

## SOME FIGURE AND GROUND FUNCTIONS IN AMBAI NARRATIVE

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Bahasa pada umumnya memakai berbagai cara untuk menyatakan bagian-bagian yang terpenting dari suatu wacana. Kertas ini menyajikan pemakaian partikel mani yang memisahkan bahan latar belakang (ground) dari bahan latar depan (figure) yang terdapat dalam suatu teks naratif bahasa Ambai. Hubungan-hubungan 'ground-figure' ini terdapat baik dalam tingkat yang tertinggi dalam wacana maupun dalam tingkat kalimat. Dalam tingkat yang tertinggi mani berfungsi untuk memisahkan isi teks dari pendahuluannya, sedangkan dalam tingkat kalimat mani berfungsi memisahkan informasi yang dinyatakan dari informasi yang tak dinyatakan.

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0. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to describe the function of the particle mani in Ambai<sup>1</sup> discourse. To do so I will make use of the Gestalt notions FIGURE and GROUND<sup>2</sup> as applied to linguistic structure by Taber (1966:84-5). FIGURE is conceived as the prominent information part of linguistic structure from total discourse to sentence. GROUND, on the other hand, constitutes the background information that creates the framework for the assertion of the material in the FIGURE.

In what follows I will show that the Ambai particle mani serves to mark off preceding GROUND material from following FIGURE material in the narrative discourse. The various manifestations of the FIGURE-GROUND relation may be summarized in the following tree:

Discourse Information

	GROUND	mani	FIGURE
1.	INTRO		BODY
2.	Cast		Assertion
3.	Time		Assertion
4.	Succession of Time		Assertion
5.	Condition		Assertion
6.	Frustrated Intent		Assertion
7.	Logical Grounds		Assertion of Conclusion

Diagram 1

That is, 1) the Introduction (INTRO) and the Body (BODY) of a narrative discourse may be viewed as instances of a GROUND-FIGURE contrast. I discuss this high level major discourse division under Section 1.0 below. Items 2) - 7) in the diagram constitute background and foreground pairings not as large discourse divisions, but as lower sentence level instances of the same GROUND-FIGURE relation. These are treated in Section 2.0.

In the following discussion, I will refer to the "Pasai Kuri" text translated into English and located in the Appendix.

1.0 HIGH LEVEL RELATIONS

The grammar of a total discourse must recognize certain high level 'chunks' into which the narrative piece may be segmented. These parts are familiar to students of literature under such labels as 'introduction', 'body', and 'conclusion' of speeches, essays, etc. Thus, looking at discourse from the point of view of pragmatics or speech act theory, one may identify the following general structure:

NARRATIVE SPEECH

Aperture Margin (formulaic opener)	Nucleus	Closure (formulaic finis moral application summary)
	INTRO	BODY

Diagram 2

From the tree above note that the heart (Nucleus) of the narrative is distinguished from the marginal material which is primarily given by the speaker engaging and disengaging his audience. For

Ambai the Aperture involves a formulaic phrase such as "I want to tell you about .....". Similarly the Closure is a formulaic phrase "that's all for now". The closure can also include a moral application, summary or conclusion.

The main context in which I wish to illustrate FIGURE and GROUND, however, is in connection with the Nucleus of the narrative, which is discussed below in terms of Introduction and Body constituents.

### 1.1 DISCOURSE INTRO AS GROUND

GROUND in relation to the Nucleus of the discourse includes the Introduction (INTRO) while the Body (BODY) constitutes the FIGURE. The term stage has been used to talk about that part of discourse that is necessary to get the main narrative going. Setting or background are similar terms usually including a general description of the main characters and setting the time and location of the events about to take place. However, in Ambai narratives, location seems to be considered more a part of the FIGURE than the GROUND as it is very seldom marked by mani.

Longacre (1976:143) describes Introduction as "a deep structure in which existence is predicated of something or someone and then a further predication is immediately made about that existent." So the INTRO in Ambai establishes the Cast or main characters and gives a description of them which sets the stage for the events of the main story or BODY.

