dishonesty. In the Northern Nigerian Hausa, tales like Gizo the spider educates about cunning and mischievous behaviour. Also, the Ewu na Mbe (The Goat and the Tortoise) story in Igbo folktales is popular for teaching moral lessons about trickery, consequences and honesty. Folktales told in Africa are usually interactive, with storytellers enhancing the narrative experience with the use of songs, proverbs and even gestures as well as audience participation. Also folktales usually start with classic opener like “Once upon a time”- this is represented in a variety of regional styles.

From a broader lexicographic perspective, a folktale is described as “a very old traditional story from a particular place that was originally passed on to people in a spoken form”, according to Oxford Learner's Dictionary (2024). Folktales’ oral heritage, cultural uniqueness and historical depth are all encapsulated in this concept, which supports their function as customary narrative that uphold communities’ belief and experiences. Also according to a more technical definition provided by the Merriam - Webster Dictionary, a folktale is “a characteristically anonymous, timeless and placeless tale circulated orally among people.” This emphasizes the oral tradition and universal qualities of folktales, such as the fact that they are often passed down collectively, that they are often passed down collectively, that they are often set in an unclear time or place, and that they have no known author. The versatility and anonymity of folktales allow them to evolve throughout time without losing their core concepts, which makes them eternal.

### **2.1.2. Types of Folktales**

A vast range of traditional stories that are passed down orally from one generation to the next are included in folktales. Scholars have divided folktales into many groups according to their substance, topics, purposes and cultural relevance, even though the name folktale is frequently used as a general phrase. Folktales are fictional prose narratives that are primarily presented for amusement purposes, however they frequently contain moral or societal teachings, according to Bascom (1965).

Fairytales, Legends, Myths, tall tales, and fables are the five main categories that scholars and folktales typically distinguish. Every one of these subgenres has unique characteristics, roles and cultural importance.

### **1) Fairy Tales:**

These are imaginative stories with magical elements that include fairies, witches, talking animals and supernatural happenings. They frequently include a plot structure where a hero or heroine overcome obstacles to finally receive a prize, frequently with the use of magic. Important attribute of this type of folktales including:

- Using enchantments or magic,
- Fantasy landscapes such as forests, castles etc,
- Figures such as dragons, princes and witches.

Also, common themes include justice, transformation and good versus evil. Examples of fairytales include: Snow White, Cinderella and the African folktale known as the Magic Drum.

Vladimir Propp (1968) asserts that fairy tales usually have a foreseeable plot in which a character leaves home, experiences hardship a returns changed. These stories aid in establishing societal standards and moral principles.

## **2) Legends:**

Legends are semi historical tales that have historical roots but have been enriched with made-up details throughout time. They usually attempt to explain cultural customs, valiant acts, or natural monuments and are set in a familiar time and location. This type of folktales is inspired by real individuals and events, but over the top frequently localized (associated with a particular area) and also reflect history and cultural identity.

Some examples include, The legend of Queen Idia(Benin), Robin Hood and King Arthur. According to Bascom (1965), he pointed out that unlike myths and fairytales, legends are “believed narratives.” They are helpful for examining a community’s social and historical identity because they are frequently presented as true or partially accurate.

## **3) Myths:**

This is one of the main categories of folktales. These are typically regarded as sacred stories that describe the beginnings of the world, people, the natural world, or cultural customs. Myths are considered authentic and authoritative in the cultures that tell them, in contrast to other types of folktales like fables or fairytales (Bascom, 1965). They are frequently recounted to support societal ideas or religious beliefs and are usually connected to divine or supernatural.

It should be noted that in folkloristic and anthropological context, the contemporary use of the word “myth” as a synonym for “false belief” is misleading. A

myth, as Eliade (1963) correctly explains, is a genuine narrative of sacred origins rather than a lie. In this way, myths carry moral, spiritual and cosmic values, fulfilling a dual religious and social purpose. The origin of life, death, and other natural events are explained by myths in many African civilizations. For instance, the Yoruba story of Olodumare and the Orisha deities' role in creating the world are revered as sacred explanations of the origins of the universe.

#### **4) Tall tales:**

A tall tale is one that has incredible aspects and is told as though it were factual and true. These are tales that exaggerate real-life events and are wholly made up stories that take place in my recognizable locations. The tone is usually friendly, and events are frequently recounted in a way that gives the impression that the narrator was present during the incident. The main way that legends and tall tales differ from one another is in age, while many legends exaggerate the adventures of its heroes, tall tales do so to the point that it over powers the narrative.

#### **5) Fables:**

These are short stories with moral teachings imparted through the use of animals, objects or natural phenomena as characters. They conclude with a clear moral, frequently expressed directly, and are didactic in nature. Examples of fables include: The Frog and the Ox, The Tortoise and the Birds etc. Although fables are typically created as children's

stories, they teach a straightforward lesson that readers of all ages may understand. Even though they are entertaining to read, fables can play a significant role in a child's moral education, particularly when parents and kids share them.

The diversity and adaptability of oral traditions are demonstrated by the division of folktales into fairytales, legends, myths, tall tales and fables. Whether it is to inspire, educate, amuse or clarify, each style reflects distinct cultural purposes. Researchers can learn more about the values, anxieties and beliefs that influence a community's worldview by comprehending these forms.

### **2.1.3 Functions of Folktales**

Folktales have a number of significant social roles. Beyond providing amusement, these roles aid in the transmission of culture, the formation of moral principles, the prescription of historical records and the fortification of collective identity.

The following are the various functions outlined by different scholars, most especially in traditional African societies:

#### **1) Entertainment:**

The entertainment value of folktale is the most evident and immediate purpose of folktales. Whether told at festivals, moonlight parties or family storytelling sessions, folktales frequently have dramatic narratives endearing characters and thrilling turns that

appeal to audiences of all ages (Finnegan, 1970). In both urban and rural areas, they are a shared hobby.

## **2) Moral and Ethical Instruction:**

A lot of folktales are meant to impart social ideals and moral lessons. While good deeds like humanity, kindness and respect are rewarded, characters in these stories frequently suffer the repercussions of disobedience, greed, dishonesty or pride. For example, African stories like “Why the Tortoise’s shell is cracked” and fables like “The Tortoise and the Hare” highlight qualities like patience, honesty and cunning (Okpewho, 1992).

## **3) Cultural Heritage Preservation:**

Folktales aid in the preservation of a person's history, value, tradition and custom. They preserve cultural identity and make sure that future generations are linked to their ancestors through frequent oral transmission. In African communities, whose history was mostly unwritten, this is especially crucial.

## **4) Education:**

Children and young people are prepared for adult roles through the informal educational methods of folktales. They provide knowledge of roles, taboos, cultural

expectations and the repercussions of wrongdoing. Additionally, they can teach kids how to solve problems, think critically and strengthen their language skills.

## **5) Religious and spiritual purposes:**

Folktales in certain societies are a reflection of cosmology and spiritual beliefs. They could reinforce the community's religious beliefs and practices by incorporating deities, spirits and other worldly forces.

### **2.1.4. Taboos in Folktales**

One of the most interesting and recurrent themes in folktale construction, especially in African oral traditions, is taboos. The term taboo in folklore refers to a ban on specific activities, words, or behaviors that are deemed improper by culture or religion. The moral, theological, and social structures of the societies that produce these stories are firmly anchored in these taboos. Their participation in folktales has an educational as well as symbolic purpose, warning listeners or readers against actions that are thought to be harmful to spiritual or societal harmony. Taboo is the restriction of a behavior because it is thought to be too hazardous and accursed or too sacred and consecrated for regular people to engage in.

Originating in Polynesia, the term taboo was first used by Captain James Cook during his 1771 visit to Tonya. He then incorporated it into the English language, which led to its widespread use. Despite being frequently linked to the Polynesian cultures of the

South Pacific, taboos have been found to exist in almost every society, both historical and contemporary. Typically, a taboo's intrinsic restriction includes the notion that violating it would result in some sort of hardship for the culprit in question.

According to Finnegan (1970), taboos are shown in African folktales as boundaries that, when crossed, carry serious repercussions, reflecting and reinforcing the moral norms of the society. In these stories, characters who break taboos are often punished, banished, charged or killed. The sacredness of social standards and the consequences of breaking them are emphasized by the narrative format. Many forbidden subjects are usually depicted in folktales. The taboo against defying elders or the divine is one typical example. Characters - who are frequently kids or cunning people - are cautioned against opening forbidden doors, going into particular forests or places, or consuming particular delicacies.

One of the main purposes of folktales, according to Bascom's (1965) examination of the functions of folktale, is to preserve cultural continuity by imparting social values, such as the observance of taboos. Because they convey moral lessons through engaging narrative, the stories serve as unofficial educational institutions, especially for young people. For example, the protagonist of many Yoruba and Igbo folktales is warned not to break a sacred order, but they often do so out of temptation or curiosity, frequently with disastrous results. These narrative decisions aim to develop moral discipline in the listener in addition to creating tension.

In conclusion, taboos in folktales are vital cultural tools that instruct, caution, and inform audiences about proper and improper conduct. These stories greatly aid in the moral and ethical growth of their audience by illustrating the consequences of transgressing social or religious limits.

### **2.1.5 Pragmatic Approaches to Folktale Analysis**

A subfield of linguistics known as pragmatics examines how meaning is created and understood in light of interlocutors' shared knowledge, speaker intention and context. Pragmatics makes it possible to investigate how language works in certain situations, particularly in oral narratives with a strong cultural and social foundation such as folktales. According to Levinson (1983:5), "Pragmatics is the study of language use" with an emphasis on how speakers use language in everyday situations.

According to Yule (1996:3), pragmatics emphasizes the interpersonal role of language in communication by analyzing "the relationships between linguistic forms and the users of those forms." By considering pragmatics as "the use of language in human communication as determined by the conditions of society" by Mey (2001:6). Jacob broadens the viewpoint of pragmatics given how shared cultural norms, social roles and interactive settings influence folktale performance and interpretation, this sociocultural perspective is especially important when studying them.

By incorporating these definitions, academics can use practical tools to uncover the hidden meanings and purposes of folktales. Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) established Speech Act Theory, one of the fundamental ideas in pragmatics. Speech acts are the roles that utterances play in communication including warning, requesting, commanding or asserting. Folktale characters frequently employ language in a performative manner. A king's declaration, for instance, might be interpreted as a decree, but a trickster's flattery might be interpreted as a tactic of manipulation. Other pragmatics tools include politeness principle by Brown and Levinson (1987), Contextual implicature and presupposition.

In summary, pragmatic approaches to folktale analysis reveal how language in folktale serves purposes beyond mere narrative, such as defining character roles, conveying moral lessons, encoding cultural norms and regulating social connections. Folktales are used as instruments of interactive communication and cultural transmission through the use of implicature, speech actions, politeness techniques and contextual cues. Therefore, using language that is both culturally relevant and purposefully employed, a pragmatic lens asks not only what a tale means, but also how it signifies.

