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NOTICE

AVISO

THE CASE REMAINS IN MIXTEC

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0. Introduction
1. PATIENT and EXPERIENCER
2. SOURCE and GOAL
3. AGENT and INSTRUMENT
4. Summary

0. Hills and Merrifield (IJAL 40.4.283-91), on the basis of Ayutla
Mixtec language data, suggest that for some languages the semantic cases
PATIENT and EXPERIENCER need not be distinguished from one another nor
do the semantic cases SOURCE and GOAL. It is the purpose of the present
writer to demonstrate the usefulness of maintaining the distinct semantic
cases as language universals relevant to the study of Mixtec or any other
language.

One of the principal benefits to be derived from the study of case
grammar has been the ability to discuss clause level[1] semantics indepen-
dent of language-specific surface structures. I would challenge the
statement of Hills and Merrifield that, "To be valid for a particular
language, a semantic category must have relevance to the understanding
of the syntactic structure of that language."[2] The study of semantics
has now progressed enough that we can compare universal deep structures
and language-specific surface structures without molding one to the pat-
tern of the other.

The argument for combining the above mentioned cases in Mixtec is
based on syntactic (surface) encodings wherein the semantic case is not
indicated on the respective nominal elements, but is included in the
semantic structure of the predicate.

> SOURCE and GOAL are found to differ only in what may be considered
> polarity in the semantic structure of predicates, and EXPERIENCER
> seems easily identified with PATIENTS in the context of verbs which
> have to do with psychological events or mental states.[3]

The fact that the semantic case is manifested in the predicate and not

in the nominal elements is not grounds for denying the existence of that

case for a particular language.

That some languages use one surface structure noun phrase to encode

two semantic cases is not proof that the cases need not be distinguished.

If the semantic distinction between the cases is valid, it will show up

in the surface forms of some, but not necessarily all, languages. If no

languages were ever discovered which required different surface forms for

the two cases, then we would assume that the distinction was entirely

artificial.

1. Languages do exist, however, which require different surface

forms for encoding the cases PATIENT and EXPERIENCER. For example, the

English pronouns: I, we, he, she, and they regularly encode the case

EXPERIENCER in active clauses (example 1), but only in passive clauses

can they encode PATIENT (example 2). The pronouns: me, us, him, her,

and them, on the other hand, most commonly encode PATIENT (example 3).

These latter pronouns can encode EXPERIENCER, but only in a passive con-

struction of very infrequent usage (as in example 4).

1. I heard a noise.

2. I was hit by a car.

3. A car hit me.

4. ? A noise was heard by me.

The fact that an example such as 4 occurs infrequently is apparently

due to the use of the passive to de-focus the person involved in order

to focus on the experience. The EXPERIENCER is more likely to receive

mention in a passive construction if it is unusual enough to require

nominal reference, as opposed to pronominal, (example 5).

5. The noise was heard by everyone present.

The use of these English pronouns with respect to these two cases

is summarized in Table I.

TABLE I

	I	me
active	EXPERIENCER	PATIENT
passive	PATIENT	? EXPERIENCER

Another argument against the combining of PATIENT and EXPERIENCER

is that the two cases can co-occur in some ditransitive clauses. This

necessarily involves what Longacre calls covalence[4] of AGENT and EXPERI-

ENCER (examples 6-8), but this does not detract from our observation

that both EXPERIENCER and PATIENT are necessary.

```
6.  We showed Alex  the evidence.
    A       A/E      P
```

```
7.  Na-nahani-da ‡‡ kwentu nuu diči kweči,  will-tell-I a story to
              A       P        A/E          child plural.  I will tell
                                            the children a story.
```

```
8.  sa-kaši?-ra bétú čitya, make-eat-he Bob banana. He will feed Bob
         A    A/E  P                                 a banana.
```

In example 6, "Alex" is at once responding to visual stimuli as an

EXPERIENCER and is presumably engaged in looking, thus AGENT. Example 7

is from a related dialect of Mixtec.[5] The children involved are listening

(AGENT), as well as hearing (EXPERIENCER). Example 8 is from Hills and

Merrifield (their example 9), in which "Bob" displays covalence of AGENT

and EXPERIENCER. In each of these examples, the distinction between EX-

PERIENCER and PATIENT is shown to be useful.