In the "Pasai Kuri" text the particle mani occurs nine times in the INTRO which is Sentences 1-11. By contrast, the BODY contains only sixteen instances of mani in the remaining 55 sentences.

The following diagram distinguishes the INTRO from the BODY by the occurrences of mani.

Nucleus	
INTRO	BODY
greater number of <u>mani</u>	lesser number of <u>mani</u>

Diagram 3

The occurrences of mani in the BODY mark GROUND on the sentence level and will be discussed in Section 2.0.

### 1.2 DISCOURSE BODY AS FIGURE

In the BODY as FIGURE, the main participants and their actions that move the story along are contained in episodes as shown in the diagram below.

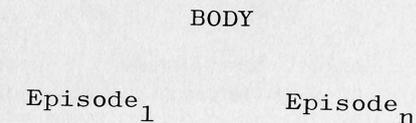


Diagram 4

The BODY may contain one or more Episodes. In the "Pasai Kuri" text, there are two Episodes (12-35 and 36-67). The Episodes consist of a number of Build-Ups, a Climax, and a Resolution.

The Build-Up is marked as to orientation of time, a succession of events which includes dialogue. These Build-Ups move

the story along and develop the conflict which leads to the Climax. The Build-Ups in the text are included in Sentences 12-28 and 36-59. The internal constructions of the Build-Ups have not been included in this paper.

The Climax is characterized by a series of short sentences with no dialogue. There is also a heightened sense of vividness, as in the second episode (Sentences 60-62) where each of the entrails is mentioned--the intestines, the lungs, and the heart--which were previously referred to as just 'entrails'.

The Resolution further unravels the story or adds information to the climax. As, for example, in the second episode (Sentences 63-67), the flashback to the time before Pasai died, when he kicked the ground causing various islands to be formed, gives added information about his death.

The diagram below summarizes the parts of an Episode which compose the BODY as FIGURE.

Episode		
Build-Up	Climax	Resolution
time orientation	short sentences	unravels the story
succession of events	no dialogue	adds information
dialogue	heightened vividness	
development of conflict		

Diagram 5

## 2.0 SENTENTIAL RELATIONS

Sentence structures also contain the distinction between GROUND and FIGURE marked by the particle mani. This distinction

can exist within a sentence as well as between sentences. Within a sentence it marks Cast or Time setting as GROUND. Between sentences mani marks certain preceding clauses as background information to a following clause. Thus, Succession of Time, Condition, Frustrated Intent and Logical Grounds are marked as GROUND clauses. FIGURE, on the other hand, is an assertion of the preceding GROUND material.

FIGURE on the sentence level is an assertion of the GROUND. It is the information prominent part of linguistic structure in that it adds new information. It is that part which keeps the story progressing. It coincides with the functionalist concept of rheme. It has also been called foreground, focus, and primary content as well as FIGURE.

### 2.1 INTRA-CLAUSAL FIGURE AND GROUND FUNCTIONS

Cast and time function as GROUND against which an assertion can be made.

#### 2.1.1 CAST AS GROUND

Cast as GROUND establishes the main characters of the story. These are usually the animate dramatis personae of the plot. Cast GROUND is found only in sentences in the INTRO of the narrative and not in the lower level division of BODY, as are succession of Time, Condition, and other types. Since Cast GROUND establishes the main characters, these are introduced at the beginning of the story, where they are marked with the particle mani, rather than in the BODY as are secondary characters. Examples of this function are shown below.

## (1) Sentence

## GROUND

Pasai Kuri uru  
Pasai Kuri two

mani

## FIGURE

mambetahatui suruine  
brathers two

"Pasai and Kuri, they two were brothers (1)."

## (2) Sentence

## GROUND

Kuri  
Kuri

mani

## FIGURE

katui dine  
small is

"Kuri was the younger (brother) (2)."

The numbers 1 and 2 at the ends of the glosses refer to sentences in the "Pasai Kuri" text in the Appendix. Other examples of Cast as GROUND are found in sentences 5, 6, and 11 in the text.

