

NOTES AND REVIEWS

ORTHOGRAPHY FOR WHOM?

This brief note is prompted by the very useful and constructively critical review by Doris A. Bartholomew¹ of the book *Otomi Parables, Folktales, and Jokes* which I edited with Jesús Salinas Pedraza.² We are grateful to Bartholomew for her thorough treatment of the work, for her noting of some deficiencies, and for her suggestion regarding the use of punctuation in the writing of Native American texts. I hope this note will clear up some of the problems brought out by Bartholomew; and I believe that her suggestion regarding punctuation is so important that it merits public discussion.

First, some housecleaning: as Bartholomew points out, it is indeed the case that diacritics were inadvertently omitted from the IPA equivalents of some characters in our orthography. Bartholomew is also correct in her translation of the word *dcn̄thi* as *whip* (sequence 32 in *The Story of the Day Laborer*). I have no objection to her free rendering of the story which she used for examples in her review. Next, Bartholomew noted that the preface to the volume gives no data about the editors or their respective contributions, or about the particular dialect of Otomi. I hope that the following will fill this gap.

Jesús Salinas is a native speaker of Otomi from Orizabita, Municipio de Ixmiquilpan, Hidalgo. He is thirty-six years old and held a teaching post in his native village during the time we worked on these stories. The stories were spoken by Salinas into a tape recorder and were translated during a six-week work

¹ Doris A. Bartholomew, "Review of *Otomi Parables, Folktales, and Jokes* edited by H. R. Bernard and Jesús Salinas P.," *IJAL* 45 (1979): 94-97.

² H. Russell Bernard and Jesús Salinas P., eds., *Otomi Parables, Folktales, and Jokes*, *IJAL-NATS* 1, no. 2 (1976).

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stint in July-August 1972 in San Diego, California. This work was supported by a grant to me from the Phillips Fund of the American Philosophical Society. The grant was for the production of a new Otomi orthography, for the collection of text materials, and for the training of Salinas in transcription of those materials. The publication of *Otomi Parables, Folktales, and Jokes* was conceived as a prelude to the development of materials for an ethnography of the Otomi, written in Otomi by Salinas.

It was our feeling that a new orthography was needed because the existing one was not being used by the Otomies themselves. The orthography devised by the Summer Institute of Linguistics had been available for several decades, but, so far as we could tell, there were no Otomi authors spontaneously using the S.I.L. writing system. Our ethnographic research turned up several reasons for the lack of acceptance of the S.I.L. orthography on the part of the Otomies. The most important reason, we think, is that it is simply not to the Otomies' economic or political advantage to learn to read and write Otomi. Again and again we were told, in very clear terms, that the Otomi language was like a "brand" which "marked people and made them poor." Salinas, who is a schoolteacher, was told by fellow villagers many times that he should see to it that their children learned Spanish and not Otomi.

In spite of this obstacle to Otomi literacy, some people were enthusiastic about the possibility of reading and writing their own language. But they felt that studying the existing orthography was a waste of time, because there was nothing to read in Otomi except for religious texts. Moreover, the orthography was considered cumbersome by many of our informants. It could not be typed on a standard typewriter (making production of local mimeographed newsletters, for example, out of the question), and it marked tone. The last point brings us to a matter of great importance, both to our work

and to broader issues of orthographic theory. Although tone is clearly phonemic in Otomi, and there is a long debate among linguists about how to mark it most elegantly, it proves unnecessary and cumbersome for Otomies to mark tone in their own language. We do not mark stress in English, though foreigners wish we would.

For all these reasons, we believed that a new orthography was needed—one that could be used by anyone who was functionally literate in Spanish and who was a native speaker of Otomi. The new orthography was developed during the transcription of the stories and jokes in the *NATS* volume reviewed by Bartholomew. Salinas became very comfortable with the transcription. Though I can appreciate Bartholomew's finding some of our orthography unappealing from an aesthetic point of view, Salinas was not troubled by the use of *v* for the schwa *ʌ*, or the use of *c* for the low back vowel *ɔ*. In fact, it was he who suggested these substitutions during discussions we had about how to use a standard keyboard to write Otomi.

During that work session in 1972, I began doing all the transcriptions myself; but midway through the session Salinas started working alone. After he finished transcribing a story, I went over the work, comparing it to the tape, making corrections, and putting in the tones. By the last week, very few orthographic corrections were required, though I was still putting in all the tones.

