

# Piapoco: Continuity of Situation and Antitopic in Narrative Discourse

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## 0. Introduction

A major problem in the analysis of Piapoco<sup>1</sup> narratives concerns the position of the subject in the simple event sentence. The normal order of elements in a simple event sentence in isolation places the subject, if present, before the verb. However, in the corpus upon which the present article is based, the subject followed the verb in thirty-six percent of the sentences examined.<sup>2</sup>

A related problem concerns the use of the demonstrative and a suffix *-ca*, when they occur as elements of the noun phrase that functions as subject. The occurrence of these morphemes closely correlates with the presence of the subject following the verb. When the subject precedes the verb, neither the demonstrative nor *-ca* is generally found; but when the subject follows the verb, the demonstrative and *-ca* are usually present.

The following table indicates the relative frequency of the six combinations of elements encountered: S - subject, V - verb, dem - demonstrative, *ca* - the suffix *-ca*.

TABLE 1

<u>Subject precedes verb</u>			<u>Subject follows verb</u>		
(A) S V	27	(48%)	(B) V dem-S-ca	17	(30%)
(C) dem-S-ca V	4	( 7%)	(D) V S-ca	1	( 2%)
(E) dem-S V	5*	( 9%)	(F) V S	2	( 4%)
Totals	36	(64%)		20	(36%)

(\*This includes three sentences which have a relative clause functioning as subject. In such constructions, a demonstrative pronoun obligatorily initiates the relative clause.)<sup>3</sup>

This paper first considers the factors which cause the subject to follow the verb in Piapoco narratives (sect. 1). It then examines the conditions under which the demonstrative and/or *-ca* appear when the subject precedes the verb (sect. 2). In section 3, an explanation is proposed for those cases where the demonstrative and *-ca* are absent when the subject follows the verb, and consideration is given to the use of the demonstrative and *-ca* with objects, leading to the conclusion that *-ca* attached to a postverbal element marks a type of "antitopic" (Chafe 1976:53).

### 1. Position of the Subject

In this section we consider the factors that cause the subject to follow the verb in Piapoco narratives. Since the combinations (A) S V and (B) V dem-S-*ca* together account for about seventy-eight percent of the examples found in the corpus, these combinations are viewed as basic, and the other patterns are treated as variations of them (cf. sects. 2. and 3).

**1.1. Presence of a Citation.** One possible factor of relevance to the relative order of subject and verb is the presence of other elements, in particular the object of a transitive verb, and a citation in connection with a quotative verb. Table 2 gives the relative frequency of combinations (A) and (B), taking the presence of these elements into account.

TABLE 2

	(A) S V	(B) V dem-S- <i>ca</i>	Total
Citation present	7	10	17
Object present	16	4	20
Others	4	3	7
Totals	27	17	44

In connection with the presence of citations, the choice of combinations partially correlates with the stage reached in the conversation being reported. Most commonly, if a conversational exchange consists of two or more speeches, the pattern found is as follows:

quote margin	citation 1	
	citation 2	quote margin
	citation 3	quote margin

(The "quote margin" may include a verb of speaking and references to the speaker and addressee.)

Once the exchange is under way, the quote margins which follow the citations are usually of form (B) V dem-S-*ca* (seven occasions out of ten):<sup>4</sup>

- (1) (i) *úimaca béeru irí yái cháwi-ca* "citation 2"  
 he-said old-woman to that tiger  
 '...the tiger said to the old woman.'  
 (ii) *úumaca úái béeru-ca cháwi irí* "citation 3"  
 she-said that old-woman tiger to  
 '...the old woman said to the tiger.'

In contrast, at the beginning of an exchange, the quote margin is often of form (A) S V (four occasions out of seven):

- (2) (i) (The girl emptied a bottle of hot pepper into the soup,  
 unbeknown to the tiger.)  
 (ii) *yá cháwi úimaca* "citation 1"  
 and tiger said  
 'And the tiger said,...'(to the old woman—the girl was hiding)

However, it is not uncommon for form (B) to be used at the beginning of an exchange (three occasions out of seven). One probable reason for this is that, although a conversational exchange is being opened, the initial speech is in response to, or otherwise follows on from, some previous action.<sup>5</sup> (Within a conversational exchange, the second and subsequent speeches represent a continuation of the initial speech, either by the same speaker, or by the previous addressee, in response to the first speaker.)

