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2 Text from Talk in Tzotzil

John B. Haviland

TZOTZIL LITERACY

There is a growing literature on the nature of written language and its relation to spoken forms.¹ Part of the interest of this relationship derives from the conviction of many authors that the canons of writing and written style exert a powerful influence at least on people's conceptions of language, if not on their overt linguistic practices. The relation of spoken to written language is thus of compelling linguistic interest. More widely, for scholars such as Goody (1977), writing as an institution—as a “technology of the intellect”—transforms the cognitive possibilities of social beings, with profound effects on the resulting social forms. More locally, the habits and standards of literacy are often taken to be the measure against which people's intellectual achievements or capacities are measured: here the canons of writing, instilled through education, become normative instruments of power—the power to define what counts not merely as “correct,” but also as “sensible,” “logical,” “coherent,” or even, simply, “tellable.” In this sense, a theory of written language becomes a potent instrument of social policy and political maneuver.

If we are to assess the theories that underlie such instruments, we need to understand what the canons of writing are, and where they come from. Here one ought to go beyond the literary traditions of the West, although little work has so far been done with naive or spontaneous writers, whose written productions emerge free from imposed standards, free from preexisting literary institutions.²

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1. See Goody and Watt (1963), Chafe (1982), and Chafe and Danielewicz (1985).

2. Marianne Mithun (1985) examines Mohawk speakers' written narratives, showing how important features—syntactic, lexical, and pragmatic—of spoken Mohawk are first reversed when

When naive writers, newly literate and familiar with few canons of textual form or content, produce written versions of originally spoken material, how do they go about it? In recent years, a few Tzotzil speakers from the highlands of Chiapas, Mexico, have begun to write. Some of these writers began their careers as bilingual teachers, *promotores culturales* (cultural promoters) for government agencies, or as "informants" for anthropologists or linguists; their incentive was, in the first instance, the standard *pesos*-per-page salary that they could thereby command. Many Tzotzil writers have begun to produce stories, books, or pamphlets, modeled on similar products familiar elsewhere in Mexican society.³ Recently there have appeared Tzotzil plays, organized around written scripts; and intrepid Tzotzil travelers have begun to compose letters, telegrams, and even faxes in their native tongue.⁴

A few Tzotziles have also tried explicitly to render into written form material which starts its life as *speech*: texts from talk. Writing dramatic dialogue, transcribing a curer's prayer in an ethnography, or inscribing a customary spoken greeting on a facsimile note all require just such a rendering. A dual process is involved: first detaching the speech from its indexical surround, its natural home; and second repackaging the written words in an appropriate textual form.

I will discuss two special sorts of such entextualized speech, one produced by a Tzotzil writer from a tape-recorded multiparty gossip session, and the other the conjoint product of a group of Indian literacy trainees who transcribed a staged conversation as part of a literacy workshop. In neither case were external

writers literate in English begin to produce texts in Mohawk. Later, as writers polish their styles and mature in the craft of writing, such features begin to reappear although in a new form appropriate to the virtues of a written medium. Robert M. Laughlin (in press) considers the relations of style and voicing that obtain between a spoken Tzotzil autobiographical narrative and its written rendition by a trained Tzotzil writer. He discovers many of the same register changes I mention here and characterizes the style of the written text as "less personal" than that of the original spoken narrative.

3. See, for example, Arias (1990), or Pérez López (1990); also, the growing production of *Sna Itz'ibajom*, a Tzotzil/Tzeltal writers cooperative, founded by Robert M. Laughlin. In his bilingual Tzotzil/Spanish monograph about the history and customs of the municipality of San Pedro Chenalhó, Arias makes a single concession to marked oral forms: his conclusion is framed in the eloquent poetic parallelism of traditional ritual speech (see Haviland 1987b).

4. Although fuller study would take us well beyond the bounds of this paper, it is worth observing how the normal etiquette of spoken greeting is both preserved and transformed in, for example, a fax sent to his family at home by a twenty-two-year-old Zinacantec visiting in the United States in September 1993. The literal question syntax of standard greetings—*mi li'ote* 'Are you here?'; *mi ja'* *to yechoxuk* 'Are you still well?'—survives unscathed in this medium which traverses from "here" to "there" and which allows only an oblique and delayed reply.

standards for the written renditions explicitly applied, nor were the writers familiar with a preestablished literary tradition, Spanish or otherwise.

From these texts there emerge the following apparent native criteria for written renditions of speech:

1. Normalizing—imposing a standard or normal form on—pragmatic features of the original speech context, especially the organization of its participants and relations between author and audience
2. Smoothing the turn structure and other interactional features in the newly fabricated textual context
3. Eliminating processing difficulties: production, reception, and grammatical hitches in the original speech
4. Searching for a register appropriate to the text
5. Perhaps least surprising, adjusting the referential focus of the emerging narrative.

I present exhibits based on this material to display the process by which speakers "reduce" their spoken words to writing: the natural history of entextualization. Parallel, and potentially embarrassing, morals about our own anthropological practices of entextualization or "decentering," faintly disguised by my own naive talk of "transcription,"⁵ should be easy to draw.

FROM THE SPOKEN WORD TO THE WRITTEN TEXT: TWO EXAMPLES

In 1970 and 1971 I amassed a corpus of multiparty conversation from tape-recorded sessions in which groups of Zinacantec men gathered together with explicit instructions to gossip about their fellows. In some cases the gossipers were hamlet neighbors of the gossipees (who were always absent, at least from the sessions in which they were being talked about). In other cases they were from other hamlets and might have been acquainted with the gossip targets only by reputation if at all. The resulting sessions were lively, ribald, and highly entertaining for all of us who participated.⁶

I used several methods for transcribing the tapes. Some I did myself, inventing as I went along *ad hoc* standards for representing multiple participants, back-channels (Yngve 1970), and so forth. Others I wrote down with the aid of one of the Zinacantec gossipers, who helped me puzzle out difficult bits of Tzotzil. Transcripts were also produced by a third method. Another of the gossipers was Little Romin, a trained Harvard Chiapas Project informant who was

5. See Ochs (1979).

6. See Haviland (1977) for some results of this exercise.

comfortable writing Tzotzil. After showing him a few of the sample transcripts I had produced, I gave him his own tape recorder and some of the tapes and asked him to write down selected parts by himself. As I had done in my own transcripts, Little Romin kept track of individual participants. I further badgered him into writing down what at first seemed to him inessential repetition. Little Romin had to construct for himself some notion of (more or less) faithful or accurate rendering into writing of what he heard on tape, although he evidently also felt the pull of narrative coherence as he wrote.

Armed with a different standard of the detail appropriate to conversational transcripts,⁷ I have recently retranscribed some of the passages that Little Romin wrote on his own. The present study analyzes fragments from one of these gossip sessions, matched pairs of the two written renditions: my transcription of what I hear on the tape, and the version Little Romin decided to write down. The excerpt in question comes from one of the most hilarious sessions of all, which crippled the original participants with riotous, convulsive laughter long into a rainy Chiapas afternoon.

The original impetus for this study, though, came from a subsequent experience in Chiapas. As part of a Tzotzil literacy workshop, conducted together with Lourdes de León,⁸ I recorded a short conversation between two Tzotzil speakers from different *municipios* (townships) in Highland Chiapas. Both were *alfabetizadores*, adult literacy teacher-trainees, with basic but minimal Spanish literacy skills, who were learning for the first time to read and write in their native language. For the most part these Indians had never seen a written text in Tzotzil, nor had they considered the possibility of such an object.

