

Personal pronouns: distribution

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The [Zapotec](#) Grammar Files

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1 Introduction

This paper discusses basic facts about the distribution of personal pronouns in Zapotec. It follows the general orientation proposed in Marlett (1993) and provides the basis for the categories presented in [Personal pronouns: inventory, this series](#).¹

Personal pronouns must be classified by their syntactic (in)dependence and by their phonological (in)dependence. Three types of personal pronouns are attested in Zapotec, although some varieties have only two, which leads to some confusion when looking at the facts across the language family:

(1)	Syntactically ...	Prosodically ...		Examples from [zai]
(a)	Independent	Independent	+S +P	'na? 1SG
(b)	Independent	Dependent	+S -P	ni 3IN
(c)	Dependent	Dependent	-S -P	=be 3H

The contexts that serve to categorize the pronouns are presented in sections 2-5.

¹I thank Beth Merrill for her helpful comments. The following are found in other files: [Transcription Conventions](#) and [Data Sources](#) for Zapotec. The abbreviations used in this paper are: 1 = first person, 1PLEX = first person plural exclusive, 1PLIN = first person plural inclusive, 1SG = first person singular, 2 = second person, 2PL = second person plural, 2SG = second person singular, 3AN = third person animal, 3F = third person feminine, 3FO = third person formal, 3H = third person human, 3IN = third person inanimate, 3INFO = third person informal, 3M = third person masculine, AFM = aforementioned, BASE = base for dependent pronouns, C = completive, CAUS = causative, DIST = distal, H = habitual, P = potential, PL = plural, POSS = possessive, Q = question particle/marker, QE = question emphazier, S = stative.

2 Characteristics of +S +P pronouns

A pronoun that occurs in the contexts discussed in sections 2.1-2.5 is classified as a syntactically and prosodically independent pronoun (+S +P). These pronouns receive their own stress, do not interact phonologically with adjacent words in any significant way, and do not lean on adjacent words phonologically.

When the language does not have a +S +P pronoun to use in a given construction, a more complicated construction must be used (see [Base plus enclitic pronoun, this series](#)).

2.1 In isolation

Only +S +P pronouns occur in isolation.

- (2) Nēdi'.
[zpc] 'nædi?
1SG
'Soy yo.'
'It's me.'

[H. Lyman (2007:39)]

- (3) Na.
[zpo] 'na
1SG
'Yo.'
'Me.' [As in reply to the question "Who went?"]

[David Riggs, p.c.]

–P pronouns (whether +S or –S) cannot occur in isolation.

- (4) *Ni.
[zai] ni
3IN
(‘Ello, él (cosa), ellas (cosa).’)
(‘It.’)

[Marlett (1993:85)]

- (5) *Yu.
[zpz] ju
3M
(‘Él.’)
(‘Him.’)

[Marlett (1993:85)]

- (6) *Bo'.
[zav] =bo?
3INFO
(‘Él/ella.’)
(‘Him/her.’)

[Marlett (1993:85)]

Only +S +P pronouns occur in questions preceded or followed (depending on the variety) only by the question particle.

- (9) ʔTsi luʔ
[zaa] ʔtsi luʔ
 Q 2SG
 ʔTúʔ
 ʔYouʔ

(13) *¿Na n?
[zpz] na n
1PLIN Q
(‘¿Somos nosotros (a quien se refiere)?’)
(‘*(Is reference being made to) us?*’)

- (14) * ɿMi n?
 [zpz] mi n
 3F/3FO Q
 (‘¿Es ella (a quien se refiere)?’)
 (‘(Is reference being made to) her?’)

[Marlett (1993:85)]

2.3 In preverbal position

Only +S +P pronouns occur in preverbal position.

- (15) Li'i bi'iya lu ni.
 [zai] 'li? bi?ja =lu ni
 2SG C.see 2SG 3IN
 ‘TÚ lo viste.’
 ‘YOU saw it.’

