Developing discourse-informed Early Grade Readers

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Research-supported assumptions

• **Reading for meaning** is foundational to all formal learning;
• Reading is essential for **continuing on to higher levels** of education;
• **Learning to read** is easiest through the L1;
• The skill of reading **transfers automatically** to reading other languages;
• Well designed MLE programs result in **more children learning the official languages**.
Goal: more children learn to read for meaning; fewer children left behind
Language Research background

- 1st hand; in-depth
- 2nd hand; workshops, theses, papers, dictionaries
- Surveys; 1st hand data
Clusters of languages

- **UBB** (Language & Culture Unit): Kupang, west Timor, Indonesia; ± 30/60 languages; both Austronesian & Papuan (VSO, SVO, SOV)

- **EMBLI** (Multilingual Education), MoE, Dili, Timor-Leste; ± 4/7/20+ languages; both Austronesian & Papuan; govt. schools
Discourse-informed Front Translation in LWC

Results in uniformly **better quality, more natural to the way local languages work, much faster**

- Language J
- Language A
- Language B
- Language I
- Language C
- Language D
- Language E
- Language F
- Language G
- Language H

Source Text
# Distractions to reading for meaning

**Things that add noise**

- spelling not reflecting sounds & structures
- inconsistent spelling
- poor word breaks
- awkward sentence structure
- use of passives & abstract nouns is foreign
- story does not start the local way
- story does not end the local way
- quote formula are not the local way
- can't tell who is important
- can't track participants through the story
- can't track time through the story
- can't track location through the story
- can't track events/themes through the story
- paragraphing does not show story structure
- background-foreground information wrong
- repetition not used the local way
- tail-head linkage not used the local way
- vocatives not used the local way

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**The Story**
Cohesion & discontinuity in narrative discourse

a) Participants (and props)
b) Time
c) Location
d) Events / Activities / Themes

Paragraphs should be put where these are introduced, changed, or resumed after a gap.

Givón (1990:427) and J. Grimes (1971)
Presentational clauses: introducing major participants

(1) English: (Long ago, in a land far far away)
There was a girl named YY.

(2) Kupang [mkn]: Ada satu nona, dia pun a nama YY.
EXIST one girl 3s POSS name YY
There was a girl, her name was YY.

(3) Tetun Dili [tdt]: (Iha) labarik ida, naran YY.
EXIST child one name YY
There was a child named YY.

(4) Galolen [gal]: Mia atabauk nehe, naran YY.
EXIST child one name-3G YY
There was a child named YY.

9 languages illustrated in the paper
EGR not follow local patterns

(10) A. John and Freddy went to the shops...

(11) B. There were two friends, named John & Freddy. The two of them went to the shops...

Kupang [mkn]:

(14) A. Anis den Peʔu pi maen kalereŋ...
   A. Johnny and Pete went to play marbles...

(15) B. Ada dua ana, nama Anis den Peʔu. Satu hari donj dua pi maen kalereŋ...
   B. There were two kids, named Johnny and Pete.
   One day the two of them went to play marbles....
Translating articles ‘a, the’

(16) School English (not natural):
Title: A dog and a cat
p.1: A dog saw a cat.
p.2: A dog chased a cat.
p.3: A cat ran away from a dog.
p.4: A cat looked down at a dog.
p.5: A cat mocked a dog.

Early draft translation 1
One dog and one cat
One dog saw one cat.
One dog chased one cat.
One cat ran away from one dog.
One cat looked down at one dog.
One cat mocked one dog.

Problem:
‘one cat’ and ‘one dog’ imply introducing new characters on every page!
Translating articles ‘a, the’

(17) Improved English (more natural):
   Title: **A dog and a cat**
   p.1: There was **a** dog and **a** cat.
   p.2: **The** dog saw **the** cat.
   p.3: **The** dog chased **the** cat.
   p.4: **The** cat ran away from **the** dog.
   p.5: **The** cat looked down at **the** dog.
   p.6: **The** cat mocked **the** dog.

