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Comparative Study of Mezquital Otomi and Mexican Spanish

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COMPARATIVE STUDY OF MEZQUITAL OTOMI AND MEXICAN SPANISH

GRAMMAR AND PHONOLOGY

by

SARAH STEFANIE VOLLMANN

B.A., Wesleyan University, 2004

A thesis submitted to the

Faculty of the Graduate School of the

University of Colorado in partial fulfillment

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Master of Arts

Department of Linguistics

2012
This thesis entitled:
Comparative Study of Mezquital Otomi and Mexican Spanish
written by Sarah Stefanie Vollmann
has been approved for the Department of Linguistics

________________________________________
J. Andrew Cowell

________________________________________
David S. Rood

Date

The final copy of this thesis has been examined by the signatories, and we
Find that both the content and the form meet acceptable presentation standards
Of scholarly work in the above mentioned discipline.

IRB protocol #: 0610.11
My degree will specialize in teaching English to speakers of other languages. Comparative studies of different languages are very useful for language teachers. The idea for this thesis grew from a video I made which presents the Mezquital Otomi language to Spanish speakers of Otomi ancestry. Mezquital Otomi is spoken in central Mexico, so it has had much contact with Mexican Spanish ever since Spanish conquest in the sixteenth century. There used to be many dialects of a single Otomi language, including the Mezquital dialect, spoken by the Mezquital Otomi people. However, nowadays those dialects have become mutually unintelligible languages.

My speakers for this endeavor were two sisters who spoke Mezquital Otomi with their mother in Mexico until about ages eight and nine, when they began learning Spanish. They never went to school in their native country, instead working in the fields. Their experience seems typical of Otomi people, who were conquered by the Aztecs shortly before the Spanish arrived. For hundreds of years, they have been poor; Mezquital Otomi is a low-status language. Mezquital Otomi is one of the more widely spoken Otomian languages. Nonetheless, many Otomi parents want their children to learn Spanish in order to ascend the social ladder. My speakers are now about 50 and 51 years old. They have lived in Boulder, Colorado for about six years, and speak Spanish at native level.
There are many similarities and differences between the two languages. For example, Mezquital Otomi contains three phonemic tones, while Spanish has none. Otomi tones may resemble differences in pitch, vowel length, or stress to Spanish speakers. Phonemes in Mezquital Otomi but not Mexican Spanish include /ε/, /ʊ/, /ɸ/, and /ʃ/. Grammatically, both languages are nominative-accusative and fusional. The basic word order in Mezquital Otomi and Mexican Spanish is AVP. However, the former sometimes uses verbs for things that would be expressed by adjectives in Spanish. For example, “to be cold” is a verb. Furthermore, Otomi does not mark gender, while Spanish genders everything, even inanimate objects. Knowledge of Spanish would help learners of Otomi in some ways, but also present them with challenges.
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Introduction

I have worked with speakers of Mezquital Otomi during almost the entire time I have been a graduate student at the University of Colorado, Boulder. I chose this school because it had a two-year master’s program in Linguistics for TESOL Professionals. My career goal is to teach English as a second/foreign language at the university level. I grew up learning about different cultures, and saw TESOL (teaching English to speakers of other languages) as a way to further a social justice goal.

How TESOL and Mezquital Otomi Further Social Justice

As a university ESL/EFL professor, I will be able to increase the number of educated professionals in countries that have emerging economies. In many places, people must know English in order to secure a powerful job. A teacher never reaches only one student or class; they will in turn affect the other people in their native countries. Nations such as China and South Korea are rapidly developing, in part because of English teachers.

Some English teachers worry that they are causing their students to lose their native languages and cultures. But my mother is bilingual in French and English, so I knew that people could be fluent in more than one language. Furthermore, knowledge of English can actually foment intercultural understanding. English is today’s international lingua franca, so people who know it as a second language can communicate their people’s perspective to a wider audience. As a writing and speaking teacher, I will give my students the power to represent their native countries and cultures.

I am fluent in Spanish, and have often wished that I could find a job teaching in Latin America. Since the age of 15, I have participated in various service projects that help people in
that region. I have seen grinding poverty, resulting in minimal education and a lack of basic healthcare. At the same time, I have been amazed by friendly, hardworking people from a diversity of indigenous cultures. When I came to graduate school, I hoped that I would be able to complete some sort of educational service project during my time here.

I had hardly begun school when I heard that Finn Thye, a Ph.D. student in my department, was recruiting people to document indigenous languages of the Americas. She had already found speakers among the Latino immigrant community in Denver and Boulder, Colorado. When I suggested that I document a language as a thesis, she helped me contact her advisor, J. Andrew Cowell. We decided that I would work with two speakers of Mezquital Otomi.

When I first met with Andy, he had another idea for me in addition to a thesis. I spent part of 2011 working for him as a research assistant, creating a video that presents the Mezquital Otomi language for heritage speakers to learn. We defined heritage speakers as grown children of Otomi immigrants who speak Spanish and perhaps English, but want to learn Mezquital Otomi. The video is titled, “El otomi mezquital para los hispanohablantes,” or “Mezquital Otomi for Spanish Speakers.” My career goal is to increase the leadership classes of other countries by teaching English to college students. In a sense, I thought, the adult children of Otomi immigrants are the leadership class of their people. Having grown up in the United States, they have had many more opportunities for education than have Otomi people in Mexico. If they learn Mezquital Otomi, they should be able to elevate their people’s status.
Background and Design of This Project

Mezquital Otomi is one of the languages spoken by the Otomi people, who are from the Central Highlands region of Mexico. The Otomian family of languages is a subset of the Otomanguean one (http://www.ethnologue.com/show_family.asp?subid=1865-16, 2011). My speakers grew up speaking Otomi with their mother in Mexico until they started learning Spanish around ages eight and nine. They are now about 50 and 51 years old, and came to the United States about six years ago. I began working with them in March, 2011.

First, I elicited some basic vocabulary for topics in the video. These words included Otomi words for places in Mexico, animals, numbers, etc. I met with my speakers for about an hour or two at a time, mostly individually, at the University of Colorado, Boulder. Twice, the younger sister generously made tamales at her home in Boulder. I went there with a camera and filmed that event. The video features her explanation of how to make tamales in both Spanish and Otomi, with key words highlighted for learners. I finished the video in August.