This is illustrated in example 3. The wife has persuaded her husband to go and collect his flashlight from another house, rather than send someone else. When he does so, she responds with a speech:

- (3) (i) (So he went to get the flashlight for himself.)  
 (ii) *néese úumaca irí úái únu-ca,..*  
 then she-said to-him that his-wife  
 'Then his wife said to him, ("Give me the flashlight!")'

An examination of the occasions when form (A) introduces the initial speech of an exchange reveals that it is never used when the speech is in response to an action by some other participant. In the case of example 2, the speaker was unaware of the last action performed. In

other cases, no change of subject occurs: in 4, for instance, the subject is specified for clarification, following the reintroduction to the story of another participant:

- (4) (i) (The tiger took the hip to the boy's mother.)  
 (ii) *néese cháwi úmaca ulí...* "citation 1"  
 then tiger said to-her  
 'Then the tiger said to her,...'

The only occasions when form (A) is used in connection with a speech which may be viewed as a response to a previous speech are as follows: (a) when the speech concerned is contrasted with the last speech as in example 5, (b) when the previous addressee directs his speech to other than the last speaker as in 6, and (c) in one residual example (7).

(a) There is probably a universal tendency in languages for the element in contrast with a corresponding element in the previous sentence to be placed at the beginning of the sentence (cf. Levinsohn 1980:115ff.):

- (5) (i) (Some said to each other, "What about all of you? Do you also see him [the god]?"  
 "Yes! We also see him," they replied [among themselves]).  
 (ii) *áibanái úima...*  
 others said  
 'Others (however) said, ("We don't see a thing!")'

(b) Example 6 is taken from a folktale describing how a group of the ancestors ascended to heaven. At one stage, the leader sends his son to the boy's aunt to ask for a fermented beverage. The aunt refuses to supply the drink, so the boy returns to his father and gives him the answer. The next significant event is the father's speech to the whole group of ancestors, telling them to resume dancing in order to ascend to heaven. (The absence of the dative *irí* 'to him' in sentence (ii) below indicates that the boy is not the addressee.) This speech may be viewed as the introduction to the last stage of the folktale, involving a different set of participants than that of the immediately preceding scene. Although the father's speech is apparently in response to the last speech,<sup>6</sup> it is likely that the narrator has treated it as the opening event of a new section of the story:

- (6) (i) (Then he returned to his father and said to him, "There isn't any [beverage].")

- (ii) *néese yáaniri úmaca*, ‘‘cayábacatani ...  
 then his-father said it-is-good  
*wawáilacué*’’  
 let’s-dance  
 ‘Then his father said, ‘‘Well, all right then...let’s dance!’’ ’
- (iii) (And they danced and ascended.)

(c) A final residual example occurs in a story describing an argument between a husband and wife, in which the husband requests a third party (Collin) to retrieve his flashlight. The wife tells Collin to let her husband get it for himself, and Collin then concurs with the wife:

- (7) (i) (‘‘Wait! He will go to get it himself!’’ she said to Collin.)  
 (ii) *càisa báisí, asíeli! Colino úmaca iri*  
 thus truly man Collin said to-him  
 ‘‘That’s right, man!’’ Collin said to him.’
- (iii) (And he stood silently [for a moment] and then he went there.)

It is probable that Collin was expected to concur with the husband rather than with the wife, so the fact that he said, ‘‘She’s right, man!’’ is significant. In other words, the subject may precede the verb to bring out the contrast with the expected (cf. example 5). Alternatively, the unusual word order reflects the narrator’s desire to keep Collin in the background since he is not one of the main protagonists. (Green 1980:593 suggests that, following English quotations, the most important element of the quote margin tends to occur last.)

