

Generic Structure Potential of the Adjudicatory Proceedings of Juvenile Court in South-west Nigeria

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Abstract

The juvenile court is a legal institution where children that are offenders or neglected are arraigned for trial or supervision. Generic Structure Potential (GSP), a perspective developed by Halliday and Hassan (1989) accounts for the thematic activities of such institutions. GSP is a contextual analysis that discusses the components of texts and sequence of discourse in interactions. Extant studies on thematic activities of institutions have focused on GSP of the essays, newspaper entries, editorials, shop interactions, classroom interactions and wedding proceedings. These works serve as the basis for proposing generic prototypical patterns and generic classifications of discursive events. Adjudicatory proceedings involve issues related to children in the Nigerian context. The contextual study of the prototypical pattern of adjudicatory proceedings from GSP's perspective which sparsely exists in literature is the gap this paper aims to fill. This study employs three selected juvenile courts in South-West Nigeria to explore the contextual situation and interactional structure of the proceedings. This paper is able to predict the nature of adjudicatory proceedings, present obligatory structural elements as based on mutual assumption and demonstrate mitigation against politic behaviour through clarification utterances. The study contributes to a better understanding of juvenile court proceedings and provides insights into the delivery of justice to children.

Keywords: Generic Structure, Proceedings, Juvenile Court, Contextual Analysis

Introduction

Traditionally, hearings on juvenile matters have been closed to the public because the open court practice might upset the delinquent and abort the purpose of juvenile justice. The basic philosophy and practice of the juvenile court has, however, been reviewed such that adjudicative processes have become accessible to the public (Siddiky, 2011). Hence, this study has the access to juvenile court hearings in Southwest, Nigeria. There are various juvenile custodial institutions in Nigeria by the provision of Sections 16 and 19 of the CYPA (Children and Young Persons Act). They were established to cater for juvenile offenders whose offences would have attracted imprisonment if they were adults. (Atilola, 2012).

Literature Review

Juvenile Justice System

The Juvenile Justice System is a civil system and the system enacted an Act, a law to handle juvenile cases in Nigeria. This Act states that "no child shall be ordered to be imprisoned if he can suitably be dealt with in any other ways whether by probation, fine, corporal punishment, committal to a place of detention or to an approved institution" (Nwanna and Akpan, 2003:168). It also states that the fundamental nature of the juvenile justice system should be rehabilitative rather than punitive, considering the delinquent act in question. This law identifies three (3) categories of children as delinquents: abandoned children, children beyond parental control and children alleged to committing offence against the law (Ebbe, 1988). The offence of some delinquents would have attracted imprisonment if there were no acts guarding them. (Alemika and Chukwuma, 2001).

Courtroom Interaction

Heritage and Clayman (2010) identify interaction as an institution that has an underlying structural organisation. It is a sequential ordering of actions which usually involve the use of turn-taking, Heritage & Clayman, (2010:173). All language activities in the courtroom are conducted through interaction because the facts of a case and the application of law are achieved through it. Drew and Heritage (1992) state that news interview, classroom and courtroom interactions are types of institutional interaction. A feature of the courtroom interaction they identified is a strictly-restrained turn taking system.

Strict constraint of legal reasoning by the legal codes. Legal realism scholars view interaction as having influence on judicial outcome because the law cannot speak for itself but depends on court participants' manners as adjudicatory hearing unfolds. Consistent with legal realism is the "breakfast theory of justice," indicating that magistrate's breakfast determines the internal processes, judgement and interpretation. The breakfast theory of justice lacks constraints. It is not grounded in the analysis of actual legal proceedings on which juvenile laws are based, stating that interaction in the courtroom is not epiphenomenal. It is believed that cultures are transmitted through interaction and that participants have specific goal orientation specific to a context (Rock, 2011:138).

Statement of Research Problem

Several studies on discourse structure describe the prototypical pattern of discourse using the Generic Structure Potential (GSP) of different genres. Ansary and Babaii (2004) earliest work reported an outline of the elements of a shop transaction in Libya. Although they did not give it the term GSP, they were able to identify Salutation(S), Inquiry of the Object for Sale (IOS), Examination of the Object for Sale (EOS), Bargaining (B) and Conclusion(C) as pattern of the discourse. The structure goes thus: S^IOS^EOS^B^C. Ghadessy (1993), establishing SP business letters, proposed a model for business communication with this structure: I^(R/I) n^R. I and R stand for Initiation and Response, respectively. Also, Halliday and Hassan (1989) describe the shop genre transaction, a service thus:

[(G).(SI)^][(SE.)^]{SR^SC^}r^S^]P^PC(^F). The GSP above indicates the shop transaction genre as follows: Greeting (G), Sale Initiation (SI), Sale Enquiry (SE), Sale Request (SR), Sale Compliance (SC), Sale (S), Purchase (P), Purchase Closure (PC) and Fines (F). Henry and Roseberry (1997) analysis of forty different entries of newspapers, magazines and encyclopaedia reveal the GSP of introductions and endings of essays, thus establishing three rhetorical elements in essays' introduction: Introducing the Topic (IT), Narrowing the Focus (NF) and stating the Central Idea of the passage (CI). Also, Ansary and Babaii's (2004) editorial examination of distinctive features of English newspapers for proposing a generic prototypical pattern revealed four obligatory structural elements in this order: RH^AI^A^AP (RH-Run on line, AI-Addressing Issue, A-Argumentation and AP-Articulating a Position), and two optional elements necessary for writer to start off arguments, which are BI-Background Information, IA- Initiation of Argument.

Advancing Ansary and Babaii's study, Odeunmi's (2007) examination of Nigerian magazine editorials' GSP of their explicatures and implicatures showed a generic schema and pragmatic model of editorials. Identified obligatory elements are (RH) Run-on Headline, (BI) Background Information, (AI) Addressing an Issue (A) Argumentation and (AP) Articulating a Position, and further identified these two optional elements: (IA) Initiation of Argumentation and (CA) Closure of Argumentation. Examining the generic structure and discourse strategies of a multicultural group of educators in making request through e-mail by Victor Ho (2009), findings revealed six generic moves and the effect of cultural background

and imposition rank of requested act. He identified acknowledging recipient contribution, providing background information, making the request, convincing the recipient to comply, elaborating the request and ending the email as obligatory part of the interaction. Inya (2013) identified obligatory and optional elements in Christian apologetics and discovers that Testimonials (TMs) is the only optional subscript in the nine rhetorical elements that constitute the GSP of the apologetics. He came up with TT, AN, BI, PCP, AOP, A, EL, F as obligatory elements and concluded that the Christian apologetics belongs to the argumentative genre.

This study departs slightly from the extant works to examine the structural features of selected adjudicatory proceedings in south-west Nigeria and to identify the contextual features of the juvenile court adjudications as well as describe the interactional patterns of the adjudications. The examined literature has proffered insights from the generic studies to get the structural and predictable elements with reference to the predictable order of the adjudicatory proceedings.

Research Aim and Objectives

The aim of this study is to examine the Generic Structure Potential of adjudicatory proceedings in South-west, Nigeria. The study has the following objectives:

- to identify the features of the juvenile court adjudications.
- to describe the obligatory and optional elements in adjudicatory proceedings
- to discuss the interactional patterns of the adjudicatory proceedings

Theoretical Anchor: Generic Structure Potential

This study's theoretical framework is the Generic Structure Potential (GSP) provided by Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) with specific references to context of situation. It is a condensed statement of the conditions under which a text can be appropriate to a specific CC and presentation of possible structures expressing a given CC (Hasan, 2004: 25). GSP proposed by Halliday and Hasan specifies the lexical or grammatical (co-occurrence features) as well as the non-linguistics (the intended audience, purpose and, the extra-linguistic criteria) identifying certain text types categorised as a genre. Because social functions are connected to the texts' structures by genre, GSP defines it as the array of features purposefully distributed within a text type. Any interaction comprising a series of optional and obligatory structural elements is sequenced in a specific order, for defining the categorised text genre by the obligatory elements (Halliday and Hassan, 1989). Once the obligatory element is absent, the text can no longer be interpreted as belonging to the institution under exploration. This study will therefore establish the GSP of adjudicatory proceedings to reveal the interactional structure, the sequence of the elements in the discourse and account for the obligatory, optional and iterative element upon which interpretations can be made.

Methodology

Data for this study were collected from a juvenile court, two correctional centres and juvenile counselling section in South-west Nigeria. Fifteen excerpts were randomly picked from the data collected for the purpose of this study, where five each were from Ibadan, Ado-Ekiti and Abeokuta. Participant observation method was employed and proceedings and discussions on juvenile cases were surreptitiously recorded. The data were transcribed and classified by the researcher. The study engaged a purposive sampling technique and the data were analysed using the Systemic Functional Linguistics.