Some of the data for the phonemes and phonology sections of this paper is from the video, since any words contain the sounds of a language. With the start of the fall 2011 semester, I began elicitation sessions on campus for my thesis. For about two hours at a time, I asked the younger sister to translate sentences from Spanish to Mezquital Otomi. The data that I analyzed in the grammar section is from these sessions. They took place from August to November, 2011. Otomi has no writing system of its own; all utterances in that language have been transcribed using the International Phonetic Alphabet here.

This paper will focus on comparing Mezquital Otomi with Mexican Spanish for teaching purposes. Language learners’ strengths and weaknesses in the target language are often the result of grammar and pronunciation similarities and differences between it and their native
language. For example, the alveolar trill in Spanish is notoriously hard for English speakers to produce. But the same phoneme exists in Gulf Arabic, so if a Gulf Arabic speaker started learning Spanish, that knowledge would help him or her.

The sisters I worked with are from a rural area in the state of Hidalgo. They never had a chance to go to school in Mexico, but instead spent their childhood working in the fields. As I got to know them, it seemed clear to me that they are barely literate in Spanish, though they speak that language at native level. At every elicitation session, I brought a written list of sentences in Spanish for my speaker to translate into Mezquital Otomi. When Francisca asked me to repeat a sentence, she would always say she had forgotten her glasses. This happened several times. I think she was embarrassed that she could not read the words on the page. She did take one-word notes at various times, such as if she had to think or ask Bernarda for a word in Otomi. Even then, sometimes I had to help her with spelling. Bernarda’s reading comprehension is very low; she had trouble with a simple page of directions to the university.

Nonetheless, both of my speakers are exceedingly smart and resourceful. Their energy and enthusiasm, as well as their knowledge of Otomi, are apparent in my video. Neither this paper nor the video would have been possible without them.

My thesis will focus on the grammatical and phonological differences between Mezquital Otomi and Mexican Spanish. There have been many contrastive studies between English and other languages (David Rood, personal communication, March 21, 2012). This study is different because it focuses on two languages that have had much contact with each other. My thesis could even be used as background for the purpose of teaching Mezquital Otomi to Spanish speakers.
Finn Thye and another student had already begun working with the speakers that Andy selected for me. Her research partner, Alexander Ferguson, had completed a B.A. in linguistics from our university; he was working on a second bachelor’s degree, in anthropology. Ideas from Finn and Alexander’s elicitation sessions are therefore scattered throughout my paper.

Information About Otomi

My source for this section is Hekking and Bakker, 2007.

Otomi is the fifth most commonly spoken indigenous language in Mexico. It has had contact with Nahuatl since the beginning of the tenth century, when the Aztecs came into Otomi territory, and Nahuatl became the privileged language when the twelfth century started. Otomi has been influenced by Spanish since the beginning of the sixteenth century, and is now spoken by about 330,000 bilinguals in the states of Mexico, Hidalgo, Queretaro, Puebla, Guanajuato, Tlaxcala, Veracruz, and Michoacan.

Spanish missionaries such as Fray Pedro Carceres and Fray Alonso Urbano documented Otomi in the sixteenth century. They used Spanish orthography, which lacked many of the sounds in Otomi. The twentieth century saw a policy of bilingual education in Mexican indigenous communities, but most Otomi people are still illiterate in their own language and many do not speak standard Spanish well. Otomi is only spoken informally, among family and friends. Thus my speakers’ experience is fairly typical of Otomi people.

Some aspects of Otomi grammar and phonology transfer into the Spanish of Otomi people in Mexico; their Spanish is thus imperfect. Since Otomi is a stigmatized language, many Otomi people do not want to teach it to their children. Also, the younger that Otomi people learn
Spanish, the more they insert loanwords into their Otomi, and the closer their Spanish is to the standard Mexican version.

More Acknowledgements

I received valuable help on my thesis from Professor David Rood in the Linguistics Department at the University of Colorado, Boulder. He is the person who first taught me how to analyze grammar in documentation. Professor Esther Brown, in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese, also provided me with reading recommendations on Spanish phonology. These books gave me information that I needed to compare patterns in the sounds of Spanish to those of Mezquital Otomi. I am immensely grateful for the support of these two professors.
The phonemes of Mezquital Otomi and Mexican Spanish

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Bilabial</th>
<th>Dental</th>
<th>Alveolar</th>
<th>Palatal</th>
<th>Velar</th>
<th>Glottal</th>
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<tr>
<td>Ejective Stop</td>
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<td>t’</td>
<td>ts’</td>
<td>tʃ’</td>
<td>k’</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unaspirated Stop</td>
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<td>ts</td>
<td>tʃ</td>
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<tr>
<td>Voiceless Fricative</td>
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<td>Tap or Flap</td>
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<td>Oral Nasal</td>
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<td>Oral Nasal</td>
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The consonants of Mexican Spanish follow:

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<th></th>
<th>Labial</th>
<th>Alveolar</th>
<th>Post-Alveolar</th>
<th>Palatal</th>
<th>Velar</th>
<th>Labio-velar</th>
<th>Glottal</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plosive</td>
<td>/p/</td>
<td>/b/</td>
<td>/t/</td>
<td>/θ/</td>
<td>/k/</td>
<td>/g/</td>
<td>/kʷ/</td>
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<tr>
<td>Affricate</td>
<td>/β/</td>
<td>/č/</td>
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<td>/χ/</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fricative</td>
<td>/f/</td>
<td>/v/</td>
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<td>/z/</td>
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<td>/ʒ/</td>
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<td>Nasal</td>
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<td>Approximants</td>
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<td>Trill</td>
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</table>


Spanish has just five vowels: /a/, /e/, /i/, /o/, and /u/.
Mezquital Otomi includes many phonemes that do not exist in Spanish. Otomi vowels include /ʊ/, as in /oni/, the word for “chicken.” Another vowel found in Otomi but not Spanish is /ε/. Learners of Otomi would have to work hard in order to hear the difference between /e/ and /ɛ/, /o/ and /ʊ/, and say them correctly. They might substitute /e/ for /ɛ/ and /o/ for /ʊ/ otherwise.

