INFORMATION FLOW

IN A

SILACAYOAPAN MIXTEC NARRATIVE

by

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The purpose of this paper is look at the information flow of a short narrative from the Silacayoapan Mixtec language located in the Silacayoapan district of Oaxaca, Mexico. This story was written in the mid 1970's by Paul, who was literate in Spanish and learned to write Mixtec. He was unmarried and in his late teens. This story has been in print since the late 1970's.

Table I gives Paul's story, analytical information, and a free translation for each sentence. Bold print indicates identifiable information and italics indicates new information.

Table I
Paul's Story

1. Yóho ná ndicani i̱ tá tu̱hun *in cuento loho* cúú á tá na̱ndoho *in ta̱nda̱hví ta̱ja̱hán campo Culiacan*
   'a little story' *'a poor man, a Mexican man (in) a Culiacan camp'*
   Let me tell you a little story that happened to a poor man, a Mexican man, in a Culiacan camp.

2. **Mí campo cán** naní a̱ *Santa Victoria.*
   "The aforementioned camp" *Saint Victoria*
   That camp is named Saint Victoria.

3. Já naní a̱.
   Thus it is named.

4. Ta tá na̱sa̱ha̱n i̱ cán já na̱xini i̱ na̱ndoho *in ta̱ja̱hán.*
   'a Mexican man'.
   And when I was there, I saw what happened to a Mexican man.

5. Na̱yi̱hví da̱ na̱caja co̱o nu̱ sáhndá da̱ *ti̱nana* cán.
   'the snake'   'the tomatoes'
   The snake scared him where he was cutting tomatoes there.

6. Ndaja coo *inca mí da̱ ndácá táhan xi̱hi̱n da̱* cán na̱chinúu da *in co̱o rí sa̱ na̱xi̱hi̱ cúú rí.*
   'another man who accompanied him' *'a snake who was dead'*
   It happened that another man, his companion, hung up a dead snake.

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7. Nachinúu da nu yíto yúhu cuíí.
   He hung it on a pole at the row-edge.

8. Cán nachinúu da ri.
   There he hung it up.

9. Ta anda já ndaja coo mí tandahví cán co xíni da ña cánúu mí coo cáa cán.
   'the aforementioned poor man ' 'the aforementioned snake'
   And then it happened that this poor man didn't know that the snake was hanging there.

10. Tá naxinu da mí yúhu cuíí mí coo natiin da chí nandahyi cohó da.
    'the aforementioned row end' 'the aforementioned snake'
    When he completed the row-end, he grabbed the snake, so he screamed.

11. Susa táhyí ñúchí nacaja da.
    Surpassingly "beautifully" he did.

12. Já va nandoho dandahví.
    'the poor man'
    That's what happened to the poor man.

Paul's story begins in S 1 with the formulaic 'let me tell you a story' followed by the introduction of the protagonist. He is not called by name, but is identified by 'one poor man, a Mexican man.'

S 2 has the first occurrence of /mí/, which identifies the following NP as referring to something mentioned before. In this sentence the 'camp' mentioned in S 1 is identified by name in S 2.

S 5 gives an abstract of the story and mentions 'the snake' which is not introduced as a participant until S 6. 'The tomatoes' are assumed to be identifiable to the reader.'

In S 6 /mí/ brings focus to the second participant and serves to provide a stressed syllable for the bound, unstressed pronoun /da/ 'he' to attached onto. Here the /mí/ phrase can be translated: 'another specified man who was his companion.' The snake as a participant is also introduced here.

In S 9, the /mí/ is used twice to refer back to the 'aforementioned man' i.e., 'the poor man' from S 1 and the 'aforementioned snake' from S 6. The two occurrences of /mí/ in this sentence would suggest, that /mí/ is not just a focusing device, since logically only one participant can be in focus at a time.

In S 10 the /mí/ refers to the 'aforementioned row-end' of S 7 and the 'aforementioned snake' from S 6.

In S 12 'the poor man' is referred to again from S 1 without a /mí/. Since the definite article doesn't exist in Mixtec, either 'a' or 'the' could be supplied in the translation into English. I would supply 'the' since we know from the information flow which participant the story is about.. In this narrative, a new participant is introduced with /in/ 'one' and identifiability is indicated by /mí/ or zero morph.

New information is indicated by italics in this presentation of the text, In S 1 all new information is in the DO or locative slots. S 2, S 4, S 5b all have new information in the DO slot. S 5a literally reads: 'He got scared, did/caused the snake,' which is a way in Mixtec to defocus the agent. This is actually the first mention of the snake, but it is formally introduced as a participant in the following sentence.in the DO slot.

Interestingly, in S 6 the second participant is introduced in the subject slot. The action of the narrative begins with S 6, with S 1-5 giving the orientation information and the two abstracts. S 6 literally reads: 'It happened that another man, his companion, hung up a dead snake.' Evidently this new information is pulled into the subject slot to signal the start of the plot

All three participants are identified and referenced by relative clauses. The protagonist is introduced as 'a man who is poor, a man who is

greasy (Mexican).' He is subsequently referred to a 'poor man.' The antagonist is introduced as 'another he, who accompanies that he.' He is subsequently referred to as 'he,' since he only does one act mentioned in three consecutive sentences. The snake is introduced as 'a snake, it who had died.' It is subsequently referred to as 'it' or 'the aforementioned snake.'

Even though the story is short and compact, only one piece of new information occurs per clause. The information in the story flows smoothly with the author giving his evaluation and reason for reporting the story in S 11. Evidently he enjoyed seeing the protagonist's reaction to the dead snake.

Appendix   I

Paul's   Story

w i t h

Word-by-Word   Gloss

Paul's Story

1.	B POT	Opening Formula
	B CON	
	B COM SUB	Abstract
2.	B CON	Orientation
3.	B CON	Orientation
4.	B COM SUB	
	F COM F COM	Abstract
5.	F COM F COM	Abstract
	B CON SUB	
6.	B CON REL CL	Narr. begins
	F COM	
	B COM REL CL	
7.	F COM	
8.	F COM	
9.	B no verb	
	B CON B CON	
10.	B COM SUB	
	F COM F COM	
11.	B COM	Evaluation
12.	B COM	Closing formula

1. Yóho ná ndicani[1] i tá tuhun in cuento loho cúú á tá nandoho in tandahví tajahán campo Culiacan

2. Mí campo cán naní a Santa Victoria.

3. Já naní a.

4. Ta tá nasahan i cán já naxini i nandoho in tajahán.

5. Nayihví da nacaja coo nu sáhndá da tinana cán.

6. Ndaja coo inca mí da ndácá táhan xihin da cán nachinúu da in coo rí sa naxihi cúú rí.

7. Nachinúu da nu yíto yúhu cuíí.

8. Cán nachinúu da ri.

9. Ta anda já ndaja coo mí tandahví cán co xíni da ña cánúu mí coo cáa cán.

10. Tá naxinu da mí yúhu cuíí mí coo natiin da chí nandahyi cohó da.

11. Susa táhyí ñúchí nacaja da.

12. Já va nandoho dandahví.