

# **Topics and Participants in Jamamadí Narrative**

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## ABSTRACT

In Jamamadí, the form used to introduce a participant is basically determined by the role he will play in the plot structure. The undergoer, actor and other participants each have a characteristic introduction.

Participants are kept straight principally by relating them to the participant who is topic within a paragraph. Once a participant has been established as topic there are various signals used to refer to him and maintain him as topic. Pronouns, kinship terms, unpossessed body parts, and gender agreement all serve to maintain the topic.

### 0. Introduction

In Jamamadí narrative<sup>1</sup> the form in which a participant is introduced and the way reference is maintained is very closely linked to the topic structure. For this reason they will be considered together. The topic of an episode or paragraph need not necessarily be a participant but often is.

### 1. Participant Introduction

#### 1.1. Place in narrative

How soon participants are introduced is related to the length of the episode: Participants in short episodes appear in the story within the first two sentences. Participants are introduced within the first two paragraphs in longer episodes.

When the narrative has a strong plot structure covering several paragraphs there is normally an introductory paragraph that gives the story in a nutshell. In this type all of the participants are introduced within the introductory paragraph. Other persons or things may be introduced later in the story but these are props rather than participants.

An example of this is the jaguar story. In the first episode which covers seventy-five clauses only three participants occur. All three appear in the introductory paragraph although Arniso is referred to only as part of the pronoun 'us'.

1. Yomahi. 2. Yome oda-ra kiyoa-marō-ni. 3. Yome oda-ra kiyoa-marō, 4. oda-ra waka-na-ne-mete yomahi. 5. Yome oda-ra kiyoa, 6. katoso ohare-ya tao-o-ka-na-marō-mani.

(1. Jaguar. 2. Jaguar us-object follow-eyewitness-comment. 3. Jaguar us-object follow-eyewitness, 4. us-object break-stem=closure-subjunctive-supposition jaguar. 5. Jaguar us-object follow, 6. shell one-instrument shot-I-instrument-stem=closure-eyewitness-but.)

'The jaguar. A long time ago the jaguar followed us and would have eaten us but I shot him with my last shell.' <sup>2</sup>

In a narrative where there is no introductory preview the participants are introduced only as they become pertinent to the story. All of the participants are usually introduced in the first or second paragraph of the episode.

In a legend Hara and his wife are introduced in the first paragraph. The hunter who is the principal actor in the story is mentioned first early in the second paragraph. There are several other people referred to in the text but these are props and appear only in the latter part of the story.

Hara. Hara fadi-ra tofa-to-ka-ne-mata-mona-ne. Hara fadi-ra tofa-to-ka-ne fadi-ya fame fadi eye to-ke, fadi-ra tofa-to-ka-witi-mata-mona yama-ya, yama-ya fadi-ra tofa-to-ka-witi, amo-ni toi-ya yama yete-#-ka-ne-bona to-ke,

(Hara. Hara wife-object stuff-away-instrument-stem=closure-supposition-reported-comment. Hara wife-object stuff-away-instrument-stem=closure wife-with two wife together away-he=go wife-object stuff-away-instrument-far-supposition-reported jungle-in, jungle-in wife-object stuff-away-instrument-far sleep-gerund four when-have jungle hunt-he-instrument-stem=closure-purpose away-he=go.)

'Hara. Hara stuffed his wife in a log in the jungle. They went out together and he stuffed her in a log in the jungle. Four days after he (another man) went hunting.

In expository narrative the topic spans are short usually only one to three paragraphs. In these cases the participants are introduced early in the paragraph. Anyone or anything introduced after the first one or two clauses are considered props. In the following example: Nene, Aoda and Tatiwake are participants, Bowatimaha is a prop. Tatiwake is part of the group indicated in the 'they also' as well as being made explicit later.

Di Aoda, di Nene, me na me kama-ke-bone, me ati-na-mone-ni. me kama-ke yamata-ra me na-kama-ki-ya, yamata awiri-ya, yamata manaki-ra me daa-na-mone, sibati yomeni manaki hemedo-ra Tatiwake haa kabikana-ra di Nene haa-ne-mona kabikana hina-kaso kanika-bone-in, Bowatimaha.

(The Aoda, The Nene, they also they come-here-purpose. They say-stem=closure-reported-comment. They come-here fruit-object they cause-come-here-when fruit have=not-when fruit price-object they give-stem=closure-reported banana eating price medicine-object Tatiwake called=for fish=hook-object the Nene called=for-stem=closure-reported fish=hook his-aunt buy-purpose-comment, Bowatimaha)

'Aoda and Nene are coming with the others. They are coming to get the fruit. If there is no fruit they want payment. Tatiwake asked for medicine in payment for her bananas that were eaten. Nene asked his aunt to get him some fishhooks to pay for the fruit she had eaten.