Also, Otomi often uses nasalized vowels, which do not occur in Spanish. Thus heritage learners of Otomi would have to learn how to consistently produce those, too.

Otomi also has many ejective consonants. Some examples are /t'/, /ts'/, /tʃ'/, and /k'/.

There is a bilabial voiceless fricative in Otomi, which Spanish speakers might substitute with /p/ or /f/ from their native language. There is also /ʃ/ in Otomi, which Spanish speakers might substitute with /tʃ/. All of these sounds would be challenging and require much practice for native Spanish speakers.

In Mezquital Otomi, /o/ and /u/ are not phonemic. For example, “You’re going to eat” could be said either /magi njone/ or /magi njune/; they seem to be in free variation. Since /o/ and /u/ are contrastive in Spanish, students of Otomi would have to be told that /o/ and /u/ are the same sound in that language. Practice listening for this aspect of Otomi should help them.

Like in Spanish, /g/ can be substituted by /ɣ/ intervocalically in fast speech. For instance,
3. mavi		tsiθe¹

AUX-2S.FUT	
drink

“You’re going to drink.”

Here, /mavi/ is the same auxiliary verb as /magi/.

Alternation can occur between /a/ and /ɛ/, too. For example,

6. ŋan¹ũ: ma n¹o

hurt-3PS me my head

“I have a headache.”

Here, /ŋan¹ ũ/ is the same particle as /ʃɛn¹o/ in:

8. ʃɛn¹o me gu

hurt-3PS me my ear

“My ear hurts.”

Students of Otomi should be taught to hear differences between /a/ and /ɛ/, the new vowel for them, so they will understand Otomi properly.

Otomí and Spanish also share many phonemes. Spanish of Central Mexico includes the phoneme /x/, which is especially salient intervocally—for example, in the word “Mexico” /mexiko/ (Lipski, 1994). In some other parts of the Spanish-speaking world, this phoneme

¹ Like in Spanish (and English, which some heritage speakers are likely to know), there is one verb in Otomi that can mean either “eat” or “drink.” The verb root tsi- is the Otomi equivalent of the Spanish tom- from the infinitive “tomar.”
becomes more of an /h/ (Lipski, 1994). In Mezquital Otomi, the two phonemes seem to alternate. One of my speakers translated the Spanish version of “You’re going to drink that water there” as /noʔe magi tsinona dehe bixa:ni/, using the distal demonstrative, but /noʔe magi tsinona dehe bihanijabu/ was “You’re going to drink that water over there,” using the very distal demonstrative. She said both sentences at the same speed, so these consonants seem to be in free variation.

Otomí also has a flap, like Spanish. However, the Otomi flap seems to only occur intervocally, while the Spanish one can happen anywhere. An example of the flap in Otomi is the determiner /no orá/.

Mezquital Otomi has both voiced and voiceless interdental sounds. For example, “my dad” in Otomi is /ma ðaða/, and “red” is /θɛni/. Students would have to be taught, and subsequently reminded, to place their tongues between their teeth—not substitute /d/ for /ð/ or /s/ for /θ/, for example. The letter “d” is sometimes pronounced as /ð/ in Spanish (e.g., Eddington, 2004), other times as /d/, so heritage speakers would have to learn to view them as different phonemes and pronounce them in the appropriate words in Otomi.

Glottal stops are often used in Otomi, but not in Spanish. If heritage learners of Otomi live in the United States and know English, they will be at an advantage for knowing this phoneme as well as interdental ones. If not, they will have to be taught how to make a glottal stop. Pointing to the glottis on a diagram should help. Speakers of English might not notice they make glottal stops, however, since they are often substituted for /t/ in informal speech. Consequently, they might not hear glottal stops in Otomi.
Mezquital Otomi and Mexican Spanish still have many phonemes in common. Like many languages around the world, they share the voiceless oral stops /p/, /t/, and /k/. Both languages also have the voiced oral stops /b/, /d/, and /g/, as well as the fricatives /s/, /x/ and /z/.

Although there is no /h/ on the chart, that phoneme is sometimes substituted for /x/ in Mexican Spanish, so heritage speakers might know how to produce /h/. Otherwise, they would have to be taught how to make this voiceless glottal fricative.

Mexican Spanish contains many other phonemes also found in Mezquital Otomi. These include nasals /m/, /n/, /ɲ/ as well as the rhotics /r/ and /ɾ/. The liquid /l/ is also in both languages, as are the semivowels /w/ and /j/. All of these factors would give Spanish speakers some foundation for learning Otomi.

Tones of Mezquital Otomi

The tones of Otomi would be a challenge for heritage speakers because Spanish is not a tonal language. Otomi has three tonemes: high, low, and rising (Sinclair and Pike, 1948). For example, /jà/ is “the” plural, /já/ is the 3PS possessive plural, and /jä/ means “liver” (Sinclair and Pike, 1948). I have updated the transcription and grammar explanation from Sinclair and Pike’s 1948 analysis. Additionally, /rà/ means “the” singular, while /rá/ is the 3PS possessive singular (Sinclair and Pike, 1948).

Sinclair and Pike count 33 consonants and clusters of glottal stop plus consonant, and claim that all of them appear before the high toneme in the same syllable (Sinclair and Pike, 1948). All of them but /ʔʃl/, /ʔʃl/, and /ʔl/ occur before the low tone in their research (Sinclair and Pike, 1948). Every one except /ʔʃl/, /ʔʃl/, /ʔm/, and /ʔʔl/ occurs before the rising toneme (Sinclair
and Pike, 1948). All consonants but /ʃ/ occur after the high toneme, and all but /k/, /ʔw/, and /x/ occur after the rising one (Sinclair and Pike, 1948).

Sinclair and Pike also find that all types of tones can occur in neighboring syllables; they are not conditioned by different environments (1948). All three tonemes can occur in monosyllabic words, though monosyllabic nouns are all rising or high in their research. Verbs can be high, rising, or low (Sinclair and Pike, 1948). The first syllable of dissyllabic words can have any of the three tonemes (Sinclair and Pike, 1948). The second syllable can also have any of the three, though the rising tone is less common (Sinclair and Pike, 1948). The rising tone is rare on the final syllable of trisyllabic words, which tend to have two morphemes (Sinclair and Pike, 1948). In some words with high tones on both syllables, the tone on the second syllable can be either high or low (Sinclair and Pike, 1948).