I transcribed the recorded conversation according to my own standards and presented a written version of the transcript to the group for their comments, reactions, and revisions. Somewhat to my surprise, they evinced spontaneous criteria both for correcting, and subsequently for altering my original transcript. That is, they quickly understood that I had tried to get down on paper exactly what had been said, and by whom. Yet they showed no hesitation in pronouncing some parts of the resulting transcript inappropriate for a written text, prompting them to edit it in various ways.

The main empirical moral I should like to extract from these serendipitous materials is this: These speakers, whose experience with reading and writing in any language (let alone their own) is next to nil, nonetheless by their

7. See Atkinson and Heritage (1984: ix-xvi) for a recent incarnation of the standard; such a tradition did not exist in 1970 in the public domain.

8. The workshop, in San Cristóbal de las Casas in October, 1985, was sponsored by the Instituto Nacional de Educación para los Adultos (see Haviland and de León 1985).

practice are able implicitly to indicate *what a text should be like*. Of what does their textual *canon* consist? Where does it come from?

ABOUT THE TRANSCRIPTS

First let me explain the Tzotzil materials, excerpted in what follows. There are two "complete texts" involved. The first is based on the staged workshop conversation about the day when the volcano *El Chichonal* erupted, at Easter 1982, snuffing out the sun and blanketing the entire Tzotzil area with a thick layer of volcanic ash. The emerging tale is one of fear and confusion, thoughts of the end of the world and mythological disaster, and frantic attempts by Indians to return to their villages to die in their own land.

The second text is extracted from a gossip free-for-all about the exploits of a licentious old woman and one Proylan, her former lover, with whom she had carried on a celebrated affair involving cornfield trysts and mischievous spying schoolchildren with slingshots.

Fragments from both conversations appear with my glossed transcription in one version and, in corresponding lines, the edited (native) rendition—resulting either from a collaborative editing session on the part of the literacy trainees, or from a single naive Tzotzil writer's understanding of the task of transcription—in the other. Forms in **boldface** have been altered or eliminated in the native rendition. The text from which cited lines are drawn can be identified by the names "Volcano" for the Chichonal story, "Lovers" for the gossip session, and when necessary by a suffixed number: 1 denotes my detailed transcript, and 2 denotes the edited written version. Thus, for example, *Lovers*₂ refers to the anthropological informant Little Romin's rendition of the Proylan gossip session, while *Volcano*₁ is my putative transcript of the literacy workshop conversation.

NAIVE WRITERS' WRITTEN RENDERINGS OF SPOKEN TZOTZIL

It seems clear that the surgery performed on the original conversational materials in order to produce a native written text falls into discrete categories. Let me consider several varieties.

PRAGMATIC NORMALIZATION

The most obvious difference between the conversation and the resulting textual sediment is the nature of the context in which each exists: the world, both social and material, within which it lives its pragmatic life. In the conversational

world, there are participants whose very faces, let alone voices, are present and salient. There are purposes, personalities, and power. There is also a breathless, almost competitive, creativity about the conversational moment: speakers vie with each other for the floor, the word, and the moral, pushing topics in edge-wise and interlocutors aside. In the written text, all of these features are peculiarly bleached, or, as I have put it, *normalized*.

Consider such pragmatically active words as nonreferential indices. The quotative particle *la*, for example, accompanies declarative sentences in Tzotzil to mark them as hearsay: not directly attested by the speaker.⁹ The particle is, for example, particularly appropriate to myths.¹⁰ The indexicality of such a word is particularly obvious when it appears in an interrogative sentence, as in line 4 of the volcano conversation:¹¹

Volcano1

4 a: mi li'-oxuk 'ox la k'alal i-yal tan-e
Q here-2API CL LA when CP-descend ash-CL

Were you here when the ashes fell *la*?

The quotative effect here must be understood to fall on the illocutionary force of the utterance, rather than on its propositional content. The quotative

9. Michael Silverstein, in conversation, suggests the following formulation: the particle *la* and its functional relatives in other languages, which mark a proposition (appropriately modalized) as originating with or vouched for by someone other than the speaker, create a new *frame*, "a perspective that projects the illocutionary relation between some [implicated] *other(s)* and the addressee of the actual message." See also Irvine (this volume), Hanks (this volume), and Haviland (1987a, 1991). Since the actual speaker may or may not be included in the purview of this implicated other, *la* can also have a softening force (in commands, for instance).

10. See Laughlin (1977:94), who describes a venerable Zinacantec storyteller as follows: "Quite deliberately he neglected to add the particle *la* which indicates that the story was only hearsay, for he wants you to know that he was there at the time of the creation."

11. Tzotzil is written here in a Spanish-based practical orthography, in which C' represents a glottalized consonant, and ' represents a glottal stop. Letters have by and large the pronunciation of the corresponding letter in Mexican Spanish; most notably, *x* stands for a voiceless palatal fricative, *j* for a voiceless glottal fricative, *ch* for a voiceless palatal affricate. In morpheme-by-morpheme glosses, the following abbreviations appear: ! = assertive predicate; 1 = numeral one, or first person; 1PL = first-person plural suffix; 1PX = first person plural exclusive; 2 = second person; 3 = third person; A = absolutive; E = ergative; ART = article; ASP = neutral aspect marker; ASP+3E = aspect marker plus third ergative portmanteau; BEN = benefactive or ditransitive suffix; CL = clitic; CONJ = conjunction; CP = completive aspect; DESID = desiderative clitic; ICP = incompletive aspect; ICP+3E = incompletive plus third-person ergative portmanteau; IRREAL = irrealis suffix; NEG = negative particle; P = Proylan (a name); PF = perfect aspect suffix; PL = plural suffix; PREP = preposition; Q = interrogative particle; REL = relational clitic; SC = San Cristóbal (place name).

particle must be understood, that is, to point implicitly to a questioner other than the speaker himself.

Were you here when the ashes fell? (X [that is, someone else] wants to know; or X asked me to ask you.)

The actual speaker is, as it were, merely quoting or relaying another's question.

Notably, the first change that the Tzotzil writers wanted to make in my literacy workshop transcript was to eliminate this *la* from their written text. Said the speaker himself: "It doesn't *do* anything." Yet all were agreed that the *la* was on the tape, and that it was not *chopol* (bad, or ungrammatical). What is wrong with the particle in the written text is that it points inexorably to another shadowy conversational presence who, in the rest of the text, is to remain invisible: to the person who asked the original question about the day the ashes fell, namely, to me myself, trying to launch the conversation. The micropolitics of the conversational moment, in which the anthropologist-teacher *directs* Tzotzil literacy students to converse, do not emerge in the orthogonal textual representation of the conversation,¹² which is thus normalized to a different, idealized, dialogic format in which only the speaking interlocutors are directly represented.

Generally, in transcribing the gossip session, the Tzotzil writer leaves the quotative *la* intact, preserving the depicted speakers' evidential integrity. Interestingly, Little Romin rewrites the remarks of one of the gossipers, at line 219 of the Proylan story. My transcription has CA saying,

Lovers1

219 ca; y-ich' la uli' li s-bek' y-a-te xi-ik i-k-a'i
3E-receive LA slingshot ART 3E-seed 3E-penis-CL say-PL CP-1E-hear

He got shot *la* in the balls with a slingshot, they say, I have heard.

The native writer introduces a further evidential remove in his more colorful rephrasing:

12. Notice that the particle *la* does survive at other points in the volcano text, for example at Volcano: 99. Here X is talking about his mother and her companions, from whom he was separated at the moment of the eruption.

Volcano2:

toj i-xi'-ik la ta j-'ech'el
much COM-be-afraid-PL QUOT PREP 1-time

they got terribly frightened right away (*la* = so they say).

The report (presumably theirs) of their fright falls within the ambit of both participants and emplotted protagonists who survive as characters in the textual narrative of Volcano2.