Revised Translation 2
   **One** dog and **one** cat
   There was **one** dog and **one** cat.
   **That** dog saw **that** cat.
   **That** dog chased **that** cat.
   **That** cat ran away from **that** dog.
   **That** cat looked down at **that** dog.
   **That** cat mocked **that** dog.
Tracking participants

Some patterns emerge in languages of eastern Indonesia and Timor-Leste.

a. 3s free pronouns are only used in some languages to track main participants, never minor participants.
b. Usually only main and major participants are named.
c. Repeated use of names to track participants is considered heavy style, or very awkward.
d. Since names should be used only at first introduction in many languages, the repeated use of names to track participants can imply that there are several people with that same name in the story. This is quite confusing to adults and children alike.
(18) School English (not natural):
Johnny went to town.
Johnny went to school.
Johnny went to eat lunch.
Johnny went to the shops.
Johnny went to see his auntie.
Johnny went home.

(19) Improved English (more natural; much better as Front Trans.):
Johnny went to town.
Arriving there, he went to school.
Then he went to eat lunch.
Then he went to the shops.
Then he went to see his auntie.
Then he went home.
(20) Amarasi [aaz]: Early version

Title: Peʔu prepares to go to school
p.1-11: His father asks, “Do you have notebook, lunch, drinking water, hat, etc.?”

Then Pete had to go back to his house, because he had forgotten his (school) bag.

Problem: p.1-11, 44 people said they were at the house. He had to ‘leave’ before he could ‘go back’
(21) Amarasi [aaz]: **Revised version**
Title: Peʔu prepares to go to school
p.1-11: His father asks, “Do you have notebook, lunch, drinking water, hat, etc.?”

*Then he left for school. But on the way, he turned back to his house, because he had forgotten his (school) bag.*
Tracking location

(22) Baikeno [bкx]:  Early version
        One day, I and my mother went to the market.
p.3-4:  Au aina? nsoos mnees.
        My mother bought rice.

(23) Baikeno [bкx]:  Revised version
        One day, I and my mother went to the market.
        Arriving at the market, my mother bought rice.

Use common Tail-Head linkage pattern.
Tracking time

(24) Long ago, in a land far far away, there was a girl named YY.   [establish timeframe]

(25) Once upon a time, there was a girl named YY.   [vague time; unreal]

(26) There was a girl named YY. One day she....   [signals shift from Setting to Storyline]
Tracking time

(27) Baikeno [bkx]:

Mbi neon meseʔ, au ama? nnao…  On the first day (=Monday), my father went …
Mbi neon nuaʔ, au ama? nnao…  On the second day (=Tuesday), my father went …
.
Mbi neon tenuʔ, au ama? nnao…  On the third day (Wednesday), my father went …
Mbi neon haaʔ, au ama? nnao…  On the fourth day (Thursday), my father went …
Mbi neon nimaʔ, au ama? nnao…  On the fifth day (Friday), my father went …
Mbi neon neeʔ, au ama? nnao…  On the sixth day (Saturday), my father went …
Mbi neno ?naek, au ama? ka nnao fa…

On the big day (Sunday), my father did not go …
(29) Kupang [mkn]: **Early version**
Beta deng beta pung kawan ampa orang ada cari kayu bakar di utan....
*I and 4 of my friends are looking for firewood out bush....*

(30) **Botong su kumpul kayu bam-banya....**
*We had gathered a lot of wood....*

(31) Kupang [mkn]: **Revised version**
*Satu kali, beta deng beta pung kawan ampa orang pi cari kayu bakar di utan....*
*One time, I and 4 of my friends went looking for firewood out bush....*

(32) **Sonde lama ju**, botong su kumpul kayu bam-banya....
*Soon, we had gathered a lot of wood....*
Repetition is common

(35) Buru [mhs]: from a folktale (repetition is underlined):

... Gofot naa, da tane fiat di enhelan, da hapu unet, da tane suran pa rahe.
Petu da oli. Da oli eta beto rua sepo, da saki suba dii, po wela toho fi saka, pa da beta unet di haik. Da beta unet dii, pa gofot na holik. Holik wela, petu rine reka wela dii. Da ego kau turen dii, pa da reka wela dii, fene...
Tail-head linkage (repetition)

(37) Ambon [abs]:
   ... Lalu doŋ pigi. ¶
   Lalu doŋ samua baŋkaŋat pi ka asrama di T.
   Doŋ lewat BM bawa. ¶
   Doŋ lewat BM bawa, tarus waktu doŋ su ada di T, ada kajadian di P, di luar kota. Itu kajadian akan carita bagini: ...