## 2.1.2 TIME AS GROUND

There are two types of Time GROUND. One occurs within a sentence establishing the time of the setting of the events to follow and the other occurs between sentences and establishes a succession of time between two events. The former is illustrated in this section; the latter under 2.2 below.

Time setting occurs both in the INTRO as well as in the BODY. Examples from the text are listed below.

## (3) Sentence

## GROUND

rahida neune  
day each

mani

## FIGURE

Pasai dama min fiai ....  
Pasai go kill pig

"Every day Pasai hunted pig ... (7)."

## (4) Sentence

## GROUND

rahida bei  
day one

mani

## FIGURE

Pasai da uai rei ...  
Pasai go mountain land

"One day Pasai went hunting ... (12)."

Sentences 36 and 39 in the Appendix are also examples of Time setting as GROUND.

## 2.2 INTER-CLAUSAL FIGURE AND GROUND FUNCTIONS

The following functions illustrate how mani is used between clauses.

## 2.2.1 SUCCESSION OF TIME AS GROUND

This type of GROUND is found within the BODY, but not in the INTRO. It is found between clauses.

(5) Sentence

GROUND

FIGURE

Mayea	mani	netahatui	Kuri dama
then		younger brother	Kuri come

"(He slept until he snored.) Then his younger brother, Kuri, came (16-17)."

(6) Sentence

GROUND

FIGURE

mayea	mani	Pasai dama
then		Pasai come

"(But the stomach and lungs they wrapped and baked.) Then Pasai came (42-43)."

Other similar examples are sentences 41 and 64 in the text.

Occurrences of Succession of Time found between clauses translated by "when" are also illustrated below.

(7) Sentence

GROUND

FIGURE

Pasai katuifo	mani	inan	dohon	aireafeai
Pasai small		mother	give	magic stick

"When Pasai was small, his mother gave him a magic stick (4)."

(8) Sentence

GROUND

FIGURE

wape	sobu	inuntarai	ene	romi	...	mani	memeirai
but	find	people	pos	garden			destroy

"But when he encountered people's gardens ..., he destroyed them (8)."

Other examples of this are found in sentences 14, 21, 24, and 55.

## 2.2.2 CONDITION AS GROUND

Hypothetical or unrealized situations are also marked as GROUND by mani. In these cases, mani could be translated by 'if'.

(9) Sentence

## GROUND

## FIGURE

inuntaraifo etoyo damira mani wea ambori wiro damira fanai  
 people say sick cough so incom sick neg

"The people said, 'If it hurts, cough so it won't hurt any-  
 more (57).'"

(10) Sentence

## GROUND

## FIGURE

tonana mani merama metohoni afui ...  
 that you-go you-give inside

"If that's the case, take my entrails out ... (48)."

Sentence 52 in the text gives a similar example of Condi-  
 tion as GROUND.

## 2.2.3 FRUSTRATED INTENT AS GROUND

The intention to perform an action is normally followed by  
 the performance of that action. However, if this intention is  
 blocked, it results in frustration. This is shown below in  
 example (11).

(11) Sentence

## GROUND

## FIGURE

etoyo emuni mani etohona tuarai  
 they-say they-kill they-give in vain

"They wanted to kill him, but they couldn't (10)."

## 2.2.4 LOGICAL GROUNDS AS GROUND

Logical Grounds as GROUND makes a statement or an observation  
 of a known fact. Then the Logical Conclusion as FIGURE is drawn  
 from that observation or fact. Below is an example of Logical  
 Grounds as GROUND.

Logical Grounds as GROUND

(12) Sentence

## GROUND

## FIGURE

Nehu nei fiabaiife nana mani denten sewa menenne  
 my pos big-reason that good more yours

"Mine are bigger and so they would be better (49)."

## APPENDIX

## Text of "Pasai Kuri"

INTRODUCTION

1. Pasai and Kuri, those two MANI they were brothers.
2. Pasai was the older and Kuri MANI was the younger.
3. They were giants.
4. When Pasai was small MANI his mother gave him a magic stick.
5. So Pasai MANI was strong.
6. But his younger brother Kuri MANI was like us ordinary people.
7. Every day MANI Pasai hunted pigs, possum and rats so they (3) could eat them.
8. But when he encountered people's gardens, canoes or homes MANI he destroyed them.
9. Finally the people got angry at him.
10. They wanted to kill him MANI but they couldn't.
11. But as for the younger brother Kuri MANI the people loved him because he loved them.