Lovers2

219 ca; kabron pero k'u t-s-sa' ti buy x-jipjon s-bek'
damn but what ICP-3E-seeK CONJ where ASP-swinging 3E-seed
y-at-e xi-ik la un
3E-penis-CL say-PL LA CL

Damn, but what is he up to flinging his balls about like that, they said *la*.

In the original line, the *la* records the fact, also represented explicitly by the framing verbs *xiik* 'they said' and *ika'i* 'I have heard', that the speaker is reporting what someone else has said about what happened: that the miscreant lover was shot in the testicles with a slingshot. In the embellished text, the speaker puts alleged words directly into the mouths of the little children who watched the lovers in the cornfield, and the *la* now suggests, "This is what they are *said* to have said (as they watched)."

At Lovers: 190, another *la* is lost in the native writer's normalization of the conversation. Judging from my own transcript of the sequence, the particle was interactionally the prelude to a joking invitation to another interlocutor to elaborate on the tale. R is telling about the mischievous students who went out to recess—*la*, 'it is said'—and later discovered the lovers in the cornfield. R goes on to suggest that M, another man present in the gossip session, was himself one of those schoolchildren.

Lovers1

190 r; k'alal ta x-lok'-ik ta rekreo li jchanvun-etik la une
when ICP ASP-exit-PL PREP recess ART student-PL LA CL
when the school kids went out for recess *la* . . .
...

192 x-chan-oj nan vun j-chi'il-tik li' une je je
3E-study-PF perhaps paper 1E-companion-1PL here CL

Perhaps our companion here was in school then himself.

This *la* appears both to introduce a joking insinuation (that M was one of the slingshot-wielders) and indirectly to invite M either to take up the story, or at least to defend himself from the charge. M in fact proceeds to do just that, starting off with a little laugh.

193 m: je

194 k'u cha'al jchanvun-on
what way student-1A

How could I have been a student?

By contrast, in the Tzotzil transcriber's version of the sequence, this little interactive scuffle, signaled by the evidential, is represented as an orderly exchange of narrative turns. M is no longer represented as defending himself but simply as continuing the story in a joking vein.

Lovers2

190 r; k'alal ta x-lok'-ik ta rekreo li jchanvun-etik une
when ICP ASP-exit-PL PREP recess ART student-PL CL
when the school kids get out for recess.

191 ja'o nan k'alal x-chan-oj vun li j-chi'il-tik le' une
just perhaps when 3E-learn-PF paper ART 1E-companion-1PL there CL
Perhaps it was when our companion there was still in school?

196 m; je juta yu'-me ja' s-k'el-oj i-y-ak'-be-ik un
what whore because-DESID ! 3E-watch-PF CP-3E-give-BEN-PL CL
taj-e
that-CL

Damn, THAT one was the one who watched them doing it!

The textual rendition simply carries the story forward without the negotiated multiple dialogues and interactional asides that characterized the gossip itself.

Other Evidential Particles and Discursive Coherence

Tzotzil makes frequent use of further evidential particles, two of which also play important roles in sequencing turns in conversation. Both orient the propositional content of an utterance to the preceding utterances, commenting in one way or another on a presumed body of information shared between interlocutors, often called "common ground" (Clark 1992). The two particles are *yu'van* and *a'a*, both usually translated "indeed." Neither particle can easily be attached to a sentence in isolation, however, because both imply in relation to the current utterance an evidential commentary on a (real or presupposable) preceding utterance.

Thus, *yu'van*, in utterance final position, suggests, "of course, indeed, what I am now saying is true, and you should have known it (despite the fact that you appear to have forgotten it or to be ignoring it, perhaps deliberately)." ¹³ Since *yu'van* is tied to a prior utterance, when a written text irons out

13. A more perspicacious and motivated analysis of this and the other particles mentioned is necessary here. See Haviland (1987a) and Haviland (1989) for some alleged improvements. Silverstein (personal communication) points out the similarity to English utterance-initial unstressed "of course." Etymologically, this particle derives from *y-u'* (3E-cause, i.e., 'because') and *van* 'perhaps' (only in interrogative contexts); thus 'is it perhaps because [of that]?'

the content of an argument or position, negotiated over several conversational turns, and collapses it onto a single, unitary, synthetic turn, the particle itself has to go. This happens to CN's overlapped remarks, at lines Lovers1: 270–271, where he is arguing that the identity of the slingshot-shooting miscreant must have become public knowledge, since even he, a man from another hamlet, had heard the gossip.

Lovers1

270 cn; an pero te (i-vinaj) ta tz'akal un yu'van
why but there CP-appear PREP later CL YU'VAN

Well, in that case it did come out later *after all*.

271 k'u ti i-vinaj to t-s-lo'ilta-ik to i-k-a'i taj un
what CONJ CP-appear still PREP-3E-gossip-PL still CP-1E-hear that CL
since it came out later, they gossiped about her later and I heard about that.

But what starts out as an oppositional or contrastive maneuver in the gossip session becomes, in the native writer's rendition, simply a confirmatory remark, in the midst of seeming general agreement. Thus the particle *yu'van* disappears.

Lovers2

270 cn; an pero y-u'un i-vinaj to un k'u ti i-s-lo'ilta-ik to
why but 3E-cause CP-appear still CL what CONJ CP-3E-gossip-PL still
i-k-a'i taj un
CP-1E-hear that CL

Why then it must have come out, if they gossiped about it and I heard that.

Sentence final *a'a* means "it's obvious," or "I already knew that." It suggests the speaker's knowing agreement with an immediately prior utterance; thus, where that utterance is absent in an edited text, the particle itself loses its place.

Moreover, when a conversation follows various currents at the same time, it may be necessary for a speaker to design a single utterance so as both to make his own point and to react to another's prior or current turn simultaneously, thus changing horses in conversational midstream. Such unhorsing seems to occur, for example, at Lovers1: 173. M remarks that Proylan went into his cornfield in the first place on a mission to guard his young crop against marauding dogs. However, M's speech is almost totally overlapped: he adds *a'a* apparently in agreement with what has just overlapped him (that Proylan had his love trysts in the corn field):

Lovers1

169 r; pero ta y-ut chobtik une
but PREP 3E-inside cornfields CL

But in the midst of the cornfields.

170 cn; [(... nab ti y-al-oj une)
lake CONJ 3E-say-PF CL
(the lake, they must have thought.)

171 r; ta y-ut chobtik la a'a
PREP 3E-inside cornfields LA A'A

Yes, they say right among the corn plants.

[
172 m; k'el-tz'i' y-ilel ch-bat taj
watch-dog 3E-seeing ICP-go that

It looked as though that (guy) was going to check for dogs

173 taj mol Proylan nan a'a
that old Proylan perhaps A'A

old Proylan was—*yeah*—

[
174 r; li Proylan-e che'e j-na'-tik mi ta x-ba s-k'el
ART Proylan-CL then IE-know-1PL Q ICP ASP-go 3E-watch
x-chob ta ti' nab
3E-cornfield PREP mouth lake

Who knows if P was going to look over his cornfield at the edge of the lake.

In Little Romin's written version, however, both of the first two lines are attributed to M, who now need only agree with the previous suggestion that something happened in the cornfield (hence an *a'a* is preserved in Lovers2: 169), and whose talk is no longer bothered by overlapping interlocutors in the edited written text.

Lovers2

169 m; in the cornfields la a'a
he went to check for dogs, Proylan did

171 r; old Proylan went to look at his cornfield . . .