In 1976, we were awarded a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities in order to produce an ethnography of Otomi, written spontaneously in Otomi (i.e., without the use of tape recorders) by Salinas. My role was to train Salinas in ethnography and to translate and annotate the work in English.

This stage of our work involved boiling down the orthography still further, eliminating tones altogether. This became necessary as we reached the point where Salinas began to write Otomi spontaneously, in long tracts, directly from his thoughts. He was impatient with the tones which I, as an anthropological linguist, had thought necessary. He insists

(correctly, of course) that tone marking is irrelevant, so long as the reader is an Otomi and not a North American or Mestizo academic. Thus, in our latest volume (the first volume of the monolingual Otomi ethnography) Salinas has produced the entire text directly to paper.³ The volume deals with the geography of the Mezquital and the fauna. The next volume, currently underway, will treat the flora, including medicinal uses. We produced camera-ready copy on the text editor of West Virginia University's computing facility. This allowed us to do a more thorough job of editing and cleaning of typographical errors than in our volume of folktales and jokes. It also allowed Salinas to scan his work and to redo sentences. This entire corpus is preserved on tape and is available to interested scholars for analysis. So far as I know, this is the first such corpus of Native American text material available in this form. It allows for studies of the evolution of literary style (in one person, anyway), as well as for statistical studies of the phonology and other parts of the grammar.

Studies of tone patterns are not possible, of course, in the ethnography. However, the volume of folktales and jokes does allow for detailed studies of such patterns. Bartholomew is correct in noting that I do not provide much information about the tone-marking system that I used in the volume she reviewed. In a previous paper,⁴ I provided a system for marking tone in isolated words; and in 1974, I offered some observations on tone patterns in discourse context.⁵ In the first paper, I showed that (at least for words in isolation) tone could be accounted for by a very small number of ordered rules and that only two tones (high and low) were required under these rules. In the second article, after considering

³ Jesús Salinas P. with H. Russell Bernard, *The Otomi*, vol. 1, *The Geography and the Fauna* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1978).

⁴ H. Russell Bernard, "Otomi Tones: A Re-Evaluation," *Anthropological Linguistics* 8 (1966): 15–19.

⁵ H. Russell Bernard, "Otomi Tones in Discourse," *IJAL* 40 (1974): 141–50.

the work of Wallis,⁶ I suggested that there were several "levels" of tone rules, one of which was for discourse. Further, I was (and am) convinced that personal rhythm of speech, and pauses, are determinants of tone pattern in discourse. However, I have not been able (so far) to derive an elegant set of rules for marking tone in discourse context.

In general, the rules I use for marking tone in discourse are: (1) mark only those tones which need to be marked according to the ordered rules I offered in 1966; and (2) mark all exceptions to those rules.

For example, low tone is marked in discourse only when it follows high tone in the same word, or when word-final in polysyllabic words. Any instance where low tone may have been marked elsewhere in the text is simply overkill. This is not very elegant, but it does provide useful information for now. I hope that the voice tapes of the material and the marking of tone and pause in the text reviewed by Bartholomew will contribute to the search for discourse-level laws of tone production.

Finally, Bartholomew's suggestion about punctuation is very important. She advocates that Native American texts be written with punctuation, in order to "systematically handle at least some of the expressive and intonational uses of pitch and length." We (Salinas and I) considered using punctuation, but rejected it because we felt we were not ready to make judgments about appropriate punctuation in Otomi. The reader will note that Salinas has opted not to use much punctuation in the more recently published ethnography. I find it impossible, of course, to translate to English without using quotation marks. But Salinas has (so far) decided that quotation marks are unnecessary in written Otomi. We decided to use capital letters at the beginning of sentences. Salinas uses some exclamation points, where emphasis would not otherwise be clear. On the other hand, he does not yet use question marks, since he feels they are superfluous, given other marking

⁶ Ethel Wallis, "The Word and the Phonological Hierarchy of Mesquital Otomi," *Language* 44 (1968): 76-90.

of interrogatives in Otomi. Salinas feels that the article *rc* should stand alone, unless it is part of a contraction, as in *eengrc 'maehnc said the woman*. This results from a rule which has evolved during Salinas's work: all words in Otomi end in vowels. Thus, the phrase *eengrc rc* contracts to *eengrc* rather than to *eeng rc*.