2. The same arguments can be employed in citing the usefulness of maintaining the semantic distinction between SOURCE and GOAL. First, languages exist which require different surface forms for encoding the two cases, such as the English prepositions 'from' and 'to' for SOURCE and GOAL respectively. Second, they often co-occur within a single clause (examples 9-11). Example 11 is again from San Juan Diuxi Mixtec.

```
9.  We proceeded from Kansas City to Dallas.
    A              S           G
```

```
10. Jack went to Dallas from here.
    A       G       S
```

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11. nžošika še?e taa-da ža?a ší nde nundua,    traveled foot father-my
                A     S        G      here and until Oaxaca.
                                                My father traveled on foot
                                                from here to Oaxaca.
```

We have shown, thus far, that it is useful to consider the semantic cases to be universals and not to combine them on the basis of language-specific encodings. By maintaining universal semantic distinctions we have a foundation for comparing language-specific encodings of semantically comparable constructions. Now let's examine the alternative.

3. If, like Hills and Merrifield, we are to combine semantic cases on the basis of surface structure, we should combine AGENT and INSTRUMENT on the basis of their Ayutla Mixtec data. INSTRUMENT encodes as a con-joined subject along with the AGENT. The following examples are from their article and employ their numbering.

```
50. vaši-ra yé?é? ší{? bétú,   came-he Acapulco with Bob.
        A   G        A     He and Bob have come to Acapulco.
```

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43. nišika te-šiša ší{? itý?,  walked he-old with wood,
            A           I      The old man walked with a cane.
                               [or, The old man and his cane walked.]
```

45. kụ-na?i-a? ña?mi vi?e-a? šį́į? ñunu?-a?, go-take-she yam house-
     A   P   G   I   her with bag-her.
                             She will carry yams to her house in her bag.
                        [or, She and her bag will carry yams to her house.]

The surface structures for conjoined AGENTs and for an AGENT plus

INSTRUMENT are exactly alike. If the decision is to be made solely on

the basis of surface structure, there is no justifieation for separating

INSTRUMENT from AGENT. They can only be separated on the basis of seman-

tics and on the basis of other languages which require different surface

encodings of the two semantic cases.[6]

4. Carried to its logical extreme, such a method would produce a

deep structure photograph-like representation of surface structure. The

two levels would look exactly alike but with distinct terminology. There

would be no point in studying the deep structure since it would be com-

pletely predictable from surface constructions.

The study of semantics and especially of case grammar has progressed

rapidly in the two year lapse between the writing and the publishing of

the Hills and Merrifield article. That article now serves to illustrate

a non-productive approach to semantic analysis because it leads us away

from universals and minimizes useful case distinctions in favor of

language-specific surface considerations.

FOOTNOTES

1. Tagmemicists have for some time insisted on the usefulness of a hierarchical distinction between clause and sentence, the latter being a level characterized by clause combination. It is allowed by Longacre, a major proponent of this distinction, that some language-specific surface structures combine clause and sentence levels (Longacre, Robert E., Hierarchy and Universality of Discourse Constituents in New Guinea Languages: Discussion. Georgetown University Press. 1972. xi). The deep structures, however, are more universal and they display very different notions on the two levels. The deep structure of clause is best reflected by case relations within a predication while the deep structure of sentence is best reflected by logical and temporal relations between predications.

2. Hills and Merrifield. 1974. 283

3. Ibid, 291

4. Longacre, Robert E., An Anatomy of Speech Notions. 1975. (in press) Chapter 1. Longacre defines EXPERIENCER as: An animate entity whose registering nervous system is relevant to the predication. PATIENT is defined as: The inanimate entity of which a state or location is predicated or which undergoes change of state or of location; the animate entity which undergoes change of (physical) state or of location.

5. San Juan Diuxi Mixtec. Data supplied by Joy Oram.

6. There may, however, be other evidence in Mixtec to separate INSTRUMENT from AGENT, such as paraphrasing potential. For instance, example 50 can be represented with a pronoun, "They have come to Acapulco." But example 43 could not be paraphrased as, "They walked."