### **2.1.6 Yoruba Folktale Tradition**

One rich and enduring component of the oral literature of the Yoruba people in Southwest Nigeria is the Yoruba folktale tradition. Yoruba folktales are also known as àlò àpagbè and they are more than just stories; they serve as social control, cultural transfer and moral instruction tools. These stories, which are typically recited in groups, particularly

on moon lit evenings or at family get-togethers, represent Yoruba cosmology, morals and social customs.

According to Abrahams (1983), African Oral literature, particularly Yoruba folktales, serves both educational and amusement purposes. Characters like talking animals, tricksters, spirits and deities are frequently used to represent moral traits or social issues. The tortoise (Ijapa or Àjàpá), which represents intellect, cunning and survival instincts, is typically embodiment of the trickster figure in Yoruba folktales. His tales serve to illustrate the negative effects of selfishness, dishonesty and greed.

Akporobaro (2005) also emphasized that Yoruba folktales are also strongly associated with the people's belief system. With tales involving divinities like Sango, Obatala or Ogun, characters and themes frequently come from the Òrìsà pantheon (Yoruba deities), connecting folktales with mythology and religion. This illustrates how secular and religious narratives are woven together in Yoruba Oral traditions, as stated by Barber (1991). Also Yoruba folktale narration relies heavily on performance. To engage the audience and emphasize important lessons, the storyteller usually employs either music, proverbs, call-and-response, dramatization or mimicry. This performative element supports Finnegan's (1970) claim that oral literature in Africa is a “total artistic activity,” where meaning is communicated through gesture, word and sound.

Crucially, Yoruba folktales frequently highlight taboos, deference to elders, diligence, honesty and the value of communal living. In order to serve as a structure for

teaching norms and appropriate behavior, these stories usually consist of a problem, a moral test and a resolution.

## **2.2 Previous Studies**

Folktales, Yoruba Oral literature and pragmatic elements in conversation have all been studied by a number of academics. Although there are not many studies that examine forbidden folktales directly from a practical standpoint, what is known about them gives this project work important background information and theoretical support.

A quantitative study on parents' opinions of Yoruba folktales' ability to instill moral values in young people in Oyo State was carried out by Adewale Badru and Odutayo (2021). They discovered that parents thought these folktales were excellent resources for moral instruction. This emphasizes the social role that folktales play in passing down cultural values, which serves as a basis for pragmatically examining taboo myths.

Patrick's (2022) study examined the linguistic features and humor in African folktales, including Yoruba tales collected in Ondo state. The findings demonstrate how comedic language and formulaic expressions enrich oral performance and engage the audience. Such stylistic dynamics inform how pragmatic strategies like implicature appear in narrative delivery. The pragmatic purposes of Yoruba proverbs and indirect speech patterns have also been investigated. Verbal indirection in Yoruba was examined by Ajayo (2020), who demonstrated how speakers strategically employ indirect expressions, in

cultural communication. In a similar vein, Farinde et al. (2023) investigated politeness signals in Yoruba interpersonal discourse, emphasizing how culture influences face management techniques in situations such as authority and elder -youth contact.

Using Vygotsky's socio-cultural framework, Adebileje's socio-cultural and attitudinal study examines a few select Yoruba taboos in South West Nigeria. Data collected through interviews with students and staff at Redeemer's University and Obafemi Awolowo University showed that taboo beliefs are gradually wearing away among youths, especially as parental instruction and cultural education decline. He explains that language is essential to culture and that taboos continue to shape attitudes, despite being increasingly influenced or undermined by Christianity and modernization.

An anthropological summary of taboos and superstitions among the Yoruba people of South West Nigeria is given by Odejobi (2013). He distinguished taboos from superstition in general, pointing out that taboos are deliberate cultural prohibitions that govern morality and behavior and are frequently connected to spiritual or social order. Taboos related to the Owo Yoruba's manufacturing of sacred textiles are examined by Akinwunmi (2005). The study emphasizes how social taboos and cross-generational barriers, including limitations on who can weave particular fabrics or adhere to gender -based purity standards, maintain social hierarchy and regulate the caliber of craftsmanship.

Ehineni (2019) investigated Yoruba proverbs in Ahmed Yerima's plays within the field of proverbs pragmatics. The study discovered that proverbs serve as a means of

warning, advising, defending and asserting in Yoruba theatrical interactions. The work demonstrates the wider applicability of pragmatic frameworks in Yoruba Oral literatures. Also, Akande (2020) looked at proverbs relating to Oyo for practical behaviors like boasting, warning and advising but not explicitly on folktales. The study came to the conclusion that local proverbs convey cultural psychology and worldview, demonstrating how pragmatics and Yoruba indigenous discourse are intertwined.

These studies give this project work a theoretical and empirical foundation, confirming the need to focus specifically on taboo narratives and pragmatic strategies in Yoruba folktales, especially from Ogbomosho. This research work thus fills an important gap linking taboo folktales, Yoruba pragmatic features and the cultural mechanisms through which indirect meaning is conveyed.

### **2.3 Concern of the Present Study**

Even while Yoruba folktales have been the subject of countless literary, anthropological and cultural studies, little focus has been placed on the ways in which these stories' pragmatic parts convey, uphold or challenge taboos. Without critically analyzing the language use, speech acts, politeness principles and pragmatic goals woven throughout these stories, the majority of current literature frequently concentrates on genre classification, moral teachings or cultural symbolism.

Furthermore, few studies have rigorously examined how taboo themes are communicated and interpreted using pragmatic techniques, particularly in connection to context, speaker intention, audience reaction and cultural consequences despite the fact that these themes are essential to many Yoruba folktales. Therefore, by performing a pragmatic analysis of a few Yoruba folktales, this study seeks to close that gap by concentrating on the ways in which taboos are encoded, conveyed and comprehended.

Additionally, this study aims to investigate how effective Yoruba folktales are at controlling behavior and communicating indirectly, particularly in traditional societies where outright conflict is frowned upon. The study's ultimate goal is to shed light on how these stories maintain indigenous knowledge and ethics, influence social behavior and mirror actual communication patterns.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND DATA PRESENTATION**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

This chapter presents the theoretical frameworks that guide the analysis of the selected Yoruba folktales. The study adopts two major theories: Speech Act Theory and the Politeness Principle. This chapter also includes the presentation of the data collected for the research.

#### **3.1 Speech Act Theory**

The Speech Act Theory is a theory of language use that holds that when people speak, they are acting in addition to expressing facts or information. John Searle developed the theory in the 1970s, especially in his book *Speech Acts* (1969), after J.L. Austin first presented it in his 1962 work "How to Do Things with Words." Austin's main argument was that language is a tool for carrying out actions rather than just a means of expressing facts.

An utterance described in terms of the speaker's intention and the impact it has on the listener is called a speech act in linguistics. In essence, it is the action that the speaker wants the listeners to take. Requests, threats, pledges, apologies, greetings, and a variety

of statements are examples of speech acts. Speech acts are a crucial component of communication. This theory is a branch of pragmatics.

This area of research is concerned with the manner in which words can be employed not just to provide information but also to carry out actions. Linguistics, philosophy, psychology, law, literary theories, and even the advancement of artificial intelligence all make use of it.

According to linguistics and philosophy of language, a speech act is an expression made by a person that combines information presentation with an activity. For instance, the sentence "I would like the mashed potatoes; could you please pass them to me?" is seen as a speech act since it both requests that someone pass the potatoes to the speaker and conveys the speaker's need to have the mashed potatoes. As noted by Kent Bach, "almost any speech act is really the performance of several acts at once, distinguished by different aspects of the speaker's intention: there is the act of saying something, what one does in saying it, such as requesting or promising, and how one is trying to affect one's audience".

J.L. Austin developed speech act theory, which was summed up in his William James Lectures, which he delivered at Harvard University in 1955 (Austin 1962). In order to explain how we can utilize language, Speech Act Theory was first developed as a theory within the Philosophy of Language. Although Searle developed it, Austin was the original creator. Accordingly, the two primary forerunners of the theory were John Searle and J. L. Austin. Austin started the work and established its framework, and his most famous

pupil, John Searle, further organized it and strengthened its basis. Austin began by looking at the idea that a factual statement should be able to be independently verified. According to Austin, saying something is equivalent to doing something. For instance, uttering "I apologize" is not just describing an apology; it is, in fact, performing the act of apologizing. Thus, Speech Act Theory moves beyond the structural level of language to investigate what people do with words in specific contexts.

Austin briefly distinguished between performative and constative utterances. Constative statements, like "The market opens at 7 a.m.," are descriptive in character and are evaluated as true or false. Performative utterances, on the other hand, are those in which the speaker actually does something by saying, as "I hereby declare this market open." Depending on the circumstances and context, these statements can be deemed felicitous or infelicitous rather than true or incorrect. Later, Austin realized that language works more dynamically and went beyond this dichotomy. His more comprehensive categorization of speech actions into locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts resulted from this insight, and it serves as the basis for this study's examination of the expression and interpretation of taboos in Yoruba folktales.

### **3.1.2 Development of Speech Act Theory**

The development of the theory can be traced in two main stages:

Austin introduced the distinction between different kinds of acts involved in communication:

#### **Austin's Contribution:**

##### **1) Locutionary Act:**

This concept can be understood as the fundamental act of speaking. It refers to the words' literal meaning. The basic act of producing a meaningful linguistic expression. The locutionary act is further subdivided into three acts: the rhetic act, which refers to the use of words to convey meanings (using words with sense and reference); the phonetic act, which refers to the use of sounds that are identifiable as words from a particular vocabulary and grammar; and the phatic act, which refers to the use of merely noises or sounds.

##### **2) Illocutionary Act:**

This is the intention behind an utterance, an utterance's intention reveals what the speaker hopes to accomplish. Therefore, when we speak, we are not only making sounds (locutionary act); we are also using our words to accomplish an action (illocutionary act). Dwelling on the illocutionary act, J.L. Austin was ready to classify speech acts. He did this

by using performative verbs that make illocutionary acts explicit (e.g, 'I declare' 'I promise').

Austin lists five primary classes of illocutionary acts in "How to Do Things with Words," which is based on his own work. These include: Expositives, Behabitives, Commissives, Exercitives, and Verdictives.

- **Expositives:**

They are used to elaborate on arguments and points of view. For instance, revise, comprehend, report, inform, infer, deny, etc.

**Examples:**

I meant to clarify that we require additional funding.

I contend that there are serious problems with the theory.

- **Behabitives:**

These are reactions to the activities of others. They are used to show how one feels about the behavior of others. They also display social behavior and attitudes. These include saying: "I'm sorry," "Congratulations," "Pity," "Consolation," "Blessing," "Cursing," "Protesting," and so on.

**Examples in English language:**

I'm sorry for being late.

