

# Nido de Lenguas: Clases

Class 2 – October 16, 2024

## GOALS

- To review nouns for describing people
- To learn how to make simple sentences in Zapotec
- To learn about two Zapotec sounds: **x** and **xh**
- To learn how the people of **Laxup** show thanks to the earth



*The town church of **Laxup***

Workshop on the Languages of Meso-America  
University of California, Santa Cruz  
[wlma.ucsc.edu/nidodelenguas/](http://wlma.ucsc.edu/nidodelenguas/)

## 1. Dialogue from last class

Did you memorize the final dialogue from our last class? Get ready to perform it with one of your classmates!

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

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

Pedro: **Zua' wenh. Duxklhenhu'.**  
'I'm well. Thank you.'

**Chixhe lhe'?**  
'How about you?'

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

Pedro: **E ba dzak Ini'nh?**  
'Is the fiesta happening?'

Raquel: **O'ó, yisezeye' de'e billda'nh nelle'.**  
'Yes, they are going to set off fireworks tonight.'

Pedro: **E uzalhenhu' neda' nelle'?**  
'Can you come with me tonight?'

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

Pedro: **Wakkse.**  
'Okay.'

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

### Exercise

Perform the dialogue with one of your classmates for everybody else.

## 2. Review: Describing people

Let's review the nouns we learned last time for describing people. Remember that these come in pairs:

<b>bi'i nhu'ulhe</b>	'girl'	<b>bene' nhu'ulhe</b>	'woman'
<b>bi'i xyag</b>	'boy'	<b>bene' xyag</b>	'man'
<b>bi'i weya'a</b>	'dancer (younger)'	<b>bene' weya'a</b>	'dancer (older)'
<b>bi'i dzul</b>	'singer (younger)'	<b>bene' dzul</b>	'singer (older)'
<b>bi'i skwel</b>	'student'	<b>bene' skwel</b>	'teacher'

### Exercise: Guess who?

With a partner, play "Guess Who?" using the playing board on the next page. In each game, one person is the Asker and the other is the Answerer. The Answerer secretly picks a picture on the board. Then, the Asker asks questions to figure out which picture the Answerer picked.

The Asker should only use the nouns for people above to ask questions. To form a simple question, use the following formula:

<b>E _____?</b> (noun)	<b>'Is it a _____?'</b> (noun)
<b><u>Example</u></b> <b>E bene' nhu'ulhe?</b>	<b>'Is it a woman?'</b>

Play a few times, taking turns being the Asker and Answerer.

"Guess Who" Playing Board

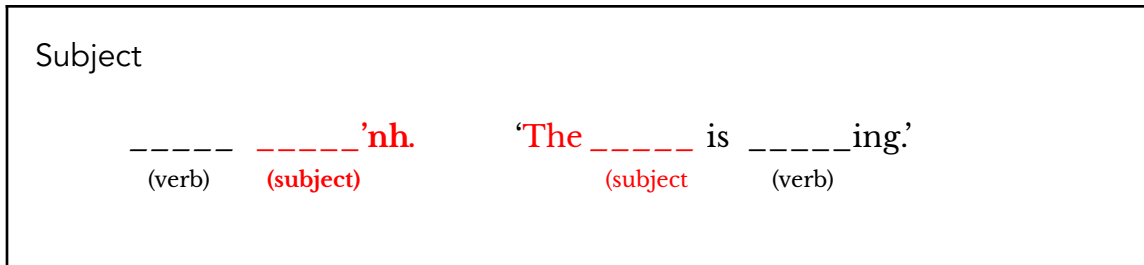
<p>(a)</p> 	<p>(b)</p> 	<p>(c)</p> 
<p>(d)</p> 	<p>(e)</p> 	<p>(f)</p> 
<p>(g)</p>  <p><small>viva tu gente .com</small></p>	<p>(h)</p> 	<p>(i)</p> 

### 3. Making sentences

In Zapotec, the *subject* — the doer of an action — *follows* the verb, unlike in both Spanish and English.