BODYEpisode 1

12. One day MANI Pasai went hunting for pigs, possum and rats.
13. But because he couldn't find any, he stayed out for one week.
14. When he came back home MANI, he was very tired.
15. Then he put down his bow and arrow and went to sleep.

16. He slept until he snored (very loud).
17. Then MANI his younger brother Kuri came.
18. When he saw MANI Pasai's magic stick lying on top of his chest.
19. Then he thought, "I'll go and hide Pasai's magic stick.
20. I'll get it for me.
21. Then when I get the things MANI (that can be gotten by using the magic stick) I'll give them to the people."
22. Then Kuri went and took Pasai's magic stick.
23. Then he fled from his mother and older brother to the Bay of Wandamen.
24. Pasai slept and when he got up MANI he looked for his magic stick.
25. He asked his mother, "Mother, where is my magic stick?"
26. Who took it or did you already give it to Kuri?"
27. Pasai got mad and beat his mother and she died.
28. Then he said angrily, "Kuri, I'll kill you."
29. Pasai called to Kuri who was at the Bay of Wandamen.
30. He pulled up bamboo trees and threw them at Kuri.
31. Then Kuri pulled up mangrove trees and threw them at Pasai who was in the Waropen area.
32. They threw the trees back and forth until they were all gone.
33. Kuri fled to the west.
34. And Pasai stayed around the Waropen and Yapen area.
35. So finally the Wandamen Bay was full of bamboo and the Waropen area was full of mangrove.

Episode 2

36. Each day MANI the people wanted to kill Pasai because he destroyed their canoes, houses, gardens and animals.
37. Finally they said, "What can we do?"
38. How can we kill him?"
39. Then one day MANI they planned a party.
40. So they got a pig and possum so they could kill and eat them.
41. Then MANI they killed the possum and boiled the meat.
42. But the stomach and lungs they wrapped and baked.
43. It wasn't long MANI (before) Pasai came.
44. He smelled the possum's stomach cooking.
45. It smelled good.
46. Then he asked them, "What are you cooking that smells so good?"
47. The people answered, "We are cooking our own entrails that we took out so we can eat them later."
48. (Pasai said) "If that's the case MANI, take my entrails out so we can cook and eat them.
49. Mine are bigger and so MANI they would be better."
50. Pasai asked again, "How did you take your entrails out?"
51. "We took them out with the barbed tip of the rattan vine."
52. "If that's the case MANI, put it inside me so you can take my insides out."
53. Then they ordered Pasai to lie down and open his mouth.
54. Then they put the barbed rattan vine into his mouth and pushed it in until it reached his stomach.
55. When it was inside his stomach MANI he felt sick.

56. So he said, "My stomach hurts."
57. The people said, "If it hurts MANI, cough so it won't hurt anymore."
58. Pasai coughed but the pain got worse.
59. Then he said, "They are teasing me because they want to kill me."
60. Then the people pulled real hard.
61. They pulled out his intestines, his lungs and his heart.
62. Then he died at once.
63. Before he died he kicked the ground.
64. Then MANI he broke off the islands of Nau, Kaifuri, Kurang and Ambai.
65. Then the people sang this song about how they killed Pasai.
66. "We killed Pasai  
Pasai was strong  
Kuri was strong  
Kuri mourned  
Pasai mourned."
67. Then Pasai died and Kuri fled to the west.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Ambai is an Austronesian language of the Geelvink Bay area of Irian Jaya, Indonesia.

The present paper is based on the dialect of Ambai which is spoken in the village of Ambai, as distinguished from the two other Ambai dialects spoken in Manawi and Randawaya.

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<sup>2</sup> The terms 'figure' and 'ground' are used in Gestalt psychology to talk about the perception of visual patterns in which objects with contours and boundaries are seen against a background. Figure is the more well defined area which stands out from the background or Ground.

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