Analysis and Findings

The examination of the adjudicatory proceedings revealed ten generic structural elements, six obligatory and four optional elements. The employed discourse structure is captured thus: [CO[^]CP[^](APR)][^] AA[^].[^] AP[^](AD).[^] CU.[^] (APC).[^] [SC[^](ADJ)].

The discourse structure notations indicate that the bracket represents optional elements, and round brackets in the schema above indicate the optionality of the enclosed elements within them which do not affect classification of the genre (Halliday and Hassan (1989). The dot‘.’ between elements implies degree of iteration for the elements, standing for more than one occurrence in the sequence. The arrow shows iteration, meaning the element can recur in the interaction, and the caret ‘^’ is the sequence of the elements in the discourse. The square brackets show restraint on the sequence, the restraint means that elements within such brackets cannot precede the ones before them or follow the elements after them.

The obligatory or compulsory elements are Court Opening (CO), Case Presentation (CP), Allocating Authority (AA), Application (AP), Clarification Utterances (CU), Summation and Commitment (SC). The optional elements are Appearances (APR), Adversarial (AD), Appealing Communication (APC) and Adjournment (ADJ). From the generic structure, the iterative elements dictate the course of the discourse. CO and CP are two obligatory elements restrained in their positions, remaining constant. In the order of the court proceedings, the two elements occur at the beginning of each session. CO (Court Opening) includes all the participants and the audience in the court; it is an obligatory aspect of the discourse. CO calls the attention of everyone to acknowledge the entrance of the magistrate and the commencement of adjudicatory hearing. CP (Case Presentation) is also an obligatory element of the adjudication, stating the adjourned case or not and the presented summation, if adjourned. APR (Appearances) involves the introduction of the attorneys.

APR is, however, optional, as there might be no need for the use of attorney in the juvenile court. AA (Allocating Authority) is a very compulsory rhetorical element in the court indicating the distance between the magistrate and others. In every utterance, the magistrate is revered and referred to as ‘His Worship’ or ‘Lord’. AP (Application) involves cross-examination and the appearances of witnesses and subjects. AD (Adversarial) is the defence of AP, prosecution with proof of evidence and the application of the Act of Juvenile Justice to the AP. CU (Clarification Utterances) is an obligatory element used mostly by the magistrate and defense attorneys to protect the interest of the juveniles. SC (Summation and Commitment) occurs at the end of each case and it presents the court’s conclusion concerning a case and its decision on rehabilitation. ADJ (Adjournment) only applies to case without final verdict and postpones or suspends the hearing of a case.

Court Opening

Court Opening (CO) marks the commencement of adjudicatory hearing in the court, thus reflecting the sequential speech event in courtroom interaction. CO is an obligatory aspect of the discourse involving all the participants and the audience in order to acknowledge the magistrate’s arrival in court and the commencement of adjudicatory hearing. Example: Court clerk: (calls) C-o-u-r-t! The name of the magistrate is not called to be obeyed but it is the court that is called, indicating the dignified position of the court being represented by the magistrate.

Case Presentation

Case Presentation (CP) is also an obligatory element of the adjudication because the Juvenile Welfare Court (JWC) pattern of adjudication demands case presentation in sequential appearance or order of importance. Priority is given to Appearances. CP states the adjourned or not adjourned case with the presented summation, if adjourned. It is, however, done one after the other, according to preference.

Excerpt 1

SW: Case number 4. Mr XY and two others.

Magistrate: Are they around?

SW: The subjects and their mother are around my Lord. The subject and the respondent are in the court your Worship. The matter is on child custody my Lord...

Excerpt 2

Magistrate: Call the cases

SW: XXY and the two others

Magistrate: Any counsel?

SW: No, my lord. The case is a refusal to accept pregnancy and the attempted murder TT, the subject. The prosecutor and the defendant are before the court but the subject is still taking medical care at the hospital.

Magistrate: Yes

SW: My lord, the subject, 15 years old, got pregnant for the defendant... The defendant attempted to kill the subject.

The social welfare officer presents the case, usually in narrative form, and the involved witnesses with the juvenile identity. The social officers, thereafter, before the court state the gathered reports in an earlier investigation from the witnesses, using embellished legal jargons. This is obligatory because the adjudication is built upon the report of the social welfare officers (SW); CP is called fact of the matter, the issue or the case, as-the-case-may-be. It is usually in simple declarative sentence form without ambiguity. Although the magistrate acquits himself with the juveniles in all categories, the juvenile court allows the distance between him and every other participant in the court.