Another evidential particle, *nan* 'perhaps,' suggests propositional uncertainty and can thus be a device for conveying interactional (perhaps even moral) effect, functioning as an element in a conversational stratagem. Insofar

as the textual rendering of a conversational moment may represent a rearrangement of the interactional balance between conversants, or a manipulation of their moral stances, it may be useful to adjust such a marker of doubt in a written text.

Whereas, in the rapid flow of conversation, speakers must continually monitor each other's turns, so that they know what will count—in the moment—as agreement or disagreement, the linear world of the text seems to smooth out such interactional details. Consider the complex exchange, at *Lovers I*: 323–331, where the gossip session is at a point of transition: having described the old lady's misadventures with young Proylan, the group moves on to consider whether she has engaged in any other improprieties. Two participants, R and CA, seem gradually, and simultaneously, to remember the same story, and their fragmentary turns each prompt the other to continue. As her new sin emerges (sleeping with the people who used to take her home, drunk, after she performed a curing ceremony), the two speakers are in an intricate dance of doubt, agreement, and confirmation, marked by evidential particles that track the state of discursive play at each moment.

Lovers I

322 ca: mi s-pas proval li mas krem yan li j-ch'il-tik
Q 3E-do attempt ART more boy other ART 1E-companion-1PL

Has she tried any more of our youngsters, our countrymen?

323 r: |
an ja' mu j-na'
why ! NEG 1E-know
Why, I just don't know.

324 an o la i-s-
why exist LA CP-3E-

Why, she [did] (*I've heard say*)—

R remembers having heard (see the particle *la* at 324) that the old lady had also been in trouble on another occasion. But before he manages to say where and when, CA suggests (with a hedging *nan* 'perhaps') that it involved occasions when she was being taken home:

325 ca: pero ja' nan ta y-ak'el-e
but ! NAN PREP 3E-giving-CL

But *perhaps* that was when she was being taken . . .

|

326 r: ch-ich' intyeksyon k'alal
ICP+3E-receive injections when
She got injections when . . .

R continues, over the interruption of CA, who suggests that the old woman's misbehavior took place *ta yak'el* 'when she was being taken (home).' R takes up CA's phrase in line 327,¹⁴ and adds the clarification that she was being escorted home after having performed a curing ceremony. R's final *a'a* at 328 apparently signals his agreement with CA about the circumstances.

327 li y-ak'el k'alal x-
ART 3E-giving when ASP-
she was being taken [home] after . . .

328 ch-'ilolaj a'a
ICP-cure A'A
. . . she has cured, indeed.

|
329 ca: ja' k-a'y-oj a'a
! 1E-hear-PF A'A
Yes, I've heard that.

330 k'alal tz-sut tal ta s-na li jchamel ya'el
when ICP-return coming PREP 3E-house ART patient it...seems
When she comes back from the house of the patient, it seems.

331 chbat ta ilole
ICP-go PREP curing
When she has gone to cure.

Simultaneously, at line 329, CA agrees with R (also using the particle *a'a*), saying that he has also heard this story and that it had to do with the old lady's misbehavior after curing ceremonies.

In the written version, this elaborate interactive exchange is smoothed out and regularized, and the surviving evidentials are adjusted to suggest a more orderly, linear, emerging story line, contributions to which are made by each participant in turn, reflecting definite states of knowledge at each point.

14. He accommodates his already enunciated but cut-off ergative prefix (*s-* at the end of line 324) to the new verb root '*ich*' with which he overlaps CA in the continuing line 326.

Lovers2

322-3m; pero o la x-ich' indeksion¹⁵ ta yan o un
but exist LA ASP+3E-receive injection prep other REL CL

But they say she has gotten injections from others.

325 ca; ja' taj y-ak'el-e
! that 3E-giving-CL

That's when they take her [home].

327-8r; ja' taj y-ak'el k'al ta x-'ilolaj a'a
! that 3E-giving when ICP ASP-cure A'A

Yes, that's when they take her home after she cures.

329 ca; ja' k-a'y-uj a'a
! 1E-hear-PF A'A

Yes, I've heard about that.

330 k'al sut(t)al ta s-na li jchamel ya'el-e
when return-coming PREP 3E-house ART patient it...seems-CL

When she comes back from the house of the patient, it seems.

331 bu ch-bat ta ilol-e
when ICP-go PREP curing-CL

When she has gone to cure.

The first suggestion about the story (and the evidential hedge represented by *la*) is now put in the mouth of another speaker, M, at lines 322–3. The rest of the story emerges in a sequence of orderly exchanges between R and CA, with each turn echoing agreement (marked by *a'a*) with its predecessor. What starts out as disorderly multiple-party conversation in Lovers1 emerges as shared or dialogically animated narrative monologue in Lovers2.

THE IMPOSITION OF A STANDARDIZED OR IDEALIZED SPEECH CONTEXT

It was clear to the Tzotzil writers that a written rendition, unlike the spoken conversation from which it derives, has been ripped from its physical setting. The immediate context of speech—the physical as well as the social environment—must recede in prominence.

For example, the writers elected to omit a deictic reference, at Volcano1: 41, since no Chiapas sun warms the written text.

15. Little Romin, the Tzotzil transcriber, has here rendered the Tzotzil pronunciation of the Spanish loanword *inyección* differently from my own hearing at Lovers1:326 above.

Volcano1

37 a; bwenó k'u x-'elan k'al i-k'ot une
well what ASP-be when CP-arrive CL

Good, so what was it like when [the ash] began to fall?

38 mi 'ora i-'ik'ub ta j-mek k'u x-'elan?
Q now CP-darken PREP I-time what ASP-be

Did it get dark right away, or what?

39 x; k'un'k'un ik'ub
slow darken

It got dark slowly.

40 s; ko'ol chk tok
equal like cloud

Just like fog (or clouds).

41 x; jech nox chk k'u cha'al este . . li' . . x-k-al-tik-e
thus just like what way uh here ASP-1E-say-IPL-CL

It was just like . . uh . . now, as it were.

42 sak to 'ox a'a
white still then A'A

Yes it was still light then.

This passage is simplified as follows:

Volcano2

38 mi 'ora i-'ik'ub tajmek, k'u x-'elan?

Did it get dark right away, or what?

39 x; k'un'k'un ik'ub.

It got dark slowly.

40 s; ko'ol chk tok.

Just like fog (or clouds).

42 x; sak to'ox.

It was still light then.

Notice that just as the inappropriate—because unrecoverable?—deictic reference (*li'* 'here, now') of line 41 is eliminated, the evidential *a'a* in the next line must also be pruned, as there is nothing left in the previous turn with which it can signal agreement.

The idealized context of speech has a social dimension as well. I have

suggested that these naive writers began with no established canon of written text for Tzotzil. Of course, they were not without canons of discursive form. Indeed, a central point of interest in this (more or less natural) evolution of a written genre is its indebtedness to existing standards for speech. A prominent feature of much Tzotzil talk is its convergence on a *dialogic* format. Even when there are multiple conversationalists, speech tends towards an ideal *dyad*, with one central speaker, and one designated interlocutor, or *jtak'vanej* 'answerer'. (See Haviland 1988, 1990; Goffman 1979.) When speech departs from this ideal—as in an angry squabble before the magistrate, or a joking gossip free-for-all—social arrangements often conspire to nudge or elbow participants back into orderly line. Indeed, skilled talkers count among their talents the ability to engineer an orderly exchange of turns, to suppress their own voices when they would hinder such exchange, and to trumpet them when such an exercise of verbal power will reimpose order. Such idealized dialogicality represents a *normalization* in its own right, producing in speech a convergence of very different verbal forms and tasks, and often masking the creative, multi-vocal, social complexity of emerging discourse. It does not surprise us that these novice Tzotzil writers impose a written counterpart of spoken dialogue on their edited texts, thus reducing interactive disorder to a textured but single thread of talk.