[Marlett (1993:85)]

- (16) Lué' bē lo kana'.
 [zpc] luæ? bæ =lo kana?
 2SG C.make 2SG thus
 ‘TÚ hiciste eso.’
 ‘YOU did that.’

[H. Lyman (2007:163)]

- (17) Sa nda ndo' xge'e.
 [zpt] 'sa nda ndo? ʃge?
 1PLEX H.go face plaza
 ‘Yo (formal) voy a la plaza.’
 ‘I (formal) am going to the plaza.’

[Wagner (2008:5)]

Example (18) is similar to the preceding ones in that it has a +S +P pronoun in initial position, although there is no verb.

- (18) To ga.
 [ztg] 'to ga
 2PL DIST
 ‘Ustedes son los que están allí.’
 ‘You (pl.) are the ones who are there.’

[Marlett (1993:84)]

Pronouns that are not +P cannot be used in this position whether they are +S or –S.²

- (19) * Ni biwi'ini (ni).
 [zai] ni biwi?ni ni
 3IN C.be.small 3IN
 (‘Se hizo mas pequeño.’)
 (‘It got smaller.’)

[Marlett (1993:86)]

²More ungrammatical examples are provided in Marlett (1993:86-87).

- (20) * Lu bi'iya (lu) ni.
 [zai] = lu bi'ja = lu ni
 2SG C.see 2SG 3IN
 ('TÚ lo viste.')

[Marlett (1993:86)]

- (21) * Xo ga.
 [ztg] jo ga
 3FO DIST
 ('Es él/ella que está allí.')

[Marlett (1993:84)]

2.4 After Spanish preposition

Only +S +P pronouns occur after prepositions that are Spanish loanwords. (In the case of example (22), the source of the loanword in Spanish is a noun.)

- (22) Gwnne e' fabor nada'.
 [zav] g^wn:e = e? fabor 'nada?
 C.speak 3FO favor 1SG
 'Habló en mi favor.'

[Butler (1980:248), Marlett (1993:87)]

- (23) par nada'
 [zav] par 'nada?
 for 1SG
 'para mí'

[Butler (1980:249), Marlett (1993:87)]

- (24) par yã
 [zpz] par 'jã
 for 1SG
 'con respecto a mí'

[Marlett (1993:87)]

- (25) despwes de na'a
 [zai] despwes de 'na?
 for 1SG
 'después de mí'

[Pickett (1960:47), Marlett (1993:87)]

- (26) par liu'
 [zab] par 'liu?
 for 2SG
 'para ti'

[Marlett (1993:87)]

- (27) para luë'
 [zpc] para 'luæ?
 for 2SG
 'para ti'
 'for you'

[H. Lyman (2007:38)]

A pronoun that is not +P cannot occur after such prepositions.

- (28) * despwes de be
 [zai] despwes de = be
 after of 3H
 ('después de él/ella')
 ('after him/her')

[Marlett (1993:88)]

- (29) * despwes de ni
 [zai] despwes de ni
 after 3H
 ('después de él/ella (inanimate)')
 ('after it')

[Marlett (1993:88)]

- (30) * par na
 [zpz] par na
 for 1PLIN
 ('con respecto a nosotros (inclusivo)')
 ('with respect to us (inclusive)')

[Marlett (1993:88)]

- (31) * par a'
 [zav] par = a?
 for 1SG
 ('para mí')
 ('for me')

[Marlett (1993:88)]

- (32) * par bi
 [zab] par = bi
 for 3INFO
 ('para él/ella')
 ('for him/her')

[Marlett (1993:88)]

- (33) * Gwnne e' fabor a'.
 [zav] g^wwn:e = e? fabor = a?
 C.speak 3FO favor 1SG
 ('Habló en mi favor.')
 ('S/he spoke on my behalf.')

[Marlett (1993:88)]

- (34) * par a'.
 [zav] par = a?
 for 1SG
 ('para mí')
 ('for me')

[Marlett (1993:88)]

2.5 As subject of predicate nominal clause

Only +S +P pronouns may occur as the subject of a verbless predicate nominal clause following the predicate nominal if the predicate nominal is an NP.

