

A focus particle in Quijoquitani Zapotec¹
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0. In learning Quijoquitani Zapotec (QZ), understanding the proper use of a fronting function, the focus particle (*lɛɛ*), can be a puzzling problem. My purpose in this paper is to come up with some rules for its proper use, to make some hypotheses where understanding is more difficult, and to prepare the way for further study in areas where its use is most complex.

1. Among Zapotec languages the basic word order is VSO. Subjects and objects in this order in QZ never take *lɛɛ*.² In other words, *lɛɛ* is employed only when some order other than VSO is used. (The only exceptions are first and second person plural object pronouns which are a combination of *lɛɛ* and the clitic pronoun.)

In QZ word order may be changed to SVO or OVS. In these cases *lɛɛ* precedes the pre-verbal element.

¹Santa Catarina Quijoquitani is a town of approximately 1,000 inhabitants located in the southern mountains of Oaxaca in the district of San Carlos Yautepec. The main town of the language area is Santa Catalina Quierí, which has approximately 2,500 inhabitants. The total language area, which includes two or three other smaller towns which speak closely related dialects, encompasses about 5,000 people. Field work began in June, 1983. This study was done in the spring of 1987 in consultation with Zapotec speaker Emiliano Zurita, age 19.

²The phonemes of Quijoquitani Zapotec are listed here with the orthographical symbol, where different, given in parentheses. p, t, ts, č (ch), k, kw, b, d, dz, dʒ (dx), g, gw, s, š (x), h (j), z, ž (zh), m, n, ñ, l, r, w, y; i, e, ə (ɛ), a, o, u. The syllable nucleus may be a simple vowel (a) or laryngealized (aa). There are also contrastive tones, not written in the practical orthography: high, low, low rising and mid rising.

1.1 *lɛɛ* may be used to front a subject.

- (1) *Lɛɛn ka chilidzyaa.*
 foc-I go house-my
 I'm going to my house.

1.2 *lɛɛ* may be used to front an object.

- (2) *Lɛɛ conef kwnaasy pɛw.*
 foc rabbit catch coyote
 The coyote caught the rabbit.

(Only context clues me in as to whether a fronted noun is subject or object. In the example above, rabbits do not catch coyotes, so the coyote must be the subject.)

1.3 When a fronted item is preceded by a numeral *lɛɛ* may or may not be present.

- (3) *Lɛɛ tu xusy kwey ktoo.*
 foc one lady go church
 A lady went to the church.
- (4) *Tu xusy kwey ktoo.*
 one lady go church
 A lady went to the church.

1.4 A fronted noun does not take *lɛɛ* when preceded by question words and adverbs.

- (5) *Cho ma chaw xsandiyaa.*
 who 3a eat watermelon-1s
 What animal is eating my watermelons?
- (6) *Tirak kyalkiy ka yufoo.*
 much damage go do-2s
 You are doing much damage.

I have found a couple of special cases in which fronting occurs without *lɛɛ*. I cannot as yet explain why fronting without *lɛɛ* is allowed in these particular examples.

- (7) *Naxaa kwɛ naady per lɛdy wi niyaa.*
 hand-?-1s be stick but foc-NEG also foot-1s
 My hands got stuck, but not my feet.
- (8) *Xaa nawen kwey lo kiy.*
 3m ? go face market
 He went to the market.

The subject in ex. (7) cannot be preceded by *lɛɛ* but the subject in ex. (8) can. For the sake of comparison of meaning with and without *lɛɛ* I have included ex. (9). Ex. (8) mocks the man who went to the market for showing off his purchases. Ex. (9) is a statement of surprise that he was the one who had gone to the market.

- (9) *Lɛɛ xaa nawen kwey lo kiy.*
 foc 3m ? go face market
 He went to the market.

2. *lɛɛ* is used with every type of pre-posed substantive: proper nouns, common nouns, pronouns.

- (10) *Lɛɛ Pedre ptsifi lidzy tu xaa xtily.*
 foc Peter arrive house one 3m Spanish
 Peter arrived at the house of a Spaniard.

- (11) *Lɛɛ mɛkw no ktupxto.*
 foc dog be roll.over
 The dog was rolling over.

- (12) *Lɛɛ ma koyaa.*
 foc 3a bring-1s
 I'm going to bring it (animal).

2.1 Two independent pronouns only rarely occur with *lɛɛ*. They are first person singular (*naa*) and second person singular (*lii*). (These two are the only truly independent pronouns in the language.) Note that this is one of the rare occasions in which QZ exhibits pronoun copy, which contrasts with the common use of this feature in other Zapotec languages.

- (13) *Lii chaktyoo.*
 2s not.able-2s
 You are not able to.

- (14) *Lɛɛ lii chaktyoo.*
 foc 2s not.able-2s
 You are not able to.

Example (13) seems to be the more forceful and direct statement. My language helper's feeling is that *lɛɛ* "tones down" the statement, which is the opposite of what I would expect. Maybe the label "focus word" does not really fit in this context.

3. The subject of an embedded clause is normally fronted with *lɛɛ*.

- (15) *Kon xusy lɛɛ pɛw no leñ yu.*
 see lady foc coyote be in house
 The lady saw the coyote was in the house.

