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WELL-FORMED NARRATIVE IN HIGHLAND OAXACA CHONTAL

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- **0.** Introduction
- 1. Free translation of text
- 2. General characteristics of narrative
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- 4. Analysis of paragraphs
- 5. Text and literal translation
- 0. In Highland Oaxaca Chontal (HC), narrative text is hard to come by. Almost all of the old storytellers have died, and only a few people here and there remember tales that were told. The following text was told to the Señora Emerenciana Torres by her grandmother. In order for the content of the tale to be seen in its entirety, the free translation is given first. The HC form and literal translation are found at the end of the article.

1. The Story of the Lions

Episode A:

The Mother Lion's Story to Her Cubs

- I. 1. A man went hunting. 2. When it was getting dark, he saw a clearing. 3. And he said, "Now what can I see—it's dark."
 4. So he climbed a tree. 5. For he said, "Otherwise, if some animal should come, if there's nothing else, it will eat me."
- II. 6. So then they arrived; at dark the lion cubs arrived with their mother. 7. And they said, "Tell us our story."
- ¹ Data for this article were collected on field trips to the Highland Oaxaca Chontal area during 1967–70 and 1972–73, under the auspices of the Summer Institute of Linguistics. The text was recorded and transcribed by Muriel Parrott in the village of Santo Domingo Chontecomatlan. The analysis and write-up are by Viola Waterhouse.

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- III. 8. So then she said, "Now you climb up the tree." 9. The lion cubs climbed up the tree. 10. She said, "You go see if someone is there, if some earth person is sitting up there."
- IV. 11. So then they just climbed up. 12. And then they came down. 13. There was no one there; there was no listener. 14. The man stretched out there they didn't see. 15. And so he just kept quiet, sitting there.
- V. 16. So then when they came down, she told the story. 17. Now she told it to her cubs. 18. She said, "Now in a certain place, in a city, there is a city where they buy their water." 19. "There isn't any water." 20. "If we were men, if we were people, we would show where the water is." 21. "So that we would make a lot of money." 22. And she said, "Now since we're only animals, it isn't possible, we can't talk."
- VI. 23. So then the lions danced. 24. They danced around the tree there in their clearing. 25. They were contented. (Yes, indeed.) 26. They were happy.
- VII. 27. So then when day came, they went away. 28. They went away. 29. And the man came down. 30. He came down and went away. 31. The man went away. 32. Now he had heard what the lions said. 33. He went away. 34. Now he had heard where the place was; now he had heard where the water was.

Episode B:

The Man Finds the Water

VIII. 35. So now then, the man went. 36. He went to that place. 37. So when he arrived, then he thought he would tell the people where—. 38. No, first he made

a test; he said, "Give me some water." IX. 40. So then they said, "Here it isn't given—they do not give water." 41. "They don't give it." 42. "They don't give away water." 43. "They buy water."

X. 44. So then he said, "Oh, but there is water." 45. "There's water close by." 46. "You just don't know it." 47. So they said, "Is it true, really true, or are you just saying so?" 48. He said, "It's true."

XI. 49. So then he went off. 50. Since he had already been to see it. 51. He had already been to see the place where it was wet, just a little bit wet.

XII. 52. So then it was that he told the people. 53. They said, "If it's true that you are just talking; if you don't know what you're talking about, we'll kill you right now." 54. "You won't make any money." (Yes, indeed.)

XIII. 55. So then after that he gave himself up. 56. He said, "Now the water will come out." 57. So the people gathered. 58. When they dug for the water, it flowed. 59. Much water came out. 60. The people were happy. (Yes, indeed.) 61. The man made much money. 62. He took it away.

Episode C:

The Compadre's Unsuccessful Attempt

XIV. 63. Now then the man went away. 64. He was carrying his money, feeling very happy. 65. He went to his house. 66. And when he got to his house, they said, "How is it, this man was always poor?" 67. There was another man there, his compadre or his friend. 68. So he said, "Where did you get that money?" 69. He said, "In a certain place." 70. "There's a tree." 71. "You go climb it." 72. "And when the lions come, you will have already climbed the tree." 73. He said, "Fine." 74. And so that man went. 75. He went.

