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## 16. Conclusions on style

Style is one of the salient features of the performance, for style depicts the poetic function that conveys the orientation and the attitude of the performer towards the story. The way of speaking reflects the style in **hwènùxó**. Performers use style to visualize the storytelling by using specific markers to highlight salient passages of the story. Style involves the language usage of the performers, when they use fixed structures to tell a specific part of the story. However, style also involves individual choices, when it comes to coining ideophones as well as giving comments by the insertion of meta-discourse markers. Songs have distinctive features, such as a melody and a rhyme that set them apart from the prose narrative.

Linguistic choices include grammatical choices as well as the use of words. Performers use several markers that influence the meaning of the bare verb by placing a marker as a prefix to the verb. The meaning of the majority of aspect markers in Fongbe unmistakably gets close to the meaning of tense. The performers use four aspect markers that refer to the moment that an action takes place. The routine marker conveys frequency, two recurrence markers convey recurrence and the out-of-sequence marker conveys a rearrangement in the chain of events.

The performers use four mood markers that reflect the attitude and opinions of the central participant. The irrealis marker indicates the central participant's attitude towards an action in what comes next in the story. The reported irrealis marker conveys that an action might have happened. The two optative markers require an action, for example a wish or a command. Performers use the non-perfective verbal marker to mark the topic of all the stories of the corpus. Performers use specific serial verb constructions of three to four verbs to convey the peak.

Performers carefully choose their words. These choices often are individual choices that colour the performance. They comprise deictic markers, clause markers and clause connectives, discourse markers and, the individual coining of ideophones. The use of words is the result of a form of grammaticalization, for instance in the coining of ideophones.

The definite particle **ɔ** tracks the central participant and all his aliases and paraphernalia. This particle is the most salient example of the use of the deictic function in the performance. Furthermore, the performers have a different orientation towards the agents, for they sometimes topicalize or omit them. Topicalization emphasizes the position that the agent in question holds in that fragment of the story; while the omission underlines that the agent has a very low position in that part of the story.

Performers use a broad range of deictic markers to indicate the dimension of the virtual distance between the audience and the agents. Performers use various combinations of deictic markers, such as deictic focus particles, deictic markers or demonstrative pronouns. These markers point at a proximate or a remote location. Gestures often emphasize the deictic markers. Kinetics plays a crucial role in the pointing at the central participant, the agents and the actions.

Performers use adjuncts to mark the coordination of the discourse, or to indicate a change in time and setting. Connectivity in combination with a pause conveys suspense. Performers use meta-discourse markers to comment on the action of the agents, especially agent B. All meta-discourse markers are nasal.

Performers like to coin ideophones that materialize sensations or sensory perceptions. Sounds in Fongbe storytelling often have a meaning. The use of epithets and epitomes gives an individual touch to the central participant in trickster stories. Performers use the dental click that is a rare phoneme in Fongbe. They also use the schwa that is no part of Fongbe.

Style in songs differs from the prose narrative by code switching. The use of words in songs concerns the use of rhyme, alliteration and assonance. Songs are composed of stanzas that have the form of a couplet or a quatrain. The chorus most often consists of a couplet. Songs have two mood markers, an inhibition and an illusory wish marker. Performers use contraction and elision to mould the words into the melody of the song. Songs use formal speech, and have religious references. The use of loanwords reminds us of the practice in the **vodun** religion where new priests learn to speak a so-called 'secret language' during their initiation in the thicket. This makes clear that the central participant refers actually to the god who temporarily takes abode in the object or utensil.