

Nido de Lenguas: Clases

Class 3 – October 23, 2024

GOALS

- To learn a new greeting
- To review verbs for describing actions
- To learn how to ask and answer yes-no questions
- To learn how to pronounce the apostrophe (')
- To explore how the people of **Laxup** enjoy *za'a* 'corn'



A *milpa* (corn field) on the outskirts of **Laxup**

Workshop on the Languages of Meso-America
University of California, Santa Cruz
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!

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

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

2. What's your name?

When you meet someone new, it is polite to ask what their name is. For instance, if you were meeting Beto for first time, you would ask and he would respond as follows:

You: **Gak lhiu'?**

'What is your name?'

Beto: **Beto lhia'.**

'My name is Beto.'

Exercise

Maestra Fe will ask each student what their name is. You should respond in Zapotec using the following formula:

Maestra Fe: **Gak lhiu'?**

You: _____ **lhia'.**

3. Warm up: Verbs

Last time, we learned six verbs describing actions, which we used to make sentences:

shtahs	'sleep'	shnhabdille'	'greet'
ze	'stand'	shnhide'	'hug'
chehb	'be scared'	shnhupe'	'kiss'

Exercise

Maestra Fe will hold up an illustration and ask students to say *just the verb* that describes that action.

4. Asking and answering questions

A yes-no question is a question that you can answer with either “yes” or “no”. In Zapotec, you ask a yes-no question by adding the question word **e** to the beginning of a sentence:

E shtahs bi'i nhu'ulhe'nh? 'Is the girl sleeping?'

You can then answer this kind of question by saying **o'ó** 'yes' or **o'o** 'no' in Zapotec:

A: **E shtahs bi'i nhu'ulhe'nh?**
'Is the girl sleeping?'

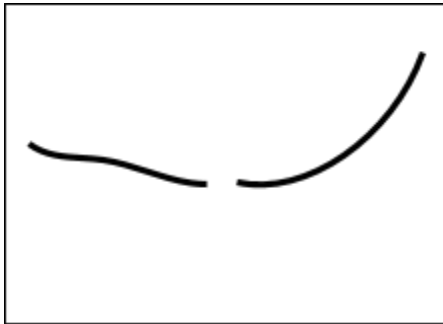
B: **O'ó.**
'Yes.'

A: **E ze bi'i nhu'ulhe'nh?**
'Is the girl standing?'

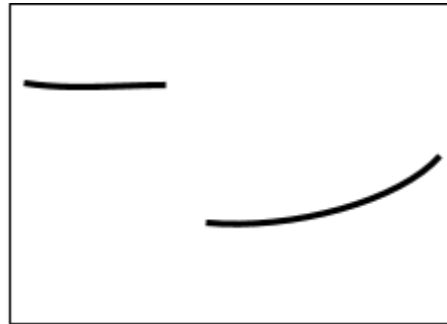
B: **O'o.**
'No.'



While these words may sound very similar to one another, they have different intonations:



O'ó. 'Yes.'
([listen](#))



O'o. 'No.'
([listen](#))

Since the second syllable of **o'ó** 'yes' ends with a high tone, we write it with an accent (ó). Since the second syllable of **o'o** 'no' does not end with a high tone, we write it with no accent.

Asking and answering yes-no questions			
E _____?			
'Is/Are _____?'			
O,ó.	<i>or</i>	O'ó.	
'Yes.'		'No.'	

Exercise A

Listen to Maestra Fe's questions about the pictures she is holding up and answer by saying o'ó 'yes' or o'ó 'no'.

Exercise B: Guess What Happened?

With a partner, play "Guess What Happened?", using the playing board below. In each game, one person is the Asker and the other is the Answerer. The board contains nine "stories", each describing a different sequence of events. The Answerer picks one of these stories and the other has to guess "what happened" by asking yes-no questions. The Answerer can only respond by saying o'ó 'yes' or o'ó 'no'. The game ends when the Asker has picked the right story.

Just as a reminder, here are some nouns that we learned earlier for describing people:

bi'i nhu'ulhe	'girl'	bene' nhu'ulhe	'woman'
bi'i xyag	'boy'	bene' xyag	'man'

"Guess What Happened?" Playing Board

<p>(a)</p>	<p>(b)</p>	<p>(c)</p>
<p>(d)</p>	<p>(e)</p>	<p>(f)</p>
<p>(g)</p>	<p>(h)</p>	<p>(i)</p>

5. ´

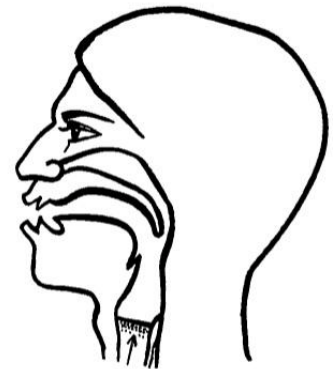
As you know, Zapotec has five vowels: *a*, *e*, *i*, *o*, and *u*. These sound much like the vowels in Spanish. But they receive a special pronunciation when they combine with the apostrophe symbol ´.

a´	cha´	´pot
a´a	za´a	´corn

As you pronounce a vowel, air passes through your vocal folds, making them vibrate. When no ´ is present, your vocal folds should be relaxed, allowing air to flow through them freely:

a	ya	´temazcal
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But, when ´ is present after a vowel, the air stream is stopped *abruptly* by closing the vocal folds. Practice doing this:



1. First, make a long *aaaa* sound, tapering it smoothly at the end. This is the basic vowel *a*.
2. Now, make another *aaaa*, but this time cut it off abruptly at the end. If you exaggerate, it might sound like you are choking or about to cough.
3. Repeat these cut-off *aaaas*, making them shorter and shorter. Now you are making the vowel *a´*.