XV. 76. So then when he went and climbed up, the lions arrived. (Wow!) 77. And since the lions go about, they had

seen that the water had been dug. 78. So now they said, "Because that day maybe someone was listening, that's why now the water has appeared; they dug for the water." 79. "Someone told about it."

XVI. 80. So then when the cubs came up again, they said, "Now tell us another story." 81. She said, "But first what you must do, you must go see that tree there." 82. "If anyone is listening to the talk, if anyone else is there."

XVII. 83. So then they just climbed up. 84. In a moment they had pulled down the man. 85. They pulled him down; they ate him. 86. They ate him. 87. Where was his money-making? 88. They didn't hear any of their story either. 89. They ate him. 90. They ate him.

2. The story is told in bold outline, with a minimum of detail and embellishment. There is no introduction; one is plunged immediately into the story with the entrance of the main participant: kal šans ti²ay kampear the man went hunting. There is no typical closure like the ikula²apa it reached the summit of some storytellers, only the macabre repetition in lower and lower tones: iteNna²me. iteNna²me. They ate him. They ate him.

The phonological style of the narration is characterized by skillful variation of speed and loudness of utterance. Unitinitial sentences, whether of episodes, central action paragraphs, or closing paragraphs, tend to be louder than those that follow. Central action paragraphs tend to be speeded up. Unit-final sentences trail off into silence.

The literary style is characterized by an effective use of repetition, ellipses, flash-backs, dependent sentences, and one rhetorical question. Grammatical repetition is of the same word. There is also semantic repetition of the same thought by the use of synonyms or the expression

of the opposite or the negative. Narrator involvement is seen in the use of exclamations like aha? yes (25, 54, 60) and itale wow! (77). Repetition is usually of verbs. Nonverbs repeated are Spanish (Sp.) noun ciudad city (18), HC nouns laha? water (many times), lehuł' his-house (65, 66), ?ek tree (71, 73), and adjective alinka true (47, 48).

Semantic repetition by use of synonyms is of two types: (1) of HC terms, as in ti⁷wa it flows (58) and ipani it came out (59); and (2) of Sp. (or combined HC-Sp.) terms alternating with HC terms, as in nink'sanuk' we are men (HC), nink'kristiano we are people (Sp. cristiano) (20); contento timana contented (Sp.) they-are (HC) (25); tišoki kileta they-are happy (HC) (26); akí no se regala here it is not given (Sp.) (40); aimikunni they don't give it (HC) (40, 41); aimi⁷enni regalar they-don't-do (HC) give (Sp.) (42). Semantic repetition by expression of opposites is seen in if we were people (20) versus we are only animals (22); water is not given (40-42) versus they buy water (43); by expression of negative if you're only talking versus if you don't know what you're saying (53).

Repetition is sometimes in the same sentence: see 6, 13, 22, 47, 53. Usually it is in a succeeding sentence: (2, 3), (16, 17), (23, 24), (27, 28), (29, 30), (30, 31), (35, 36), (44, 45), (74, 75, 76), (84, 85), (85, 86), (89, 90). Intonation shows whether there is one sentence or two. Repetition may also occur after expression of a related thought in an intervening sentence: see (31, 33); and (85, 86) with (89, 90). There may be alternating repetition as in (62–65).

Repetition serves various purposes. (i) For emphasis: note the refusal to give water repeated four times (40-43), and the piling up of repeated references to water (18-20), (38-45), (56-59), (77, 78). (ii) To show shift of focus (e.g., from participant

to location): The lions danced. They danced around the tree...(32, 24); The man went. He went to that place (35, 36). Shift of focus from direct object to indirect object is shown by change of verb from transitive to ditransitive: she told the story (uya²a²ma), she told it to them (u²i²mola²) (16, 17). (iii) As a vehicle for added information: He had been to see it. He had been to see the place...(50, 51); There is water. There is water close by (44, 45).