Otomí utterances tend to have high intonation at the end, so Sinclair and Pike only found high and rising tonemes there. Nevertheless, high tonemes in that position have occurred in a medium high tone, and a rising glide has been heard as a descending glide (Sinclair and Pike, 1948). When people talk in an animated way, their overall pitch rises, sometimes changing the tones (Sinclair and Pike, 1948).

(Sinclair and Pike, 1948). Nouns are also higher in pitch relative to their articles in both Spanish and Otomi (Sinclair and Pike, 1948).

Sinclair and Pike note several difficulties that Spanish-speaking researchers have had in hearing tone in Otomi. First, the high tone sounds like pitch-stress to Spanish speakers (Sinclair and Pike, 1948). Many disyllabic words with low and then high pitch have been transcribed as having accent on the last syllable (Sinclair and Pike, 1948). The rising tone also sounds to Spanish speakers like vowel length difference, because it is longer than the other tonemes (Sinclair and Pike, 1948). These challenges would be the same for Spanish-speaking learners of Otomi.

Spanish loanwords in Otomi provide insight into how Spanish phonotactics adjust according to Otomi tones (Wichman, 2006). ‘C(C)V(C)CV becomes C(C)V^{MH}(C)CV, for example the Spanish “pato” becomes /ba^{MH}do/ (“duck”) (Wichman, 2006). (C)V’CVC(C)V becomes (C)VH’CVHC(C)V, for example the Spanish “chaqueta” becomes /tʃa^{H}ke^{H}ta/ (“jacket”) (Wichman, 2006). (C)V’CVC becomes (C)V^{H}CV, for example the Spanish “color” becomes /ko^{H}lo/ (“color”) (Wichman, 2006). Final consonants in words stressed on the last syllable in Spanish are deleted because Otomi prefers open syllables (Wichman, 2006). In Wichman’s notation, ^{MH} marks the rising tone and ^{H}, the high tone (Wichman, 2006).

I did not transcribe tone, since it seems to have no grammatical function. Very little research has been done by other linguists on Mezquital Otomi, so more information about how Otomi tone corresponds to Spanish stress appears to not be known.
Comparison of Conditioning Environments

The phoneme /g/ is an allophone of /ɣ/ in Mezquital Otomi. /g/ appears in many more conditioning environments than /ɣ/; the latter phoneme only occurred in the environments a_I, o_u, and u_u in my data. (/g/ occurred in a_I, as well.) The situation in Spanish is very similar, as /ɣ/ is an allophone of /g/. /ɣ/ is used when the phoneme is not word-initial or after a nasal, in which case /g/ is correct (Schwegler et al., 2010). In Mezquital Otomi, /ð/ and /ð/ occur in many of the same conditioning environments, with /ð/ more common. In my data, the only times /ð/ and not /ð/ was used were word-initially before /a/ and between /e/ and /o/. In Spanish, / ð/ is correct after a nasal, pause, or /l/. The same grapheme is pronounced as the fricative /ð/ in all other cases (Schwegler et al., 2010). Heritage learners of Otomi would have to become accustomed to these different conditioning environments over time.

In my data, the ending /-n/ was added to /noʔeɾa/ and /ɾa/ before /tʃutsi/, the word for “girl,” and /metsi/, the word for “boy.” The same thing happened on the prefix /ja-/ to make singular /tʃutsi/ plural. It is possible that these two nouns are in their own noun class—or that it is more efficient to epenthesize an /n/ in this language, which has many nasalized vowels. My dataset for this project was not large enough to be conclusive.

Several vowels are interchangeable in Otomi, but contrastive in Spanish. For example, my speaker told me “they make” could be said /nujo hoki/ or /nujo hoka/. Similarly, “they are going to make” is either /nojɔ magahjoka/ or /nojɔ magahoki/. This concept would be a task for heritage speakers to remember as they work on their listening skills in Otomi.

As in Spanish, /b/ and /v/ are interchangeable in Otomi. Intervocally, they can also become /β/ in fast speech. For example, my speaker translated “right now” both as /nuvia/ and
/nuβia/ in different sentences. /k/ can also be pronounced as the fricative /h/ intervocally in fast speech. My speaker translated “we make” as /ðihoke/ and /ðihohe/, saying each one was correct.

The underlying form of the negative particle for most negative Otomi sentences, /hin/, can be pronounced many different ways. In the sentence

122. inŋ gatsi jaŋeŋi
NEG eat-2PS.PAST tamale-PL

“Didn’t you eat tamales?”

/hin/ is said without the word-initial /h/, and the /n/ harmonizes with /g/’s velar place of articulation.

Some conditioning environments are different cross-linguistically for phonemes that appear in both languages. For example, /f/ and /ɸ/ are only intervocalic in my Otomi data, yet in Spanish, there are consonant clusters such as /fɾ/ in words like “fresco” (/frесko/, “fresh”). Similarly, /p/ is always either word-initial (preceding a vowel) or intervocalic in my Otomi data, but can occur in such Spanish words as “imprimir” (/imprimiɾ/, “to print”) and “playa” (/plaija/, “beach”). The flap /ɾ/ is also word-initial preceding a vowel or intervocalic, in contrast to common Spanish words like /frесko/ and /imprimiɾ/. People tend to disprefer consonant clusters, so these phonemes would be easier for Spanish speakers to say in Otomi. An ideal syllable is CV, or consonant, vowel (class notes, Phonology with Prof. Rebecca Scarborough, University of Colorado, Boulder, March 15, 2011).

The phoneme /l/ only occurs in Spanish loanwords according to my Otomi data, and then only when the Spanish feminine definite article (/la/) is part of an Otomi word. It is always intervocalic. Indeed, consonant clusters are rare in Mezquital Otomi, and the more common
clusters include /n/, /ŋ/, or /ʔ/. /n/ and /ŋ/ are always the first consonant in a cluster; the exception is that my data showed /n/ after /r/ in words borrowed from Spanish. /ʔ/ is always the second consonant in a cluster.

