

Nido de Lenguas: Clases

Class 1 – February 20, 2020

GOALS

- To introduce you to the town of *Laxup*, its culture, and its people
- To start using the Zapotec alphabet
- To learn some basic greetings
- To practice fricative sounds in Zapotec



The town of Laxup (Santiago Laxopa) in the Sierra Norte of Oaxaca

Workshop on the Languages of Meso-America
University of California, Santa Cruz
wlma.ucsc.edu/nidodelenguas/

1. *Laxup* (Santiago Laxopa)

The small town of *Laxup* (Santiago Laxopa) is located high in the Sierra Juárez mountains in the Sierra Norte region of Oaxaca, Mexico.

Today, *Laxup* has about 1,500 inhabitants, most of whom speak Zapotec. Spanish is used at school and when Laxopeños travel outside the town.

Some Laxopeños have left to live in Oaxaca City, Mexico City, and Saltillo, Coahuila. They stay in touch with their families by phone, and many return to their town during the annual *fiesta del pueblo*.

The language spoken in *Laxup* is one variety of Zapotec. Other Zapotec varieties are spoken from the Sierra Norte through the Valley to the Sierra Sur and Isthmus.

Zapotec is one of 16 official languages in Oaxaca; each one has many varieties. Throughout the state, there are a total of 854 varieties of these languages.



2. Greetings

One of the first things you need to learn when starting a language is how to greet people. First, we will learn how to greet Maestra Fe at the beginning of class.

Dialogue 1: How to start class

Fe: *Padziuxh!*

‘Hello (informal)!’

Class: *Padziuxh e!*

‘Hello (formal)!’

Fe: *Gak zualhe?*

‘How are you all?’

Class: *Zuatu’ wen.*

‘We are doing well.’

Exercise

Practice your part of Dialogue 1 with Maestra Fe.

Now, we can learn how to greet your fellow students. It is also how Laxopeños greet one another in a variety of different circumstances.

Dialogue 2: How to greet your classmates

You: *Padziuxh!*

‘Hello!’

Your friend: *Padziuxh!*

‘Hello!’

You: *Gak zuu’?*

‘How are you?’

Your friend: *Zua’ wen.*

‘I’m doing well.’

Chixhe lhe’?

‘How about you?’

You: *Duxklenu’, zua’ wen.*

‘Thank you, I’m doing well.’

Exercise A

Practice *both* parts of Dialogue 2 with Maestra Fe.

Exercise B

Find a friend and practice Dialogue 2 with them.

3. The Zapotec alphabet

Zapotec has 29 sounds in its alphabet— 5 vowels and 24 consonants — written using the same letters as English and Spanish.

<i>a</i>	<i><u>b</u>ake'</i>	'cow (vaca)'
<i>b</i>	<i><u>b</u>ehb</i>	'trash (basura)'
<i>ch</i>	<i><u>ch</u>i</i>	'ten (diez)'
<i>d</i>	<i><u>d</u>uh</i>	'rope (mecate)'
<i>dz</i>	<i><u>dz</u>ul</i>	'be singing (cantar, estar cantando)'
<i>e</i>	<i><u>y</u>ell</i>	'town (pueblo)'
<i>g</i>	<i><u>g</u>ah</i>	'nine (nueve)'
<i>i</i>	<i><u>i</u>z</i>	'year (año)'
<i>j</i>	<i><u>j</u>id</i>	'chicken (pollo)'
<i>k</i>	<i><u>k</u>ulla'</i>	'my back (mi espalda)'
<i>l</i>	<i><u>l</u>e'</i>	'her, him (elder) (ella, él)'
<i>lh</i>	<i><u>lh</u>e'</i>	'you (tú)'
<i>ll</i>	<i><u>ll</u>in</i>	'work (trabajo)'
<i>m</i>	<i><u>m</u>e'edo'</i>	'baby (bebé)'
<i>n</i>	<i><u>n</u>i'a'</i>	'my foot (mi pie)'
<i>nh</i>	<i><u>nh</u>is</i>	'water (agua)'
<i>o</i>	<i><u>t</u>one'</i>	'tall (alto)'
<i>p</i>	<i><u>p</u>elot</i>	'ball (pelota)'
<i>r</i>	<i><u>r</u>os</i>	'rice (arroz)'
<i>s</i>	<i><u>s</u>etw</i>	'squash greens (guía de calabaza)'
<i>sh</i>	<i><u>sh</u>nej</i>	'eleven (once)'
<i>t</i>	<i><u>t</u>one'</i>	'tall (alto)'
<i>ts</i>	<i><u>ts</u>upe</i>	'two (dos)'
<i>u</i>	<i><u>x</u>hua'</i>	'corn (maíz)'
<i>x</i>	<i><u>x</u>aa'</i>	'my father (mi padre)'
<i>xh</i>	<i><u>xh</u>a'</i>	'clothes (ropa)'
<i>w</i>	<i><u>w</u>i</i>	'orange (naranja)'
<i>y</i>	<i><u>y</u>ell</i>	'town (pueblo)'
<i>z</i>	<i><u>z</u>ede'</i>	'salt (sal)'

In Zapotec spelling, two symbols are used — ' and *h* — that do not represent sounds on their own. Instead, they change the pronunciation of the letter they occur next to.