Ellipses and implied information are seen in (11, 12) where search for the listener is not specifically mentioned, but the result is given in 13; in (19, 20) where location of the water is not stated, but 34 says that the man heard it; and especially in 66 where mention is made only of the man's former poverty, not his present riches.

Flashbacks are seen in the reasons for climbing given after the climb is made (5, 10); the man's already having been to see the wet place (50, 51); and the lions' having seen that the water had been found (77–79). Dependent sentences are statements of purpose (21, 39), explanation (50), and condition (82). The rhetorical question is where is his money-making? (88).

3. The story is divided into three episodes. Episode A, the mother lion's story to her cubs, is the Setting. Episode B, the man's finding the water, is the Central Action. Episode C, the compadre's attempt, is the Close. Each episode also has a setting, a central action, and a close.

Episode A includes seven paragraphs, the first thirty-four sentences of the text. The first two paragraphs give the setting of the episode: time, place, and participants. The first paragraph introduces the first main participant: the man; the time: dusk; the place: a tree in a clearing. The second paragraph introduces the second set of participants: the lion cubs and their

mother. Paragraphs III-VI give the central action of the episode: the lion cubs asking for a story; the search for the listener; the story of the place where water had to be bought; the dance of the lions. Paragraph VII gives the close of the episode: the departure of both the lions and the man.

Episode B includes six paragraphs, sentences 35–62. Again, the first two paragraphs give the setting: the man's arrival at the place and asking for water; the people's reply that water is never given there. Paragraphs X–XIII develop the central action: the man's assertion that there is water and the people's doubt; the flashback to his having seen the wet place; their threat to kill him if it is not true; the finding of the water. The last three sentences of paragraph XIII (60–62) give the close: the people's joy; the man's reward; his taking it away.

Episode C includes the final four paragraphs, sentences 63–90. The first paragraph gives the setting: the man's arrival home; the compadre's query and its answer; the compadre's departure. Paragraphs XV–XVII give the central action: the man's arrival followed by that of the lions and their concern over their story having been heard; the cubs asking for another story and the command to look for a listener; the catching and eating of the man. The last four sentences of paragraph XVII (87–90) give the close: no money for the man; no story for the cubs; just they ate him. They ate him.

4. Paragraphs are marked phonologically by increase of loudness at the onset and decrescendo followed by pause at the terminus; grammatically, by introductory phrases i lihou⁷ ma so then, and pues ihma ihoupa so then after that, or iciya ma now then; and semantically, by change of participants, or location, or both. Three sentences (12, 15, 25) have the introduc-

tory phrase i lihou⁷ma but lack phonological and semantic criteria for marking paragraph onset. Sentences 12 and 15 add further action or attitude of the same participants in the same location; 25 is semantically linked to the preceding sentence in the same paragraph.

Simple paragraphs are of two major structural types: Action and Speech. Complex paragraphs are a combination of both simple types. All but two action paragraphs are composed of setting, center, and close. These two (VI, XI) lack setting. Paragraph VI shifts focus from the mother lion to the cubs, as they all become active participants in the dance, but with no shift of setting. Paragraph XI is transitional, with action (the man going to the wet ground) and close (a flashback to his having been there before).

Speech paragraphs all lack close. Setting may also be lacking (IX, X) or may be action (II, V, XII, XV) or speech (XVI). The central action may be the speech of one individual (V), of a group acting as a whole (II, IX, XII), or a conversation (X). Criteria are lacking for analyzing speech alone as a separate paragraph in all cases; rather, setting and speech together make up a cohesive unit. So also, complex paragraphs (XIV) are best analyzed as single units.

The detailed analysis of paragraphs follows. Roman numerals refer to paragraphs; arabic numbers to sentences; act to action type, sp to speech type, act/sp to complex type; S to setting, A to central action, C to close.