It should be noted that although participants are introduced near the beginning of the story and props may be introduced near the end, they may also be introduced near the beginning. In some cases it is a prop that is topic and therefore is mentioned first or soon thereafter.

In the following example yobe 'house' does absolutely nothing in the story. The houses were to be burned in retaliation for wrongs suffered. In this example 'house' is indicated as topic even though it is a prop.

Yobe-ra. Yobe-ra me ati sari-na na-mone, me ati-na-ni-ni,  
yobe.

(House-object. House-object they say burn-stem=closure do-reported, they say-stem=closure-?-comment, house.)

'House. They say they are going to burn the house.'

## 1.2. Devices for introduction

A participant who is undergoer and topic of the episode is introduced by a noun standing alone as a complete sentence at the beginning of the episode. Although the participant thus identified may be actor in much of the episode, his downfall is expected. If there is a villain he will be introduced in the same way as the undergoer. In the incident of the burning of the houses 'the houses' are thus identified. This is the only case in about fifty stories where a topic thus identified is not a participant. In the following example the episode topic and undergoer is 'the jaguar'. 'Jaguar' is set off by final intonation and a sentence final form of this noun.<sup>3</sup> The jaguar follows the men at first and is in these places an actor, but later is subdued and becomes the undergoer.

'Yomahi. Yome oda-ra kiyoo-marō-ni.

(Jaguar us-object follow-eyewitness-comment.)

'The jaguar. The jaguar followed us.'

Participants may also be introduced by a noun functioning as subject or object of a complete sentence. The participant introduced as a noun within the first two clauses of a paragraph may also serve as a topic but is not necessarily topic. The criteria for determining whether or not it is topic will be discussed later. If the person thus introduced is also indicated to be topic, he will be basically an actor rather than an undergoer. In the following example the animals are the episode topic. John is introduced as a participant. He is in fact also the paragraph topic but this is not indicated by the use of the noun.

Bani madi. Di Yowaho bani me-ra amo-ni-mata-maka.

(animal being. The John animal plural-object sleep-stem=closure-supposition-perspective)

'The animals-wild pigs. John put the wild pigs to sleep.'

Participants may also be introduced by kinship terms. When a kinship term is used the person referred to by the term is never topic. They may become a paragraph topic at a later point in the story but cannot then be referred to by a kinship term. The ego of the kinship term is always the topic of the paragraph in which the kinship term is used unless the topic is an event. In the latter situation there may be 2 egos in one paragraph. This is still under study. Like a noun can become a topic in a later paragraph if introduced early, so also can those initially introduced as kinship terms. If introduced early, participants are likely to be important to the story and may serve as paragraph topic later. When introduced later in the episode or late in the paragraph, they are usually props. In the following example Hara's wife is introduced by a kinship term in the initial paragraph when Hara was topic. She is not signalled as topic of any later paragraph but shares the stage with the hunter during the rescue and the first part of the resolution. In these sections, she is referred to by means of pronouns rather than kinship terms.

Hara. Hara fadi-ra tofa-to-ka-ne-mata-mona-ne.

(Hara. Hara wife-object stuff-away-instrument-stem=closure-supposition-reported-comment)

'Hara. Hara stuffed his wife (in a hollow log).'

In the story of Hara, his wife is the victim. This is not signalled by the use of a kinship term but by its replacement. In all the stories where the villain, victim and hero are present, it is the second person introduced that is the victim.

Participants may also be introduced by a pronoun. It does not seem strange that first and second person should be introduced by pronouns as their referent is implicit. Third person pronouns, however, are also used in Jamamadí to introduce participants. When a third person pronoun is used, a noun or kinship term may be used later to identify the person but does not necessarily do so. The use of unidentified third persons thus far seems to be restricted to legends. In narratives a person may be introduced by a pronoun but is always identified soon afterward. The person introduced by a pronoun always is central to the story with the possible exception of the indefinite me 'they'.

In the legends it is the person introduced by the pronoun who is the hero. In these cases the person is never definitively identified. The narrator upon questioning could not supply the names of the individuals. In the jaguar story, the idea of hero still seems to be implied even though it is first person who is hero. In this case the jaguar was the villain, we were the victims, and I the hero, introduced in that order.

Yomahi. Yome oda-ra kiyoa-maró-ni. Yome oda-ra kiyoa-maró  
oda-ra waka-na-ne-mete yomahi. Yome oda-ra kiyoa katoso  
ohare-ya yome tao-o-ka-na-maró-mani.