Congratulations on your accomplishment.

**Examples in Yoruba language:**

Mo dúpé fún ìrànńwó re- I thank you for your help.

Mo bá ọ kédùn lóri ìpàdánù - I'm sorry for your loss.

- **Commissives:**

These commit the speaker to a certain course of action in the future. Commissive words include promise, undertake, contract, intend, vow, bet, guarantee, pledge etc.

**Examples in English language:**

I promise to finish the assignment by tomorrow.

I vow to never forget you.

**Examples in Yoruba language:**

Mo şèléri láti wà níbè ní àkókò. - I promise to be there on time.

Mo tété náírà márùn-ún pé òjò máa rò. -I bet five naira that rain will fall.

- **Excercitives:**

These relate to decisions in favor or against a course of action. They are connected with saying that something is to be so. Examples: order, command, direct, urge, beg, plead, advise, warn, recommend, appoint, dismiss, nominate, vote, declare.

**Examples in English language:**

I order you to leave the premises immediately.

I advise you to be careful.

**Examples in Yoruba language:**

Mo kílò fún ọ pé kí o má ẹ èyí mó." - I warn you not to do this again.

- **Verdictives:**

These are speech acts that deliver a judgement or assessment. They involve the speaker delivering a finding upon evidence or reasons. They are often expressed in the form of giving a decision for or against somebody or something.

**Examples in English language:**

I declare this project a success.

I reckon it'll take us about three hours.

### **Examples in Yoruba language:**

Mo şawárí pé àìsàn ibà ni ó ní." - I diagnose that it is malaria he has.

Àwọn onídàájó rí i pé kò jèbi." - The judges found him not guilty.

### **3) Perlocutionary Act:**

The impact of the statement on the listener is known as the perlocutionary act. This is the speech act's real result. It has to do with how the utterance affects or makes the listener react (e.g., terrifying, convincing, amusing). The impact an utterance has on a listener—whether it be through feelings, ideas, or behaviors, is known as a perlocutionary speech act. This is the action carried out by speaking. It is the impact that the speech act has on the listener; it is the outcome of the speech act.

This is different from the locutionary act (the actual utterance and its meaning) and the illocutionary act (the speaker's intention). The perlocutionary part, on the other hand, is the effect that an utterance could have on the hearer or addressee (Huang, 2014: 128).

According to Austin in his book "How to Do Things with Words" published in 1962:

"A speaker utters sentences with a particular meaning (locutionary act), and with a particular force (illocutionary act), in order to achieve a certain effect on the hearer (perlocutionary act)."

**Examples of Perlocutionary:**

“Close the window, it's about to rain.”

**Perlocutionary Effect:** The listener quickly closes the window to avoid letting water get into the house.

“You're really good at this.”

**Perlocutionary Effect:** The listener feels encouraged and motivated to continue their work.

Speech Act Level	Description	Nigerian Pidgin English Example
Locutionary	The literal act of uttering words with meaning and reference.	Cold dey catch for here.
Illocutionary	The speaker's intention or the act performed in saying something.	Telling person something, complaining, begging person.
Perlocutionary	The effect of the utterance on the listener, the consequences of the act.	Make person close window

## **Searle's Refinement:**

Austin's speech act theory was expanded upon by John Searle (1975), who divided illocutionary acts into five groups. These categories shed light on how language is used by speakers to carry out acts during conversation. A description of these categories is provided below, along with examples:

### **1) Declaratives:**

Declaratives are utterances that just by being said, alter the outside world. The utterance itself carries out the action, and the speaker has the institutional authority to make such modifications.

### **2) Assertives:**

Assertives are utterances in which the speaker commits to the truth of a proposition. They express the speaker's worldview and can be judged as either accurate or inaccurate.

### **3) Expressives:**

Expressives convey the speaker's feelings or psychological state in relation to a specific circumstance. They only convey the speaker's feelings without necessarily trying to get the listener to do anything.

#### **4) Directives:**

Directives are statements meant to persuade the listener to take action. Through a variety of requests or directives, the speaker tries to affect the hearer's behavior.

#### **5) Commissives:**

Commissives are statements in which the speaker makes a commitment to a future action. These actions convey intent and have the power to unite the speaker or a group.

### **3.1.3 Application of Speech Act Theory to Selected Yoruba Taboo Folktales**

Speech Act Theory can be used to analyze the chosen Yoruba taboo folktales. It focuses on locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts to show how language in these stories serves as a cultural tool for social control, moral instruction, and tradition preservation.

Locutionary acts are the actual utterances made by the storyteller or characters, including word choice, grammatical construction, and cultural idioms. These behaviors are frequently embedded in the highly metaphorical Yoruba language of the taboo folktales, which rely on idioms, proverbs, and symbolic imagery. The Chief Priest's statement, "The Arugba carries more than the calabash; she bears new life within her, a life conceived in defiance of sacred law," in the story "Why the Arugba Must Be a Virgin," is a locutionary act that clearly conveys the violation of custom. Such exact

wording guarantees clarity and eliminates any doubt regarding the offense and its importance.

The intentional force behind the statements is captured by illocutionary deeds. This energy is frequently conveyed in these folktales as cautions, bans, admonitions, and moral precepts. Ogun's statement, "No one shall sit at the edge of the door when it is raining; it is a sacred path for the spirits," for example, in "Taboo About Not Sitting at the Edge of the Door When It Is Raining," has the illocutionary power of a demand backed by divine authority. The statement does more than just describe; it establishes a cultural law that compels listeners to behave in a way that is expected of them in the Yoruba worldview.

The impact that these statements have on the listener is referred to as a perlocutionary act. Fear of supernatural vengeance, adherence to taboos, and internalization of moral principles are frequently the perlocutionary ends that folktales aim to achieve. According to "Why Pregnant Women Shouldn't Eat Okra," Omodeye's hardships during childbirth and the elders' subsequent ruling are intended to create a lifelong dislike of eating okra when pregnant. Members of the community refrain from the prohibited behavior in order to prevent similar outcomes, which strengthens the group's loyalty to tradition.

It is clear from applying Speech Act Theory to these folktales that they are intentional acts of communication that protect cultural values and influence behavior rather than being merely entertaining. Language clarity is provided by the locutionary dimension, cultural authority and intention are encoded by the illocutionary dimension, and concrete changes

in thought and behavior are guaranteed by the perlocutionary dimension. Because of this interaction, Yoruba society's taboo folktales continue to be effective tools for social and moral control.

### **3.1.4 RELEVANCE/JUSTIFICATION OF THE THEORY**

Speech Act Theory is extremely pertinent to this study, because it provides a framework for comprehending how language is utilized to accomplish actions within certain cultural and social situations. The theory, which was developed by philosophers like Searle and Austin, goes beyond considering language as a simple means of communication and instead emphasizes how utterances serve as actions that have the power to persuade, warn, forbid, or instruct.

In the context of Yoruba taboo folktales, language serves as a tool for moral code enforcement, cultural preservation, and generational transmission of collective knowledge in addition to being a narrative tool. These stories' statements frequently have performative weight, serving as a warning against an illegal behavior, a proclamation of repercussions, or a statement of social norms. In the folktale, for example, a prohibition issued by a deity or elder serves as a binding command with social and spiritual force rather than just being information.

A pragmatic analysis of the folktales is made possible by the use of Speech Act Theory, which shows how certain utterances function as locutionary, illocutionary, and

perlocutionary actions to accomplish various communicative objectives. Understanding how taboo-related messages are constructed to elicit regulation, create dread of repercussions, or stimulate moral reflection in listeners is essential.

This theoretical approach is especially well-suited for the current study because it captures the performative nature of language in oral traditions, where words are active agents that shape cognition and behavior rather than passive symbols, Speech Act Theory examines the functional power of language in context, in contrast to strictly structural theories that concentrate on language's form or simply sociolinguistic methods that highlight its social distribution. Because of this, it is the best lens through which to examine how Yoruba taboo folktales use speech to influence their audience and uphold cultural standards.

### **3.2 POLITENESS PRINCIPLE**

Politeness can be viewed as some social phenomena, a way to build positive relationships with others, and a standard enforced by societal norms. Therefore, by its very nature, it is normative, instrumental, and phenomenal. (Al-Seady, 1998a: 18; Betti and Al-Jubouri, 2009: 8) Politeness is common in many ways. It is a phenomenon that is seen in all civilizations, used as a tool by speakers of various languages, and accepted as the standard in all societies.

Although politeness is universal, different cultures have distinct criteria of judgment, strategies to realize politeness, and actual expressions of politeness (Betti and Al-Jubouri, 2015c: 70; Igaab, 2010: 13; and Betti, 1996: 44). These variations can be linked to how the concept of politeness originated in various cultures (Huang, 2008: 97; Betti, 2013: 19). In contrast, Leech does not want to take pragmatic competence into consideration (Betti, 2021c: 7). His analysis of linguistic politeness phenomena is a component of his effort to establish a framework for what he refers to as general pragmatics, which describes the ways in which language is employed in communication.

In his groundbreaking book *Principles of Pragmatics* (1983), Leech first put forth the Politeness Principle (PP) as an addition to Grice's Cooperative Principle (1975). Leech's Politeness Principle focuses on how speakers manage interpersonal relationships by delicate and socially conscious language use, whereas Grice's approach describes how speakers achieve effective communication. The foundation of the theory is the knowledge that communication involves more than just conveying information; it also involves preserving social harmony and preventing face-threatening activities (FTAs).

Grice's Cooperative Principle was expanded upon by Leech in 1983 with the introduction of the Politeness Principle. Leech's Politeness Principle discusses the social side of contact and explains how speakers use language to uphold interpersonal connections, demonstrate respect, and prevent disagreement, whereas Grice's maxims concentrate on making sure that communication is effective. Geoffrey Leech claims that

there is a politeness principle with conversational maxims that are comparable to those put out by Paul Grice.

The following are the six maxims he cites: Tact, generosity, approval, modesty, agreement, and empathy (Leech, 1983: 132; Betti, 2002d: 94; and Betti, 2021a: 78). The first and the second, as well as the third and the fourth, create a pair. By minimizing the expense and optimizing the value to the speaker or listener, these maxims differ from culture to culture (what is courteous in one may be odd in another) (Leech, Ibid: 132; and Betti, 2015a: 45).

### **1) The Tact maxim:**

The maxim of tact reads: "Minimize the expression of beliefs which imply cost to others; maximize the expression of beliefs which imply benefit to others." Betti and Hasan 2020: 73; Betti, 2002c: 87).

This maxim's second part reflects the positive politeness strategy of attending to the hearer's interests, wants, and needs, while the first part aligns with Brown and Levinson's negative politeness strategy of minimizing imposition (Leech, 1983: 132; and Betti, Igaab & Al-Ghizzi, 2018: 261).

