Nido de Lenguas: Clases
Santiago Laxopa Zapotec
Class 1 – December 8, 2017

Goals
● To start using the Zapotec alphabet
● To learn how to greet people in different situations
● To learn how to ask basic information about someone

Content
● greetings
● basic sounds of Zapotec
● pronouns

1. Greetings

One of the first things you need to know when you learn a language is how to greet people. Below are a couple dialogues showing how Laxopeños greet each other in different circumstances.

Dialogue I: How to greet someone when you see them in the street

Fe:  
Le':  
Fe:  
Le':  
Fe:  
Le':  
Fe:  

Dialogue II: How to greet someone when you arrive in their house

Le':  
Fe:  
Le':  
Fe:  
Le':  
Fe:  
Le':  
Fe:  

I’m here.
You’re here. Hello, hello.
Hello. How are you?
I’m not well. How about you?
I’m well.
Dialogue III: How to start and end class

Fe:  *Gak zuale?*  How are you all?
Le’:  *Zuatu’ wen.*  We are doing well.

Fe:  *Ba biyuzh skwel.*  Now we are ending the class.
     *Na yizhagdu yitwbiu’.*  Then I’ll see you next month.
     *Lashlotte yiyejle.*  Go carefully. (Vayan con cuidado.)
Le’:  *Duxklemu’ e.*  Thank you.
Fe:  *Duxklenle.*  Thank you.

*Exercise*

Practice each of the dialogues above with a partner, taking turns with each of the roles. If there is vocabulary from another dialogue that is relevant, feel free to improvise. After you finish one dialogue, switch partners to try the next one.
2. The Zapotec alphabet

Zapotec has sounds that are different from both English and Spanish, so some of the letters we use to write Zapotec might be unfamiliar. There are also some unique combinations of letters, as well as some combinations that don’t sound like they do in other languages.

2.1. Consonants

Santiago Laxopa Zapotec has 24 consonants. Some of these are found in both English and Spanish:

- **ch** (chhi) ‘ten (diez)’
- **k** (kuzha) ‘my back (mi espalda)’
- **m** (me’edo) ‘baby (bebé)’
- **p** (pelot) ‘ball (pelota)’
- **s** (setw) ‘squash greens (guía de calabaza)’
- **sh** (shwe) ‘be sick (estar enfermo)’
- **t** (tone) ‘tall (alto)’

Some are very similar to consonants found in Spanish:

- **b** (behb) ‘trash (basura)’
- **d** (duh) ‘rope (mecate)’
- **g** (gah) ‘nine (nueve)’
- **r** (ros) ‘rice (arroz)’

Some are very similar to consonants found in English:

- **w** (wi) ‘orange (naranja)’
- **y** (veyzh) ‘town (pueblo)’
- **z** (zede’) ‘salt (sal)’

Some of these consonants are more unfamiliar:

- **dz** (dzull) ‘be singing (cantar, estar cantando)’
- **j** (jid) ‘chicken (pollo)’
- **l** (le’) ‘you (tú)’
- **ll** (lle’) ‘her, him (elder) (ella, él)’
- **n** (nis) ‘water (agua)’
- **nn** (nni’a) ‘my foot (mi pie)’
- **ts** (tsupe) ‘two (dos)’
- **x** (xaa) ‘my father (mi padre)’
- **zh** (zhin) ‘work (trabajo)’
- **zx** (zxa) ‘clothes (ropa)’
A couple things to keep in mind:

- Zapotec \(w\) has a special pronunciation when it occurs in certain places within words, which we will discuss later.
- Zapotec \(n\) and \(nn\) sound roughly like \(n\) in English or Spanish, but they are different in ways that we will talk about later. For now, you can think of \(n\) as just a shorter form of \(nn\).
- Zapotec \(l\) and \(ll\) also can sound like \(l\) in English or Spanish. Again, \(l\) is roughly shorter than \(ll\). It is important to remember that \(ll\) does not represent the same sound as in Spanish.

For now, don’t worry about pronouncing all of these sounds correctly quite. We will be coming back to the unfamiliar ones.

**Exercise**

A. Pronounce each of the words above after the instructor, listening carefully to the first sound in each word. What sounds are familiar? What sounds are unfamiliar?

B. If you attended the Summer Camp, you have already been introduced to the retroflex sounds \(x\) and \(zx\). Pay special attention to these, making sure to pronounce them as best you can, following the instructor.

\[shwe\] ‘be sick (estar enfermo)’
\[zhin\] ‘work (trabajo)’

\[xa’a\] ‘my father (mi padre)’
\[zx\] ‘clothes (ropa)’
2.2. Vowels

Zapotec has five vowels: these are very similar to the vowels of Spanish.

\begin{align*}
\text{a} & \quad b\text{ake}' & \text{‘cow (vaca)'} \\
\text{e} & \quad y\text{ezh} & \text{‘town (pueblo)'} \\
\text{i} & \quad i\text{z} & \text{‘year (año)'} \\
\text{o} & \quad t\text{one}' & \text{‘tall (alto)'} \\
\text{u} & \quad z\text{vu'a}' & \text{‘corn (maíz)'}
\end{align*}

Each of these vowels has four different forms. For now, don’t worry about trying to pronounce them, just try to recognize them when you see them.

\begin{align*}
\text{a} & \quad z\text{xan} & \text{‘under (abajo)’} & \text{basic (básica)} \\
\text{a}' & \quad z\text{x'a} & \text{‘clothes (ropa)’} & \text{checked (cortada)} \\
\text{a}'\text{a} & \quad z\text{a'a} & \text{‘corn (elote)’} & \text{creaky (quebrada)} \\
\text{ah} & \quad z\text{ah} & \text{‘bean (frijol)’} & \text{breathy (susurrante)}
\end{align*}

\textbf{Exercise}

Listen to the instructor pronounce each of the words above, which show the four forms for the vowel a. How do these sound similar? How do they sound different?
3. Asking about personal information

Here is a basic dialogue that shows how to ask for information from someone you are talking to in Zapotec.