In summary, the combination (B) V dem-S-*ca* is preferred to (A) S V in connection with the reporting of conversational exchanges, when the speech in question continues the exchange or is in response to the last event recorded. Combination (A) occurs if the speech concerned is not a response to the last event recorded, if the primary relationship with the previous speech is one of contrast, if the speech opens a new section of the story, and possibly if the answer is unexpected.

**1.2. Other Examples.** The conditions for preferring combination (B) over (A) in connection with reported conversations may be extended to sentences describing other events. In general terms, the placing of the subject after the verb in narrative may be explained in terms of ‘‘continuity of situation’’ between successive sentences, where ‘‘continuity of situation’’...means that...the spatiotemporal setting of the events described in the independent clauses remains unchanged, as does the cast of participants’’ (Levinsohn 1980:165ff.). For Piapoco

narrative, there is continuity of situation between successive sentences if the participants involved remain constant and there is no sudden switch from one time or location to another.

As far as sentences in which the subject follows the verb are concerned, on only one occasion is the "continuity of situation" requirement not fulfilled, and this may be discounted if the sentence is interpreted as existential (cf. example 22).

In general, sentences whose subject precedes the verb are used when participants are introduced to the story or reintroduced, following an absence off-stage (cf. example 2), when there is a switch of location (which presupposes a change in the cast of participants—illustrated in example 12, or when the narration is resumed, following a digression from the recounting of the main events, such as a comment by the narrator (but cf. footnote 6). This last is illustrated in example 8:

- (8) (i) (So they [Macàbali's family] ate sparingly.)  
 (ii) (Comment) *ímaté nía, Macàbalinái, wapíchalé*  
                   thus they Macàbali's-kin before-us  
           *bàaluité èeri*  
           long-ago day  
           'Such were Macàbali's family, long before our time.'  
 (iii) *néese Macàbali íma ìiri iriwa,..*  
       then Macàbali said his-son to-him  
       'Then Macàbali said to his son,...'

(In connection with a comment introduced by *íma* 'thus' in the middle of a story, the subject of the sentence invariably occurs immediately following *íma* (sentence ii above). Such sentences may be considered not to represent a continuation of the story, and as such violate the condition for placing the subject after the verb, if one occurs.)

The subject also precedes the verb if the object, rather than the subject, is marked by the presence of the demonstrative and *-ca*. The motivation for such marking appears to be that the speaker is more interested in what happens to the object than what the subject does (cf. further in sect. 3).

This is illustrated in example 9. The tiger has just killed the boy and is alone on stage. He eats the boy's chest, heart, and head, and then decides to take the rest of the boy's body to his mother. Attention rests on the boy, rather than on the tiger, since the mother immediately recognizes her son's body and takes steps to kill the tiger:

- (9) (i) *yúuca icanápi ìwaliabàawa yái isàba-ca*  
 he-threw neck around that hip  
 'He put the boy's hip around his neck.'
- (ii) *yá cháwi itéca isàba ìwaliisewani*  
 and tiger took hip on-top-of-himself-it  
 'And carried it on top of himself.'
- (iii) (...The dead boy's mother said [to herself],...)

(For a residual example of combination (A), cf. 21 and the discussion of 20 in sect. 3.)

In summary, when the subject of a sentence is placed after the verb, it indicates that the sentence in question leads naturally from the previous one, in the sense that there is "continuity of situation" between them, i.e., the participants involved remain constant, and there is no sudden change in the location or time of the events.<sup>7</sup> When the subject of a sentence is placed before the verb in narrative, either there is a discontinuity of situation with the material already presented (e.g., the sentence concerned begins a new section of the story or the story is resumed, following a digression), or else some other factor in the development is more significant than marking the continuity of situation that exists with the previous sentence. This is the case when the contrastive relationship between the two sentences is at the fore, or when the speaker's concern is more with what is happening to the object than what the subject is doing.