Excerpt 3

Attorney: my Lord, respectfully sir, my application is that this case be merged with that tendered before my Lord at Ogbere.

Magistrate: Don't worry yourself about that. I preside over the two cases.

Attorney: As the Lordship pleases.

Appearances

The appearance of counsels, though after the court opening session, in the juvenile welfare court is optional. Appearances (APR) involves the introduction of the attorneys who may or may not be at the juvenile court during adjudication. During this stage, the counsels are involved in the interrogation, mitigations, clarification of issues, and possibly recommendations. A good number of counsels make appearances because they often want beinvolved in a struggle to keep the floor and prevent others from retaining their turn. They are called knowing participants, as they show understanding of the hearings and their contributions are realized by interrogatives and legal terms which are formal, rigid and ritualistic. If this stage must be observed, it must occur immediately after the CP.

Excerpt 4

Magistrate: Any counsel?

Counsel: With total respect to your Worship, my name is ABC. I am the humble appearance for the suspect.

Counsel: Nana and Nana, 2006: 966 confirm that, “There is no immutable principle of law that the custody of a child at a tender age should be awarded to the mother in divorce proceedings.”

Excerpt 3 and 4 above demonstrate the legitimate position of the counsels. Apart from projecting their goals through deference, the counsels understand their position as the advocator and wish to be recognised as that. “Humble appearance” suggests to the hearers that they are privileged to have him as a counsel, yet remaining humble to the court. The expression is both informing and projecting; the excerpts give information about his person and project his intention, to appear for the suspect. The counsel made reference to a book which represents a form of authority in that line of argument to support his expression. References to an already existing knowledge are often used by counsels to support their expression of certainty. For example, the excerpt is characterised by terms such as ‘respect’ qualified by ‘total’ and ‘appearance’ with ‘humble’; these constitute evidence of the preservation of legal professionalism.

Excerpt 5

Counsel: An order was made that the respondent should come before this honourable court today for reference and cross examination.

Excerpt 5 introduces the activities of the counsel in the court. Counsels mediate between the magistrate and the prosecutor or the defendant and do not require introduction. They submit to the magistrate’s authority using reverent words as they state their missions to the court.

Allocating Authority

Allocating Authority (AA) is a compulsory rhetorical element in the court. It indicates the distance between the magistrate and others and in every utterance the magistrate is revered and referred to as ‘His Worship’ or ‘Lord’. The AA is evident in the references to the magistrate. The pronoun ‘you’ is substituted for ‘your worship’ during adjudicatory hearing. This lexical choice affirms the distance of the magistrate to other participants in the court. “I preside over the two cases” and “I want you to know that” are utterances indicating the magistrate’s authority. Instances of the allocation of authority to the magistrate include “respectfully sir” and “as the lordship pleases.”

Excerpt 6

Attorney: My lord, respectfully sir, my application is that this case be merged with that tendered before my lord at Ogbere.

Magistrate: Don’t worry yourself about that. I preside over the two cases

Attorney: As the lordship pleases.

Application

Application (AP) involves cross examination and the appearances of witnesses and subjects. It involves questioning of witnesses or subjects; however, the subjects are only interrogated by the magistrate in juvenile proceedings. The function of the Application (AP) is to develop the

testimony of the prosecutor and elicit evidences from the defendant.

Excerpt 7

Prosecuting C: With due respect my lord, the boy had a fire lighter with him; prior to the time of the outbreak. I pray that the boy and his people be thoroughly investigated and brought to book.

Defence: My lord, my client did not know how the fire came about. He did not start the fire. He only passed through the farm with the cattle.

Magistrate: This boy has been accused of an arson attack, the farmland...

Defence: Your Honour, the boy is a young Fulani boy with cattle, he only takes them through the farm. I want your honour to look into this matter critically. This is not an ethnic issue my lord.

Excerpt 8

Magistrate: The girl did not mention any other person, yet you claim that you were not responsible for her child. According to the evidence already established, you came to work in their compound, didn't you?

Respondent: Yes sir

Magistrate: Where did you sleep that night?

The adjudication presents the contrastive nature of cross-examination of juvenile offenders in the juvenile court where counsels may or may not be involved. Where counsels are involved, they speak in favour of their clients even when the magistrate links the proceedings to factual phenomena. The counsel opines in excerpt 7, that it has become necessary to find out the truth about a burnt farm so that the issue will not cumulate into ethnic fight. It is also unusual for the magistrate to refer to juveniles as 'this boy or that girl'; he calls them subjects but as the accused in the above adjudications, they were not referred to as subjects. This shows a form of dissociation from the erring juveniles. The tone of the interaction is harsh and straight to the point, because the juveniles were being cross-examined.