## **2) The generosity maxim:**

The maxim of Leech's generosity reads: "Minimize the expression of beliefs that express or imply benefit to self; maximize the expression of beliefs that express or imply cost to self." (Leech, 1983: 132; Igaab, 2015b: 25; Betti, 2021i: 19).

The generosity maxim, which emphasizes the speaker and states that others should come before oneself, differs from the tact maxim (Leech, *Ibid*: 33; Betti, 1998: 4; and Betti, and Mahdi, 2020: 98).

## **3) The approbation maxim:**

The approbation maxim reads: "Minimize the expression of beliefs which express dispraise of others; maximize the expression of beliefs which express approval of others." (Igaab and Al-Manhalawey, 2010c: 41; Betti, 1990: 93).

Praising others is ideal, but if this is not possible, one should avoid the situation, respond little (perhaps by using euphemisms), or keep quiet (Betti, 2002a: 13; and Betti, 2020d: 13). The maxim's first portion aims to prevent conflict, while its second part aims to exhibit solidarity and uplift others (Watts, 2003: 65–68; and Betti, 2020b: 18).

## **4) The modesty maxim:**

The modesty maxim is one of the six maxims Leech (1983) put forward in his PP (politeness principle), which means to minimize self-praise or maximize self-dispraise.

"Minimize the expression of praise of self; maximize the expression of dispraise of self" is the modesty maxim.

**5) The agreement maxim:**

"Minimize the expression of disagreement between self and others; maximize the expression of agreement between self and others" is the agreement maxim. (Betti, 2006: 77); (Igaab 2010b: 162). It is consistent with the "seek agreement" and "avoid disagreement" positive politeness methods that Brown and Levinson value highly (Betti, 2013: 5).

It is not asserted, therefore, that people completely avoid disagreement. Simply put, it is noted that they communicate agreement rather than disagreement considerably more directly (Igaab, 2015a: 145; and Betti, 2021d: 13).

**6) The sympathy maxim:**

"Minimize antipathy between self and other; maximize sympathy between the self and other" is the sympathy maxim (Betti and Igaab, 2018: 31).

This comprises a limited set of speech acts that are in line with Brown and Levinson's positive politeness strategy of attending to the hearer's needs, wants, and interests, such as congratulating, apologizing, and offering condolences (Igaab, 2010b: 152; and Betti, and AlFartoosy, 2019: 101; and Betti, 2021n: 2).

These maxims reduce the impact of face-threatening behaviors and promote friendly relationships between participants. Leech's approach has been expanded upon by academics such as Holmes (1995), who examined the socio-cultural variations of politeness, and Brown and Levinson (1987), who incorporated politeness into their Face Theory. These developments emphasize the universality of politeness practices while acknowledging cultural differences in their use.

### **3.2.1 Application of Politeness Principle to Selected Yoruba Taboo Folktales**

In taboo-themed Yoruba folktales, narrators frequently deal with delicate cultural prohibitions that could offend or disgrace listeners if handled brutally or explicitly. A helpful foundation for analyzing how such messages are respectfully and tactfully communicated is the use of the Politeness Principle.

Using the Politeness Principle in a Selection of Yoruba Taboo Folktales, the language employed in folktales frequently reflects social hierarchies, respect for elders, and the avoidance of direct offense. In Yoruba traditional society, politeness is highly valued. The Politeness Principle clarifies the techniques used by storytellers to handle delicate subjects while still imparting moral lessons in the setting of taboo folktales. In order to determine how these maxims are used in dialogues, narrator comments, and indirect allusions to banned behaviors, the folktales will be analyzed.

This demonstrates how Yoruba oral tradition handles socially difficult subjects while upholding cultural standards.

For instance: When a narrator presents a warning in a way that minimizes imposition. For example, by employing proverbs or metaphors rather than direct statements they are exhibiting the Tact Maxim.

Narrators lessen the impact of the restriction by praising characters before correcting or warning them, which is a reflection of the Approbation Maxim.

Before discussing the taboo, narrators emphasize shared cultural values, fostering a sense of unity between speaker and listener. This is an example of the Agreement Maxim in action.

### **3.2.2 Relevance/Justification of the Theory**

Yoruba folktales about taboos are not only stories; they are also means of passing down cultural and moral values, which makes the Politeness Principle extremely pertinent to this study. Taboos frequently deal with subjects that need to be handled carefully to prevent offending elders, gods, or social mores.

This study can pinpoint the precise linguistic and practical techniques narrators employ to preserve social harmony while imparting moral lessons by using the Politeness Principle. By using Leech's maxims in the analysis of these tactics, it will become clear how

politeness is ingrained in the composition and delivery of Yoruba folktales, guaranteeing that the message is both successful and suitable for the culture.

Politeness Principle offers a strong foundation for comprehending how language choices in Yoruba folktales regulate social connections, express respect, and protect dignity especially when discussing taboo subjects. The Politeness Principle is useful to this study because it bridges the gap between linguistic structure and socio-cultural meaning, which makes it particularly helpful in pragmatic analysis. Indirectness, euphemism, and respect indicators (such as honorifics and pluralization for respect) are important politeness techniques in Yoruba culture that are consistent with Leech's maxims.

Applying the Politeness Principle permits Yoruba oral literature's identification of culturally distinct politeness techniques, knowledge of how storytellers deliver moral messages without directly addressing taboo subjects, examination of practical decisions that guarantee cultural sensitivity and message clarity. As a result, the Politeness Principle serves as a framework for comprehending how Yoruba folktales serve as moral education tools without violating social decorum, in addition to being a tool for detecting linguistic politeness.

### 3.3 Data Presentation

The data for this study are shown in this section: Behavioral & Environmental Taboos, Health & Pregnancy-related Taboos, Religious & Ritual Purity Taboos, and Social & Moral Conduct Taboos are the thematic categories into which the chosen taboo folktales in Yoruba culture are categorized. Both the Yoruba and English versions of the stories pertaining to that theme are included in each category.

#### 3.3.1 Religious and Ritual Purity Taboos

##### Story 1: ÌTÀN LÉHÌN ÌDÍ TÍ ARUGBÁ FÌ GBODÒ JÉ WÚNDIÚ

Yèyè Òsun ni Òrìṣà ìbímo, yèyè funfun ti Yorùbá. Ó ti wá ní ààmì nípasè odò. Òrìṣà Yorùbá yìi ni Òrìṣà obìnrin kan ṣoṣo tó wà nínú àwọn òrìṣà tó dá sílẹ̀ tí Olódùmarè rán láti fi dá ilé ayé sílẹ̀. Ayeye olódoodún ni won n se fún odò, Yèyè Òsun.

Ìgbà kan, lásìkò ayeye Òsun, èyí tí ó máa n wáyé léèkan lódoódún lójoojúmó nínú osù kejo (Ayeye òsè méjì). Òṣèrè àṣà kan tí a mò sí ARUGBÁ lásìkò àjòdún tí wón n pè ní Àdùnní ní ìbálòpò pèlú ọkùnrin kan, Àkànní.

Ní alé kan, nígbà tí m̀nàmànà ya nípasè òrun, àwọn èmí méjì yọ sínú òjìjì léhìn àwọn odi ààfin. Ó jé alé ti àwọn ìbúra ẹnu àti àwọn ilé rí èèwò, ìfẹ̀ tí ó ní ìgboya láti kojú èrùjẹ̀jẹ̀. Ìfẹ̀ wọn tàn bí òdòdó ní alé, tí wón n tako àwọn òfin mímó tí wón dè Àdùnní gégé bí

Arugbá. Ààrá dá àtakò wọn lóhùn, sùgbón wọn kò fiyè sí i. Sùgbón lójó ayeye Òsun Òsogbo, won kò mò pé àsírí Àdùnní yóò tú, tí èsì ìfé won yóò sì tú.

Ní ọ̀sẹ̀ díẹ̀ lẹ̀yìn náà, Àdùnní dúró nínú yàrá rẹ̀, ó rántí ìkún omi alé yẹn bí ó ẹ̀ n múra sílẹ̀ fún iṣẹ̀ mímó rẹ̀. Ohun kòòkan tí àwọn aṣọ àṣà ni ó wúwo ju ti ó kẹ̀hìn lo: iró funfun, adé ilèkè, àmùrè mímó, igbá mímó, tí a ẹ̀ ọ̀ṣọ̀ pèlú àwọn àwòrán dídán àti àwọn àmì ti agbára Òsun, ìwòntúnwònsì ni pàtàkì lórí orí rẹ̀.

Lákòkò ìrìn-àjò mímó láti ibi-ìsinmi lọ sí odò, aféfé kún fún ẹgbèrún àwọn ohun ayò; àdúrà wọn ga bí àsá sí òrun. Kò sí enìkan tí ó wòye bí ìgbésè Arugbá tí ó yàn ti ya dí è, wón tèsíwájú pèlú orin won pé "Yèyè ò, Yèyè Òsun." Àdùnní kosè ó sì ṣubú, èyí mú kí igbá ṣubú láti orí rẹ̀ tí àkóónú rẹ̀ sí dà sí ilè. Pèlú ìyàlénú, gbogbo ènìyàn kígbè "Èèwò!"

Ohùn Olórí Alufa ni a gbó bí ó ti sọ pé: "Arugbá gbé dí è ju igbá lọ. Ó ní ayé tuntun nínú rẹ̀-èyí ní ilòdì sí òfin mímó."

Pèlú ìjákulè, Oba lé Àdùnní àti Àkànní kúrò nílè.

Láti ojó náà lo, gbogbo àwon Arugbá ni wón ti wá sí ilé ìjosìn fún ọ̀sẹ̀ dí è kí ayeye odún náà, wón sì ti kilò fún won pé kí wón pa ara won mó láti yàgò fún ibínú Yèyè Òsun.

Bákan náà, Títí di òní, àwon kan n so pé lásìkò ayeye Òsun Òsogbo, aféfé n so orúko won láyè nígbà tí Arugbá bá bèrè ìrìn àjò mímó.

## ENGLISH TRANSLATION

### Story Behind Why the Arugba Must Be a Virgin

Yeye Osun is the Yoruba goddess of fertility, motherhood and purity. She is symbolized by the river. This Yoruba goddess is the only female Orisa among the founding deities sent by Olodumare to establish the earth. A yearly Festival is celebrated in honor of the river goddess, Yeye Osun.

Once upon a time, during the period of the Osun Festival, which happens once a year typically in August (a two-week long celebration). A ritualized performer known as ARUGBA during the festival (a calabash carrier) who was called Adunni had an affair with a man, Akanni.

One fateful night, when lightning tore through the sky, two souls slipped into the shadows behind the palace walls. It was a night of whispered oaths and forbidden promises, a love daring to challenge the divine. Their love blossomed like a flower at night, defying the sacred laws that bound Adunni as the Arugba. Thunder answered their defiance, but they paid it no heed. But on the day of the Osun Osogbo Festival, little did they know that Adunni's secrets would be exposed, and the consequences of their love would be unleashed.