## 2. Presence of the Demonstrative and *-ca*, When the Subject Precedes the Verb

Occasionally, when the subject precedes the verb, it is modified by the demonstrative, with or without the suffix *-ca*. In this section we consider in turn the motivations for the presence of these elements. *-ca* is also found attached to a locative or temporal adverb occurring prior to the subject.

### 2.1. The Demonstrative.

A demonstrative modifies a preverbal subject under two circumstances: immediately following the introduction of major participants at the beginning of a story (cf. 10 and 11), and in connection with the reintroduction of a major participant, following his absence while other participants interact (12). In both cases, the presence of the demonstrative appears to reflect the speaker's desire to single out a particular participant, from a group of several major participants already introduced, as being the one upon whose actions the events of the story start or continue to build.

Immediately after a cast of two or more major participants has been introduced at the beginning of a story in a nonevent clause, combination (E) dem-S V is employed to refer again to one of these participants. The presence of the demonstrative presumably marks that participant, over against the others just introduced, as the person upon whose actions the story starts to build. (Compare a similar use of the demonstrative in Inga [Quechuan], Levinsohn 1978:89ff.)

- (10) (i) *néese bàaluité abéechúa béeru, uídu*  
 then long-ago a-certain woman her-daughter  
*yaanisawa, abéeri uìri asieli*  
 menstruous a her-son man  
 'Long ago, (there was) a woman with a menstruous daughter  
 and a grown-up son.'
- (ii) *néese yái uìri asieli yàa*  
 then that son man went  
*ichàwidàaca inanábàalé*  
 to-fish at-river  
 'Then her grown-up son went to fish at the river.'

Example 11 illustrates the introduction of two or more major participants in connection with *event*-type sentences (i), following which combination (C) dem-S-*ca* V is employed to single out the participant upon whose actions the story proper starts to build (cf. sect. 2.2 for a discussion of *-ca*):

- (11) (i) (Once a man from Cadá arrived to sell a hammock to Jim. We were not aware of their arriving; suddenly we saw them\* standing together.)
- (ii) *néese úái inanái-ca úumaca*  
 then that woman said  
*Pumèniru irí,..*  
 Pumèniru to  
 'Then that woman said to Pumèniru,....'

(\*Apparently the writer assumes the presence of the woman with the man. Compare the version presented in footnote 6. Example 11 occurred in the second version of the same story.)

Combination (C) is used also when a sentence reintroduces a major participant to the story following his absence while other participants interact. (Compare the use of the demonstrative in similar circumstances in Inga; Levinsohn 1978:94ff.) This time, the demonstrative occurs against the background of the interaction of other



major participants and singles out the (different) participant whose actions the story will now follow.<sup>8</sup>

This is illustrated in example 12 below. Previously, the boy had left home to go fishing. While he is away, a conversation takes place at the house between the mother and the tiger. After that, the scene switches back to the boy as he sets a signal fire on his way home:

- (12) (i) (''Now I will kill game for us to eat,'' he [the tiger] said to her.)  
 (ii) *néese yái sumài-ca itùcuniaca yàacawa*  
 then that boy burned came  
 'As for the boy, he lit a signal fire and was coming (over the savannah).'

The function of the demonstrative may also be viewed from a negative standpoint, that is, whenever there is no need to reidentify or highlight the subject. For example, the demonstrative is not used when the participant concerned is not the one upon whose actions the events of the story will now build (sentence (ii) of example 13), or when a participant arrives on the scene for the first time (sentence (iii); i.e., the demonstrative is anaphoric in reference).

Example 13 is taken from the same story as 12 above. As we have already noted, the woman's son has gone fishing. Following a conversation between the woman herself and the tiger, the latter goes and kills the boy. The woman herself is only a bystander, while the story builds on actions performed by the boy and the tiger:

- (13) (i) (Then in the morning the boy set out for home, bringing the smoked fish.)  
 (ii) *néese yáatua ibàlùà iicáida iipunita*  
 then his-mother stood looking toward-him  
 'And his mother was standing, watching for his arrival.'  
 (iii) *néese cháwi yàanàa yáatua néré*  
 then tiger arrived mother at  
 'Now a tiger arrived at the mother's place.'