I, act, S (1, 2), A (3, 4), C (5). II, sp, S (6), A (7). III, act, S (8), A (9), C (10). IV, act, S (11, 12), A (13, 14), C (15). V, sp, S (16, 17), A (18–22). VI, act, A (23, 24), C (25, 26). VII, act, S (27, 28), A (29–31), C (32–34).

VIII, act, S (35, 36), A (37, 38), C (39). IX, sp, A (40–43). X, sp, A (44–48). XI,

act, A (49), C (50, 51). XII, sp, S (52), A (53, 54). XIII, act, S (55, 56), A (57–59), C (60–62).

XIV, act/sp S (63–66), A (67–73), C (74, 75). XV, sp, S (76, 77), A (78, 79). XVI, sp, S (80), A (81,82). XVII, act, S (83), A (84–86), C (87–90).

5. Lan šmuwa? (the lions).

Episode A. I. 1. Kal šans ti²áy kampear. (the man he-does to-hunt [Sp. campear]) 2. I łpe imufahma, išim²ma el parahe. (and there it-got-dark-over-[him], he-saw the clearing [Sp. paraje]) 3. I tikwá, Iciya, hale laifšinya, imufkomma. (and he-says, now which my-seeing, it-got-dark) 4. I if²ahma nałke al ²ek. (and [Sp. y] he-climbed this the tree) 5. Ana ikopa, Porke ha²ni a²i, iłke hale kinnehá lokwaiyaku, ha²ni a²i ni tinci, a²te²ma. (now he-said, because [Sp. porque] if not, this which animal its-arriving-maybe, if not not something, me-it-will-eat).

- II. 6. I lihou²ma, ikwainaca, lamuf ikwainaca lan šmuwa² i lihana. (and [Sp. y] its-finish, they-arrived, the-dark they-arrived the-lions and their-mother) 7. I ana timí, Lu²icoŋa² kalkwento. (and [Sp. y] now they-say, tell-us our-story [Sp. cuento]).
- III. 8. I lihou⁷ma, timí, Iciya tołf' ahle al ⁷ek. (and its-finish she-says, now you-pl.-climb the tree) 9. If'ah⁷me lanaške šmuwa⁷. (they-climbed the-offspring lions) 10. Timí, Tołcinca aka timana łpe o kwa naici tikucaf'ya ašans kamac'. (she-says, you-pl.-go-see maybe there-are there or [Sp.] either someone he-sits-on-top person earth).
- IV. 11. I lihou⁷ma if ah⁷me⁷á. (and its-finish they-climbed-up-just) 12. I lihou⁷ma imulnanka. (and its-finish they-camedown) 13. Ailopa⁷a nihnaici, ailopa⁷a lokimf epa. (not-there-is no-one, not-there-is that-which-listened) 14. I kal šans tinifya aikišini⁷me. (and the man he-

stretches-out no-they-saw) 15. I lihou⁷ ma ime⁷ eyoši ana ikucu. (and its-finish he-kept-quiet-self now he-sat).

V. 16. I lihou⁷ma imulnanka, uya⁷a⁷ma el kwento. (and its-finish they-came-down, she-told-[it] the story [Sp. cuento]) 17. Iciya u⁷i⁷mola⁷ linaške šmuwa⁷. (now she-told-it-to-them her-offspring lions) 18. Timí, iciya, tal parte, el siudad, tipa⁷a el siudad, ti²naNni laha². (she-says, now such [Sp.] place [Sp. parte] the city [Sp. ciudad], there-is the city they-buy thewater) 19. Ailopa⁷a laha⁷. (not-there-is the-water) 20. Ha⁷ni ma nink'šanuk', nink'kristiano, ałmuhta pe lopa⁷a laha⁷. (if definitely we-men, we-people [Sp. cristianol we-go-show where there-is the-water) 21. Para ke lulihta akweka lan tomí. (so that [Sp. para que] we-go-gain big the (pl.) money) 22. I timi, iciya komo nink' innehá, aimi⁷iya, aimi⁷iya małpalaiyaku. (and she-says, now since [Sp. como] weanimal, not-it-is-possible, not-it-is-possible we-speak-maybe).