Few weeks later, Adunni stood in her chamber, memories of that thunderous night flooding back as she prepared for her sacred duty. Each item of ritual clothing felt heavier than the last: the white wrapper, the beaded crown, the sacred sash, the sacred calabash,

adorned with intricate carvings and symbols of Osun's power, balanced precariously on her head.

During the sacred journey from the shrine to the river, the air was filled with a thousand ecstatic voices; their prayers soared like eagles toward the heavens. None noticed how the chosen Arugba's steps faltered slightly, they continued with their chanting of "Yeye o, Yeye Osun." Adunni stumbled and fell, this caused the calabash to fall from her head and its content spilled on the floor. With shock and surprise, everyone shouted "Abomination!"

The Chief Priest's voice was heard as he said: "The Arugba carries more than the calabash. She bears new life within her, a life conceived in defiance of sacred law."

With disappointment, the Oba banished Adunni and Akanni from the land.

From that day onwards, all Arugba's are kept in the shrine for a few weeks before the festival and are strictly warned to keep themselves to avoid the wrath of Yeye Osun.

Also, To this day, some say that during the Osun Osogbo Festival, the winds whisper their names when the Arugba begins her sacred journey.

## Story 2: OBA KÒ GBÓDÒ WO INÚ ADÉ E RÈ.

Òrànmiyàn, òkan lára àwọn oba tó dá ilè Yorùbá sílè ni bàbáa rè, Oduduwà fun ní adé. Wón sọ pé adé náà ní àwọn nṣkan tẹmí tó lè pe àwọn ọlórùn àti àwọn baba fílá nínú. Wón kilò fún Òrànmiyàn pé kò gbódò wo inú adé náà nítorí síṣe bẹ̀ẹ̀ kò ní dín agbára adé kù nṣkan ni sùgbón ó tún lè fi í hàn sí àwọn ipá tẹmí tó léwu. Òrànmiyàn kò ní itélórùn pèlú èyí àti nígbàgbogbo fé láti mo ohun tí ó wà nínú adé rẹ gaan.

Nípa iwákiri, Ní ojò kan, Òrànmiyàn pinnu láti wo inú bínú. Ní àkókò tí ó sé, ìmólè afójú kan tán-an láti orí adé àti pé ó ti lù pèlú ìsínwín lésèkesè. Òrànmiyàn pàdánù àsopò tí èmí rẹ ó sì di aláìlágbara àti àìlágbara. Àníyàn àwọn alágbà pe àlùfàà láti dá sí ọ̀rò náà. Wón n rúbọ, wón sì n se iwènùmọ láti mú kí ibàlẹ̀ ọkàn àti agbára ọba padà bọ sípò. Láti ojò yẹn tí di òní, ó di èwò tí ó múná fún ọba èyíkèyí láti wo inú adé e rẹ.

## ENGLISH TRANSLATION

### **A King Must Not Look Inside His Crown**

Oranmiyan, one of the founding kings of the Yoruba people, was given a crown by his father, Oduduwa. The crown was said to contain spiritual elements that could invoke the presence of the gods and ancestors.

Oranmiyan was warned never to look inside the crown because doing so would not only diminish the crown's power but could also expose him to dangerous spiritual forces.

Oranmiyan was not satisfied with this and always wanted to know what was really inside his crown.

Driven by curiosity, one day, Oranmiyan decided to peek inside the crown. The moment he did, a blinding light shone from the crown and he was immediately struck with madness. Oranmiyan lost his spiritual connection and became so weak and powerless.

The elders out of concern called the priest to intervene. They performed sacrifices and cleansing rituals to restore the king's sanity and power.

### **Story 3: KÒ SÍ ÒFÉ NÍNÚ ÀÀFIN NÍ ÀSÀ YORÙBÁ**

Tipétipé séyìn, ní ilú Ilé-ifè àtíjò, ọ̀dọ̀kùnrin kan tó n ọ̀ ọ̀ ààfin kan wà tí orúkọ rẹ̀ n jẹ̀ Ọ̀lárótímí. Ó jẹ̀ olókíkí fún ẹ̀dá àìbìkítà a rẹ̀ àti pé ó ní ihùwàsì tí sùfèé gbogbo síṣe àwọn isẹ̀ ààfin rẹ̀.

Àwọn àgbààgbà ti kílò fún Ọ̀lárótímí pé kí ó dá sùfèé dúrò sùgbón pèlú gbogbo èyí tóun yóò tún sùfèé láí mọ̀. Ọ̀un yóò sùfèé ní gbogbo ọ̀jọ̀ kàn-an pàápàá nígbà àwọn ilàna mímọ̀ àti àwọn ayẹyẹ àwọn baba-nlá.

Ní alé ọ̀jọ̀ kan, lásìkò ayẹyẹ ti èmi láti bu ọ̀lá fún àwọn baba nlá, Ọ̀lárótímí bèrè sínífífèfè tí ó máa n ṣe nítòsí ilé ijòsìn. Láìmọ̀, ọ̀júbọ̀ nàà ni wọn kà sí ẹ̀nu ọ̀nà tẹ̀mí tí àwọn baba nlá ilẹ̀ nàà fi n bá ọ̀ba sọ̀rò.

Súfúfú rẹ̀ ba ìjùmòsòròpò ẹ̀mí jẹ̀ pẹ̀lú rẹ̀ ní mímò ẹ̀yí sì bí àwọn ẹ̀mí baba ńlá nínú. Lójijì, ìjì lílẹ̀ kan gba ààfin nàà kojá, ohùn ẹ̀rù sì dún láti ọ̀nà àbáwọ̀lé.

Lésẹ̀kẹ̀sẹ̀ ni olórí àlùfáà àti àwọn àlùfáà mírán mò pé àwọn ẹ̀mí nàà ti dààmú, lésẹ̀sẹ̀sẹ̀ ni wọn ẹ̀ ẹ̀fòşẹ̀ tí wọn sì rí pé súfẹ́e Olárótímí ni ó pe àwọn ẹ̀mí búburú, tí wọn sì súfẹ́e fún àpẹ́jọ̀ wọn sí ààfin. Àwọn ẹ̀mí mú pẹ̀lú u wọn rúdurùdu àti ibi tí ó yorí sí àisàn lójijì àti rúdurùdu láàárín ààfin.

Fún ọ̀pọ̀ ọ̀jọ̀, àwọn àlùfáà ẹ̀ ọ̀wọ̀ àwọn àtò ìwẹ̀nùmọ̀ láti mú ìpadàbòsípò padà. Lẹ́yìn tí a lé àwọn ẹ̀mí búburú nàà lọ ní àşeyorí, a ti kéde àşẹ̀ ọ̀ba kan pé:

“Ènikẹ̀ni kò gbòdò súfẹ́e ní ààfin, nítorí ìró tí a kà léèwò ni ẹ̀yí tí ń ké pe àwọn ẹ̀mí, tí ó sì ń da ìjọ̀ba àwọn baba ńlá ru.”

## **ENGLISH TRANSLATION**

### **No Whistling Inside the Palace in Yoruba Culture**

Long ago, in the ancient city of Ile-ife, there was a young palace guard named Olarotimi. He was known for his carefree nature and had the habit of whistling while performing his palace duties.

Olarotimi was warned by the elders to stop whistling but despite all these he would unconsciously whistle again. He would whistle every single day even during sacred rituals and ancestral ceremonies.

One fateful night, during a spiritual ceremony to honor the ancestors, Olarotimi began his usual whistling near the royal shrine. Unknown to him, the shrine was considered a spiritual gateway through which the land's ancestors communicate with the king.

His whistling disrupted the spiritual communication with him knowing and this angered the ancestral spirits. Suddenly, a gust of heavy wind swept through the palace and a deep ominous voice echoed through the corridors.

The chief priest and other priests immediately knew that the spirits had been disturbed and they immediately performed divination and discovered it was Olarotimi's whistling that summoned evil spirits, who mistook the whistle for a summon into the palace. The spirits brought with them chaos and misfortune which led to sudden illness and confusion within the palace.

For days, the priests conducted series of cleansing rituals to restore order. After the evil spirits were successfully driven away, a royal decree was declared:

"No one shall whistle in the palace, for it is a forbidden sound that calls upon spirits and disturbs the ancestral realm."

### 3.3.2 Behavioral & Environmental Taboos

#### Story 4: ÈÈWÒ NÍPA KÓ JÓKÒÓ SÍ ETÍ ILÈKÙN NÍGBÀTÍ ÒJÒ BÁ NRÒ.

Gégé bí ìtàn àròsọ Yorùbá ẹ sọ, ọdẹ alágbára kan-án wà tí orúkọ rẹ n jé Ògúnlàlà, olùfokànsìn Ògún. Ní ojó kan, Ògúnlàlà gbéra sóòde, ó sì se ilé rí fún Ògún pé òun yóò se ebo nígbà tó bá padà dé. Síbèsíbè, lórí ilée rẹ, òjò bèrè. Ó sì ti rí láti òjò. Ó dé ilé léhìn ìgbà díẹ ó rẹwèsì púpò. Dípò kí ó lọ sí ojúbọ láti lọ rúbọ, ó jókòó sí etí ilèkùn láti sinmi díẹ. Bí Ògúnlàlà ti jókòó níbè ló ti sùn, ó sì dí enu ònà ilé nàà. Ní àkókò yẹn, òjò nàà sí lèé, Ògún tí ó n rin ìrìn àjò ní ilé ní ìrìsì ìjì, ti sún mó ilé nàà.

Ògún rí Ògúnlàlà tí ó dí enu ònà, kò jé kí ó wo inú ilé nàà. Èyí bínú, Ògún sì fi ariwo lù ú, ó sọ pé:

"Kò sí ẹnìkan tí yóò je olúwa ní etí ilèkùn nígbàtí òjò bá rò, ó jé ònà mí mó fún àwọn èmí."

Láti ìgbà nàà, ó di èèwò fún àwọn ènìyàn pàápàá jùlò àwọn olùfokànsìn Ògún láti jókòó létí enu ònà tí òjò bá n rò.

## ENGLISH TRANSLATION

### TABOO ABOUT NOT SITTING AT THE EDGE OF THE DOOR WHEN IT IS RAINING.

According to Yoruba mythology, there was a powerful hunter named Ogunlala, a very devoted worshipper of Ogun. One day, Ogunlala set out to hunt and promised Ogun that he would make a sacrificial offering when he returned. However, on his way home, it started raining. He got drenched from the rain. He got home after a while and was so tired. Instead of going to the shrine to offer his sacrifice, he sat at the edge of the door to rest a little.

As Ogunlala sat there, he fell asleep and blocked the entrance to the house. At that moment, the rain intensified and Ogun who was traveling the land in the form of a windstorm, approached the house. Ogun found Ogunlala blocking the doorway, preventing him from entering the house. Angered by this, Ogun struck him with a thunderous roar, declaring:

"No one shall sit at the edge of the door when it is raining, it is a sacred path for the spirits."

