

# THE FUNCTION OF RHETORICAL DEVICES IN ILIANEN MANOBO<sup>1</sup> FORMAL STORYTELLING

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## 1. Introduction

Formal storytelling, viewed as a social phenomenon, fills a vital role in Ilianen Manobo society. It not only serves as a means of entertainment but functions as a medium of instruction in transmitting their highly-valued cultural mores and customs, and also serves as a vehicle for establishing precedent in the settling of Manobo custom-law cases.

The first section of this paper builds on earlier analyses (Wrigglesworth 1971, 1977a), describing the sociolinguistic features of the cultural behavior necessary for a formal Manobo storytelling performance.<sup>2</sup> This includes the behavior required of a *raconteur/raconteuse*,<sup>3</sup> as well as the concomitant audience response required to see a story through.

The second section presents an overview of a more extensive description (Wrigglesworth 1984) of the linguistic devices employed by a Manobo narrator for transporting his audience to the scene where his story is taking place and heightening the vividness of that story, thereby convincing his audience that they are witnessing the events of the story as they unfold. This includes the use of a variety of rhetorical features to enable an all-night audience to be able to recognize the various high points and peaks in his narrative.

### 1.1 *The All-Night Formal Storytelling Complex*

I describe here a typical setting in which formal storytelling occurs, that is, in the sense of locale, or time and place, and situation, which includes the appropriate behavior patterns. It is a Manobo home with relatives gathered from a distance for the two-day "*Kebulangan*" Manobo New Year celebration.<sup>4</sup>

A man (or woman) who wishes to relate a story to those gathered for such an occasion keeps rising from his position on the floor, slightly adjusting his position again and again until he is observed by one of the men.<sup>5</sup> If he is known to be competent in the storytelling art, he is then invited to speak. Anyone

present may do this with: *Na kalu ke edtetarem si Anggam (or Ayà) ne ebpemineg ki en* "Ah, perhaps Uncle (or Aunt)<sup>6</sup> will relate a story now, so we will all listen." And while it is not considered appropriate for an audience to suggest to the narrator a specific story, since every performance is tailored to the occasion, it is common for them to suggest that Uncle relate a new episode concerning one of their culture heroes. Such innovations are understood by a Manobo audience to be information that has newly been communicated to the narrator by his familiar spirit, thereby indicating that the familiar spirit was also a friend of the culture hero who is no longer with them.

If the would-be raconteur is not deemed competent, his attempts to be recognized are ignored.<sup>7</sup> But having been acknowledged and invited to perform, the storyteller may ask the host to extinguish all except a single household candle, while seating himself with his back toward his audience, pulling a tubular sleeping garment up over his head. This is considered modest and appropriate Manobo conduct, while a face-to-face encounter is considered to be both immodest and distracting. Some narrators feel they would forget the story if they faced their audience, they say.

Of deeper significance, perhaps, is the environment of receptivity the narrator is thereby creating for all of his listeners, wherein darkness is necessary in order to give wider scope to their imaginations so that each one can see the story-participants performing before them as he envisions them.<sup>8</sup>

Whatever the Manobo narrator's story, he begins with the narrative discourse introducer *Hane* "Take note" (Wrigglesworth 1971), then pauses slightly to clear his throat before plunging into the story: And there we are with Good-Character and Bad-Character Girl." The throat-clearing pause helps create an expectant air; the narrator is said to be "stretching his mind" to give them a good performance, thus assuring them<sup>9</sup> that a competent raconteur is in control!

This early in the story the audience is expected to begin assuring the narrator that they are listening by making "*undug te etew*" appropriate responses to the performance. They begin by encouraging him, following the first sentence of his story, with comments as: *Nè be enduena nu ve iya* "Keep on now, for it's just as you say!" Subsequent audience responses often give evidence that the narrator is doing just that: *Na, inteng kew ve!* "Now, just take a look at that (what a sight)!"