- VI. 23. I lihou²ma łiya, tišouli lan šmuwa². (and its-finish that, they-dance the lions) 24. Tišouli iłpe luši k' ek liłparahe. (they-dance there the-root tree their-clearing [Sp.]) 25. I lihou²ma contento timana². (and its-finish happy [Sp.] they-are) (and its-finish happy [Sp.] they-are) (and yes) 26. Tišoki kileta. (they-are happy).
- VII. 27. I lihou²ma ikwaikomma litine, iyena²me. (and its-finish it-arrived the-day, they-went-away) 28. Iyena²me. (they-went-away) 29. I lahšans imunanni²á. (and theman he-just-came-down) 30. Imunanni, i²wana²ma. (he-came-down, he-went-away) 31. I²wana²ma kal šans. (he-went-away the man) 32. Houpa ikwehpa te lokwapa lan šmuwa². (finished he-heard what their-having-said the lions) 33. I²wana²ma. (he-went-away) 34. Houpa may ikwehpa peci kopa²a tal parte, houpa ikwehpa peci²á kopa²a laha². (finished thus he-heard where such [Sp.] place [Sp.], finished he-heard where-just there-is the-water).

Episode B. VIII. 35. I iciya lihou⁷ma lahšans i⁷wa⁷ma. (and now its-finish theman he-went) 36. I⁷wa⁷ma tal parte. (he-went such [Sp.] place [Sp.]) 37. Ana likwaici, ana timi u⁷i⁷mola⁷ lan šanuk⁷ pe— (so his-arriving-there, so he-says he-will-tell-them the people where—) 38. A⁷i, primero, i⁷e⁷ma prueba, timi, Lu⁷wiła kaiha⁷. (no, first [Sp.] he-did test [Sp.], he-says, me-give my-water) 39. Ma si de veras sa⁷ni ti⁷naNni laha⁷. (definitely if [Sp.] of truth [Sp.] if they-buy the-water).

IX. 40. I lihou²ma timinni, Akí no se regala— aimikunni laha². (and its-finish they-say-to-[him], here (Sp. aqui) not itself gives [whole phrase Sp.] not-they-give thewater) 41. Aimikunni. (not-they-give) 42. Aimi²enni regalar laha². (not-they-do to-give [Sp.] the-water) 43. Ti²naNni laha². (they-buy the-water).

X. 44. I lihou⁷ma timí, Uta! tipa⁷a laha⁷. (and its-finish he-says, [exclamation] there-is the-water) 45. Tipa⁷a cerca laha⁷. (there-is close-by [Sp.] the-water) 46. Imank' aimolcinyi. (you-pl. not-you-see) 47. Ana timí, Ma⁷ alinka, alinka, o mane tokwa? (so they-say, definitely true, true, or just you-say) 48. Timí, Alinka. (he-says, true).

XI. 49. I lihou⁷ma, i⁷wa⁷ma⁷a. (and its-finish he-went-just) 50. Como houpa išiŋwo⁷ma. (as [Sp.] finished he-saw-went-and-returned) 51. Houpa išiŋwo⁷ma pe el lugar ihyaki, wata aka ihyaki. (finished he-saw-went-and-returned where the place [Sp.] it-is-wet, a-little perhaps it-is-wet).

XII. 52. I lihou²ma iłke iciya ce²a u²i²mola² lan šanuk'. (and its-finish thisone now just he-told-them the people) 53. Timinni, Ha²ni ałinka mane tokwahma, aimošinufi ma tokwahma, pues anulemma ałma²a²mo². (they-say if true just you-say, not-you-know just you-say, then [Sp.] once-for-all we-will-kill-you) (aha yes) 54. Aimolihya tomí. (not-you-gain money).