Glides, especially /j/, are also common beside vowels, avoiding hiatus. The Spanish vowels /i/ and /u/ convert to semivowels /i/ and /u/ in cases of hiatus (Schwegler et al., 2010). Two adjacent vowels can also be diphthongs in Spanish (Schwegler et al., 2010) as in Otomi.

Some vowels in Otomi are oral, others nasal. The i-vowel and e-vowel in Mezquital Otomi are almost always oral (Wichman, 2006). The u-vowel is nasal almost all the time (Wichman, 2006). There is contrast between /a/ and /ä/, however (Wichman, 2006). This contrast might be difficult for heritage speakers to learn because there are just two conditioning environments in which vowels are nasalized in Spanish (Schwegler et al., 2010). Any vowel is nasalized between two nasal consonants, or word-initially before a nasal consonant (Schwegler et al., 2010). Students of Otomi would have to be told the difference between an oral and nasalized vowel, and know when they are producing which one, in order to pronounce Otomi properly.

Mezquital Otomi, unlike Spanish, is a tonal language. For example, the word for “one,” /na/, has a tone that falls, then rises. It is not the same word if the tone is incorrect, so Spanish speakers would have to learn this new concept. However, tone seems to have no grammatical function in Otomi, as evidenced by H. Harwood Hess’ 1968 study of the language. Therefore, I did not transcribe it in this paper.
Comparing Loanwords

Mezquital Otomi has had centuries of contact with Spanish, and loanwords reveal a great deal about Otomi phonology compared to Spanish. My speaker translated the Spanish word for “store,” “tienda,” into Otomi as /denda/. Thus the diphthong disappears, supporting a claim that Hekking and Bakker made with more data (ed. Matras and Sakel, 2007). Heritage speakers of Otomi would have to try not to use diphthongs when speaking their new language.

According to my speaker, “mesa” (“table” in Spanish) is /meʃa/, so the /s/ becomes postalveolar. The same phenomenon seems to occur with “queso” (the Spanish word for “cheese”), which is /geʃo/ in Otomi. This finding agrees with Hekking and Bakker’s (ed. Matras and Sakel, 2007). They found the same initial consonant that I did for the name “Juan” (ed. Matras and Sakel, 2007), which my speaker translated as /ʃua/. Spanish speakers would have to beware of using intervocalic /s/ when they speak Otomi.

The voicing of /k/ in the borrowed word /geʃo/ supports another of Hekking and Bakker’s findings. They write that voiceless stops from Spanish tend to become voiced in Otomi. This rule might be a good one to tell Otomi learners as they recognize borrowed words from Spanish.
Describing Mezquital Otomi and Spanish Grammar

Introduction

Like Spanish, Mezquital Otomi is a fusional language. The basic word order is AVP. The basic word order in a noun phrase is determiner, adjective, head noun. Thus, noun phrases are head-final. Otomi is a nominative-accusative language, like Spanish, and has proximal, distal, and very distal demonstratives. Mezquital Otomi has some adjectives and a copula, but some verbs can also express things that would be adjectives or adverbs in Spanish or English. Otomi does not mark gender, even on pronouns—very different from Spanish, in which everything has a gender, even inanimate objects. Otomi also has a plural prefix, while Spanish has a plural suffix. Syntax for possession follows:

name of possessor, determiner, possessive adjective, noun (P).

A system of prefixes and suffixes marks tense, aspect, and mode in Otomi. The negative Otomi particle is /hin/ most of the time, but /o/ in imperative sentences. Question words come first in Otomi open-ended questions, and yes-no questions have the same word order and morphemes as statements. These formulas are approximately the same as in Spanish grammar. Relative clause markers are optional in Otomi as in Spanish. Imperatives in Otomi are just the simple form of the verb, but they can become stronger if the speaker adds a particle. After centuries of contact with Spanish, Otomi contains many borrowed words, including some prepositions and adverbs of time. Mezquital Otomi and Mexican Spanish grammar have much in common, but learners of Otomi would also have many new grammar concepts to learn.
Abbreviation Guide

1PS  First person singular
1PP  First person plural
2PS  Second person singular
2PP  Second person plural
3SF  Third person singular
3PP  Third person plural
A    The most agent-like argument
ADJ  Adjective
AUX  Auxiliary
CAUS Causative
DAT  Dative
DET  Determiner
DET.ACC Accusative Determiner
DET.NOM Nominative Determiner
DIST Distal
FUT  Future
IMP  Imperative
IMPF  Imperfect
NEG  Negative
OBLG Obligatory
P    The most patient-like argument
PAST Past tense
Word Order

The basic word order in Mezquital Otomi is AVP, the same as Spanish. In the following example, “he” is the agent, “three big snakes” is the patient, and “killed” is the verb.

29. nonī vijo nju jak’enja döngi
he kill-3S.PAST three snake-PL big

“He killed three big snakes.”

Word order can vary, though, to become PVA in some situations. This phenomenon might be more generally true for non-agentive subjects, though the only examples in my data were for body parts. To say a part of the body hurts, there is a phrase that means “hurts” and then the part of the body follows. For instance:

7. j'amì ma wa
hurt.PRES my feet

“My feet hurt.”
This system seems close to the Spanish one, in which a reflexive verb (“me duele”) is used, followed by a definite article and the part of the body. However, Otomi does not appear to distinguish between singular and plural things that hurt, while Spanish does. Also, the verb in Otomi does not point out who the body part hurts. Instead, the possessive (/ma/ for “my,” /di/ for “your”) on the body part signals who hurts. Learners of Otomi should be made aware of these differences.

Like in Spanish, agent pronouns can be omitted in Otomi, since they are expressed by the verb. They are both pro-drop languages. The auxiliary verb /magi/ (also pronounced /magI/ or /mavi/) seems to show future tense in 2PS. For example,

1. magi niune  
   AUX.2PS.FUT eat  
   “You’re going to eat.”

This explanation works with many other sentences, such as

3. ma\~nIn ts\~i\~n\~e  
   AUX.2PS.FUT drink  
   “You’re going to drink.”

The auxiliary /maga/ also exists for first person plural future tense.

19. maga tsi\~h\~u da ?aro  
   AUX.3PP.FUT eat some rice  
   “We’re going to eat rice.”