In the literacy workshop, for example, writers routinely and consciously purged overlaps and repetitions to straighten out the dialogue. Several passages already cited illustrate the phenomenon. For another example, I transcribed Volcano: 67–70 as follows:

Volcano1

67 o bu I-a-bat-ik
exist where CP-2A-go-PL
Or did you go somewhere else?

[
68 x; vo'on-e este
I-CL uh
Well, I, uh . . .

69 k'alal este tal ti tan x-k-al-tik-e
when uh come ART ash ASP-1E-say-IPL-CL
When the ashes came, as we say,

70 este li' oy-un ta Jobel-e
uh here exist-1A PREP SC-CL
Uh, I was here in San Cristóbal.

71 a; aa
72 x; li' oy-un ta Jobel
here exist-1A PREP SC
I was here in San Cristóbal.

The same passage appears in the writers' version as follows:

Volcano2

67 o bu I-a-bat-ik?
exist where CP-2A-go-PL
[Or] did you go somewhere else?
69 x; k'alal tal ti tan-e,
when come ART ash-CL
When the ashes came
70 li' oy-un ta Jobel-e.
here exist-1A PREP SC-CL
I was here in San Cristóbal.

More interestingly, there is also a smoothing of interactional edges. Where in the original conversations there were frequent struggles not only for the floor but for what might be called rights of authorship (for example, rights to tell a particularly juicy bit, to deliver the punchline, or to be able to finish a story line), the edited versions sometimes reorganize the emerging story so as to make things come out more neatly.¹⁶

The recasting of authorship, for example, occurs at Volcano:77. A is seemingly trying to preempt the narrative floor in preparation for launching his own story.

Volcano1

74 x; tal este k-ak' j-nichim-kutik x-k-al-tik
come uh 1E-give 1E-flower-1PX ASP-1E-say-IPL
we had . uh . come to give our flowers, as we say.
75 porke jech kostumbre oy-utik x-k-al-tik
because thus custom exist-1P ASP-1E-say-IPL
Because that's the custom we have, as it were.
76 komo nopol xa este semana santa x-k-al-tik
as near already uh week holy ASP-1E-say-IPL
Because, as we say, it was getting close to Holy Week.

16. Textual reorganizations of this kind may, of course, be as much products of the different *interactional context of the transcription* as results of some emerging textual canon. The writers share a common goal—settling on a text—whereas as conversationalists they were in competition for the floor, for rights to tell the story.

77 a; eso, nopol
yes near

Right, it was getting close.

78 mi y-olon mi s-lajel ech'el
Q 3E-below Q 3E-ending away

Was it before (Easter), or already afterwards?

79 vo'on-e ch' ay xa x-k-a'i
I-CL lose already ASP-1E-hear

I have forgotten.

80 x; mo'oj, y-olon to 'ox
no 3E-below still then

No, it was still before.

In the edited version, his turn is reduced to pure questioning, so that X is represented as continuing, unmolested, with his own narrative.

Volcano2

74 x; tal kak' jnichimkutik,

We had come to give (an offering of) our flowers,

75 **yu'un**¹⁷ jech kostumbrekutik.

Because that's our custom.

76 **yu'un** nopol xa semana santa.

Since it was getting close to Holy Week.

78 a; mi yolon mi slajel ech'el?

Was it before (Easter), or already afterwards?

80 x; mo'oj, yolon to'ox.

No, it was still before.

A more radical sort of reorganization takes place in a fragment of the gossip session which we have already met.

Lovers1

171 r; ta y-ut chobtik la a'a
PREP 3E-inside cornfields LA A'A

Yes, they say right among the corn plants.

[]

17. Such changes as the substitution of Tzotzil *yu'un* for Spanish *porque* reflect a conscious decision on the part of the literacy trainees, to which I return in "Form, Style, and Register Issues," to purge from their written text all Spanish loans in favor of their closest native equivalents.

172 m; k'el-tz'i' y-ilel ch-bat taj
watch-dog 3E-seeing ICP-go that

It looked as though that (guy) was going to check for dogs

173 taj mol Proylan nan a'a
that old P perhaps A'A

old Proylan was—*yeah*—

[]
174 r; li Proylan-e che'e j-na'-tik mi ta x-ba s-k'el
ART P-CL then 1E-know-1PL Q ICP ASP-go 3E-watch
x-chob ta ti' nab
3E-cornfield PREP mouth lake

Who knows if P was going to look over his cornfield at the edge of the lake.

Here a chance remark by R at line 171 in the original is misattributed in line 169 in the edited text to M, the established narrator of the moment. M's subsequent rejoinder is in turn attributed to R, creating a more orderly (dia)logic in the emerging story. (The question is when, why, and where the lovers made their way into the cornfields. The reason was supposedly that dogs had been eating the young ears of corn. Proylan, the owner, had gone to inspect the damage.)

Lovers2

169 m; ta yut chobtik la a'a
PREP 3E-inside cornfields LA A'A

Yeah they say in the cornfields.

172 a k'el-tz'i' la yil ch-bat taj yil proylan-e
go watch-dog LA disgusting ICP-go that disgusting P-CL

He went to watch for dogs, I hear, that disgusting Proylan.

174 r; li **mol** proylan-e y-u'un ch-ba s-k'el x-chob ta
ART old P-CL 3E-cause ICP-go 3E-watch 3E-cornfield PREP
ti' nab
mouth lake

Old Proylan went to look over his cornfields by the lake.

Much conversational back-channel—normally required in polite Tzotzil conversation—is purged from the written texts, as is multiple repetition, a phenomenon prominent in Tzotzil talk. Sometimes the interactive flavor and collaborative phraseology of the original talk is kept, although overt repetition is eliminated. Certain interactional struggles, signaled in talk by explicit "paragraph markers," which serve to reclaim the audience's attention and thus the floor (*va'i un*, literally 'so listen!'), are simply done away with in the written

versions. Conversely, some transition points in the narrative are made cleaner, disguising the fact that considerable efforts were required to achieve them in the conversational moment.

Related to such interactional smoothing is the ironing out in the edited text of irrelevant issues in the participant structure underlying the conversation, including what can be described as relations of identity, dominance, subordination, and deference. In speech, participants negotiate rights to telling the story, and the authority to tell it; they also compete as appropriate hearers or interlocutors; and they may explicitly and implicitly portray their relation and moral stance to the narrative, to its protagonists, and to the other participants in the speech event. Many such issues of "footing" (Goffman 1979) are blunted or eliminated in the naive writers' texts.

Consider, for example, the inappropriate "self-referential honorific" occurring at one point in the gossip session when a speaker refers to the old lady being discussed as *jme'tik Petu'* 'our mother Petrona.' This first-person plural inclusive possessive form is appropriate to, among others, familiar nonrelatives (where it contrasts with, e.g., *me' Petu'* 'mother P' appropriate to junior kinsmen, or *me'tik Petu'* 'mother P' [without the first-person possessive prefix *j-*] appropriate to a more distant acquaintance). Under the circumstances, such implicit claims to relationship are both inappropriate and somewhat ludicrous (since the whole point of the story is to ridicule the lewd old lady), and in the edited written version the reference is altered to *taj me'el Petu'* 'that old lady P,' implying no specific relationship with any of the speakers.

In general, facets of the relationships between interlocutors, patently available and interactionally exploitable if not necessarily exploited in the discursive event, are submerged in the decentered texts I have been presenting. They are only available to be read out *behind* the pragmatic bleaching and normalization. In the volcano conversation, for example, the fact that one of the narrators is a Zinacantec, whose Tzotzil dialect is also spoken by the workshop leader, gives his words a certain subtle prestige, a slight advantage over the variant of the other narrator, whose Chamula dialect is different. The only residue of this imbalance in the resulting text appears in potentially ambiguous phonological and morphological choices, which during editing were routinely resolved in favor of the dominant Zinacantec forms. I will return below to the evolution of a written standard from such micropolitics.