- (16) * Kon xusy pēw no leñ yu.
 see lady coyote be in house
 The lady saw the coyote was in the house.

4. lēē is rarely used in questions. The only type of question I've found in which lēē occurs is one in which there is no verb present.

- (17) Pe lēē ma nrīi. Lēē maw.
 Q foc 3a this foc 3a-3i
 Is this the animal? This is it.

4.1 lēē is rarely used in response to a yes-no question. (Again, the only examples I've found are responses in which there is no verb present, as in ex. (17).)

- (18) Pe kwey xaa. Kwey xaa.
 Q go 3m go 3m
 Did he go? He went.

- (19) Pe kwey xaa. * Lēē xaa kwey.
 Q go 3m foc 3m go
 Did he go? He went.

4.2 Fronting with lēē is expected in responses to other types of questions.

- (20) Pa kwey xaa. Lēē xaa kwey tañ.
 Where go 3m foc 3m go country
 Where did he go? He went to the country.

- (21) Pa kwey xaa. * Kwey xaa tañ.
 Where go 3m go 3m country
 Where did he go? He went to the country.

It is interesting to note in ex. (20) that in the response to the question the subject is the word under focus and not the location. Again the label "focus word" does not seem to fit the use of lēē in its context.

5. In QZ a statement is most commonly made negative by suffixing the negative morpheme (-dy) to the verb.

- (22) Kwyadyaa
 go-NEG-1s
 I didn't go.

But in order to keep the pre-posed subject the negative morpheme must occur suffixed to the focus word. (This construction would occur only as a specific response to certain questions.)

- (23) Pe nak byoydyoo xyosyaa nek. Lēdyaa kwyā.
 Why bring-NEG-2s bull-1s yesterday foc-NEG-1s go
 Why didn't you bring my bull yesterday? I didn't go.

(The idea is that someone else did go.)

- (24) * Lēēn kwyady
 foc-1s go-NEG
 I didn't go.

6. Note in the following examples how verb tense is affected by whether the subject is pre-posed or post-posed to the verb. The only syntactic difference between ex. (25) and (26) is that in ex. (25) the subject is pre-posed with lēē. As far as I know this kind of tense change only occurs with the progressive verb aspect.

- (25) Lēēn ka yawle.
 foc-1s go eat-already
 I'm already eating.

- (26) Ka yawlaa.
 go eat-already-1s
 I've already eaten.

7. lēē may or may not be used to introduce an adverbial time phrase.

- (27) Lēē stutyee tse name lēē xusy si.
 foc another day X foc lady go
 On another day the lady went.

- (28) Stutyee tse name lēē xusy si.
 another day X foc lady go
 On another day the lady went.

8. lēē may or may not be used in conjunction with another untranslatable particle (name). name usually signals the beginning of a new paragraph in narrative discourse. It may introduce a new character, a change of scene, or direct speech. It appears to be a corresponding focus word on the paragraph level of a discourse. name is post-posed to the words it modifies while lēē is pre-posed.

- (29) Tsi go name lēē ma kwloo xusy tu lefi kyexpey.
 then X foc 3a put lady one in net
 Then the lady put it (animal) in a net.

- (30) Tsi go lēē ma kwloo xusy tu lefi kyexpey.
 then foc 3a put lady one in net
 Then the lady put it (animal) in a net.

When introducing direct speech the force of the fronted subject is more difficult to discern than in other cases.

- (31) Tsiḡo name chēb ma, "
 then X say 3a
 Then the animal said, "
- (32) Tsiḡo name lēē ma chēb, "
 then X foc 3a say
 Then the animal said, "

9. When fronting a location phrase lēē is never used.

- (33) Tañ kwey xaa.
 country go 3m
 He went to the country.
- (34) Lo xkiti chaa xaa.
 face ashes lie.down 3m
 He was lying in the ashes.
- (35) * Lēē tañ kwey xaa.
 foc country go 3m
 He went to the country.
- (36) * Lēē lo xkiti chaa xaa.
 foc face ashes lie.down 3m
 He was lying in the ashes.

10. During the scene-setting of a narrative the absence of lēē can be quite striking. Take for instance the following story. I have included in the English translation the places where lēē occurs.

(37) A lady had a piece of land and she tended watermelons. Every morning the rabbit went to eat them. It went throughout that (watermelon patch) eating the lady's watermelons and it wasn't caught. It was very quick. It ran very quickly. After it finished eating them it went into the thicket. It went among that thicket.

(lēē) One day (lēē) the lady went out. When the lady arrived (lēē) the animal was sitting eating a watermelon.

In the first paragraph, where lēē does not occur even once, the habitual verb aspect is used extensively. In the second paragraph, the completive aspect becomes the dominant verb aspect, carrying the main-line events of the narrative. It is with these main-line events that lēē is used predominately, though not exclusively.

11. When a speaker fronts a substantive with *lé* his intention may be to make that substantive more prominent. But, as we have seen, there are times in which the label "focus word" does not at all seem to fit the use of *lé*. The fronted item does not always appear to be under special focus (see sections 2.1, 4.2, and 6). Also, while there are various instances in which the use of *lé* is readily predictable, at other times its use is very difficult to predict.