Since then, it became a taboo for people, most especially devotees of Ogun to sit at the edge of the door when it is raining.

## Story 5: ÈÈWÒ TÍ KÒ GBA KÍ A MÁA GBÁLÈ LÁLÉ.

Ní ìgbà kan ní ilú Ìbàdàn, opó tálákà kan wà tí orúko rè nǵé Ayòmídé. Obìnrin tí ó n ṣiṣe takuntakun ni, a sì mọ ọ fún onínúrerere re láìbikítà àìní re. Ní ojó kan, Ayòmídé gbá ówó nla lòwò ójulumó kan to pada wa lati irin ajo ire. Arabinrin naa dupe ati ki o dun pupo nitori naa o pinnu lati fi owo naa pamọ lailewu ti a we sinu aṣo ti o tata ati fi pamọ si abe ibusun re.

Ni ale ojo yen, nigba ti Ayomide n mura lati sun, o ṣakiyesi pe ogba naa ti kun pelu awon ewe ati awon ohun elo ti o da silẹ nipase afeṣe iroṣe. Níwòn bí ó ti pinnu láti jé kí ilé rè wà ní mímọ tónítóní, ó mú ìgbálè rè ó sì bèrè sí í gbá ilé nàà pèlú lílo ìmòlè ṣùpá tí n wọ fèrèsè rè.

O gba yara re ati agbo. Bí ó ti n gbá, ọkàn rè n rìn lọ, ó gbàgbé owó tí ó kó sí abẹ ibùsùn rè. Láìmò, ó gbá aṣo tó ní owó nàà jade kúrò nílẹ. Ní báylí ná, àwọn ẹmí tó n rìn kiri tí wọn mò sí Esu (ẹmí ẹtàn) kojá lọ. Nigbati o se akiyesi aṣo naa, o gbe e, o ro pe o je ebo igbagbe, o si paṣe sinu oru.

Ní òwúrò ojọ kejì, Ayomide fi ìbínú wá owó rè níbi gbogbo nínú yàrá ṣùgbón kò rí i. Ó lọ bá woṣe woṣe kan tó so fún un pé ẹmí ti gba owó nàà, kò sì sí ohun tó lè se é. Ó sunkún kíkankíkan ó sì nímòlára ìbànújé gan-an nípa rè.

Iri ri re je eko fun gbogbo eniyan ati pe won kilo lati dekun gbigba ni ale. O di eewo ti o muna lati gba agbo naa lehin osan nitori pe o dabi gbigba awon ibukun ati oro rere lo, awon emi n rin kiri ni ale ti won si ka eyikeyi ohun ti o ba jade bi ore.

## **ENGLISH TRANSLATION**

### **Taboo of Not Sweeping the Compound at Night**

Once upon a time in the town of Ibadan, there lived a poor widow named Ayomide. She was a hard working woman and was known for her generosity despite her poverty. One day, Ayomide received a large sum of money from a relative who had returned from a prosperous journey. She was so grateful and overjoyed so she decided to keep the money safely wrapped in a tattered cloth and hid it under her bed.

That night, while Ayomide was preparing to sleep, she noticed that the compound was littered with leaves and discarded refuse brought in by the evening wind. Determined to keep her house clean, she took her broom and began to sweep the house with the use of the moonlight entering her window.

She swept her room and compound. As she swept, her mind wandered and she forgot about the money she kept under her bed. Unknowingly, she swept the cloth containing the money out of the house. Meanwhile, a group of wandering spirits known as Esu (trickster spirit) passed by. Noticing the cloth, he picked it up, assuming it was a forgotten offering, and disappeared into the night.

The next morning, Ayomide searched frantically for her money everywhere in the room but could not find it. She consulted a diviner who informed her that the spirit had taken the money and there's nothing that could be done about it. She wept profusely and felt really bad about it.

Her experience served as a lesson to everyone and they were warned to stop sweeping at night. It became a strict taboo to sweep the compound after dusk as it was like sweeping away blessings and good fortune, the spirits roam at night and they consider any swept-out item as an offering.

### **Story 6: ÈÈWÒ TÍ A KÒ GBODÒ SÚFÈÉ LÍ ÒRU**

Ní ilú ilu Ifè ní àtijó, ogbón ode kan wà tí orúko rẹ̀ n jé Adégbóyèga. Wọn mò ọ̀n fún akíkanjú àti àṣà rẹ̀ láti máa sáfèé nígbà tí wọn n sọdẹ̀ nínú igbó pàápàá ní alẹ̀. Pèlú ìkìlò láti òdò àwon àgbààgbà, Adégbóyèga nígbàgbó wí pé fifi panu lẹru lẹru àwon eranko igbe ati àwon ẹ̀mí búburú.

Ní alẹ̀ ojó kan tí ó burújù, Adégbóyèga gbéra sínú igbó láti sode. Bí ó ti n rìn kiri nínú igbó òkùnkùn nàà, ó bèrẹ̀ sí í sáfúfú ariwo nílá kan tí ó mú. Kò mò ọ̀n pé, sáfúfú nàà bèrẹ̀ sí í sọ̀ nínú igbó nàà, ó sì pe ẹgbẹ̀ àwon ẹ̀mí tó n rìn kiri, tí wọn mò sí Ajogun (àwon omo ogun oníwà ìbàjẹ̀ tó máa kan èyàn lára tí wọn bá ẹ̀ṣẹ̀ tabu tàbí ewoo). Awon emi, ti won sina fun ipe lati ijoba won han niwaju Adegboyega ni irisi ojiji ti o ni awon oju pupa ti o gun so pe:

“Ta ni o gboya lati pe wa?” ni wọn beere ni iṣọkan.

Eru ba Adegboyega, o gbiyanju lati sa sugbon awon emi naa yi i ka, ti won si bere sii korin epe igbaani. Wón ẹ̀pè fún un pé ó dá ìjọba wón rú, wón sì jí ohùn rẹ́ mú, wón sì sọ ọ́ dí odi. Nigba ti olori alufa ri Adegboyega, nigba to n to ewe, to n rin kiri lainidi, ko le sọrọ. Ó mú un lọ sí ojúbọ rẹ́, ó sì ẹ̀ ẹ̀ ẹ̀ àfòṣe, ó sì ẹ̀wá rí pé sùfèè rẹ́ ti pe àwọn ẹ̀mí òru, wón sì fi í bú pé kí ó wà odi tí tí láé. Àlùfáà náà wá sọ pé:

"Lati isisiyi lọ, maṣe je ki ẹnikenì sùfèè ni aṣe, nitori awọn ẹ̀mí ko ni isinmi ati pe ohun le pe awọn ti ngbe inu ojiji."

## **ENGLISH TRANSLATION**

### **Taboo of Whistling at Night**

In the ancient town of Ile Ife, there was a skilled hunter named Adegboyega. He was known for his bravery and his habit of whistling while hunting in the forest, even at night. Despite warnings from the elders, Adegboyega believed that whistling would scare away wild animals and evil spirits.

One fateful night, Adegboyega set out into the forest to hunt. As he roamed the dark woods, he began to whistle a loud, sharp tune. Unknown to him, the whistling echoed through the forest and summoned a band of wandering spirits, known as Ajogun (malevolent forces that will only affect humans if they violate taboos or ewoo). The spirits,

mistaking the whistle for a call from their realm appeared before Adegboyega in the form of shadowy figures with piercing red eyes saying:

"Who dares to call upon us?"they asked in unison.

Terrified, Adegboyega tried to flee but the spirits surrounded him and started chanting ancient incantations. They cursed him for disturbing their domain and stole his voice, making him mute. When the chief priest saw Adegboyega, while sorting for herbs, wandering aimlessly, unable to speak. He took him to his shrine and performed divinations and discovered that his whistling had summoned the spirits of the night and they cursed him to remain mute forever. The priest then declared:

"Henceforth, let no one whistle at night, for the spirits are restless and the sound may summon those who dwell in the shadows"

### **3.3.3 Health & Pregnancy-related Taboos**

#### **Story 7: KÍLÓDÉ TÍ ÀWỌN OBÌNRIN KÒ GBÓDÒ JE ILÁ NÍNÚ ÀSÀ YORÙBÁ**

Ní ìgbà kan, obìnrin kan tí wọ̀n n pè ní Ọ̀mọ̀dẹ̀yẹ̀ jẹ̀ àgàn fún ọ̀pọ̀lọ̀pọ̀ ọ̀dún. Lẹ́hìn ọ̀pọ̀lọ̀pọ̀ àwọ̀n ìdánwò láti lóyún, ó pinu láti şàbẹ̀wò sí olùtọ̀pá kan, lẹ́hìn ọ̀pọ̀lọ̀pọ̀ ìdánilójú láti ọ̀dọ̀ àwọ̀n ọ̀rẹ̀ àti agbẹ̀gbẹ̀ e rẹ̀. Àsọtẹ̀lẹ̀ náà pèsè àpọ̀pọ̀ míímọ̀ fún un láti mú. Ó tún pèsẹ̀ fún un láti yàgò fún àwọ̀n oúnjẹ̀ kan, pàápàá ilá, tí ó bá fẹ̀ láti lóyún àti firánşẹ̀ láìléwu. Ó dúpẹ̀ lówó babaláwo, ó sì lọ.

Ní ọ̀sẹ̀ díẹ̀ léyìn náà, ọ́ rí i pé òun ti lóyún, inú u rẹ̀ sì dùn gan-an. Osù díẹ̀ kí Ọ̀módẹ̀yẹ̀ tó bímọ̀, kò ní sùùù, ò sì fẹ̀ ọ̀bẹ̀ okra tó dùn púpọ̀. Ọ̀kọ̀ rẹ̀ rán an létí nípa ìkìlò àtòrunwá náà, ọ́ mú kó dá a lójú pé ẹ̀ẹ̀kan soṣo ló máa jẹ̀, kò sì ní sí ibi kankan. Pẹ̀lú ìkìlò náà, ọ́ pèsè ọ̀bẹ̀ okra ọ̀lórò, tẹ̀rẹ̀ kan ọ́ sì jẹ̀ ẹ̀ pẹ̀lú ebi.

Nígbà tí àkókò tó fún un láti bímọ̀, isẹ̀ ìrọ̀bí sòro gan-an. Ọ̀mọ̀ náà jẹ̀ ìsokúùso tóbèè tí àwọn agbẹ̀bí tiraka láti di ọ̀mọ̀ náà mú. Ó n bó lówọ̀ wọn sáá, ọ́ mú kí ọ́ fẹ̀rẹ̀ má ẹ̀é ẹ̀ fún ọ̀mọ̀ náà láti bímọ̀ láisẹ̀wu.

