

# THE USE OF DEICTICS TO IDENTIFY PARTICIPANTS IN BAHASA INDONESIA

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## 0. INTRODUCTION

In any discourse one major consideration is how participants are brought onto the stage of the discourse and subsequently tracked through the text.<sup>1</sup> Distinct patterns and strategies exist in every language to accomplish this process. Bahasa Indonesia has a textual use of deictic words, *ini* 'this', and *itu* 'that', among its repertoire of tracking devices. The purpose of this paper is to show how such deictic words function in Bahasa Indonesia to help identify participants in narrative discourse. Further, it is shown that no analysis of deictics in Bahasa Indonesia can be considered complete if it fails to take into account certain aspects of the total discourse in which deictics occur.

## 1. THE BASIC PATTERN

In Bahasa Indonesia there is a rather standard pattern of introduction and subsequent tracking of participants in narrative discourse. Simply put this is as follows:

- 1) A participant is introduced by a formula: *se-orang* 'one-person', + NOUN PHRASE, often further described in clauses introduced by *yang*.<sup>2</sup>
- 2) The next reference is usually by NOUN PHRASE + *ini*.
- 3) Further reference is by NOUN PHRASE + *itu*.
- 4) Subsequent reference is by means of pronouns, NOUN PHRASE + *itu*, affixing of *-nya* to the participant, use of *tadi* or *tersebut*.<sup>3</sup>

This basic pattern can be seen illustrated in a short story by Mohammed Kassin, 'Cara Chicago', one of several in his collection of stories entitled *Teman Duduk*. In 'Cara Chicago' the main participant,

[illegible]

(4) Melihat perempuan yang baru datang ini, kedua laki-laki itu  
*seeing woman who just came this both men that*  
 bergamit-gamitan dan waktu perempuan itu pergi kemuka  
*nudged each other and when woman that go in front of*  
 loket akan membeli karcis, se-orang diantaranya  
*ticket window in order to buy ticket one-person in-among-them*  
 datang menghampiri dia.  
*came approached her*  
 'Seeing the woman who had just come, the two men nudged each other,  
 and when the woman went to the ticket window to buy a ticket, one  
 of them approached her.'

This is similar to the pattern in English in which there is as a rule a two step process of establishing a participant. In English a

participant is introduced using an indefinite article, but thereafter the definite article may be used. For example, consider the beginning of this fairy tale: *'Once upon a time there was a beautiful princess who lived in a large gloomy castle all alone. One day the princess was out in her garden and a strange looking dwarf approached her ...'* In two steps the princess is established in the story. In Bahasa Indonesia we see a three step process of participant introduction and establishment in the discourse involving the use of deictics.

A further interesting characteristic of this textual use of deictics is that it is logically analogous to their spatial use. In the spatial use of deictics objects close to the speaker are referred to as *'this'*, while objects farther away are referred to as *'that'*. Similarly, in the textual use, *ini* *'this'*, occurs on the reference to a participant closest to its introduction (when the hearer first had contact with the participant). *Itu* *'that'*, on the other hand, marks references farther away from the original introduction, maintaining the same close-far away distinction as in the spatial use of deictics.

## 2. SOME VARIATIONS IN THE BASIC PATTERN

While the basic pattern of participant identification described above seems fairly widespread throughout narrative discourse, a survey of a number of narratives soon reveals some seeming contradictions to the pattern. We will examine some of these and show that with an adequate discourse perspective these seeming discrepancies can be rather nicely explained, and further add weight to the growing evidence that a discourse perspective is not a luxury but rather a necessity for linguistic investigation.

Three basic notions of discourse help give a fuller and more complete understanding of the function of deictics in Bahasa Indonesia. These are: 1) a distinction between Major and Minor participants, 2) re-setting of participant identification at a new paragraph, and 3) a distinction between kinds of information in discourse.<sup>4</sup>

We quickly note in observing the use of deictics in Bahasa Indonesia that the pattern described above applies only to **major** participants (not necessarily people only, for sometimes animals or even inanimate objects play major roles). Minor participants may be introduced in the same fashion with the formula *se-orang ...*, but are subsequently tracked by usually affixing the particle *-nya* rather than one of the deictic words, *ini* or *itu*. For example in the story 'Pengalaman di Jakarta' a servant who plays a relatively minor role in the whole story

is introduced as *se-orang pelayan hotel* 'one-person servant hotel', but is subsequently tracked by marking him as *pelayannya* 'servant-definite', or when fully established with a pronoun, *dia* 'he'. Thus a different pattern for identifying minor participants exists than that for major participants.

Now consider the following span of identifications of a major participant in the same story, 'Pengalaman di Jakarta':

(29) *pedagang itu*  
*merchant that*

(30) *ia*  
*he*

(31) *dia*  
*he*

(38) *bingungnya,*<sup>5</sup> *ia*  
*shock his he*

(39) *badannya*<sup>5</sup>  
*body his*

(40) *kulitnya*<sup>5</sup>  
*skin his*

(41) *pedagang itu*  
*merchant that*

We may ask why in (41) the reference to the merchant shifts to the fuller noun phrase with *itu* where up to that point pronouns or even more oblique references in the form of third person possessive markers, *-nya*, sufficed. There are no new participants introduced who might be confused with the merchant if pronouns were used. Why then in (41) is there a shift to a full noun phrase, *pedagang itu* 'merchant that', instead of continuing on with a pronoun for reference? The answer lies in the fact that (41) is a paragraph break, the beginning of a new paragraph. This is marked by a time indicator, *akhirnya* 'finally', and a change in location from the shower stall where sentences (29-40) take place to outside the stall. Here as at other paragraph boundaries the reference to a participant is reset more fully, usually by a noun phrase plus the deictic *itu*.