In addition, no demonstrative appears when the story as a whole is concerned with a single "central character" (cf. Branks 1978), because the story naturally reverts to him whenever he appears on stage. There is thus no need for him to be singled out as the participant through whose actions the story will now develop.

In the folktale concerning how Macàbali's family ascended to heaven, for instance (cf. 8) Macàbali is the central character, and the

actions of all the other participants are related to him. Whenever a change of subject back to Macàbali occurs, the demonstrative is absent (e.g., 6(ii) and 8(iii)).

We conclude that the demonstrative modifies a preverbal subject only where there exists a group of major participants from which one needs to be singled out as the person whose actions the story is now to follow.

**2.2. Function of Preverbal *-ca*.** A comparison of example 10 (dem-S V) with examples 11 and 12 (dem-S-*ca* V) suggests that the presence of *-ca* correlates with the participant concerned having been involved in earlier events. In 10, in contrast, the previous material only posits their existence. A similar correlation is found when *-ca* is not attached to a postverbal subject (cf. sect. 3).

The suffix *-ca* is attached also to preverbal locative and temporal adverbs, apparently as a literary device in order to highlight the event described in the rest of the sentence.

In 14, for instance, *-ca* is attached to the locative adverb *néré* 'there', and the rest of the sentence describes the "trigger" event (Forster 1976:19) which creates the problem needing resolution in the rest of the story, viz., revenging the killing:

- (14) (i) ([The boy] entered the woods.)  
 (ii) *yá néré-ca cháwi inúani*  
 and there tiger killed-him  
 'And it was there that the tiger killed him.'

Similarly in 15, *-ca* is attached to the temporal adverb *néese* 'then', and the rest of the sentence describes the "key", i.e., that event which leads to the resolution of the problem. (The decision of the tiger to take the boy's body home to his mother leads to the opportunity for her to take revenge; cf. discussion of example 9.)

- (15) (i) ([The tiger] cut off the dead boy's head.)  
 (ii) *yá néese-ca cháwi yúuca inatabàawa*  
 and then tiger threw on-himself  
*yái sumài-ca*  
 that boy  
 'And then it was that the tiger threw the boy on himself.'

In each of the examples considered in section 2, *-ca* has been attached to an element which has linked the sentence concerned with earlier events. In the case of 14 and 15, this was to achieve a literary

effect. In the case of 11 and 12, however, this occurred in connection with the need to single out a particular major participant as the one whose actions the story was now to follow (sect. 2.1).

It is instructive that *-ca* is normally absent when the subject precedes the verb, presumably because usually there is no need to reestablish a "basis" (Beneš 1962:6) for linking the new sentence with past events. Only when the basis of linkage needs to be stated, or is marked as a literary device, is *-ca* attached (in connection with the demonstrative) to a preverbal subject.<sup>9</sup>

### 3. Antitopics

In section 1 we noted that, whenever the subject of a sentence is postverbal there is "continuity of situation" with the previous material, and most commonly the subject is marked by the presence of the demonstrative and the suffix *-ca*. Although the subject occurs at the end of the sentence, it appears correct to claim that it is still the topic about which a comment is being made:

(16) (i) (Then that boy came, setting fire to the savanna.)

**Comment                      Topic**

(ii) *yá iwàliuacawa analimalé yái iuculiri-ca*  
and he-entered woods that youth  
'And he (the youth) entered some woods.'

We have also claimed that, on occasion, a sentence appears to be arranged around the object, rather than around the subject, in which case it is the object which may be marked by the demonstrative and *-ca* (cf. discussion of example 9). On such occasions, the narrator seems concerned more with what happened to the object than with what the subject did. In other words, the object may be thought of as the topic about which a comment is being made.

This is illustrated in example 17 (the Piapoco version of the second sentence is given in (16) above). The narrator's concern appears to be more with what happened to the boy than with what the tiger did:

(17) (i) (Then that boy came, setting fire to the savanna.)