- (35) Ben' tondo le'e.
 [zpc] ben? tondo 'læ?
 person foolish 2PL
 'Ustedes son tontos.'
 'You are fools.'

[H. Lyman (2007:152)]

2.6 As predicate nominal

Only +S +P pronouns may occur as the predicate of a verbless predicate nominal clause.

- (36) Narä ni.
 [zaw] 'naræ = ni
 1SG 3INFO
 'Soy yo.'
 'It is I.'³

[Stubblefield & Stubblefield (1994:104)]

3 Characteristics of +S pronouns

In addition to the contexts in which only +S +P pronouns are used, at least two contexts only require that the pronoun be +S and do not specify whether the pronoun must be +P or –P.

3.1 As object of the verb following an NP subject

The following examples illustrate the possibility in some varieties of having a +S –P pronoun after an NP subject in its usual postverbal position, usually as an object of the verb.

- (37) ... ra ka enne'yu bi ...
 [zaa] r-a ka en:e?ju bi
 H-say PL man 3INFO
 '... le dicen los hombres ...'
 '... the men say to him/her ...'

[Nellis & Nellis (1983:433)]

- (38) Bi'lya Ale ni.
 [zai] bij'a ale ni
 C-see Alejandro 3IN
 'Alejandro lo/la vio.'
 'Alejandro saw it.'

[Marlett (1993:88)]

³The source translated this example as 'I am he'.

- (39) Usa'an Xul a'.
 [ztg] u-sa'an ʃul a?
 C-leave Julia 2SG
 'Julia te dejó.'
 'Julia left you.'

[Marlett (1993:89)]

- (40) Kut Li n.
 [zpz] kut li n
 P-CAUS-die María 1PLIN
 'María nos matará.'
 'María will kill us.'

[Marlett (1993:89)]

- (41) Rure guna Xwan mi.
 [zab] rure guna ʃwan mi
 there C-see Juan 3AN
 'Juan lo/la vio allá.'
 'Juan saw it there.'

[Marlett (1993:89)]

As it is generally possible to have a +S +P pronoun in this context, this is not illustrated here.
 –S –P pronouns do not occur in this context.

- (42) * Bi'iya Ale lu.
 [zai] bi'ja ale =lu
 C-see Alejandro 2SG
 ('Alejandro te vio.')

(*'Alejandro saw it.'*)

[Marlett (1993:90)]

- (43) * Kut Li r.
 [zpz] kut li =r
 P-CAUS-die María 2SG
 ('María te matará.')

(*'María will kill you.'*)

[Marlett (1993:90)]

- (44) * Gwdao beko' na'a ni' a'
 [zav] g^wdao beko? na? ni? =a?
 C-eat dog DIST AFM 1SG
 ('Ese perro me mordió.')

(*'That dog bit me.'*)

[Marlett (1993:90)]

3.2 After interrogative pronoun

Only +S pronouns occur as the predicate nominal associated with an interrogative pronoun. In some varieties of Zapotec, this must be a +P pronoun as well, but in other varieties it may be a –P pronoun. See appendix A.

Examples (45)-(46) show languages in which a +S but –P pronoun is allowed in this context.

- (45) ɿChu l'ʔ
 [ztg] tʃu l'ʔ
 who? 2SG
 'ɿQuién eres tú?'
 'Who are you?' [Marlett (1993:90)]

- (46) ɿNuni bi?
 [zaa] nuni bi
 who? 3INFO
 'ɿQuién es él/ella?'
 'Who is s/he?' [Marlett (1993:91)]

In some varieties, the pronoun may also be +P in this context.

- (47) ɿNuni inte'ʔ
 [zaa] nuni 'inteʔ
 who? 1SG
 'ɿQuién soy yo?'
 'Who am I?' [Marlett (1993:90)]

- (48) ɿChu luh?
 [zaw] tʃu 'lu^h
 who? 2SG
 'ɿQuién eres?'
 'Who are you?' [Stubblefield & Stubblefield (1994:104)]

Examples (49)-(54) show languages in which a +P pronoun is required in this context.