Frankly, the rules for punctuation and contractions in Otomi are evolving as we work. It is very likely that there will be changes in these policies as we move ahead with the orthography. Salinas is teaching others to write Otomi, and they may suggest the use of more punctuation than Salinas now believes is necessary. Bartholomew says, "Especially in these days when linguistic theory emphasizes the unity of grammar and phonology, and when sociolinguistic policy advocates full recognition of minority languages, it seems wrong to deprive the transcription of the native language of its rightful punctuation. Bernard has been successful in teaching native speakers to write the language phonemically (except for tone). Probably he can teach them to punctuate the sentences also" (p. 96). I certainly agree with the notion of the unity of grammar and phonology, and the recognition of native languages (who wouldn't?). But I fail to see how these things are related to "rightful punctuation." Salinas and I have been working to develop an orthography for spontaneous use by Mezquital Otomi speakers. We have been trying to move away from transcription of spoken texts and more toward the production of written materials directly from thought to paper.

The idea that Otomi has a "right" to punctuation is rather unproductive, in my opinion. Linguists may need tone markings to make Otomi intelligible to them. And I would personally be more comfortable with punctuation than without it. But Salinas is writing Otomi and feels no need for any tone marking and precious little need for punctuation. Those Otomies to whom he has shown his texts have little difficulty reading them. They do not ask for tone or punctuation marks. Full recognition of minority languages must surely mean that their writing systems

can evolve according to the needs of the writers, rather than according to the needs of linguists. I do not consider it any failure on my part to have been unsuccessful in teaching Salinas to use tone markings. On the contrary, Salinas has taught me that (in spite of my needs as a linguist) tones are just a pesky nuisance to him. I have no doubt that a few more punctuation marks may creep into the Otomi writing system over time. But I see no reason for me to decide now what they will be or to teach Otomies to use them.

As I stated at the beginning of this note, I found Bartholomew's review to be very constructive. Her knowledge of Otomi is obviously excellent (most likely better than mine); her request for more information on the background of the book and on the reason for my having marked tone and pause as I did is well taken. I must part company, however, with the notion that Otomi (or any previously nonwritten language) can be "deprived of its rightful punctuation."

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A NEW WRITING SYSTEM FOR THE CANADIAN INUIT (ESKIMO)

0. Introduction

1. The background of Canadian Inuttitut writing
2. The preparatory work of the Inuit Language Commission
3. Some considerations preliminary to a proposal for a parallel system
4. The new writing system

0. In connection with the preparation and acceptance of a new writing system for the Canadian Inuit, both linguistic and non-linguistic aspects of the question are of great interest. The term "writing system" is preferred to "orthography," because a system allows variation in the number of dialectal "orthographies." The linguistic aspects deal with the phoneme inventory of the language, taking into consideration both surface and underlying structure. Among the

nonlinguistic aspects, one may mention the different writing systems that have been employed, in particular the Inuit syllabary, and their relationships to the Inuit dialect areas, as well as the governmental and church authorities who have practiced special ways of writing the Inuit language. But not least of all, there is the question of proposing a satisfactory orthography in a region where there is no recognized common standard dialect or "official language." There are also some aspects connected with the relationship between Canadian dialects and other Inuit dialects, when one considers the problem in the context of written communication.

1. Although the Labrador Inuttitut had a writing system by 1800, when the Moravian missionaries introduced a writing system using the Roman alphabet, the people living about the Mackenzie Delta are only now acquiring a recognized writing system. In different regions, different writing systems were introduced, often by missionaries who had spent a great deal of time working out their system; but frequently the result was only poorly suited to the demands of the Inuttitut. It is not my intention, however, to try here to give a detailed description of the various writing systems using the Roman alphabet, partly because my knowledge of some of them is rather superficial.

It is my impression that some of those occupied with Inuttitut writing were in fact aware that their own writing customs were unsuited to Inuit language structure. This at least is a possible reason that Reverend J. Peck preferred to introduce a syllabic writing system instead of the Roman alphabet. With minor adaptations, he adopted a syllabic system used for the Cree language. The syllabic system is reminiscent of early shorthand systems, in that simple geometrical signs are used as symbols. The main symbol is a triangle which can symbolize four different vowels by turning its point in four directions: left, right, up, and down. The consonant symbols may form syllables with the same vowels by taking up positions oriented in a direction corresponding to that of the match-