Léyìn ọ̀pọ̀ wákàtí isẹ̀ ìrora, Ọ̀módẹ̀yẹ̀ nígbẹ̀yìn-gbéyìn bí ọ̀mọ̀ kan tí kò lágbara, tí ọ́ rẹ̀wèsì. Ọ̀mọ̀ náà lóra láti dàgbàsókè àti nígbàgbogbo ni itò púpọ̀ ní ẹ̀nu rẹ̀. Àwùjọ̀ náà dá ìyá náà lẹ̀bi nítorí àìgbọ̀ràn rẹ̀ sí ìtọ̀ni tẹ̀mí.

Àwọn àgbà náà so pé ọ́ yẹ̀ kí ọ́ yàgò fún àwọn aboyún nígbà oyún láti yàgò fún ìbímọ̀ tí ọ́ nira àti ọ̀mọ̀ tí ọ́ lóra.

## **ENGLISH TRANSLATION**

### **Why Pregnant Women Shouldn't Eat Okra in Yoruba Culture**

Once upon a time, a woman called Omodeye was barren for several years. After many trials to get pregnant, she decided to visit a diviner, after lot of convincing from her friends and community. The diviner prepared a sacred concoction for her to take. He also instructed

her to avoid certain food, especially okra, if she want to conceive and deliver safely. She thanked the diviner and left.

Few weeks later, she discovered she was pregnant and was very happy about it. Few months before she gave birth, Omodeye became so impatient and craved a very delicious okra soup. Her husband reminded her about the diviner's warning, she convinced him that it was just going to be once and there wouldn't be any harm. Despite the warning, she prepared a rich, slimy okra soup and consumed it hungrily.

When it was time for her to give birth, labor was extremely difficult. The child was so slippery that the midwives struggled to hold the child. He kept slipping out of their hands, making it nearly impossible for the child to be delivered safely.

After hours of painful labor, Omodeye finally delivered a weak, lethargic child. The child was slow to develop and always had excess saliva in his mouth. The community blamed the mother for her disobedience to the spiritual instruction.

The elders then declared that Okra should be avoided by pregnant women during pregnancy to avoid having a difficult delivery and a sluggish child.

### 3.3.4. Social & Moral Conduct Taboos

#### Story 8: KÍ ÌYÀWÓ OBA KÒ GBÓDÒ MÁA SE ÀGBÈRÈ NÍNÚ ÀSÀ YORÙBÁ

Ní ilú Òyó àtíjọ, Aláàfin(Oba) alágbára kan wà nígbà kan rí tí orúko rẹ n jẹ Sàngó, olórun àrà àti Ògún. Sàngó jẹ olókíkí fún agbára nlá, agbára àti àsopò ti èmí sí àwọn baba. Òpòlopò ìyàwó ló ní, sùgbón ìyàwó rẹ tí ó fẹràn jù ni Olori Oba, ìyàwó tó gbèyìn, tí ewà àti ore-òfẹ e rẹ sì mò sí.

Ní ojọ kan tí ó burújù, Sàngó ní láti rin irin-àjò lọ sí ilẹ̀ jíjìn láti yanjú àrìyànjiyàn. Kí ó tó lọ, ó kílò fún àwọn aya rẹ pé kí wón jẹ olóòótó bí àwọn èmí baba nlá ẹ n sọ wón. Nígbà tí kò sí, òde arẹwà kan tí orúko rẹ n jẹ Àgbònrín wá sí ààfin láti fi ránsé sí. Olori Oba di ifẹràn sí Àgbònrín, ó sì pè é sínú yàrà rẹ ní ikòkò. Pẹ̀lú ikílò láti ọ̀dọ̀ àwọn ọ̀dọ̀bínrin ààfin tí ó fẹràn rẹ, ó kọbi ara sí ẹ̀sẹ̀ náà, ó sì ẹ panságà pẹ̀lú rẹ.

Olori Oba kò mò, àwọn baba nlá n wó. Wón bínú nígbà tí wón dà á sí Sango, àtọmọ̀dọ̀mọ̀ wón alágbára. Gégé bí ìjìyà, wón fi ìjì lù ààfin tí ó fi ààfin náà sílẹ̀ ní idàrúdàpò, agbára èmí Sàngó sì dínkù.

Nígbà tí Sàngó padà wá, lésèkesè ló bá àwọn babaláwo sòrò tí wón fi hàn pé àìgbódò Olori Oba ti mú èègún dé ààfin. Ó sòrò fún Sàngó láti gbàgbó, ó jẹ ohun tí ìyàwó rẹ é se. Bí ó ti fọ́jú nítorí ìbínú, ó pe ọ̀dẹ̀ náà, ó sì lù ú sán ààrà. Aláàfin lé Olori kúrò ní ààfin. Láti ojọ̀ náà lọ, ó ti di èwọ̀ fún ìyàwó Oba èyíkéyìi láti ẹ panságà.

## **ENGLISH TRANSLATION**

### **The King's Wives Must Not Be Involved in Adultery in Yoruba Culture**

In the ancient city of Oyo, there was once a powerful Alaafin(King)named Sango, the god of thunder and war. Sango was known for his great strength, power and spiritual connection to his ancestors. He had several wives, but his favorite wife was Olori Oba, his last wife and she was known for her beauty and grace.

One fateful day, Sango had to travel to a distant land to settle a dispute. Before he left, he warned his wives to remain faithful as the ancestral spirits would be watching over them. During his absence, a handsome hunter named Agbonriin came to the palace to deliver a message. Olori Oba became infatuated with Agbonriin and secretly invited him into her chambers. Despite warnings from her favorite palace maidens, she ignored the taboo and committed adultery with him.

Unknown to Olori Oba, the ancestors were watching. They were angered by her betrayal to Sango, their powerful descendant. As punishment, they struck the palace with thunderstorm which left the palace in disarray and Sango's spiritual powers were diminished.

Upon Sango's return, he immediately consulted the diviners who revealed what Olori Oba's said by rage, he summoned the hunter and struck him down with thunder. Olori Oba was banished from the palace by the Alaafin. From that day henceforth, it became a taboo for any King's wife to commit adultery.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA ANALYSIS

#### 4.0 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the data presented would be analyzed using J.L Austin's and John Searle Speech act theory as well as Leech's Politeness Principle. Utterances that serve as Speech Acts are identified, classified as either Locutionary, Illocutionary or Perlocutionary Act and categorized into Austin's five categories (Expositives, Behabitives, Commissives, Exercitives and Verdictives). Finally, the utterances are examined in relation to the Politeness Principle.

#### 4.1 DATA ANALYSIS

This section analyzes the extracted utterances from the presented data using Speech Act theory and the Politeness Principle.

##### 4.1.1: The application of the theories to extract 1 from Story 1:

**Extract:** “Arugbá gbé dí è ju igbá lọ. Ó ní ayé tuntun nínú rẹ̀-èyí ní ilòdì sí òfin mímó.”

**Interpretation:** “The Arugba carries more than the calabash. She bears new life within her, a life conceived in defiance of sacred law.”

**Locutionary Act:** The literal interpretation is that the Arugba is pregnant, which is against sacred law, in addition to carrying the ceremonial calabash.

**Illocutionary Act:** The chief priest is issuing a condemnation or judgement. The intended meaning behind the utterance is to declare that the Arugba has violated ritual law, she is unable to serve and that she's pregnant.

**Perlocutionary Act:** The community is forced to take social action, establish a new taboo and set stricter rules for upcoming Arugba.

#### **Austin's Category:**

**Verdictive:** It is a pronouncement of judgement on the Arugba's condition.

#### **Searle's contribution**

**Declarative:** The status of the Arugba is altered by this utterance, she is no longer considered a sacred Virgin but rather 'impure' for the ceremonial duty. She loses her role as the Arugba the instant it is said.

**Politeness Principle:** The utterance violates the Tact Maxim because it emphasizes the social and spiritual costs placed on the community and the goddess Osun. The Arugba's activity, as revealed in this utterance, has the reverse effect of minimizing cost and maximizing benefits to others.

#### **4.1.2 The application of the theories to extract 2 from Story 2:**

**Extract:** Àníyàn àwọn alàgbà pe àlùfàà láti dá sí ọ̀rò náà.

**Interpretation:** The elders out of concern called the priest to intervene.

**Locutionary Act:** The elders made a verbal call for the priest to intervene and resolve the issue.

**Illocutionary Act:** The utterance serves as an appeal or request, giving the priest authority to make amends.

**Perlocutionary Act:** In response, the priest offers sacrifices and cleansing rituals which restores Oranmiyan's power and sanity.

**Austin's Category:**

**Exercitive and Behabitives:** Both Exercitive and Behabitive are reflected in the statement "The elders out of concern called the priest to intervene." It is Behabitive because it conveys the elders' worry for the king's welfare. It is also Exercitive because the elders, as authoritative figures, used their cultural right to call for the priest's help. As a result, the statement blends authoritative action with social attitude.

**Searle's contribution:**

**Directives:** This is because convincing the priest to take action is the aim of this directive speech act.

**Politeness Principle:** The utterance complies with sympathy maxim because the elders show concern for the king's well being. As the elders take charge and make an attempt to find assistance for the king rather than ignoring his predicament, it also reflects Generosity Maxim.

**4.1.3 The application of the theories to extract 3 from story 3:**

**Extract:** Ènikèni kò gbódò sùfèé ní ààfin, nítorí ìrò tí a kà léèwò ni èyí tí n kè pe àwọn èmí, tí ó sì n da ljoḃa àwọn baba nílá ru.

**Interpretation:** No one shall whistle in the palace for it is a forbidden sound that calls upon spirits and disturbs the ancestral realm.

**Locutionary Act:** The King (through the priest) utters the word that whistling is forbidden in the palace.

**Illocutionary Act:** The speaker's intention behind this utterance is to set a mandatory regulation for all palace occupants by serving as a restriction.

**Perlocutionary Act:** The people, being aware that whistling in the palace is forbidden and doing so has spiritual repercussions, refrain from it.

### **Austin's Category:**

**Exercitive:** The utterance is Exercitive because it uses authoritative words to establish a new law.

### **Searle's Contribution:**

**Declarative:** Since the royal order formally makes whistling a cultural taboo, it mainly serves as a declaration. The utterance produces a new social reality through speech.

**Politeness Principle:** The utterance restricts everyone's freedom in the palace by enforcing a rigorous prohibition, which is against the Tact Maxim. Since the ban is intended to shield the King, the palace and the people from damage brought by evil spirits, it can also be said to adhere to the sympathy maxim.

#### **4.1.4 The application of the theories to extract 4 from Story 4:**

**Extract:** Kò sí ẹnìkan tí yòò je olúwa ní etí ilèkùn nígbàtí òjò bá rọ̀, ó jẹ ònà mímó fún àwọ̀n èmí.

**Interpretation:** No one shall sit at the edge of the door when it is raining, it is a sacred path for the spirits.

**Locutionary Act:** The deity Ogun utters the words which forbids anyone from resting at the doorway while it is raining, since it is a sacred path for spirits.