(Jaguar. Jaguar us-object follow-eyewitness-comment. Jaguar us-object follow-eyewitness us-object break-stem=closure-subjective-supposition jaguar. Jaguar us-object follow shell only-instrument jaguar shoot-I-instrument-stem=closure-eyewitness-declarative)

'The jaguar. The jaguar followed us and would have killed us but I shot him with my only shell.'

## 2. Maintaining participants and reference

### 2.1. Noun repetition

The role of a participant in an episode (whether undergoer, hero, actor, etc.) determines not only his introduction but later references to him. A participant who is not the topic is repeated over and over by the same type of reference as was used to introduce him. In the following example the monkeys are not topic.

wafa me ati oda mita-maró-m. Wafa me ati oda mita, wafa me  
fora-o-na-bone sere rofi-o-na, wafa me kake, wafa me na,

(Monkey plural voice we hear-eyewitness-perspective. Monkey plural shoot-I-stem=closure-purpose dart roll-I-stem=closure, monkey plural came monkey plural do)

'We heard the monkeys. I wanted to shoot them, so I rolled a dart and they came and stayed.'

### 2.2. Pronouns

Once a participant is established as topic he can thereafter be referred to by a pronoun. A common device to indicate a participant as topic is a change in word order. The normal word order is OSV. But the subject can be made the topic of the paragraph by changing the order to SOV. This can only be done when both the subject and the object are nouns. When either one or both are pronouns the order is fixed and cannot be changed. When either one is a noun and the other a pronoun the order is Noun-pronoun-verb irregardless of which is noun and which is pronoun. When both are pronouns the order is OSV and cannot be changed.

In the following example Andre is signalled as topic of the paragraph by the word order SOV. He is the subject of the next six clauses but is always referred to by # third person singular.

De Andere noko-ra baa-na-ri-ne-mata-ka. Koba-ra kaa-#-na-ri  
noko-ra baa-#-na-ri-no #-ka-wina, fai yifo-ra #-yose  
yosori-ra #-yose-mari-m. Yosori-ra #-yose-mari-m, Tobi-ra.

(She Andre face-object hit-stem=closure-on-stem=closure-supposition-event. Copaiba-object cut-he-stem=closure-explanation face-object hit-he-stem=closure-on-verification. He-instrument-hang and=so fruit=object he sent younger=brother-object he=sent=eyewitness-perspective. Younger=brother-object he-sent-eyewitness-perspective Tobi-object.)

'Andre hit his head. As he was cutting copaiba, he hit his face and was laid up in the hammock so he sent his younger brother for fruit. He sent his younger brother Toby.'

When a third person topic has been established by a change in word order or other means it can remain as topic even though it is being acted upon rather than being the actor. To do this a -hi 'actor=non=topic' is used on the verb and gender agreement on the verb agrees with the topic.

In the following example Gabriel is the topic. The use of -hi 'actor=non=topic' in the final clause maintains him as topic. Any time that -hi 'actor=non=topic' is used there is an obligatory absence of the -ra 'object' indicator. This has the effect of making the clause similar to the English passive.

Kabiho moni yana-ka-ne-mari-m tayai aaya Kabiho ati-ne-  
mari-ka noko bofora sari-hi-ka-ne-naho.

(Gabriel sound walk-instrument-stem=closure-eyewitness-perspective  
sound=of=gun exclamation=of=man Gabriel say-stem=closure-eyewitness-  
sequence eye powder burn-actor=non=topic-instrument-stem=closure-verified)

'I heard Gabriel shoot, boom. Ouch! he said. His eye was burned by the powder.'

Although this use of -hi 'actor=non=topic' is quite consistent more study is needed to determine when and where it is not used, as well as some of its other uses. When the episode topic and paragraph topic are not the same how do you know which is being referred to?

### 2.3. Unpossessed body parts

In Jamamadí body parts are obligatorily possessed. For this reason you cannot speak of an arm or a leg without specifying whose arm or leg or at least to what category it belongs, ie., human arm or wild pig leg, etc.

The only time that a body part is spoken of outside of immediate context of the possessor is when the possessor is topic. This is one way of reaffirming the topic without mentioning him as such. In the previous example of Gabriel, noko 'eye' is non-possessed so we know that the topic, Gabriel, is the possessor.

### 2.4. Kinship terms

Kinship terms are also used to identify participants and to relate them to the participant who is topic. While the person referred to by a kinship term functions syntactically in the immediate sentence, he may or may not be a participant in the paragraph. The ego may or may not serve any syntactic function in the immediate sentence but is always the topic of the paragraph or one of the participants in topic when an action or event is topicalized.