PROCESSING ISSUES

Not surprisingly, these naive Tzotzil writers discovered that speakers "make mistakes" that must not be slavishly reproduced in written texts. With neither

Saussurean nor Chomskian coaching, they came to reject parts of texts, even straightforwardly transcribable ones, as inappropriate.

HESITATIONS, FALSE STARTS, AND OTHER DYSFLUENCIES

In the Volcano transcript, most of the editing effort was devoted to eliminating hesitations, false starts, and other signs that the original conversationalists were nervous and uncertain in their talk. Pause markers of all kinds (*este, pues, bueno*, loans from Spanish, and *ali*, in Tzotzil) were routinely omitted from both texts. Similarly, certain repetitive expressions were systematically pruned, particularly *xkaltik* '(as) we say', a rough Tzotzil equivalent of the ubiquitous American English *y'know*. Speaker errors and hesitations were similarly smoothed. The writers confidently spotted—and purged—production errors, some involving mistaken intents, some involving speaker uncertainty (as, for example, at Volcano:68, in a passage we have already seen), others involving awkward expressions which resulted from mislaunching an utterance, which thus required reformulation.

On the other hand, in the written version of the gossip session, the transcriber decided to leave intact some speech twitches characteristic of several of the participants, much as a novelist will endow his characters with verbal signatures. CN, a well-known fast-talker, retains his habitual form of words—he ends his phrases with *uk une* (literally 'also then')—even in places where on the original tape he does not appear to use the words. The transcriber puts into this man's mouth words that make him *sound like himself*. Thus, for example, the following set of lines in Lovers1 is reduced to a single, stereotyped line in Lovers2.

Lovers1

287 cn; pen-

288 batz'i pentejo ali k-itz'in i-k-a'i ox
real asshole ART 1E-brother CP-3E-hear then

"What a real asshole my brother is!" is what I heard

289 x-chi li mol Prutarco
ASP-say ART old Plutarco
old Man Plutarco say.

Lovers2

288 cn; pentejo **tajmek**¹⁸ li kitz'ine xi li mol Prutarco **uk une**
"My brother is a real asshole," says old Plutarco, too.

18. The intensifier *batz'i* 'really' is also replaced, in Lovers2, with another intensifier, *tajmek* 'very'.

It is also unsurprising that the naive writers should apparently have felt free to edit the recorded utterances according either to standards of grammaticality and “intelligibility”¹⁹ or to judgments about register and appropriate levels of formality. They altered everything from lexical items to verbal inflections, from auxiliary verbs to particles showing interclausal linkages. The literacy trainees even sought an orthographic solution to an intonational problem, introducing commas to help clarify an otherwise ambiguous parsing.

There is obviously a special problem that ordinary writers do not face in the written rendition of what starts as a spoken conversation: what to do with unintelligible material or uncertain hearings. In the Volcano conversation, the writers and I jointly decided on a transcription of the original, resolving questions of interpretation by committee, until we had a transcript from which we could proceed. In the Lovers transcript, the transcriber was on his own, and occasionally what he wrote seems to result from embellishment and overinterpretation of material on the original tape that is difficult to hear, overlapped, or plainly unintelligible.²⁰ There are numerous revealing instances in the text. For example, at Lovers: 226, where CN makes a joke,

Lovers1

226 cn: ay x-chi xa nan li mol une ja ja ja
oh ASP-say already perhaps ART old-man CL

“Ay” said the old fellow, probably, ha ha ha.

the transcriber interprets it as a *different* joke:

Lovers2

226 cn: muk' xa jal x-ixtalan li mol uk un
NEG already long(time) ASP+3E-play ART old also CL

The old fellow didn't get to play around very long.

I have already mentioned such embellishment and reattribution in the case of another joke, at Lovers: 219–222.

19. The tape recordings I have of the editing sessions for the Chichonal text contain such evaluative expressions as *chopol* ‘bad’, *mu stak* ‘it won't serve’, *mu a'ibaj lek* ‘you can't understand it clearly’, applied to utterances that need reformulation.

20. I have not, since beginning this investigation, taken the obvious step of listening again to the original tape recording with the original transcriber—now a distinguished ex-President and powerful political figure in the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional*—to puzzle out his interpretations. I have, however, checked my own transcription with other Zinacantecs.

CONTENT ISSUES

Clearly, the task of producing a text (which involves fixing its content, what it is “about”) puts strong constraints on these naive writers. Exactly where such constraints arise is worth pursuing in more detail. Do these writers develop a “story” that schematically divides the relevant from the inconsequential? Do plots—whether of disasters with denouements or jokes with punchlines—have an internal momentum and contour which must be maintained in a written rendition? Is there a kind of referential focus here, which causes writers to stick to “the facts?”

We encounter in these empirical specimens what might be called the power of narrative to regiment its own decentering.²¹ In familiar ways, the story itself produces its own kind of normalization, although the process is arguably a dialectic between the narrative “facts” and the needs of the discursive moment. Nonetheless, the reduction of conversational discourse to orthogonal text cannot simply be a result of pragmatic “bleaching,” since the narrative “events,” the momentum of the “story,” the “denouement,” and its evaluative “moral” all independently motivate the pruning of those conversational sequences which do not advance narrative ends. The urge to keep to a central story line is also, I may add, driven both by the concerns of the discursive moment—when one “story” can be arguably represented as better than another—and by a retrospective interpretive glance at the moment of writing. The tale of volcanic disaster in Tzotzil terms is *lo'il no'ox* ‘just talk, conversation’. The gossip about the slatternly old lady is a possessed deverbal noun, from the same root: *slo'iltael* ‘the story told on her’. The morphology here suggests that *certain* narratives—*lo'iltael*—being aimed and barbed, are more *tellable* than others which are ‘mere talk’.

ELIMINATING IRRELEVANCIES AND SIDETRACKS

I have already mentioned that in the volcano story the writers began at an early stage to prune from the written text all extraneous characters, including me, limiting the text to two storytellers and their mutual interaction.

In the gossip text, however, the Zinacantec transcriber needed to make more complex decisions about both the internal momentum and dramatic logic of the story. A clear example comes when the written text slyly cuts any mention of the schoolchildren's slingshots until the appropriate moment, apparently

21. Consider the classical treatment of narrative and the strong social demands on its discursive realization in Labov (1972): see also Haviland (1977, Ch. 4).

so as not to undermine the coming comic sequence in which the lovers are attacked from behind with slingshot pellets, bringing the cornfield tryst to an abrupt and painful end. Perhaps the author does not want his readers—just as, in the original telling he did not want his audience—to see the joke coming before he is ready to deliver it; or perhaps the writer, like the teller, wants the right—and the space—to deliver the punchline himself. Compare the following transcribed fragment of a passage we have met before with the subsequent written formulation by Little Romin.

Lovers1

210 r: s-lok'-oj la li s-vex une
3E-remove-PF LA ART 3E-pants CL

They say he had taken off his pants.

211 x-vinaj li s-bek' y-at ta s-pat une
ASP-appear ART 3E-seed 3E-penis PREP 3E-back CL

His balls were visible from behind.

212 m: |
ja ja ja

213 r: y-a:k'-be ech'el
3E-give-BEN away

He was giving it to her (facing away from them).