This similarity between Spanish and Otomi grammar would help heritage speakers learn Otomi.
Noun Phrase Word Order

The usual order of elements in a Mezquital Otomi noun phrase follows:

number, head noun, possessor, relative clause.

Pronouns also come before determiners, which precede the head noun, but adjectives can precede or follow it. (The only pronouns that accompany other elements in noun phrases in my data are third person singular.) For example,

29. noni vijo nju jak’enja doŋgi

3PS kill-3PS.PAST three snake-PL big-PL

“He killed three big snakes.”

The previous sentence demonstrates that numerals (e.g., “three”) go before the described noun (“snakes”), while adjectives (“big”) come after it.

A longer example displays more elements in a noun phrase:

134. noni ra j’uvua vihio nojø nju

3PS DET.NOM Juan kill-3PS.PAST ? three

jak’enja de mige me bui haran hwâhi

snake-PL of Miguel ? ? the field

“Juan killed Miguel’s three snakes, which were in the field.”

In the first noun phrase, the 3PS pronoun and nominative determiner precede the head noun. In the second noun phrase, the number precedes the head noun, but the possessor and relative clause follow it.
Head Marking

Noun phrases are head-final in Mezquital Otomi. “Your snake” is

ɾi k’enja

your snake.

A longer noun phrase is structured the same way. “Miguel’s snake” in Otomi is

paɸi no ora k’enja

Miguel DET snake

The snake, the head, comes at the end of each noun phrase.

Mezquital Otomi is verb-medial in verb phrases. In the example

95. ɛɾa ðame tihi du:nti

DET man run-3PS.PRES a lot

“The man runs a lot.”

the verb /tihi/, “runs,” is the head of the verb phrase and at the beginning of it.

Grammatical Relationships: S, A, P

Mezquital Otomi is a nominative/accusative language. The verb agrees with the S and A arguments in the nominative case. There appear to be no affixes to mark the A or the P, which are instead shown through syntax.

Sometimes, it seems that the system of determiners in Mezquital Otomi serves as a case-marking mechanism. /noʔora/, /noran/, /nuɾan/, and /noʔera/ are all A markers, while /ɾan/, /ɾa/, and /era/ are the P markers. For instance,

43. noɾan tsutsi bijandi ɛɾa metsi

DET.NOM girl see-3PS.PAST DET.ACC boy
“The girl saw the boy.”

Here, /noɾaŋ/ is the A determiner; /eɾa/ is the one for the P. Further evidence is in the next sentence:

44. noɾaŋ metsi bijandi eɾa tfutsi
   DET.NOM boy see-3PS.PAST DET.ACC girl

   “The boy saw the girl.”

The determiners do not vary with gender, but with case. /noɾaŋ/ is the nominative case marker, /eɾa/ the accusative one. H. Harwood Hess claims that /nú ra/ means “that the” or “the one referred to” (1968). /nú ra/ appears often in his data, before nouns, so it seems that my speakers simply pronounced this expression differently. However, the first mention of the girl is not an anaphoric reference in my data, so Hess’ theory of the meaning of /nú ra/ does not work for /noɾaŋ/ here.

   There are other times when this theory does not work. For example,

36. no oɾe juvua vihio paoi no oɾa k’enja
   DET.NOM Juan kill-3PS.PAST Miguel DET.ACC snake

   “Juan killed Miguel’s snake.”

Here, both the A and the P receive the supposed A marker. Perhaps a study with more data would be more conclusive about case-marking in Otomi.

   In Spanish, like English, determiners do not vary according to case, so this concept would be a new one for heritage learners of Otomi. Also, Spanish is a gendered language, and most feminine words (including the feminine article, /la/) end in /a/. Spanish speakers might be tempted to put /eɾa/ before a feminine noun, even in the nominative case.
These determiners can come before names of specific people, but are omitted when the A or P is a pronoun or when there are adjectives or quantifiers before them. For example:

30. noni vijo na donga k’enja
   3PS kill-3PS.PAST one big-SG snake
   “He killed one big snake.”

Here there are no determiners even though this sentence is transitive.

36. no oɾe ʃuvua vihio paφi no o ra k’enja
   DET.NOM Juan kill-3PS.PAST Miguel DET.ACC snake
   “Juan killed Miguel’s snake.”

Here, there is a determiner before a proper noun, which never happens in Spanish. Also, word order for possession is very different in Otomi than in Spanish. The Spanish way to say “Miguel’s snake” would be “the snake of Miguel,” with the possessor at the end and the possessed at the beginning. This format reverses that word order.

Also, it does not matter whether the A or P is human or animate:

34. noʔora benʔia obizi ra oni
   DET.NOM woman eat-3PS.PAST DET.ACC chicken
   “The woman ate the chicken.”

Here, /noʔora/ is the nominative determiner. “Chicken” is the same word in Otomi whether it is alive or dead/edible, unlike Spanish. I could not figure out why the consonant /n/ is at the end of the first determiner, for the girl and boy, and not on this one. The glottal stop could disappear for phonological reasons, so perhaps that explains the /n/ as well.

The dative case also seems to be marked by word order alone. An example follows:
She gave tamales to the girls.

There are no determiners in this sentence, yet it is clear that “she” is the A and “the girls” are the P.

Demonstratives

In Otomi, as in Spanish, there are proximal, distal, and very distal demonstratives. For example, the simple form of one sentence (with no demonstratives) is:

20. maga tsihu da dahe
    AUX.3PP.FUT drink some water
    “We’re going to drink water.”

A similar sentence, but with a proximal demonstrative, follows:

22. noʔe magi tsinona dehe noyua
    2PS AUX.2P.S.FUT drink water PROX
    “You’re going to drink this water right here.”

The Otomi demonstrative /noyua/ would easily translate into Spanish as “este.” Yet Otomi differs from Spanish in the order of P and demonstrative. In Spanish, demonstratives come before their nouns, while demonstratives go after them in Otomi.

23. The same is true with distal demonstratives:

2PS AUX.2P.S.FUT drink water DIST
    “You’re going to drink that water there.”
The Otomi distal demonstrative /bixa:ni/ corresponds to the Spanish one “ese,” except that the word order is opposite.