Shtahs **bi'i skwele'nh.**

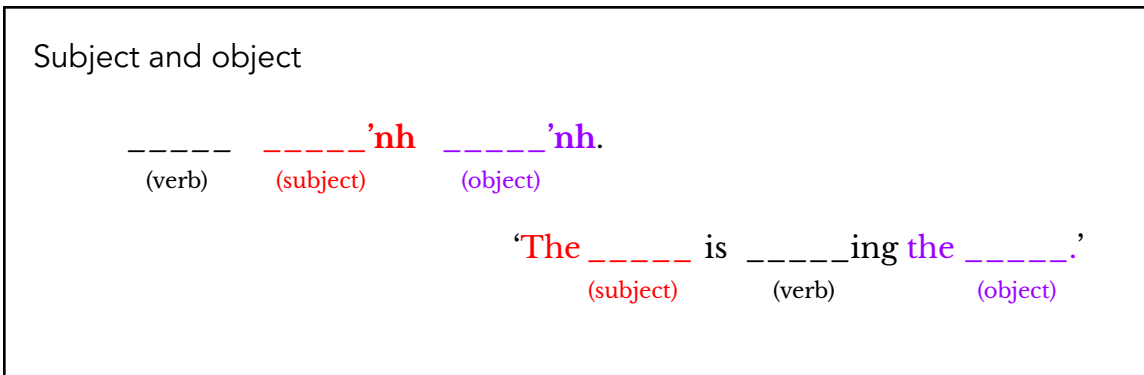
'The **student** is sleeping.'



When there is an *object* — someone or something that is affected by an action — it comes next, after the subject.

Shnabdille' **bi'i skwele'nh** bene' skwele'nh.

'The **student** is greeting **the teacher**.'



Notice that an ending — **'nh** — is added to the subject and object to form a complete sentence. We will explain what this ending is later on. For now, just make sure to include it when you form a sentence.

Here are six verbs that we will use to make sentences:

shtahs  
ze  
chehb

'sleep'  
'stand'  
'be scared'

shnabdille'  
shnhide'  
shnhupe'

'greet'  
'hug'  
'kiss'

Exercise A

Maestra Fe will hold up an illustration and ask students what is happening.

Exercise B

With a partner, take turns making a new sentence by mixing and matching *any of* the nouns and verbs you know. Your partner should try and figure out what situation you are describing (who is doing what to who).

Tarjetas

Memorize these verbs using these digital flashcards:

<https://babel.ucsc.edu/tarjetas/actions/>

#### 4. x and xh

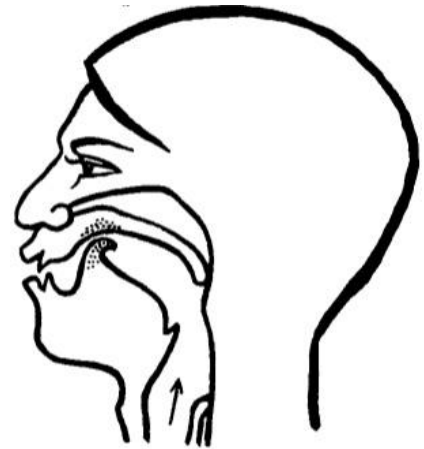
There are several unfamiliar sounds in Zapotec, which we will be learning little by little. Two of these sounds, which are not found in either Spanish or English, are **x** and **xh**.

<b>x</b>	<b><u>x</u>uge'</b>	'fingernail'
<b>xh</b>	<b><u>xh</u>ile'</b>	'sheep'

Both sounds are made by placing your tongue very close to the roof of your mouth to make a “rushing” sound. The tip of your tongue should be curled backward toward the roof of your mouth.

While the tongue position for **x** and **xh** is the same, they differ from each other in another way. When you say **x**, your vocal cords *should not* be vibrating. When you say the **xh** sound, they *should* be vibrating.

- **x** = vocal cords are not vibrating
- **xh** = vocal cords are vibrating



You can feel whether your vocal cords are vibrating by touching your throat at your voice box.

For speakers of English and Spanish, **x** and **xh** will sound very similar to two other sounds in Zapotec: **sh** and **ll**. Both of these are also found in English, though the Zapotec spelling for them might be unfamiliar.