In the following example Wademara is the topic of the episode and paragraph. In this case Birinawa is also a participant but not topic. Mano, a third participant is bawling Waldemara out for several items, only one of which deals with Birinawa.

Fai sori di Birinawa do-di-maki-bona ati-nofa sori-ra do-  
di-maki awira. Mano ati-ne-ne.

(And=so brother the Birinawa away-take-after-purpose say-always brother-object away-take-after not. Mano say-stem=closure-comment.)

'"She (Waldemara) always says she is going to take her brother but she did not take him." Mano said.'

The use of kinship terms is a common way to introduce props. They provide a sort of cohesion by tying them to the topic. They can be used alone or in apposition with a proper noun. In the following example Borokobi, the ego of the kinship term, is topic. Noka the referent of the kinship term only occurs once in the episode and then only to give a direct quotation.

Fadi one di Noka "... " Noka ati-na-mone-ni.

(wife other the Noka "... " Noka say-stem=closure-reportedly-comment.)

'His sister-in-law Noka "... " Noka said.'

## 2.5. Gender agreement

The use of pronouns and gender agreement are closely linked. Gender agreement shows contrast in the case of third person singular only, as all the other pronouns take the feminine or unmarked gender. The subject of the clause is always expressed within the clause, except in the case of third person singular which is a zero verb affix plus gender agreement indicated by vowel changes in the verbs and their suffixes. When the subject is zero it is the topic who is subject unless an action or event is topic, and in this case one of the participants in the action or event is subject. When the participants in the action or event are of different genders the gender agreement on the verb will show which is subject.

When the subject of the sentence is unexpressed it is the topic of the paragraph who is subject. In the following example Hara is topic. He is also the subject of each clause as shown by the gender agreement on the verbs. He was last mentioned by name six clauses earlier.

Fai hoko-ra to-na-ke, hoko-ra baa-ne, fai hini-ra to-iyara-witi-mata-mona-ra.

(And=so bark-object away-cause-go=masculine, bark-object hit-stem=closure=masculine, and=so himself-object-talk-far-supposition=masculine-reported=masculine perspective.)

'He went to get the bark, he pounded the bark and talked to himself.'

At times, rather than having a participant as topic, there is an event. In this case two participants are equally treated as topic. Both are referred to only by pronouns and gender agreement. If they are both of the same gender it can get confusing. In the following example the hunter's finding of the girl is topic. In the following clauses both the hunter and the girl are then referred to many times by means of zero affixes plus gender agreement.

Dafo me ra yabe, dafo me-ra yabe, ati yana-na-mete-mone-ni.

(bird they=object picked=up=masculine, bird they-object picked=up=masculine, voice walk-stem=closure=feminine-supposition=feminine-reportedly=feminine-comment=feminine.)

'He picked up the bird, her voice arrived.'

### 3. Dismissing Participants

There are at least three common ways of removing participants from the scene. In each of these ways all the participants are considered dismissed unless referred to again immediately following. The one exception to this is in the episode topic. He is expected to remain in consciousness for the entire episode even though he may not be referred to for several paragraphs.

#### 3.1. Quotation margins

When the story is a series of reported conversations, the normal way of dismissing participants is to give all embedded quotation margins up to the one in which the narrator is involved: that is "John told me that they said such and such." This does not always change the cast but the listener is warned that there may be a change.

Di Toti ati-ne-mona-ra. Di Fono ati-ne-ra. Me ati-na-ni.

(The Toti say=stem=closure-reportedly-perspective. The Fono said-stem-closure-perspective. They say=stem-closure-comment)

'They tell me "Fono said, that Toti said..."

#### 3.2. Motion verbs

In hunting and fishing texts where each incident normally occurs in a different location the most common way to change participants is to use motion verbs. As in the case above a change does not occur after every motion verb but the listener must be prepared for a change.

Bito oda ka-ka-ma, oda ka-ka-ma-maroke. Oda ka-ma,

(Bito we dual-go-back we dual-go-back-eyewitness-sequence, we go-back)

'Bito and I came back'.

#### 3.3. Time phrases

In all types of texts when a word or clause designates a time span, the speaker is free to introduce new participants or drop old ones.

Yama soki-ya oda amo-ka-na,

(thing dark-at we sleep-dual-stem=closure)

'At night we slept.'

#### 4. Subsidiary topic

In some situations a second or subsidiary topic may be included within the span of a primary topic. One situation where this can happen is an included direct quotation. In this case the primary topic is the speaker and she topicalizes someone else for the duration of her quotation but she is still primary topic after the quotation.