And since one of the functions of his story is to reinforce acceptable Manobo cultural values for each succeeding generation, the audience lauds acceptable Manobo conduct demonstrated by a story-participant, while showing disapproval for an action which is in violation of a socially-approved norm. *Ken à kew pè be iya rema kayi te meama!* "You can't outdo that man (for generosity)!" they exclaim; while drawing attention to the jealousy and greed of another story-

participant with: *Henà nesihi en maa!* "My, how jealous she is!" Of prime importance to the narrator are those comments of the audience which assure him that his performance is "telling it just as it is (i.e. just as it originally happened)."<sup>9</sup>

The cultural preference is for a narrator's story to last an entire nighttime; for a good Manobo raconteur is expected to hold the attention of his audience until dawn. And while his audience may drink their coffee or chew betelnut throughout those long night hours, he is expected to drink his coffee and chew his betelnut ahead of time in order to avoid any interruption during his storytelling performance. When one considers the irregularity of Manobo meals and hence the low intake of nutritional value, coupled with the daily heat and fatigue, to say nothing of the rigors of planting and harvesting followed by hiking distances to attend a storytelling performance, maintaining one's alertness throughout an entire night is a feat for any audience! But for the narrator, whose voice is often reduced to a whisper for days to come, it constitutes a challenge for the very fittest!

## 2. Evoking Images for Narrative Settings

As a narrator of traditional narratives, the Manobo raconteur's over-all generic aim is to: *egkepenheewit ke menge etew ne ebpemineg diyà te edteteremen* "take the listeners to the very place where his story is taking place." To do this he must first create a stage with images to serve as setting for his story. To accomplish this he begins with the obligatory narrative introducer *Hane* "Take note" (Wrigglesworth 1971), before transporting them to the distant scene where his story is taking place: *diyà te pè ma ki Pilanduk* "there [far away out of sight] we [you and I inclusive] are with Pilanduk."<sup>10</sup> The second sentence of the story setting produces an effect analogous to that of a camera lens zooming in on its subject. By emphatically preposing a focused noun phrase: *ini si Pilanduk ini* "this Pilanduk here" (where deictic pronouns and locationals co-occur), the narrator brings the story participant he has just brought on stage up front. *Ini si Pilanduk ini ne etew ne midsiveysivey* "This Pilanduk here is a person who lived all alone." The final sentence of the story-setting makes known the problem, claim, or lack (Labov & Waletzky 1967, Grimes 1971, Longacre 1985) that will provide the plot involvement for the story. *Su wà duma ne ed-ul-ulaan din ke kenà ke tarù ne edlelehen din.* "For there is nothing else he continually engages in except his deception of others when he speaks."<sup>11</sup>

Having transported his audience to the remote and spatially-defined setting for his story, and zeroed in on its key story-participant with his problem, claim, or lack, it is the narrator's constant aim to keep his audience focused on the story's development as it unfolds.

The narrator shifts the scene from that introduced in his story setting by moving his story-participants offstage by means of motion verbs followed by a time setting which is illustrated by the following examples: "When Pilanduk finished dressing he is then setting out. When he arrived at the river bank..." or "When it was late afternoon Pilanduk returned from looking for rattan. As he was about to arrive at his temporary shelter..." The motion verb may also function in response to a self-command given in soliloquy, or to a command delivered in dialogue: "I had better think of some way for me to get across to the other side. And so Pilanduk is calling out then to the king<sup>12</sup> of the crocodiles (for help)."

However, when the motion verb moves the story-participant offstage without a subsequent time setting, as e.g., by saying, "Pilanduk is running away again to the mountains (taking the story-participant out of sight)," the narrator creates a new episode setting with: *Hane kayi te pè ma te buaya*. "Take note, here [close at hand, within close range of sight] we [you and I inclusive] are with the crocodiles." The new episode setting serves to introduce a new key story-participant or, after they have all been introduced, to span distance in shifting rapidly back and forth between them in order to keep the audience current and involved with the progress of each of them.<sup>13</sup>

It is the narrator's skillful handling of episode settings that enables an all-night, drowsy audience to more easily reorient themselves in the story. *Na pemineg kew su riyan en ke ratu*: "Now pay attention everyone for there's the king back again" after his wife has just been kidnapped by Pilanduk. While the absence of settings cause the audience to complain: *Egkevadti vadtì embiya warà 'hane kayi te pè ma...' te teteremà din*. "It's too broken up when there is no 'Take note, here we are now with...' in his story."

### 3. Heightening Vividness for Maintaining Audience Interest

Having evoked a stage with images as setting for his story, and having transported his audience to the very place where his story is taking place, a Manobo raconteur's aim is to keep his audience focused on the narrative's action as it unfolds. For heightening the vividness of his narrative, and thereby convincing his audience that they are witnessing the events taking place, a Manobo narrator may shift to a more specific person, or he may choose one of two possible shifts in tense in order to effect a more dramatic portrayal of his story.

#### 3.1 A Pronoun Shift

Except for the pronoun exponents of dialogue, a Manobo narrative is basically told in the third person. But to heighten the imagination of his