(ii) (and he (the youth) entered some woods)

(iii) (and the tiger killed him there.)

(iv) *imaté cháwi inúaquéi<sup>10</sup> sumài-ca*

thus tiger killed-that boy

'Thus that boy was killed by the tiger.'

Compare also example 9.

This reference at the end of the sentence to "what the sentence is about" may be compared with Chafe's "antitopic" (1975:53-54). He says about the sentence in Seneca (using the word *subject* to mean "what the sentence is about"), "Thus it is possible for a Seneca speaker to utter a sentence...in which there has not yet been a commitment as to subject. The subject is then added...as an afterthought or 'antitopic'."

In the case of Piapoco, if there is continuity of situation with the last sentence, the narrator has the option of arranging a transitive sentence, so that either the subject (V (dem)-S-*ca*) or the object (V (dem)-O-*ca*) is the "antitopic." So, the sentence *She (the woman) got the hot pepper juice* could be rendered in such a way as to make either the object or the subject the matter about which the sentence is primarily concerned:

- (18) (subject is antitopic)  
*uedáca àasi ituní úái béeru-ca*  
 she-got pepper juice that woman
- (19) (object is antitopic)  
*uedáca yái àasi ituní-ca*  
 she-got that pepper juice

(In practice, the choice of antitopic is probably influenced either by which participant the narrator has been following most closely as in example 17 or by the relative importance of the subject or object, as far as the development of the on-going narrative is concerned; see the discussion of example 9 in sect. 1.2.)

Since the demonstrative and *-ca* normally co-occur, when there is an antitopic, it is not immediately obvious which in fact is the marker of antitopic. However, a few examples are found in which a postverbal subject is not accompanied by the demonstrative, i.e., the sentence is of form (D) V S-*ca*. Example 20 illustrates this possibility:

- (20) (i) (She [the mother] poured it into his mouth.)  
 (ii) *yá ipisianícawa, yéetánícawa cháwi-ca*  
 and he-jumped-around dying tiger  
 'And the tiger jumped around, dying.'  
 (iii) *néese uedá àicu yá unúaca yúuwàiricu*  
 then she-took stick and she-hit in-his-neck  
 'Then she took a club and hit him in the neck (so that he died).'

In section 2.1 we suggested in connection with 13(ii), that the demonstrative is not employed when the participant concerned is not the person upon whose actions the story will now build. The same explanation appears to be valid in example 20. It is clear from the context that the initiator of the whole series of actions being described is the mother. Sentence (ii) appears to have been inserted simply to inform the reader how the patient was faring, prior to the description of the next act performed by the mother (iii).

In another version of the same story, combination (A) was used, presumably with the same motivation:

- (21) *néese cháwi ipìsianícawa, yéetánícawa*  
 then tiger jumped-around dying  
 'Then the tiger jumped around, dying.'

It thus appears that it is *-ca*, rather than the demonstrative, which marks the antitopic as such, a function consistent with its use when attached to a preverbal element (sect. 2.2). Just as its presence preverbally indicates the primary basis for linkage with the previous material, so its marking of the antitopic shows which feature of the "continuity of situation" with the last sentence the narrator wishes to bring to the fore. In other words, whether *-ca* appears preverbally or postverbally, it indicates the "point of departure" or "basis" of the sentence, viz., "the sentence opening which...is directly linked to the context" (Beneš 1962:6).

In two residual examples in which the subject follows the verb, neither the demonstrative nor *-ca* occurs, i.e., the sentence is of form (F) V S.

One of these sentences occurs at the beginning of a story where normally the opening sentence has the subject preceding the verb. In example 22 the movement verb *yàanàa* 'he arrives' takes on an existential function (cf. Firbas and Pala 1971:97), and the order of elements corresponds to that of other existential sentences (cf. D. Klumpp ms., sect. 1.2.2, the Spanish *llegó un varón* 'A man arrived'.):

- (22) *yàanàa abéeri asieli*  
 he-arrived one man  
 'A man arrived.'