- (49) ɿTu liu'ʔ
 [zab] tu 'liuʔ
 who? 2SG
 'ɿQuién eres tú?'
 'Who are you?' [Marlett (1993:91)]

- (50) *ɿTu b?
 [zab] tu =b
 who? 3INFO
 ('ɿQuién es él/ella?')
 ('Who is s/he?') [Marlett (1993:91)]

- (51) ɿTu li'i?
 [zai] tu 'liʔ
 who? 2SG
 'ɿQuién eres tú?'
 'Who are you?'⁴ [Pickett (1960:86), Marlett (1993:90)]

⁴The source had the translation 'Who's there?'.

- (52) * ¿Tu l?
 [zai] tu =l
 who? 2SG
 ('¿Quién eres tú?')
 ('Who are you?')

[Pickett (1960:86), Marlett (1993:90)]

- (53) ¿Kyu ru?
 [zpz] k^ju 'ru
 who? 2SG
 '¿Quién eres tú?'
 'Who are you?'

[Marlett (1993:91)]

- (54) * ¿Kyu yu?
 [zpz] k^ju ju
 who? 3M
 '¿Quién es él?'
 'Who is he?'

[Marlett (1993:91)]

Example (55) illustrates that in no variety (so far as is known) can the pronoun be –S.

- (55) * ¿Nuni a'?
 [zaa] nuni =a?
 who? 1SG
 ('¿Quién soy yo?')
 ('Who am I?')

[Marlett (1993:91)]

3.3 In conjunct situation

When pronouns are conjoined, it seems +S pronouns are required; more data are needed from varieties that have such conjunctions. (The conjunction /o/ in (56) is a Spanish loanword.)

- (56) ¿Tu bi'ni ni? ¿Li'i la o la'a be?
 [zai] tu bi'ni ni li' la o la' =be
 who C-do 3IN 2SG Q or BASE 3H
 '¿Quién lo hizo? ¿Tú o él/ella?'
 'Who did it? ¿You or him/her?'

[Pickett, Black & Marcial (2001:29)]

- (57) la'a be ne xamigu be
 [zai] la' =be ne f-amigu =be
 BASE 3H and POSS-friend 3H
 'él/ella y su amigo/a'
 's/he and his/her friend'

[Pickett, Black & Marcial (2001:27)]

4 Characteristics of +S -P pronouns

A pronoun that occurs in the contexts discussed in section 5⁵ and does not occur in the contexts described in section 2 is classified as a syntactically independent but prosodically dependent (+S -P) pronoun in [Personal pronouns: inventory, this series](#).

5 Characteristics of -S -P pronouns

A personal pronoun that does not occur in the contexts described in section 2 and section 3 is classified as a syntactically dependent and prosodically dependent pronoun. The primary positions for -S -P pronouns are following a verb (as subject) and following a noun (as possessor), as illustrated by (58)-(60).⁶

- (58) Rue bi' dxin tsola'dxi'.
 [zpc] r-ue =bi? dʒin tsolaʔdʒiʔ
 H-do 3INFO work slowly
 'Él/ella trabaja despacio.'
 'S/he works slowly.'

[H. Lyman (2007:110)]

- (59) Ba nati bi'.
 [zpc] ba n-ati =biʔ
 already S-die 3INFO
 'Él/ella ya está muerto/a.'
 'S/he is already dead.'

[H. Lyman (2007:152)]

- (60) ni'a ba'
 [zpc] niʔa =baʔ
 foot 3AN
 'su pata'
 'its foot/paw'

[H. Lyman (2007:110)]

Assuming that the verb and the possessed noun are the heads of their respective constructions, one may claim that the pronouns are adjacent to the heads. In some varieties of Zapotec, the -S -P pronoun cannot be separated from the head by almost anything. These are those which have a strict condition on this adjacency constraint: a -S -P must directly follow the head. In some varieties, however, a third person -S -P pronoun may be separated from the head by other -S -P pronouns.⁷ See appendix A. Choapan Zapotec [zpc] is of the lax type, as shown by (61).