The pattern continues with very distal demonstratives, the equivalent of “aquel” in Spanish:

24. noʔe magi tsinona dehe bihanijabu
    2PS AUX.2PS.FUT drink water VERY DIST

“You’re going to drink that water over there.”

Here, -jabu seems to be a suffix that increases the intensity of distalness.

Otomi also has some determiners that might seem redundant to someone proficient in Spanish when Otomi borrows words from that language. In the example

25. none la rana ʃəŋgami
    DET the frog be-green-3PS.PRES

“The frog is green.”

In Spanish, the article “la” is already a determiner for “frog.” The article is borrowed lexically as part of the word. However, in Otomi, the determiner /none/ must be added. Heritage learners of Otomi might omit either /none/ or /la/.

Adjectives

The basic rule in Spanish is that adjectives come after the nouns they describe, but some (including, notably, quantifiers) precede these nouns. I could not gather enough data in my thesis to determine the entire pattern for that in Otomi. However, quantifiers do consistently precede their nouns in my data, and other adjectives can come before or after their nouns. For instance,

30. noni vijo na doŋga k’enja
In this sentence, the adjective “big” (/doŋga/), as well as the quantifier “one” (/na/), precede the noun “snake” (/k’enja/) that they describe. But consider the following sentence, which also uses a quantifier and the adjective “big”:

29. noni vijo nju jak’enja doŋgi
3PS kill.3PS.PAST three snake.NC big.PL

“He killed three big snakes.”

Like in the first example, the quantifier goes before the noun it describes. The adjective root for “big,” doŋ-, takes the singular suffix –a or the plural one –i. Nonetheless, my speakers did not always follow this rule. There is also a plural prefix for the noun, ja-. But the same adjective, “big,” comes after the noun, even though it was before the noun in the first example.

Some verbs contain words that are adjectives in Spanish and English. For instance,

47. no ma ðaða ʃidano ho
DET.NOM my dad be-fat-3PS.PRES

My dad is very fat.

The third person singular form of the copula would be /ra/, but that word is not above. Instead, one word says “is very fat.”

Some adverbs that modify adjectives are contained in verbs. For example, there is one copula verb, “to be,” as well as another for “to be very.”

71. ra dehe ʃang’ami
DET water be green-3PS.PRES

The water is green.
This sentence uses an adjectival verb, /ʃʌŋʔami/.

72. ra  dehe  ʃirangʔami
    DET  water  be very-3PS.PRES green

The water is very green.

The verb in the previous sentence is not in this one. Instead, there is a different verb, /ʃirangʔami/, for the sentence that translates as “The water is very green.”

H. Harwood Hess claims that Mezquital Otomi has a copula (1968), which is rare in languages that use verbs instead of adjectives (J. Andrew Cowell, personal communication, December 13, 2011). My data agrees with Hess’ claim:

45. nuˈraŋ  hwa  ra  ɗongi
    DET.NOM  fish  be-3PS.PRES  big-SG

The fish is big.

Hess lists /ra/ as the 3PS present form of the copula (1968). Hess also finds that /daŋga/ is the word for “big,” an adjective (1968). He elaborates that there is a –ce suffix which marks the quality verb type, with such meanings as “to be cold” (Hess, 1968). The adjective “cold” would thus be contained in this verb, though Mezquital Otomi also has a copula.

Gender/Person/Number Marking

The prefix ja- is the plural prefix that my speaker consistently used to translate plural nouns from Spanish to Otomi. This information agrees with that found by Hess (1968). For example, /jaˈteŋi/ is how my speaker pronounced “tamales” translated from Spanish. Heritage
speakers would be used to suffixes as plural markers, so they would have to learn to put this affix at the beginning of the noun.

My speaker could not recall a difference in Otomi between “he” and “she.” Thus /noni/ or /none/ must be the universal third person singular subject pronoun. This idea could pose difficulties for heritage speakers as they practice listening skills in Otomi. In Spanish, they can distinguish the gender of a person from the pronoun used, but in Otomi, the same pronoun can correspond to a male or female person as well as an inanimate noun. They might have to ask the gender of a person if they need to know it.

In Otomi, unlike in Spanish, pronouns and determiners come before proper nouns. In

134. noni ɾa jувua vihio nojo nju jak’enja

3PS DET.NOM Juan kill-3PS.PAST ? three snake-PL
demige me bui haɾan hwâhi

of Miguel ? ? the field

“Juan killed Miguel’s three snakes, which were in the field.”

/noni ɾa/ might seem like extraneous information to learners of Otomi, who do not put determiners before proper nouns.

A quantifier seems obligatory before nouns such as “rice” and “water.” My speaker translated “We’re going to eat rice” (with no determiner in English or Spanish) as

19. maga tsihu da ?aro

AUX-1PP.FUT eat some rice

“We’re going to eat rice.”
Similarly, “We’re going to drink water” became

20. maga tsihu da dahe
   AUX-3PP.FUT drink some water
   “We’re going to drink water.”

/da/ is absent in sentences that use possessives, definite articles, or demonstratives. The one exception in my data is:

22. maga tsihu natuki da dehe
   AUX-1PP.FUT eat/drink a little water
   “We’re going to drink a little water.”

/natuki da/ means “a little,” but more research would be necessary to determine other meanings of /natuki/ and /da/. Suffice to say that in my data, every noun must be preceded by a determiner.

Possession

Some possessive adjectives exist in Otomi. For example,

32. noni vijo ma k’enja
   3PS kill-3PS.PAST my snake
   “He killed my snake.”

Here, “ma” is “my.” /ri/ is “your” (second person singular), and /ra/ is the third person singular possessive. These possessive adjectives come before what is possessed, just like in Spanish.
Word order varies with how possession is expressed. When there is a possessive adjective, the determiner on the P comes before the possessive adjective, which is followed by the noun:

35. noni vihio noʔo ri k’en’ja
   3PS kill-3PS.PAST DET.ACC your snake

“He killed your snake.”

When a sentence mentions the name of the person to whom the P belongs, the name is followed by the determiner, then the noun:

36. no ore ūvua vihio paφi no ora k’enja
   DET.NOM Juan kill-3PS.PAST Miguel DET.ACC snake

“Juan killed Miguel’s snake.”