Further refinements in the basic pattern of deictics in participant identification involve a distinction in kinds of information in a discourse. These types of information include setting, background material (additional information given that is not crucial to the advancement of the main event sequence, but which is helpful in explaining the situation so the hearer gets the right information),

evaluative material (comments by the author or speaker giving his evaluation of a situation), and collateral material (information given as to what could have happened, but which did not. This adds much to the events by giving a contrast of what might have occurred) (Grimes 1972:Chapter 4).

In a number of texts observed the basic pattern seemed to fall apart. For example, a sequence of identifications of a major participant, another merchant, goes as follows:

- (55) ... se-orang pedagang yang berasal dari Amerika  
*one-person merchant who originates from America*
- (56) orang Amerika ini  
*person America this*
- (57) kedua pedagang-pedagang itu  
*both merchants that*
- (58) pedagang Amerika ini  
*merchant America this*
- (59) dia  
*he*
- (60) kamar orang Amerika tersebut  
*room person America mentioned*
- (63) orang Amerika ini  
*person America this*
- (64) dia  
*he*
- (65) ia  
*he*
- (66) ia  
*he*
- (67) ia  
*he*
- (68) ia  
*he*
- (70) pedagang Amerika itu  
*merchant America that*

Initially the merchant is introduced according to the basic pattern, *se-orang pedagang yang berasal dari Amerika 'one-person merchant who originates from America'*. The second reference is according to the pattern as well, *orang Amerika ini 'person America this'*. But then problems arise. Two participants are mentioned, *kedua pedagang-pedagang itu 'both merchants that'*, and *mereka itu 'they that'*. Then again in

(58) the merchant is identified as *pedagang Amerika ini* '*merchant America this*', where we might expect *itu* according to the basic pattern described. In (59) things seem semi-normal with a pronominal reference, but then in (60) the merchant's room is identified rather fully as *kamar orang Amerika tersebut* '*room person America mentioned*'. Once more in (63) he is *orang Amerika ini* '*person America this*', before a shift to a more regular sequence of pronouns occurs, skipping the use of *itu*, leading up to (70) where a fuller noun phrase plus *itu* signals a new paragraph.

This seeming chaos can be ordered and tamed with the help of the concept of kinds of information in discourse. Bahasa Indonesia, like many other languages, often has different grammatical forms used in event passages from those used in non-event material such as setting, background, evaluation of speaker, or collateral.

Such is the case with participant tracking through a discourse. Intervening non-event material within a sequence of events in a sense upsets the normal pattern of participant tracking. In the section described above we see that (57) is background information which the author gives to the readers to help them further understand the connection between the two merchants involved in the story. (58) resumes the event line tracing the initial actions of the American merchant on through (59). In (58) the merchant is identified as *pedagang Amerika ini* and then *dia*, after the interruption of the event line in (57). Once again in (60) through (62) non-event material intervenes, this time setting material, a description of the room and bathroom where the merchant is staying. Within this section, the setting of the stage for the next episode, the room is identified as the merchant's with the rather long phrase *kamar orang Amerika tersebut*.<sup>6</sup> In (63) the sequence of main events resumes with the American merchant being fully identified as *orang Amerika ini*, as a not yet fully established participant, though no other participants have been introduced. Had *itu* been used rather than *ini* it would have marked the merchant as an already well established participant in the discourse. The use of *ini*, however, indicates that the merchant is still not fully established, probably because of the various bits of non-event material being interspersed into the narrative at this point. The interjection of such non-event material in a sense delays the full establishment of the American merchant till well into the episode. By (64) and (65) he is established and referred to with pronouns only.

### 3. CONCLUSIONS

Thus we have seen some important ways in which Bahasa Indonesia uses deictic words to establish a participant in a narrative discourse and help track him through it. Furthermore, it became clear that the kinds of concepts to which it was necessary to appeal to explain choices among deictics in various sentences were not sentence-grammar concepts, but discourse-grammar ones. Thus a discourse perspective is a must in understanding the full function of deictic words in Bahasa Indonesia.

N O T E S

1. This paper was originally presented to the Linguistic Association of the Southwest (LASSO), in Dallas, Texas, November 1976.
2. Or a participant may be named. In such cases the pattern being described does not apply.
3. The scope of this paper is limited to examining primarily the function of the deictic words in participant reference. *Tadi* and *tersebut* occur much less frequently and are beyond the scope of this paper.
4. For a full discussion of kinds of information in discourse see Grimes 1972, Chapters 3, 4, and 6.
5. *-nya* has several functions, two of which are seen in this paper:  
1) as part of the participant identification scheme along with *ini* and *itu*, and 2) as the third person possessive morpheme, its function here.
6. I believe the use of *tersebut* for participant reference is a more direct link to the speech act situation. Its use rather than *itu* has the effect of drawing the reader/hearer a bit out of the middle of the event sequence, and closer to the speaker-hearer speech act situation. The phrase *kamar orang Amerika tersebut* '*room person America mentioned*', has a sort of passive feel in the sense of 'the room of the American merchant who was mentioned (by me, the speaker to you, the hearer)'. The performative element is not specified but I feel is implicit in the use of *tersebut* here.



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