XIII. 55. Ana, pues, ihma ihoupa e²epoši entregar. (so then [Sp.] after-that it-finished he-did-himself to-give-over [Sp.]) 56. Timí, Ma tipawa laha?. (he-says, definitely it-will-come-out the-water) 57. Ihou⁷ma efol'e⁷ molci lan šanuk'. (itfinished they-gathered-themselves the people) 58. Ce⁷a ipunca laha⁷, ti⁷wa. (then they-dug the-water, it-flows) 59. Aspe kaha⁷ haka ipani. (much water perhaps it-came-out) 60. Tišoki kileta lan šanuk'. (they-were happy the people) (aha yes) 61. Kal šans ulihnamma akwekah tomí. (the man he-gained big money) 62. Titaici. (he-carried-it-away).

Episode C. XIV. 63. Iciya ma i⁷wana-⁷ma kal šans. (now definitely he-went-away the man) 64. Itaiyinwa lakitomi, tišokinwa keta. (he-was-carrying the-his-money hewas-being happy) 65. I?wana?ma lehuł'. (hewent his-house) 66. I likwainaci lehuł, timí, Como alke apobre siempre kal šans? (and his-arriving his-house, they-say, how [Sp.] this poor [Sp.] always [Sp.] the man) 67. Tipa⁷a łokwena kal šans ⁷ya, kwa ikomale o mane ałke i⁷amigo. (there-is the-other the man just either his-compadre [Sp.] or just this his-friend [Sp.] 68. Ana timí, Pe koši² newo² ma el tomi? (so he-says, where you-found-went-and-returned money) 69. Timí, Tal parte. (he-says, such [Sp.] place [Sp.]) 70. Tipa al ek. (there-is the tree) 71. Tof'ahta. (you-will-go-climb [it]) 72. I iłkwainaspa lan šmuwa⁷ ima kołta of'ahpa al ⁷ek. (and they-arrive the lions you already you-climbed the tree) 73. Timí, Abweno. (he-says, good [Sp.]) 74. I ana ałke kal šans i²wa²ma. (and so this the man he-went) 75. I²wa²ma. (he-went).

XV. 76. I lihou'ma i'wa'ma if'aci, ikwainaca lan šmuwa'. (and finished hewent, he-climbed, they-arrived the lions) (Itale! exclamation) 77. I como lan šmuwa' tiyelakoyi, houpa išimpa laha' ipunapa. (and as the lions they-go-about, finished they-saw the-water they-had-dug)

78. I iciya timí, Porke łpe litine koła ikimf' enni, por eso ma houpa i wahnapa laha, ipumpa laha, (and now they-say, because [Sp. porque] there the-day perhaps they-were-listening, for that [Sp.] now finished it-has-been-seen the-water, they-dug-it the-water) 79. Uya apa kwa naici. (he-told-[it] either someone).

XVI. 80. I iłke²a lihou²ma if²ahconna²me linaške², timí, Ne², lu²ikoncoŋa²
ałkwento. (and this-then its-finish theyclimbed-again her-offspring, they-say, Good,
tell-us-again our-story [Sp. cuento]) 81.
Timí, Pero primero tol²eca, hipu²wa
tolcinca al ²ek. (she-says, but [Sp.] first

[Sp.] you-pl.-do-go, there you-pl.-see-go the tree) 82. Ha²ni łapalay tikimf'e, kwa naici okwena²ya. (if the-talking he-hears, either someone other-just).

XVII. 83. I lihou²ma if'ah²me²á. (and its-finish they-climbed-just) 84. Ah rato, ešałkina²me lahšans. (in a-moment [Sp.] they-pulled-along the-man) 85. Ešałkina²me, iteNna²me. (they-pulled-[him]-along, they-ate-[him]) 86. IteNna²me. (they-ate) 87. Pe kolihya tomí? (where his-gaining money) 88. Aikikweh²me el kwento nada. (not-they-heard the story [Sp. cuento] nothing [Sp.]) 89. IteNna²me. (they-ate) 90. IteNna²me. (they-ate).