When ´ occurs between two vowels, the air stream is interrupted in the same way, but then it is allowed to restart. You can practice doing this as follows:

1. First, say ´uh-oh´. Notice how the air flow stops between ´uh´ and ´oh´.
2. Next, replace ´uh´ and ´oh´ with the *aaaa* sound. Now you are making the vowel *a´a* in Zapotec.

Exercise

Listen to Maestra Fe pronounce the words below (all ones you have seen before). Try and spell each word, concentrating on *whether* an apostrophe should be added to the vowel, and if so *how*. After you have written the word down, raise your hand to volunteer your answer to the class.



tomato



corn



chicken



topil



potato



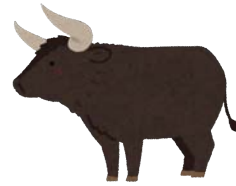
child



hat



orange



bull



mouse



sheep



pot

5. Final dialogue: Za'a 'corn (elote)'

The harvest of **za'a** 'corn (elote)' in late fall is one of the most delicious times of the year in **Laxup**. After months of hard work — first planting the corn, then taking care of the plants, finally harvesting the fresh corn — the people of **Laxup** can enjoy the many different ways of preparing the corn.

After shucking the corn (**shtsuxe**) and removing the kernels (**txhube**), a number of different foods can be made, including: **yetgu' za'a** 'tamal de elote', **nhiszeye' za'a** 'atole de elote', and **yet za'a** 'tortilla de elote'.

Beto is coming back from the *milpa* (corn field), carrying **za'a** 'elote' in a **llume** 'basket', when he sees his sister Raquel:

Raquel: **E ba belho'o?**
'Are you back?'

Beto: **O'ó, ze nhua' za'a.**
'Yes, I have brought some corn.'

Raquel: **Wenh gulhe! E dzunh xna'dzu'nh yetgu' za'a?**
'Great! Is our mother making *tamales de elote*?'

Beto: **O'ó.**
'Yes.'

Raquel: **Nhude' shtsuxe, txhube' za'anh?**
'Who is shucking the corn and removing the kernels?'

Beto: **Dziu!**
'Us!'

Raquel: **Wakkse!**
'Okay!'

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/2024/2024-3-dialogue.mp3>

7. Homework

7.1. *Write a story.* With the nouns and verbs you have learned, write a short story in Zapotec. Try and make it as interesting as possible by making use of all the words you know.

7.2. *More yes-no questions.* In today's class, we learned how to ask yes-no questions. This means that we can greet someone in a yet another way:

E Beto'nh lhiu'?
'Is your name Beto?'

They could then respond by saying 'yes' or 'no':

O'ó, Beto'nh lhia'.
'Yes, my name is Beto.'

or

O'o, Raquele'nh lhia'.
'No, my name is Raquel.'

Find a friend and greet them in this new way. Ask them about their name using a yes-no question. Then, repeat this activity in the reverse direction.

7.3. *Practice with apostrophes.* Find a partner from class to play this game, which requires you to pronounce vowels with the apostrophe.

In Zapotec, there are many words whose meanings are differentiated solely by whether an apostrophe is present or not. Here are some of these words:

- | | |
|-------------|------------------|
| yu | 'earth (tierra)' |
| yu'u | 'house (casa)' |
- | | |
|-------------|----------------------|
| ya | 'temazcal' |
| ya'a | 'mountain (montaña)' |
- | | |
|------------|-----------------|
| ga | 'where (dónde)' |
| ga' | 'green (verde)' |
- | | |
|-------------|----------------|
| de | 'ash (ceniza)' |
| de'e | 'thing (cosa)' |
- | | |
|--------------|---------------------|
| lhe | 'name (nombre)' |
| lhe' | 'you (tú)' |
| lhe'e | 'you all (ustedes)' |

- | | | |
|----|---------------------------|---|
| 6. | bi
bi'i | ‘what, which (que, cual)’
‘child (niña/o)’ |
| 7. | La’
la’a | ‘Oaxaca’
‘gash (raja)’ |

With a partner, pick one word in each set below to pronounce. Can your partner guess which one you are saying? Take turns being the Speaker and Guesser. (Some of these words are new: don’t try to learn them now. Just concentrate on how they are pronounced.)

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

za’a	‘corn (elote)’
shtsuxe’	‘shuck (corn)’
txhube’	‘remove corn kernels’
yetgu’ za’a	‘tamal de elote’
nhiszeye’ za’a	‘atole de elote’
yet za’a	tortilla de elote’

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

<https://wlma.ucsc.edu/nidodelenguas/clases/2024/2024-3-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/>