**Dialogue IV: How to ask for basic information about someone**

Fe:  
**Gak lliu’?**  
What’s your name?

Le’:  
**____ llia’. Gak lliu’ le’?**  
My name is ____. What is your name?

Fe:  
**Fe llia’.**  
My name is Fe.

Le’:  
**Ga bene’ le’?**  
Where are you from?

Fe:  
**Bene’ Laxup neda’.**  
I am from Laxopa.

Tzxizxe le’?  
And you?

Le’:  
**Bene’ ____ neda’.**  
I am from ____.

Le’:  
**Ga zua llizhu’?**  
Where is your home?

Fe:  
**Parkway Street zua llizha’n.**  
My home is on Parkway Street.

Tzxizxe le’?  
And you?

Le’:  
**____ zua llizha’n.**  
My home is ____.

**Vocabulary**

- **lle (lli)**: ‘name (nombre)’
- **ga**: ‘where (donde)’
- **bene’**: ‘person, people (personas, personas)’
- **Laxup**: ‘Santiago Laxopa’
- **neda’**: ‘I, me (yo, a mi)’
- **llizh**: ‘home (casa)’
- **zua**: ‘be, live (estar, vivir)’

**Exercise**

With a partner, practice asking each other about your name, hometown, and address. Ask at least 3 people.
4. Pronouns

You may have noticed that there are different words for the speaker and listener. These are called **pronouns**, and they come in two types in Zapotec: **separate** and **attached**.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>separate</th>
<th>attached</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I, me</td>
<td>neda’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>you</td>
<td>le’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>she, he, her, him (an elder)</td>
<td>lle’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>she, he, her, him (a non-elder)</td>
<td>lleba’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are others pronouns, too, though we will discuss these later. But for now, just concentrate on the two different types of pronouns.

The attached pronouns can be used to describe a **possessor**, the person to whom something belongs.

- **llizha’** ‘my home’
- **llizhu’** ‘your home’
- **llizhe’** ‘her/his home (an elder)’
- **llizhba’** ‘her/his home (a non-elder)’

Notice that some words have different forms depending on what the attached pronoun is.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>separate</th>
<th>attached</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>xna’a’</td>
<td>‘my mother’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xno’o’</td>
<td>‘your mother’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xne’e’</td>
<td>‘her/his (an elder) mother’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xnaba’</td>
<td>‘her/his (a non-elder) mother’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>separate</th>
<th>attached</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>xa’</td>
<td>‘my father’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xo’</td>
<td>‘your father’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xe’</td>
<td>‘her/his (an elder) father’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>xaba’</td>
<td>‘her/his (a non-elder) father’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Dialogue V**: How to ask for basic information about other people

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Zapotec</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fe: Gak lleba’?</td>
<td>What’s her/his (non-elder) name?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Le’: ___ lleba’. | Her/His (non-elder) name is ____.
| Ga bene’ lleba’? | Where is s/he (non-elder) from? |
| Le’: Bene’ ____ lleba’. | S/he is from ____.
| Ga zua llizha’? | Where is her/his (non-elder) home? |
Le':  _____ zua llizha’n.  Her/his (non-elder) home is on _____.

Vocabulary

xna’ (xno’, xne’)  ‘mother (madre)’
xa (x)  ‘father (padre)’

Exercise

With a partner, practice asking about the name, hometown, and address for other people — both who are in the room and who are not — using the vocabulary above.
5. Written exercises

5.1. Sequence. The sentences below form a conversation, but they are out of order. Write a number next to each sentence, indicating what their correct order is.

A.  _____ Fe: *Wakwkse’.*
   _____ Fe: *Zua’ wen.*
   _____ Le’: *Padziuzx e!*
   _____ Le’: *Zua’ wen. Tzxizxe le’?*
   _____ Fe: *Gak zuu’?*
   _____ Le’: *Na yizhagdzu. Ba dziya’a*.  
   _____ Fe: *Padziuzx!*

B.  _____ Le’: *Duxklenu’ e.*
   _____ Fe: *Lashlotte yiyejle.*
   _____ Fe: *Na yizhagdzu yitwbiu’.*
   _____ Fe: *Ba biyuzh skwel.*
   _____ Fe: *Duxklenle.*

5.2. Complete. Write the missing words or phrases in the conversations below.

Le’: *Ba bla’a’.*

Fe: *Ba blo’o’. Padziuxz, ______________.*

Le’: ______________. *Gak zuu’?*

Fe: *Bitu zua’ wen. ______________?*

Le’: *Zua’ ______________.*

5.3. Essay. Using the words and phrase that you have learned, write a short autobiographical essay, describing who you are: what your name is, where you live, what your parents’ names are, where they live, etc.