As in sect. 2.2, *-ca* is absent because the man has not featured in earlier events in the story (cf. examples 10 and 11). As for the demonstrative, it would appear that it cannot be used when the participant has not already been introduced (cf. discussion in sect. 2.1).

In the other residual example, 23, the subject is not completely distinct from that of the previous sentence:

- (23) (i) (They resumed dancing again, and said among themselves,  
 "What about you? Do you also see him [the god]?")  
 (ii) "*waicácata nacáini,*" *náimaca áibanái*  
 we-see-yes also-him they-said others  
 "'Yes! We see him, too!'" some replied.'  
 ('But there were others who said, "We don't see a thing!"')

*Aibanái* 'others' (ii) is a vaguely identified part of the group who speak among themselves (i). Nevertheless, the subgroup as such has not been mentioned previously. Consequently, the demonstrative cannot be used, and *-ca* cannot be employed to relate the reference to the subgroup to some earlier occasion when they were involved in some event (cf. sect. 2).<sup>11</sup>

It thus appears that, attached to a postverbal element, *-ca* marks the antitopic of the sentence. However, it cannot occur if the element concerned has not featured (explicitly or implicitly) in the immediate context. In other words, the antitopic must be a feature of that shared continuity of situation with the last sentence which allowed the subject to be placed after the verb (cf. sect. 1).

#### 4. Conclusions

This paper has illustrated the importance of the concept of "continuity of situation" (Levinsohn 1980:165ff.) for explaining variations in word order in Piapoco, as well as the need to recognize the "basis" for relating a sentence to its context (Beneš 1962:6) and the identity of the "central character" (Callow 1974:49) for determining the presence versus absence of the demonstrative and a suffix *-ca*. In addition, Chafe's "antitopic" (1975:53) has been found to be a useful tool for identifying whether a sentence has been arranged around what the subject has been doing, or whether it relates what happened to the object.

The placement of a subject after its verb in Piapoco narrative texts has been found to indicate "continuity of situation" with the event described in the previous sentence, where the continuity consists of an unchanging cast of participants on stage, together with no sudden change of spatiotemporal setting between the sentences.

Most commonly, a postverbal subject is accompanied by a demonstrative and the suffix *-ca*, though the functions of these elements are independent of each other.

The demonstrative is anaphoric and its presence therefore presup-

poses the prior introduction of its referent. In connection with a preverbal subject, it is used to single out the major participant through whose actions the story now develops, over against other major participants who have been introduced. However, it is not used in connection with a preverbal subject to refer to the central character of a narrative. In connection with a postverbal subject, it is normally present, and its absence is significant, indicating that the story will not develop through the actions of the participant concerned.

The suffix *-ca* indicates the "basis" for relating the sentence to its context, and thus the "point of departure" of the sentence, as it conveys new information. Of particular interest is its attachment to a preverbal locative or temporal adverb to achieve the literary effect of highlighting a particularly significant event or turning point in the narrative (sect. 2.2).

A postverbal subject or object may also take the suffix *-ca*, in which case the sentence is arranged around the element so marked. In a language without a passive comparable to English, this device enables the Piapoco speaker to make a comment about what is happening to the patient (object), as an alternative to describing what the subject is doing.

## Notes

1 The Piapoco language is spoken by approximately three thousand people who live along the Vichada and Guaviare Rivers in the eastern plains of Colombia. According to Čestmír Loukotka (1968), Piapoco belongs to the Arawak linguistic family. The extant Arawakan languages most closely related to Piapoco are Achagua and Yucuna (cf. Schauer and Schauer 1978:1-54). The material for this present analysis was collected in a Piapoco community from 1976 to 1981. We wish to express our appreciation to the many members of the Piapoco community who graciously assisted us in our study of the language.

2 The corpus on which the present analysis is based comprised seven written texts—two versions of one story, four versions of a second story, and one version of the final story—for a total of 210 sentences. Of these sentences, 136 had no overt subject. Of the remaining 74 sentences, 18 were nonevent constructions (stative or equative) whose order is obligatorily Verb Subject/Complement. This leaves 56 event sentences containing a subject.