**Illocutionary Act:** By declaring the doorway as a sacred pathway, the speaker intends to forbid sitting there when it rains. The utterance serves as a limitation intended to control human conduct and avoid transgressing the spirits.

**Perlocutionary Act:** The perlocutionary effect causes devotees and community members to take to heart this taboo and avoid sitting at the doorway when it is raining and honoring the sacredness of the spirits' path.

**Austin's Category:**

**Exercitive:** Since Ogun employs supernatural authority to enforce a new taboo and control human behavior, therefore the utterance is Exercitive.

**Searle's Contribution:**

**Declarative:** Ogun's utterance is a declaration since he's enacting a new cultural and religious rule.

**Politeness Principle:** The utterance seems to violate the Tact Maxim because it limits people's freedom of action. However, the restriction also shields worshippers from spiritual harm and upholds reverence for the sacred, it also reflects the sympathy maxim.

#### **4.1.5 The application of theories to extract 5 from story 5:**

**Extract:** Ó lọ bá woşéwoşé kan tó sọ fún un pé ẹmí ti gba owó náà, kò sì sí ohun tó lè se é.

**Interpretation:** She consulted a diviner who informed her that the spirit had taken the money and there's nothing that could be done about it.

**Locutionary Act:** The diviner uttered the words that the spirits had taken the money and nothing could be done about it.

**Illocutionary Act:** The intention of the speaker (the diviner) is to declare finality and eliminate any hope of recovering the money.

**Perlocutionary Act:** The effect is that Ayomide breaks down in tears and the community heeds to the warning of not sweeping at night.

**Austin's Category:**

**Verdictive:** This is because the speaker (that is, the diviner) provides a judgement that nothing can be done regarding the situation.

**Searle's Contribution:**

**Declarative:** This is because the utterance of the diviner brings closure and makes it clear that absolutely nothing can be done.

**Politeness Principle:** The utterance violates the sympathy maxim because it makes Ayomide grief worse rather than better. It also observes the Agreement maxim because the diviner corresponds to spiritual truth instead of deceiving her with false hope.

#### **4.1.6: The application of the theories to extract 6 from story 6:**

**Extract:** “Ta ni o gboya lati pe wa?”

**Interpretation:** “Who dares to call upon us?”

**Locutionary Act:** The literal meaning of the utterance is that the spirits are requesting to know who called them.

**Illocutionary Act:** The intention of the speakers (the spirits) is to confront and threaten Adegboyega for trespassing on their territory.

**Perlocutionary Act:** The effect of this utterance is that Adegboyega becomes afraid, as a result of recognizing the repercussions of his whistling. Fear paralyzes him leaving him vulnerable to the spirits and ultimately resulting in his punishment.

**Austin's Category:**

**Behabitve:** This is because the utterance conveys displeasure and a hostile attitude towards the offender. This utterance shows how the spirits feel about the behavior of Adegboyega.

### **Searle's Contribution:**

**Directives:** Although, it also expresses dissatisfaction, this utterance is a directive because the spirits demand that Adegboyega take responsibility. Its main purpose is to provoke an action rather than just convey emotions.

**Politeness Principle:** The utterance violates the approbation maxim by expressing dispraise rather than praise. It also violates the sympathy maxim by maximizing antipathy rather than maximizing sympathy.

#### **4.1.7: The application of the theories to extract 7 from story 7:**

**Extract:** Àwọ̀n àgbà náà sọ pé ó yẹ kí ó yàgò fún àwọ̀n aboyún nígbà oyún láti yàgò fún ìbímọ́ tí ó nira àti ọmọ́ tí ó lọ́ra.

**Interpretation:** The elders then declared that okra should be avoided by pregnant women during pregnancy to avoid having difficult delivery and a sluggish child.

**Locutionary Act:** The utterance literally states that pregnant women should avoid eating okra since it will result in a risky delivery and weaken the unborn child.

**Illocutionary Act:** By making the diviner's advice a social norm, the intention is to protect mother and child by forbidding pregnant women from consuming okra.

**Perlocutionary Act:** The effect of the utterance is that pregnant women in the community avoid eating okra, which strengthens the cultural taboo and guarantees obedience to communal and spiritual authority.

**Austin's Category:**

**Exercitive:** The utterance is an exercitive because the elders are exercising their power by forbidding pregnant women from eating okra.

**Searle's Contribution:**

**Declarative:** The utterance establishes a new social and cultural reality, that is pregnant women are no longer allowed to consume Okra.

**Politeness Principle:** The utterance violates the Tact Maxim because it gives limits to women's ability to eat whatever they want. However, because the restriction aims to safeguard mothers and children from danger, it observes the sympathy maxim.

#### **4.1.8: The application of the theories to extract 8 from story 8:**

**Extract:** Kí ó tó lọ, ó kílò fún àwọn aya rè pé kí wọn jẹ olóòótọ bí àwọn ẹmí baba nílá ẹ n sọ wọn.

**Interpretation:** Before he left, he warned his wives to remain faithful as the ancestral spirits would be watching over them.

**Locutionary Act:** Sango literally told his wives to stay faithful, reminding them the ancestral spirits would keep an eye on their behavior.

**Illocutionary Act:** The utterance is intended to warn and instruct his wives, preventing them from being unfaithful.

**Perlocutionary Act:** The effect of the utterance is that, even though Olori Oba disobeys, his wives are morally and spiritually obligated to stay faithful while he is away.

**Austin's Category:**

**Exercitive:** It is exercitive because Sango enforces rules on his wives' behavior by using his power as king and gods-descended ruler.

**Searle's Contribution:**

**Directive:** This is because the utterance is intended to direct the listeners' (his wives') actions.

**Politeness Principle:** It observes the sympathy maxim because it is intended to shield the wives from divine wrath and uphold the palace honor.

## 4.2 Discussion of Findings

The communication functions that underlie the eight Yoruba taboo folktales have been uncovered through the use of Speech Act Theory and the Politeness Principle. Every tale included direct or reported utterances that conveyed three kinds of acts: locutionary act (literal words), illocutionary act (the speaker's intention), perlocutionary act (the impact on the hearers or community), and According to Austin's and Searle's categories, the majority of utterances were classified as Behabitives (expressing disapproval or warnings), Verdictives (passing judgments), and Exercitives (imposing norms and prohibitions). At the same time, many statements were Declaratives in the sense of Searle, as they created taboos out of everyday acts and enacting new cultural realities.

The use of Leech's Politeness Principle showed that because the statements imposed limitations or conveyed disapproval, they frequently broke the maxims of Tact and Approbation. Nonetheless, by safeguarding the community, maintaining spiritual balance, and upholding the legitimacy of both human and divine institutions, these transgressions fulfilled greater societal purposes. Since bans were presented as safeguards for the welfare of people and society, the Sympathy Maxim was occasionally upheld.

Overall, the results demonstrate that Yoruba taboo folktales are performative acts that establish and uphold cultural norms rather than just being stories. Through the incorporation of spoken acts into stories, these folktales uphold cultural norms, respect ancestors' authority, and strengthen group discipline.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY, FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION**

#### **5.0 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter summarizes the previous chapters of the study on pragmatic analysis of selected taboo folktales in Yoruba language, as well present the findings and draw some conclusions.

#### **5.1 Summary of the Study**

This research examined selected Yoruba taboo folktales with a focus on their pragmatic analysis functions.

In Chapter one, the background of the study introduced the topic, language of discourse as well as the statement of the problem, aim and objectives of the study, research questions, methodology and the significance of the study.

In Chapter two, the literature review was divided into three sections which were conceptual review, previous study and concern of the present study.

The third chapter focused on the theoretical framework adopted for the research, namely the Speech Act theory developed by Austin (1962) which was further expanded by Searle(1969) and Politeness Principle developed by Leech (1983). This chapter explained the principles of the theories, their mode of application, relevance to the present research

and how it serves as an analytical tool for the study. Closing this chapter was the categorization of data and data presentation in Yoruba language as well as interpretation in English language.

The fourth chapter was devoted to the analysis of the data. It included the analysis of extracts from the selected Yoruba taboo folktales using both Speech Act theory and Politeness Principle, and a discussion of the major findings derived from the analysis.

## **5.2 Findings**

The findings of this research work include:

### **5.2.1 Speech Act in Yoruba Taboo Folktales**

According to the study, there are many speech acts in Yoruba taboo folktales that function at the locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary levels. Many utterances were classified as Behabitives (expressing warning or disapproval), Verdictives (passing judgment), and Exercitives (imposing regulations and restrictions) based on Austin's and Searle's classifications. Some utterances, however, served as Declaratives in Searle's view as they made ordinary behaviors into legally binding cultural taboos. An example of how an utterance enacts a new cultural reality is Ogun's utterance that it is a taboo to sit at the doorway when it is raining.

### **5.2.2 Politeness Principle and Social Functions**

Many of the utterances in the folktales were found to violate the Tact Maxim when Leech's Politeness Principle was applied. The community's safety, order, and ancestral authority were among the greater cultural and spiritual objectives that these intentional transgressions served. As evidenced by the taboo against pregnant women eating okra (Story 7), which was presented as a protective measure for both mother and child, the Sympathy Maxim was occasionally upheld.

### **5.2.3 Folktales as Performative Acts of Culture**

Yoruba taboo folktales have been demonstrated to be performative communication activities that create and uphold cultural norms, in addition to their entertainment value. The folktales serve as instruments for moral teaching, social discipline, and spiritual preservation by incorporating spoken acts into stories. They uphold traditional norms and represent ancestors' authority, guaranteeing that taboos are upheld in the community. One example of how stated statements in stories influence behavior and preserve sacred traditions is the ban against whistling in the palace (Story 3) and at night (Story 6).

## **5.3 Conclusion**

This study has demonstrated a great number of pragmatic elements in Yoruba taboo folktales, especially those from Ogbomoso, that have not received enough attention. This study showed that folktales can also be evaluated as performative speech acts that create

and uphold taboos, despite the fact that prior research has frequently treated them primarily as oral literature or cultural heritage. The results showed that the folktales contain locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts. They also showed declarative and directive functions according to Searle's concepts, and the majority of utterances come within the categories of Exercitives, Verdictives, and Behabitives. According to the Politeness Principle, the Sympathy Maxim and other maxims were purposefully upheld in order to safeguard the society and maintain ancestral power.

#### **5.4 Areas of Further Research**

The pragmatic analysis of Yoruba folktales depicting taboos has been investigated in this study. Nonetheless, additional study in related fields is still possible. The linguistic philosophy of Yoruba taboos can be investigated in future research, with an emphasis on the philosophical, cultural, and communicative foundations that shape their use and interpretation. Such studies would expand the field of linguistic and pragmatic investigation into indigenous tales in addition to deepening our grasp of Yoruba worldviews.

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