<b>sh</b>	<b><u>sh</u>nej</b>	'eleven'	English: <i>shop</i>
<b>ll</b>	<b><u>ll</u>it</b>	'egg'	English: <i>zh, treasure</i>

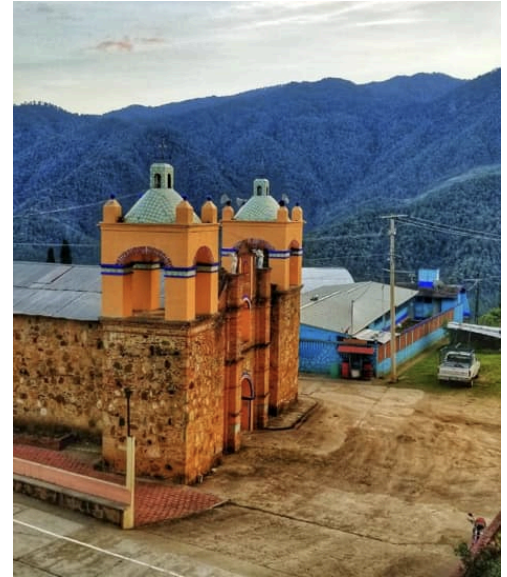
#### Exercise

Practice **x** and **xh** by repeating the words above after Maestra Fe. Try and pay attention both to the position of your tongue and to whether your vocal cords are vibrating. Pay close attention to how **x** and **xh** feel and sound different from **sh** and **ll**.

## 5. Final dialogue: *La junta de ancianos*

In **Laxup**, the town elders gather to give thanks to the earth twice a year in the traditional way. This *junta de ancianos* occurs once in the summer, and once in the winter

First, the town bell (**ya**) is rung in a specific way, calling the town elders (**bene' xwanh**) to the church. They gather in the sacristy in the early evening, before going out into the mountains (**ya'ado'**). Starting around midnight, they begin to pray at sacred places around the town. They pray for the well-being of the people and town, and they make offerings to the earth, including corn (**xhua'**), cacao (**zwia'**), eggs (**llit**), and mezcal (**meskal**). Over the course of the night, they visit several sacred places, returning to the church in the early morning. There, they enjoy coffee and hot chocolate.



Raquel and her brother Beto are in the town square in front of the church, when the bell begins to ring for the town elders to gather:

*Raquel:* **Ba sesille' ya'nh!**  
'They are ringing the bell!'

*Beto:* **E tsja'ak bene' xuanha' ya'ado'.**  
'Are the elders going to the mountains?'

*Raquel:* **O'ó.**  
'Yes.'

*Beto:* **Bi de'e tsjaseka'ane' lla?**  
'What are they going to bring?'

*Raquel:* **Tsjaseka'ane' xhua', llit, zwia', meskal.**  
'They are bringing corn, eggs, cacao, and mezcal.'

*Raquel:* **Ba ziya'a!**  
'I'm going to go!'

*Beto:* **Nha' yillagdzu!**  
'See you later!'



### Exercise

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

You can practice the dialogue at home by listening to the recording here:

<https://wlma.ucsc.edu/nidodelenguas/clases/2024/2024-2-dialogue.mp3>

## 6. Homework

6.1 *Match and translate.* Match up each sentence below with the scene it describes. Then, write the English translation for each sentence.

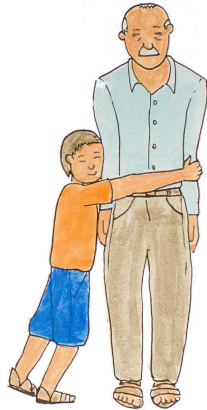
(a)



(b)



(c)



(d)



1. \_\_\_\_\_ **Shtahs bene' dzule'nh.**

Translation: \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_ **Chehb bi'i nhu'ulhe'nh.**

Translation: \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_ **Shnhabdille' bene' nhu'ulhe'nh bi'i skwele'nh.**

Translation: \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_ Shnhide' bi'i xyage'nh bene' xyage'nh.

Translation: \_\_\_\_\_

6.2. *New words.* The dialogue above contains the following (new) words:

ya	'bell'
bene' xwanh	'town elder'
ya'ado'	'mountains'
xhua'	'corn (maíz)'
zwia'	'cacao'
tsja'ak	'go to (plural)'

Go back and look at how these words are used in the dialogue above.

6.3 *Mix and match.* Make five new sentences using the words in this lesson. These can be either the nouns and verbs that we learned earlier, or the new words that you just reviewed in Section 6.2.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

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

<https://wlma.ucsc.edu/nidodelenguas/clases/2024/2024-2-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.

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You can look up the meaning or pronunciation for any word in the online Zapotec dictionary:

<https://zapotec.ucsc.edu/slz/dictionary>