- (61) Bëti bi' ba'.
 [zpc] bæti =biʔ =baʔ
 C-CAUS-die 3INFO 3AN
 'Él/ella lo mató.'
 'S/he killed it.'

[H. Lyman (2007:150)]

⁵That is, without support from the BASE word /la'a/; see [Base plus enclitic pronoun, this series](#).

⁶I consider the examples discussed in [Base plus enclitic pronoun, this series](#) to be a subtype of the noun followed by a pronoun.

⁷This condition was first elaborated in Marlett (1993).

Such examples are impossible in other varieties such as Isthmus Zapotec [zai]. See (62).

- (62) * Bi'iya lu be.
 [zai] bij'a =lu =be
 C.see 2SG 3H
 ('Tú lo/la viste.')

(*'You saw him/her.'*)

[Marlett (1993:95)]

6 The existence of a person hierarchy

Even when all of the facts presented above are taken into consideration, some distributional facts are not accounted for. Specifically, in languages with the lax version of the adjacency condition (see appendix A), some sequences of pronouns are still disallowed. At least two studies of the distribution of pronouns have made this fact explicit: López, & Newberg (2005:9), H. Lyman (2007:33-35) and H. Lyman (2008). López, & Newberg (2005) show that the hierarchy in (63) is relevant.

- (63) 1/2 > 3FO > 3INFO > 3AN > 3IN

No example is grammatical that has the order of -S-P pronouns outside of this order, and pronouns cannot be repeated in the string in these particular languages. And in no variety of Zapotec, to the best of my knowledge, can the direct object be a -S -P pronoun that is first or second person.

Appendix A: Points of variation in distribution

ISO 639-3 code	Identifier as in Ethnologue	after 'who?' or what? +S and +P or ±P	Strict or Lax version of adjacency condition
zaa	Sierra de Juárez	±P	
zab	San Juan Guelavía	+P	
zac	Ocotlán		
zad	Cajonos		
zae	Yareni		
zaf	Ayoquesco		
zai	Isthmus	+P	Strict
zam	Miahuatlán		
zao	Ozolotepec		
zaq	Aloápam		
zar	Rincón		Lax
zas	Santo Domingo Albarradas		
zat	Tabaa		
zav	Yatzachi		Lax
zaw	Mitla		
zax	Xadani		
zca	Coatecas Altas		

ISO 639-3 code	Identifier as in Ethnologue	after ‘who?’ or what? +S and +P or ±P	Strict or Lax version of adjacency condition
zoo	Asunción Mixtepec		
zpa	Lachiguirí		
zpb	Yautepec		
zpc	Choapan	+P	Lax
zpd	Southeastern Ixtlán		
zpe	Petapa		
zpf	San Pedro Quiatoni		
zpg	Guevea de Humboldt		
zph	Totomachapan		
zpi	Santa María Quiegolani		
zpj	Quiavicuzas		
zpk	Tlacolulita		
zpl	Lachixío		
zpm	Mixtepec		
zpn	Santa Inés Yatzechi		
zpo	Amatlán		
zpp	El Alto		
zpq	Zoogocho		
zpr	Santiago Xanica		
zps	Coatlán		
zpt	San Vicente Coatlán		
zpu	Yalálag		Lax
zpv	Chichicapan		
zpw	Zaniza		
zpx	San Baltazar Loxicha		
zpy	Mazaltepec		
zpz	Texmelucan	+P	moot
zsr	Southern Rincón		
zte	Elotepec		
ztg	Xanaguía	±P	
ztl	Lapaguía-Guivini		
ztn	San Agustín Mixtepec		
ztp	Santa Catarina Albarradas		
ztp	Loxicha		
ztq	Quioquitani-Quierí		
zts	Tilquiapan	±P	
ztt	Tejalapan		
ztu	Güilá		
ztx	Zaachila		
zty	Yatee		

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