214 all: ja ja JAA JAA

215 ca: i-k-a'i ti ji-
CP-1E-hear CONJ

What I heard was that . . .

|
216 all: ((laughter))

217 ca: y-ich' la-
3E-receive LA

That apparently he got it . . .

|
218 all: ((laughter))

219 ca: y-ich' la uli' li s-bek' y-at-e xi-ik i-k-a'i
3E-receive LA slingshot ART 3E-seed 3E-penis say-PL CP-1E-hear

that apparently he got hit by the slingshot right on the balls, they say, I've heard.

|
220 all: ((laugh))

221 j: ja' nan ch-p'it lok'el nan li povre
! perhaps ICP-jump exiting perhaps ART poor

The poor fellow perhaps jumped right out.

Little Romin, in his own transcription, renders the same passage as follows:

Lovers2

210 r: s-lok'-oj la li s-vex une
3E-remove-PF LA ART 3E-pants CL

They say he had taken off his pants.

211 x-vinaj li s-bek' y-at ta s-pat une
ASP-appear ART 3E-seed 3E-penis PREP 3E-back CL

His balls were visible from behind.

213 i-y-ak'-be la ech'el un
CP-3E-give-BEN LA away CL

He was giving it to her (facing away from them), it's said.

219 ca: kabron pero k'u tz-sa' ti buy x-jipjon s-bek'
damn but what ICP+3E-seek CONJ where ASP-flinging 3E-seed
y-at-e xi-ik la un
3E-penis-CL say-PL LA CL

Damn, but what is he up to flinging his balls about like that, they said, supposedly.

220 x: aj aj aj aj

221 d: pero batz'i x-mut'lij xa j-na' un
but really ASP-jerking/shrinking already 1E-know CL

But he must have been just about to ejaculate, I bet.

Little Romin eliminates CA's upstaging mention of the slingshot, at line 219, and presents the story—which, incidentally, *he* was telling (he appears as R in the transcript)—in his own way.

The Tzotzil writers seem to have invented their own version of an inherently propositional view of language, in which superficially different formulations can be reduced to a common shared referential content. The problem is particularly pressing in the task they faced: to reduce a multiparty conversation with considerable overlap and interaction to a coherent linear text. The process of writing seems to allow a pragmatic restructuring, tending towards an ultimately monologic form, where propositional content takes precedence over the indexical microcosm of the parent interaction, and where interactive richness is pruned in favor of monologic narrative.

Some textual reformulations are offered in the guise of mere corrections. During the editing session one speaker, X, offered an improved version of "what he meant to say" at Volcano: 46.²² The original line,

Volcano1

k-a'-uk y-u'un wo'-uk nox x-tal-e
1E-think-IRREAL 3E-cause water-IRREAL only ASP-come-CL

I thought that only rain was coming.

is re-rendered as

Volcano2

ko'olaj x-chi'uk vo' i-tal.
equals 3E-with water CP-come

It was the same as if it were about to rain.

The reformulation, according to X, captured his intended meaning better than what he actually heard himself say on the tape.

At a higher level, where, because of interruptions or generalized hilarity, episodes in the original interaction are unable to reach a satisfactory narrative conclusion, the writers occasionally introduce order from without. For example, Little Román frames the slingshot sequence with an initial "paragraph marker" *va'i un* (where the original text has none), and he closes the scene in proper fashion with a clause-final clitic *une* at line 205.

Lovers2

200 r; v-a'i un
2E-hear CL

so listen

201 li jchanvun-etik une
ART student-PL CL

the schoolchildren . . .

202 ta x-bat-ik un
ICP ASP-go-PL CL

they went

203 ta sa'-ik mut ta x-lok'-ik j-likel ta rekreo un
ICP 3E+seek-PL bird ICP ASP-exit-PL 1-moment PREP recess CL

they hunted birds when they got out for a moment of recess.

22. *Mu a'ibaj k'usi xk'ot 'o* 'one can't understand what it leads to' is the criticism X launched against his own recorded utterance.

204 ta x-bat-ik ta y-ut chobtik un
ICP ASP-go-PL PREP 3E-inside cornfields CL
they went into the cornfields.

205 ja' ti bu x-va'et-ik une
! ART where ASP-standing-PL CL

or wherever they happened to loiter about.

The written text thus imposes an episodic structure which in the original conversation can be inferred only from the interaction and not from the actual language.

FORM, STYLE, AND REGISTER ISSUES

Finally, differences between the original conversational performances and the written renditions reflect these Tzotzil writers' decisions about which *varieties* of language to reproduce in the texts they are creating. Despite a reputation (and a talent) for ridiculing their neighbors' dialects, the Tzotzil writers were enthusiastic about representing not only their own speech but also that of others, in readable form. The literacy teachers, for example, welcomed an alphabet in which each speaker would write as he or she spoke. The resulting dialect tolerance was combined with apparent criteria of dialect purity, so that sometimes speakers' written words were adjusted to coincide with their own appropriate dialects, even when the spoken words were, by such a criterion, "in error."²³

Moreover, the literacy trainees displayed a developed consciousness about Tzotzil as a dominated language, and unsurprisingly (though to a certain extent, as a result of our urgings) began a campaign to purge Spanish from their Tzotzil texts. Throughout the editing process, with increasing enthusiasm the writers excised Spanish loans, including connectives that are a routine part of ordinary speech, and substituted the nearest (and often infrequently used) Tzotzil equivalents. Words like *porque* 'because', *como* 'like', and even *pero* 'but', fell away before Tzotzil paraphrases, or were simply omitted when the writers found them redundant in the context of an overall Tzotzil construction.

Even the gossip group created its own special euphemisms. The language of "injections" evolved during the gossip sessions, from an apparently creative initial use to a generalized group in-joke. The expression was incorporated

23. Laughlin (in press) remarks that a Chamulan's speech as it is rendered into writing by another Chamulan is pruned of the Zinacanteoisms that the speaker has picked up in the course of his working life.

willy-nilly into the written text, and, duly, into the speech of at least a small group of Zinacantec hamlet-mates—including Little Romin himself, who still uses it twenty-five years later in joking conversation.²⁴

THE PRAGMATIC NORMALIZATION OF THE WRITTEN TEXT

Between a conversational moment and representations of entextualized telos, the balance between what Silverstein (1976) called relatively presupposing and relatively creative (entailing) indexes in speech must necessarily shift. Partly this is a sequential spelling out of indexical givens in the texts I have presented. Participants no longer present themselves as human faces, with biographies and competing interests, but only as disembodied words. There is no longer a negotiable universe of discourse, but instead a textually established corpus of common knowledge, whose mutuality is not between interlocutors but between text-artifact and reader. The channel eliminates in obvious but occasionally profound ways the context of situation of some originary text. Any text resulting from writing eliminates the warmth of the sun that the original conversants could point to deictically. It erases the tension between tellers, the scramble for punchlines, and the secret animosities between rivals for the floor thinly masked behind mildly competitive words, that were all too obvious to us gossipers. The remnants of such micropolitics are buried behind the process of entextualization itself. Little Romin, taking authorial control of the gossip text, nudges his own words—and his narrative authority—vaguely to center stage. The literacy trainees endow the adopted Tzotzil dialect of the anthropologist leader with a passive prestige in the textual sediment, even as the anthropologist himself is rendered discursively invisible. And so on.