1. Tatiwake hika bidime-ra idi-make, 2. maki-ra ati kosi-tee-mone-ni. 3. Hika bidimi to-sawi-ma-ra ahi. 4. maki-ra ati kosi-na, 5. "Di Anika kosi-o-baka-mani". 6. 'kosi-o-ne-ya 7. koro-o-witi-ya, 8. hina-ka-idi di Ahadere fido-na-maki-a 9. Di Ahadere noko-ra kosi-o-ne-ba-maka." 10. ati-tee-mone-ni.

(1. Tatiwake her-possessive niece-object take-after=feminine. 2. husband-object say spank-repeatedly-reportedly=feminine-comment=feminine. 3. her-possessive niece away-join-with=feminine-negative result 4. husband-object say spank-stem=closure=feminine 5. The Arnika spank-I-certainly=feminine-comment=feminine. 6. spank-I-stem=closure=male-temporal 7. throw-away-I-far=male-temporal 8. his-possessive-grandfather the Andre come-stem=closure-after-temporal 9. The Andre face-object spank-I-stem=closure=male-future-after=male." 10. said-repeatedly-reportedly=feminine-comment=feminine.)

'Tatiwake took her niece away. She (Tatiwake) said that she (Tatiwake) was going to spank her (Tatiwake) husband, because her (Tatiwake) niece was not staying with them. She said she would spank her husband. "I am certainly going to spank Anika. I will spank him and throw him away and when his grandfather Andre comes back I will spank him in the face." She (Tatiwake) said.'

Another situation is where a subsidiary topic develops related to the primary topic as for example. The primary topic is Baina, a man whose son was bitten by a dog. In the course of speaking about Baina the dog is mentioned and what they are going to do with the the dog if they get the chance. This is not a separate paragraph as there are no other paragraph indicators.

1. "Me-ra noko-to-ni-hari, 2. ai-ya sa-sawi, 3. Badi-ra yome na-boe-nao-ra. 4. Me-ka yome kaa-o-ne-ne, 5. o-ko-make-mani. 6. Me-ka yome kaa-o-na-ne-ra". 7. Kanamara ati-na-mone-ni. 8. Bowatima ati kaa-hiti-mona-ne yomahi.

(1. "Them-object face-away-stem=closure-only=male 2. us-location reduplication-join 3. Son-object dog cause-die-verified=male-perspective 4. They-possessive dog cut-I-stem=closure=male-subjunctive 5. I-go-after=feminine. 6. They-possessive dog cut-I-stem=closure=feminine-subjunctive-perspective" 7. Kanamara said-stem=closure=feminine-reportedly=

feminine-comment=feminine 8. Bowatima say cut-repeatedly-reportedly=male-male comment-male dog.)

"He only wants them, he always stays with them and their dog bit his son. I should cut their dog. If I go over there I will cut their dog". Kanamara said. Bowatima said she would cut it too, the dog.

## FOOTNOTES

1. Jamamadí is an Arawakan language spoken by an unknown number of people along the Purus River in the state of Amazonas, Brazil. The dialect under study consists of about 100 speakers located above the town of Lábrea. Data were gathered during field trips in 1963-1977 under the auspices of the Summer Institute of Linguistics in accordance with a contract with the Museu Nacional de Rio de Janeiro and by permission of the Fundação Nacional do Índio. I also wish to thank Robert A. Dooley for his valuable advice given in a field workshop at Porto Velho, Rondônia, Brazil.

2. The phonemes of Jamamadí are a, i, o, e, m, d, t, h, k, s, n, y, f, b, r, w. The phoneme /s/ is [ts] word initially, /f/ is [ɸ], /r/ is [ɽ] initially and before front vocoids and [r] elsewhere. /h/ functions as a nasal and frequently is dropped on an unstressed syllable leaving only nasalization. Vowels following nasals /m/, /n/, and /h/ are nasalized. Stress alternates on every other syllable starting with the first. Sentence stress falls on the verb root and will modify the alternating stress pattern in some words. Sentence final intonation is a down glide. Sentence medial intonation is an up glide.

3. Some nouns have two forms depending on their placement in the sentence. These are nouns which in isolation or in sentence final position have an /hV/ on the end. When these nouns occur sentence initial or medial a shortened form is used by dropping the /hV/ and certain perturbations occurring on the final vowel. When the final form ends /ahi/ the /a/ is changed to /e/ and the nasalization associated with /h/ remains on the /e/. When the vowels are identical on each side of the /h/ then the vowel is not changed but the nasalization from the /h/ remains.