(tail-head linkage underlined):
   ... So they went. ¶
   So they all left going to the dormitory at T. They went by way of lower Red Rock. ¶
   They went by way of lower Red Rock, and then while they were at T, there was an incident at P, outside the city. The story of that incident goes like this: ...

This story has 19 occurrences of tail-head linkage in 99 sentences.
(38) Baikeno [bкx]: Revised version
   One day, I and my mother went to the market.
p.3-4: Ntee nabii ṭpasa?, au aina? nsoos mnees.
   Arriving at the market, my mother bought rice.
Point-of-departure
(reduced repetition)

(40) Tetun Dili [tdt]:  Early version
... Busa nee moos haksoit sae tuir ba baki leten.
The cat also jumped up on the bench.
Tiu nee haksoit tuun hosí baki leten...
The old man jumped down from the bench.

(41) Tetun Dili [tdt]:  Revised version
... Depois busa nee moos haksoit sae tuir ba baki leten.
Then the cat also jumped up on the bench.
Haree nune, tiu haksoit tuun hosí baki leten...
Seeing that, the old man jumped down from the bench.
Quote formula (position)

(42) Mary said, “I'm going to the market. Would you like to come too?”

“I'm going to the market,” Mary said. “Would you like to come too?”

“I'm going to the market. Would you like to come too?” asked Mary.
Quote formula (position)

(48) Kupang [mkn]  
**Tanel kasi tau bilan**, “Beta mau iko bantu oraŋ susa di Semau.”  
_Nathaniel told [us] saying_, “I want to go along and help the people in difficulty on Semau.”

(52) Tetun Dili [tdt]:  
**Entaun katuas dehan**, “Hau nee, liurai nia atan.”  
_So then the old [respected] man said_, “I am the king's servant.”

(56) Amarasi [aaz]:  
**Rarit in nak**, “Karu hi mtoup au haan totis feʔe na te, au ?toit he hi...”  
_Then he said_, “If you accept my earlier request, [then] I ask that you...”

(60) Dhao [nfa]:  
**Həia noun peka na**, “Jaʔa keʔa boe noun ətu mia!”  
_Then she said_, “I don’t know where he is!”

(64) Buru [mks]  
**Tu da enika fen**, “Kae puna tenik la ute yako naa!?”  
_And he asked saying_, “What have you done to me now!?”

Most Austronesian languages of eastern Indonesia and Timor-Leste _always_ have quote formula at the front.

For Buru there are _no exceptions_ in 99 texts of varying length.
(44) Tetun Dili [tdt]: Early version (artificial, ungrammatical; VS)
“İha ona, apaa,” dehan Apeu.
“Yes, I have it, father,” said Pete.

(45) Tetun Dili [tdt]: Revised version (following natural discourse; SV)
Apeu hataan, “İha ona, apaa,”
Pete responded, “Yes, I have it, father.”
Direct vs. Indirect speech

(69) [indirect; + complementizer] She said **that she** was going to the market.
[indirect; - complementizer] She said **she** was going to the market.
[direct; - complementizer] She said, **“I am going to the market.”**
[direct; + complementizer] She spoke saying, **“I am going to the market.”**

(70)[same she? different she?] She said **she** was going to the market.
[direct? indirect?] She said, **“She** was going to the market.”

Many Austronesian languages in eastern Indonesia and Timor-Leste **never use** indirect speech, or use it very little.

**Problem:** many Early Grade Readers in the region use indirect speech following the Indo-European pattern.
(71) [indirect] He told them to go ahead of him into the forest.
[direct] He told them, “You all go ahead of me into the forest.”

(72) [indirect] Hearing that suggestion, the king accepted it.
[direct] Hearing that suggestion, the king said, “Good. Let's do that.”

(73) [indirect] The king was informed that many crops had been destroyed.
[direct] They told the king, “The flooding destroyed many crops.”

(74) [indirect] The corrupt official bragged about how rich he was.
[direct] The corrupt official bragged saying, “I have so much wealth and land and possessions!”

(75) [indirect] They asked him not to send them away.
[direct] They begged him, “Please don't send us away from here!”
Framing Questions

Different languages use **different question words** for the same social / pragmatic function.