Adversarial

Adversarial (AD) is the defence of Application (AP), prosecution with proof of evidence and the employment of the Act of Juvenile Justice of Nigeria to the Application (AP). This presents the professional expertise of the counsels.

Excerpt 9

Defense C.: With profound respect sir, the complainant alleged my clients to have stolen a few items but when Your Worship asked what they stole, they mentioned one bogus amount. On that note alone, my lord respectfully sir, the complainant should be lenient in the prosecution of the juveniles.

The defence counsel draws on the compassion of the court to mitigate the offence of the juveniles. His duties include representing the defendant or respondent during adjudication in order to provide strong advocacy. The adversarial is usually palliative in nature where appeal is made and the counsel demands the mercy of the magistrate. AD features more where there are attorneys in the court. The defence attorney uses 'a few items' in contrast to 'one bogus amount' to reduce the effect of the theft committed by the juvenile. He does not refute the charges against his client before the court. This strategy used in defending the juvenile falls within the optional generic stage. The services of attorneys are usually not required to

defend or prosecute juveniles in the court. This example is an instance of a protective strategy employed during adversarial.

In this case, the attorney mitigated the juvenile offence by using 'a few items' to describe what his client has stolen. 'A few items' is used to project the amount as either unimportant or unexceptional before the court. This is a strategic intent to veil the offence of the juvenile; by reducing the value of the stolen item he has contrasted it with 'one bogus amount'. The seriousness of the theft is thus mitigated by the defence attorney. The quantifying numerative 'one' is used as a referent here. This is intended to show the contrast between 'a few items' and 'one bogus amount'. In the adjudication, the juvenile is petitioned for theft; the attorney and his client admit the guilt but substitute theft for stealing and reduces what was stolen to a few items. The attorney uses a specific determiner 'a' against the non-specific 'one' to mitigate the offence. The specific determiner is qualified with few items and the non-specific determiner serves as the attribute of the bogus item. Through the role of an advocator, he is able to advocate leniency, having reduced the effect of the theft in adjudication.

Excerpt 10

Defence Counsel: My lord, on the issue of custody, custody is not a matter of right and it is not granted as a trophy or as a measure of punishment. It is the paramount interest of the subject that matters most. In the preliminary investigation before this honourable court, the children preferred to be with their father. So your Worship sir, like I pray the court the last time, I will also pray that the custody be granted to the respondent according to the wishes of the subject or alternatively the children should be allowed to tell this noble court which of the parties they are most comfortable to live with, in view of the fact that the parties are no longer together, which is unfortunate...

Clarification Utterances

Clarification Utterances (CU) is an obligatory element used mostly by the magistrate and defence attorneys to protect the interest of the juveniles. It involves sighting and stating laws guiding the juvenile adjudication.

Excerpt 11

Counsel: Your Worship respectfully sir, I am objecting to the allegation, because the law permits you to hear the case as charged together with an adult. Your lordship, you have the opportunity to hear the two different cases together. My lord respectfully sir, my application is that this charge be merged with that tendered before my lord at Ogbere.

Magistrate: I am the one presiding over the two cases...

Defence C.: Very well then my lord, as your lordship pleases.

Magistrate: This case is different from that of the regular court. I want you to know that.

Clarifying during interaction is expressed as an iterative device and the act is usually performed by the magistrate who acts as the overall voice of the court. However, the counsels, in order to make their opinions known, employ clarification utterances. What the counsel demands here is a waiver of jurisdiction in which the juvenile court will need to transfer a juvenile case, especially if an adult is involved, to an adult criminal court. The CU indicates that certain injunctions which may be obtained at other courts are not relevant to the juvenile delinquent court. This restricts the attorneys from applying certain investigative strategies. It puts the language of the defence and prosecution attorneys in line with protective correction

in the juvenile court. The CU is a mitigating device which occurs repeatedly to protect the interest and save the face of the delinquent juvenile. During adjudication, the CU is mandatory; it serves as a reminder of what should obtain in the juvenile court. The CU indicates that certain injunctions which may obtain at other courts are not relevant to juvenile delinquent court. The CU is obvious in the excerpt below:

Excerpt 12

Magistrate: This case is different from that of the regular court. I want you to know that. If you are coming to this court, remove the toga of the regular court process and proceeding and come to the knowledge of these juveniles.