3 For a discussion of the relative clause in Piapoco, see Klumpp and Burquest 1980.

4 All idiom examples given here are written in the practical orthography for Piapoco. The letters have approximately the same values as in Spanish with the following exceptions: the phonemes /b/ and /d/ are always full stops [b], [d], regardless of their environment: the phoneme /w/ is the voiced bilabial fricative [ɸ] in all environments. In addition, each word in Piapoco has one or more phonemes of stress. A word may have all heavy stresses or all lenis stresses or a combination of the two. Heavy stress is accompanied by high pitch on the stressed syllable and is indicated in the orthography by an acute accent:

Ÿ. Lenis stress is accompanied by low pitch and is indicated by the grave accent over the stressed vowel: Ÿ. For a description of the phonology of Piapoco, see Sudo 1976:7-14 and D. Klumpp's article in this volume.

5 Following a digression, the next main event of the story may be related back to the events presented before the digression, by the use of an appropriate prenuclear dependent clause (cf. Levinsohn 1980:264). In such cases, the speech or event described after the digression may be viewed as following on from the events which the prenuclear clause reiterates. Thus is established "continuity" with the situation to which the prenuclear construction refers (cf. sect. 1.2).

(i) 'There came some people [Santiago and his wife] to sell a hammock.'

(ii) (Digression) 'Suddenly we saw them standing there together. And she darted into the house because she did not want the other people present to see her face.'

(iii) 'Now when they had finished selling the hammock.'

(iv) *ĩmaca Colino iri yái Santiago-ca...*

he-said Collin to that Santiago

'Santiago said to Collin (a bystander),...'

6 The opening word of the father's speech, *cayábacatani* 'it is good', would not be the initial response to bad news. Rather, it would be the concluding utterance of an exchange with the bearer of the news, during which the latter would relieve himself of responsibility, in this case blaming the stingy aunt. Such an exchange implicitly occurs between sentences (i) and (ii) of example 6.

7 In fact, there is "continuity of situation" with the previous sentence whenever no overt subject precedes the verb. Compare a similar conclusion for Greek in Levinsohn 1980: 165ff.

8 A further example of combination (C) occurs in the opening sentence of another story:

*néeseté niái Macábalinái-ca nawáilaté*

then those Macábali's-kin danced

'Then those relatives of Macábali danced...'

The text which begins with the sentence above was written after a lengthy discussion of the story topic with the language assistant. A transcription of an oral version of the same folktale was studied and glossed by the assistant prior to his composing his own rendition which is the written text used for the present analysis. Regarding this unusual use of the dem-S-*ca* combination in the opening sentence of the text, it is assumed that, following his informal explanation of the legend, the author begins the story as if these participants had already been introduced.

9 It is noteworthy that the combination \*S-*ca* V has not been found to date in Piapoco texts. Such a combination might theoretically parallel the construction in which -*ca* is attached to a spatiotemporal adverb, as a literary device for highlighting a particularly significant event. Alternatively, it could indicate a switch back to the central character of the story, following events involving other participants in which he was not involved (cf. sect. 2.1 on the absence of the demonstrative). Whether such a combination is possible in Piapoco remains to be seen.

10 An optional contraction of the demonstrative is very common in oral Piapoco and also occasionally occurs, as here, in written texts. It consists of the final vowel of the demonstrative, -*i*, which is attached to the word immediately preceding. If that word ends in -*ca* [ka], a morphophonemic change takes place. The combination becomes -*quéi* ['kéi].

11 The combination \*V dem-S, which has not been encountered in text, would appear to be impossible. On the one hand, the position of the subject implies continuity of situation with the last sentence (sect. 1.2), and the presence of the demonstrative presupposes an



earlier reference to the participant concerned. On the other hand, the absence of *-ca* would imply that there is no basis for linking the reference to the subject to an earlier event in which he was involved—a contradiction! The absence of this hypothetical combination therefore tends to confirm the validity of the present analysis.

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