I have spoken about the pragmatic *normalization* involved when a text is extracted from a discursive center—say, a multiparty gossip session—and recast onto simpler, or at least transformed, indexical terrain: a linear narrative, or a semantic dialogue with simulated multiple voices presented in a monologic pragmatic medium. Perhaps writing as mere technology is responsible for much of the normalization I have described. Goody argues that the inven-

24. Don Brenneis has pointed out, in discussion, that the process of entextualization can lead, at a later point, to retellings: the reincorporation into speech of something once reduced to text. See also Haviland and de León (1988), and Sherzer (1983: 201 ff.). Here we see a single symptom of the more global process: the gossip group develops its own highly context-specific turns of phrase. These are in turn frozen onto a written page. At the same time, through a parallel process of decentering, the writer himself generalizes their usage by incorporating such phrases, now with echoes of their dialogic origins, into less context-bound speech.

tion of writing and its institutional spread trigger a series of transformations of mind at the level of society as a whole. Much of the effect he attributes almost mechanically to the tangible product of writing—the manipulable, examinable, physical text-artifact itself:

When an utterance is put in writing it can be inspected in much greater detail, in its parts as well as in its whole, backwards as well as forwards, out of context as well as in its setting; in other words, it can be subjected to a quite different type of scrutiny and critique than is possible with purely verbal communication. Speech is no longer tied to an 'occasion'; it becomes timeless. Nor is it attached to a person; on paper it becomes more abstract, more depersonalized. (1977: 44)

The pragmatic reduction of spoken words in the texts produced by naive Tzotzil writers thus exemplifies minuscule preliminary steps down Goody's longer road to what is claimed to be a distinctively "modern" cognition.

In this view, literacy emancipates its beneficiaries from the contingency of the indexical surround, including personae and activities:

Words assume a different relationship to action and to object when they are on paper than when they are spoken. They are no longer bound up directly with 'reality'; the written word becomes a separate 'thing', abstracted to some extent from the flow of speech, shedding its close entailment with action, with power over matter. (Goody 1977: 46)

However, part of the warrant for pragmatic normalization in these written texts derives from something deeper than technology. I have suggested, for example, that narrative may by its nature exhibit a strong decenterability, so strong that alternate texts and voices are drowned out in the process of creating coherence around a monologic story line. Bauman argues that

Events are not the external raw materials out of which narratives are constructed, but rather the reverse: Events are abstractions from narrative. It is the structures of signification in narrative that give coherence to events in our understanding. (Bauman 1986: 5)

Events are thus segments of some entextualized narrative.

Pragmatic normalization in moving to text from talk (evident in the relation that a narrative conversation has to its text-artifactual representation as accomplished by writers or transcribers), thus has an analog in what we might

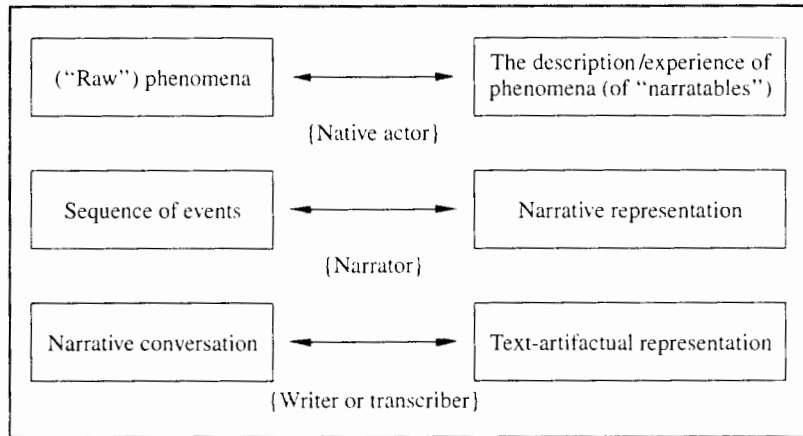


FIGURE 2.1

call *referential normalization*, the process by which a narrative core is extracted/overlaid on a sequence of events, a feat engineered and accomplished by a storyteller and her or his interlocutors.

There is a further analogy. The classificatory imperative of language itself means that all utterances, spoken or written, convert "raw" phenomena—whatever these may be—into the discrete units of experience, specific "narratables" now cast into linguistic chunks whose size and shape depend on grammatical and morpho-lexical categories of the language in question, "fashioned" in speech. The agents of this ubiquitous process are, of course, speakers (i.e., actors) in general. There is thus (minimally) a three-step process of normalization, illustrated in Figure 2.1.

Moving from talk to text is thus a single moment in a larger, ubiquitous process of shearing away context to permit representation, the target of our joint metaphors of "decentering" and "entextualization." The process requires filtering of the various indexical phenomena that defines narratables and incorporating those that survive into the text-artifact. Any narrative that results is more completely and autonomously determined—decentered or entextualized, or, perhaps, "(re)centered" on the text-artifact itself—than it was in the interaction from which it sprang.

There are at least two further important matters which have lurked in the background here, and which I will simply note in closing. The first is the ethnographic question about Tzotzil "genres": narratives, conversations, "gossip," or "jokes." How do such models together with local canons of the "interaction order" (Goffman 1983) interrelate with the sorts of phenomena I have

reported?²⁵ Zinacantecs are, I think, less interested in, say, the precise timing of overlap or the mechanics of repair than in what makes a good story, or how to frame events and opinions in a form that everyone can agree on. I have mentioned that talk, in Tzotzil *lo'il* 'talk, conversation', via the derived verb *-lo'ilta* 'tell stories on (somebody)', can be conceptualized to be aimed at a victim. Implicitly, Zinacantecs, like everyone else, know that only certain sorts of things can be told and only about certain people. Not all news is newsworthy; not all *lo'il* can be aimed. By extension, then, one presumes that only some (aspects of) tellings can be written, or in the absence of the ethnographer's promptings would be worth writing.

An important aspect of apparent Tzotzil theory about narrating becomes evident in Zinacantec legal discourse. In the courtroom before a Tzotzil magistrate, interest often centers less on the narrative sequence of a witness's account than on whether *itz'ep'uj sk'op*—whether 'his word slipped'. Did he, that is, inadvertently change his story, blurring out an inconsistency? The Tzotzil notion of "replication" (when a witness is asked to tell his story several times) is here seen to involve a referential thread together with the precise formulation of crucial details. A further look at the work of current Tzotzil writers will need to explore the connections between locally constituted genres and consciously fashioned texts.

Finally, this brings me to an issue I have left largely in the air: the matter of power, authorship, and authority. On the one hand, social power is mediated through the texts it produces (allows). An American court insists on "the whole truth," while a Zinacantec magistrate searches for a "ratifiable account," replete not only with (self-)confirmatory detail but also with opportunities for agreement or at least mutual acquiescence between antagonists. We are again balanced between coherence and accuracy.

However, the trick of producing text from discourse has a more immediate politico-economic dimension as well. After all, the Tzotzil writers whose products I have surveyed here were in various ways doing my bidding. How did they understand their tasks? What did they think I wanted from them? What did they want from me? Both the literacy trainees hoping for a relatively well-paid government job if they could just satisfy our criteria for accurate writing, and Little Romín transcribing my gossip tapes at a standard salary of so much per page, had clear economic stakes in the production of their texts. For Tzotziles—from anthropological consultant to bilingual schoolteacher,

25. A parallel question arises about the theorist's notion of "transcript," exemplified in my own texts.

from Indian writer funded by development grants to mini-bus driver hoping for a driver's license, or would-be migrant worker looking for travel papers—literacy pays. Perhaps more than pragmatics and in ways to be explored, pesos motivate the production of text from talk.

I have noted that the power of narrative itself may have compelling effects: the stories of Proylan and the old lady, or the volcanic eruption, may by their very nature warrant decentering/entextualizing, thereby producing the illusion of coherent, integrated texts that can stand clear of the circumstances of their production. We engage in this sort of sleight of hand all the time, often perhaps unwittingly, in doing ethnography. I have here recorded the sad fact that heretofore innocent Tzotziles can be induced to engage in similar conjuring tricks.

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Discovering Discourse in Text