(105) English:  **What** is your name?

Spanish  ¿**Como** se llama?  [how are you called?]

Indonesian  Nama-mu **siapa**?  [your-name is who?]
Question words *(position)*

(106) English:  
What is your name?  
What are you doing?  
What did they eat?  
Who got hit?  
What did they get hit with?  
Where did they go?  
When did they go?  
Who are you going to see?  
Why are you going?  
How much did it cost?

Fronted Q-words in the Timor region should be treated with suspicion.
(108) Buru [mhs]  
Kae ṣaam **sane**?  
Kae puna **sapan**?  
Sira kaa **tenik**?  
Sira flali **sane**? / **Sane** flali geba dii?  
Du flali sira tu **sapan**?  
Sira gam **doo**?  
**Pila** saa sira iko? / Sira iko filim **beto** **doo**?  
Kae la ku liŋa **sane**?  
Kae la ku iko **la** **emkua**? /  
Kae la ku iko **la** (ŋei) **sapan**? /  
Filin **pila**?
Logical relations *(clause order)*

**Result-REASON**

(109) You should come inside, **because it is raining.**

*Since it is raining,* you should come inside.

*It is raining,* so *(result)* you should come inside.
**Logical relations (clause order)**

**Result-REASON**

(111) Kupang [mkn]  
Maso, *tagal ujan.*  
*Come in, because it's raining.*

(113) Tetun [tet]  
Foo etu oan ida ba haʔu lai, *tan haʔu ksalaen mate ona.*  
*Give me some rice now, because I'm starving.*

(115) Tetun Dili [tdt]  
Hau halo buat sira nee hotu, *tanba o tuir ona hau nia hakarak.*  
*I am doing all these things,*  
*because you have done what I wanted.*

(119) Galolen [gal]  
Nii hali laʔa ni uman, *doʔi namtaʔuk.*  
*He returned to his house, because he was afraid.*
(85) Tetun Dili [tdt]:
Draft title A: Hamoos duut
Draft title A: Weeding the garden (lit: cleaning the grass)
[Artificial, ungrammatical, no subject]

The story begins A: Apeu ho nia amaa baa toos atu hamoos duut.
Apeu and his mother went to the garden to clean/weed the grass.

(86) Revised title B: Apeu ajuda nia amaa hamoos duut [new title]
Revised title B: Pete helps his mother weed the garden
[The second (B) follows local/regional patterns and is more grammatical.]

The story begins B (revised): Iha labarik ida, naran Apeu.
Iha loron ida, nia ho nia amaa baa toos atu hamoos duut.
There was a child named Apeu. [Presentational clause ($2.2$)]
One day he and his mother went to the garden to clean/weed the grass.
Discourse Closings *(formulaic)*

(89) Amarasi [aaz]: On reʔ naan, tua.
    Like that, sir/maam.

(90) Kupang [mkn]: Bagitu sa.
    That's it.

(94) Tetun Dili [tdt]: Mak nee deit.
    It's just like that.

(96) Dela [row]: Baʔu a naa ena.
    That's all.

(99) Buru [mhs] (Ya naŋ endohin) esnegen baa dita.
    That is the extent (of my story).
Discourse Closings

(104) Kupang [mkn]: revised & restructured

Title: Kotoŋ minta tarima kasi
       saŋ Tuhan
Tuhan, botoŋ minta tarima kasi,
tagal Tuhan su kasi matahari
ko kasi taránŋ sang botoŋ
tiap hari. ...
Botoŋ puŋ sambayang bagitu
sa, Tuhan. Makasi.

Revised draft B:

We give thanks to God
Lord, we give thanks, because You have
provided the sun to give light every day.
(...the rain, the wind, rainbows, fruit,
moon & stars to give light at night.)
That is our prayer, Lord. Thank you.
[common Closing for a prayer]
Summary & Implications

- Is the story **structured** and told **the local way**?
- Can the children follow what the story is about?
- Discourse-informed Early Grade Readers can make a huge difference in **how many children learn to read for meaning**.
- Education programs often have **limited linguistic expertise**—particularly in discourse.
- So the best work, with the best people should be in first developing **Front Translations in LWC**.
- More children will learn to read better.

**Mak nee deit!**