This is an instance of deviation from the breakfast theory of justice, that is, legal realism; it is a situation where the breakfast of the magistrate affects adjudication. The import of other rulings is not allowed in the juvenile court. There is a procedure to follow once a juvenile is involved. This places a condition on the cross-examination pattern of delinquents, where idealism is strictly adhered to in the proceeding.

Excerpt 13

Magistrate: Let us not forget that there is a place for justice and a place for chastisement. I want you to consider that as well.

Defense C.: Very well then my Lord, as your Lordship pleases.

The above excerpt is necessitated by two conflicting claims presented by the magistrate and the defence counsel to depict levels of adjudication in the juvenile court, “justice” and “chastisement”. The first level is “the place of justice,” where the court maintains what obtains in the law concerning a case. This level of justice conforms to the ideal and equity of law. Chastisement involves punitive measures mete out to juvenile offenders, for instance, whipping, confinement, strong rebuke, which can recall a juvenile to order. “A place of chastisement” refers to a strict form of justice with an undertone of correction and discipline.

Appealing Communication (APC)

This element determines the outcome of the adjudication. The complainant is placated and the defendant awaits the summation of the magistrate. Appealing Communication (APC) requires that both the prosecution and the defence counsel be physically fit to stand trial and be willing to participate in the adjudication, that is, both the juvenile and the witness must be involved in their own defence.

Excerpt 14

Magistrate: You see, you lecture at the university; your students listen to you as you take them Mathematics. You know better, Nigeria is one.

Defendant: No sir, I have my reasons. Things have changed, sir. I get my identification there, my children too will be required to go there to get theirs. I cannot leave them to suffer in the hands of people here. I come from the north and so are my children. I regret having this woman as a wife.

In the excerpt above, the magistrate appeals to the defendant who has sent his wife packing and is taking the subjects to his people in the northern part of the country. His major reason for the break-up is ethnical differences. This is evident in the fact that behind his pursuit for divorce is a fanatical tendency which can lead to ethnic conflict against the appeal that ‘Nigeria is one’. The magistrate, however, makes a comparison between the matter and the defendant’s

profession in his appeal, 'you lecture', 'you take them', 'you know better'. These are observed in expression above. The defendant, however, distances himself from the spatial location and believes in getting identity for his children in his own state of origin.

Summation and Conclusion

Summation and Conclusion (SC) presents the commitment of the court concerning a case and the decision of the court on rehabilitation. The summation is sometimes blended with counselling, admonition, threat and moral injunctions.

Excerpt 15

Magistrate: The defendant should therefore remain at the rehabilitation centre until further injunction is given. His parents must be responsible for the hospital bills and the upkeep of the girl. They should see the welfare officer in charge for the arrangement on how the money will be paid.

Magistrate: Although the defendant continues to maintain his innocence on this reprehensible behaviour and indecent treatment of the juvenile, the court will not fail to ensure that justice is done. Let all parties appear in court on the next day of adjournment.

Adjournment

Adjournment (ADJ) is a pause or hold on adjudications and only applies to cases that are yet to be concluded. It occurs when there are procedural irregularities or unavailability of parties or witnesses; sometimes it may be due to lack of time on the part of the court. ADJ postpones or suspends the hearing of a case or the SC until a further date or *sine die*.

Conclusion

The generic structure has shown language performance in some specific functions in the context of the juvenile court and insights have been given into the proceedings of the juvenile court. The expressions of the structure have prevented oppressive adversarial devices in adjudication and revealed the order of the proceedings. The magistrate, as observed, imposes the order of the legal codes in accordance to the Acts and Rights of children and young persons in Nigeria using Clarification Utterances (CU). The obligatory structural elements were based on mutual assumption and foregrounded by discourse features to mitigate offences. The restriction promoted defence over prosecution and protection over correction. Also, the occurrence and sequence of specific instructions were easily predicted and interpreted by counsels and witnesses concerning the juveniles. The study demonstrated that the juvenile court disallows "the breakfast theory of justice" and recognized mitigations as related to legal responsibility. The iteration of CU revealed that legal formulations were adhered to in the negotiation of purpose and meaning in the court. This made politic behaviour and other forms of legal reality uncommon in the juvenile court. The rhetorical elements derived through the generic structure potential of these proceedings had contributed to the policy and relation between the Juvenile Justice System in Nigeria and the juveniles.

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