Exercise

Listen to Maestra Fe pronounce each of the words above a couple times. What sounds are familiar? What sounds are unfamiliar?

4. Fricative sounds

There are several unfamiliar sounds in Zapotec, but we cannot learn them all at once. So we are going to concentrate on just four today: *sh*, *ll*, *x*, and *xh*.

These are all **fricative** sounds that you make by placing your tongue very close to the roof of your mouth to make a “rushing” sound.

Two of these sounds are found in English, though the Zapotec spelling for them might be unfamiliar:

<i>sh</i>	<i>shnej</i>	‘eleven (once)’	English: <i>shop</i>
<i>ll</i>	<i>llin</i>	‘work (trabajo)’	English: <i>zh</i> , <i>treasure</i>

The other two — *x* and *xh* — are not found in Spanish or English. They might sound very similar, but they are in fact different:

<i>x</i>	<i>xaa’</i>	‘my father (mi padre)’
<i>xh</i>	<i>xha’</i>	‘clothes (ropa)’

Both of these are **retroflexed** fricatives that are pronounced by curling the tip of your tongue backward toward the roof of your mouth.

When you say the *x* sound, your vocal cords should not be vibrating (like *sh*). When you say the *xh* sound, they should be vibrating (like *ll*).

- *x*, *sh* = vocal cords are not moving
- *xh*, *ll* = vocal cords are moving

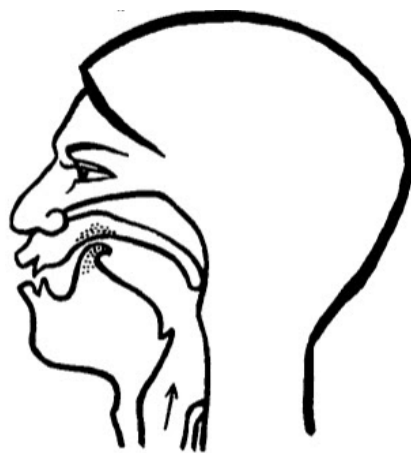
You can feel whether your vocal cords are vibrating by touching your throat at your Adam’s apple.

Here are some more words that start with *x* and *xh*:

<i>xuga’</i>	‘my fingernail’	<i>xhudzi</i>	‘beautiful’
<i>xup</i>	‘six’	<i>xhua’</i>	‘corn’

Exercise: Spelling bee

Maestra Fe will say a word that starts with one of these four sounds. Each student will take a turn writing that word on the board. Try your best to get the first sound right. It is okay to guess for the rest.



5. Final dialogue: Arriving at the fiesta

Every year, there is a festival in *Laxup* to honor the town's patron saint, Saint Santiago Apóstol. It lasts a week around the Saint's Day of July 25.

To introduce you to the culture and people of *Laxup*, we will learn a dialogue between two Laxopeños: Beto and Raquel.

Beto lives in Los Angeles, but he has returned to *Laxup* for the yearly fiesta. As he enters the town walking down the main street, he sees his old friend Raquel:



Beto: *Padziuxh, Raquel!*
'Hello, Raquel!'

Raquel: *Padziuxh! Gak zuu'?*
'Hello! How are you?'

Beto: *Zua'wen. Duxklenu'.*
'I'm well. Thank you.'

Chixhe lhe'?
'How about you?'

Raquel: *Zua'wen.*
'I'm well.'

Beto: *E ba dzak lni?*
'Is the fiesta happening?'

Raquel: *O'o, yise'ezeye' de bill da'n nelle'.*
'Yes, they are going to set off fireworks tonight.'

Beto: *E uzalenu' neda' ne'es?*
'Can you come with me tonight?'

Raquel: *Chi udexi'u' neda'.*
'If you come and pick me up.'

Beto: *Wakkse'.*
'That's fine.'

Raquel: *Na yillagdzu lla.*
'I'll see you then.'

Exercise

Listen carefully to Maestra Fe recite the dialogue above. Then repeat each sentence after her.

* * *

You can watch a video of last year's fiesta here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rTeps9mhL7E>

6. Homework

6.1. *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: *Zua'wen.*
----- You: *Padziuxh e!*
----- You: *Zua'wen. Chixhe lhe'?*
----- Fe: *Gak zuu'?*
----- Fe: *Padziuxh!*

B.

- Raquel: *Na yillagdzu lla.*
----- Raquel: *O'o, yise'ezeye' de bill da'n nelle'.*
----- Beto: *E ba dzak lni?*
----- Beto: *E uzalenu' neda' ne'es?*
----- Beto: *Bi gak nelle'?*
----- Raquel: *Chi udexi'u' neda'.*
----- Beto: *Wakkse'.*

6.2. *Complete.* Write the missing words or phrases in the conversations below.

Fe: *Padziuxh,* _____.

You: _____. *Gak zuu'?*

Fe: *Zua'wen.* _____?

You: *Zua'* _____.

6.3. *Memorize.* Listen to the final dialogue online several times:

<http://wlma.ucsc.edu/nidodelenguas/clases/2020/1-dialogue.mp3>

Then, memorize the dialogue. Practice being both Beto and Raquel. If you can, practice with your classmates too. We will start our next class by asking students to perform the dialogue.

6.4. *Vocabulary.* Practice the vocabulary in this lesson on your own device using the digital flashcards you can find here:

<http://wlma.ucsc.edu/nidodelenguas/clases/tarjetas/>