Syntax for possession can thus be characterized as: name of possessor (if applicable), determiner, possessive adjective (if applicable), noun (P). This pattern is the same as the one Hess describes (1968).

Tense/Aspect/Mode

Present

1PS  ði- or da-
1PP  -e
2PS  -ika
3PS  -i
3PP  -a

An example follows:
11. nuga ēnuni

1SG eat-1SG.PRES

“I eat.”

Here, the prefix ē- marks first person singular present tense. The next example shows the other prefix that marks the same person and tense:

59. noga dahoka jāteji mande

1PS make-1PS.PAST tamale-PL yesterday

I made tamales yesterday.

Past

1PS dai- or di-

1PP ēa- and -e

2PS gai- or gra- (hoki)

3PS bi-

3PP vi- and –i

An example follows:

111. ēahohe jāteji mande

make-1PP.PAST tamale-PL yesterday

We made tamales yesterday.

The verb root for “make” is /hok/, which becomes /hoh/ here because /k/ is intervocalic. Both the prefix ēa- and the suffix –e are added to mark first person plural past tense.
Future

1PS    hamaga-
1PP    maga-
2PS    magi-
3PS    maða- and -i
3PP    maga- and –a

An example follows:

103. noni maðahoki jat ed i ʃ udi
      3PS make-3PS.FUT tamale-PL tomorrow

She is going to make tamales tomorrow.

A prefix, maða-, and suffix, -i, are both necessary to mark third person singular future tense.

Progressive Aspect

1PS    -i
1PP    ĕi- and -e
2PS    gi-
3PS    bi- and -i
3PP    vi- and –i

An example follows:

57. noga dijoki jaṭeđi nuvia
     1PS make-1PS.PRES-PROG tamale-PL right now

I am making tamales right now.
Here, di- is the first person singular present tense prefix. The verb root for “make,” /hok/, is /jok/ intervocalically. –i is the first person singular progressive suffix.

Negation

In general, the negative particle for Mezquital Otomi is /hin/. It comes before the verb, after the subject if one is specified, i.e. by a pronoun. For instance,

119. nuga hin dahoka jātejī
   1PS NEG make-1PS.PAST tamale-PL

“I didn’t make tamales.”

This account agrees with Hess’ (1968). Please see the Phonology section for further discussion of how this negative particle can be pronounced.

The particle /o/ negates imperative sentences. For example,

53. o gi niune
   NEG 2PS eat-2PS

“Don’t eat!”

This discovery agrees with that found by Hess (1968).

There might be other ways to negate other types of sentences, however. For example,

48. noʔo ma ḏaʔa inʃanoho
   DET my dad not-be-fat-3PS.PRES

“My dad is not fat.”

Here, the verb negates the sentence. /in/ is not the negative particle here because the 3PS present form of the verb “be fat” is /ʃidanoho/. I did not gather enough data to determine whether this claim is true for any adjectival verb, and Hess does not list any way other than /hin/ (1968) to
signal negation—even for adjectival verbs. It is possible that /ʃidano/ in rapid speech sounds like /ʃano/. Without more data, I could not determine whether there was a negative particle and then an adjectival verb, or a different adjectival verb that marks negation.

Questions

Question words in Otomi follow:

when  ham ò
who   toʔo
where hawo
what  te
why   haŋka
how   haŋka

Each question word comes first in the sentence. For example,

86. hamò  magihoki    jaʃedi
     when    make-2PS.FUT  tamale-PL

“When are you going to make tamales?”

This rule applies to all sentences with question words, regardless of which question word is used.

The same rule exists in Spanish.

Yes-no questions in Otomi use the same word order and morphemes as statements. For example, the statement

64. noʔe  maihoka    jaʃedi    jōdi
     2PS    make-2PS.FUT  tamale-PL  tomorrow

“You are going to make tamales tomorrow.”
is the same in that regard as the question

124. magihoka  jaṭeḍi
    make-2PS.FUT  tamale-PL

    “Are you going to make tamales?”

Hess contends that /ha/ is the question particle, coming at the beginning of each sentence (1968).

However, my speaker did not include any such particles when she translated yes-no questions.

Negative questions are formed with the negative particle first, then the verb, and then the object. For instance,

121. hin  gahoka  jaṭeḍi
    NEG  make-2PS.PAST  tamale-PL

    “Didn’t you make tamales?”

Rising intonation at the end of an utterance signals a question.

Relative Clauses

Like Spanish and English, relative clause markers are optional. In Spanish, “The woman who ate the chicken is sleeping” would translate thus:

la  muher  ke  komio  el  pojo
ART-DEF  woman  REL  eat-3PS.PAST  ART-DEF  chicken
esta duɾmiendo

sleep-3PS.PRES-PROG

“The woman who ate the chicken is sleeping.”

Although the words here are different from English, the grammar is the same. In Otomi, one of my speakers translated the same sentence as:
“The woman who ate the chicken is sleeping.”

There is no relativizer such as “who,” like in English, or /ke/, like in Spanish. However, the same speaker translated the following sentences thus:

“The man who runs a lot is big.”

Here, /ʃi/ is the relativizer. In each type of relative clause, the relative clause follows its head.

Causatives

In Spanish, there are two basic types of indirect causatives and one direct causative.

These are the only types of sentences that I asked my speaker to translate.

Indirect causatives:

Weakest-

“My mom let me eat.”

Strongest-

“…”
“My mom helped me eat.”

In English, “My mom had me eat” would be the strongest. There is no exact equivalent of that in Spanish, though, so I only asked my speaker about these two.

Direct causative:

52. ma nana bijêna ge pêtsi ganione
   my mom make-3PS.PAST me OBLG eat
   “My mom made me eat.”

As my speaker explained, when the particle /pêtsi/ is used, it means something is almost obligatory.

Imperatives

One way to say an imperative sentence in Otomi is to use just the simple form of the verb. The translation for “eat!” follows:

54. niune
   eat-2PS
   “Eat!”

There is a stronger version, with the particle /pêtsi/, which my speaker said makes a command almost obligatory:

55. pêtsi gi nione
   OBLG 2PS eat
   “You have to eat!”

As described in the Negation section, /o/ negates an imperative sentence.
Borrowed Words from Spanish in Otomi

Native speakers of Spanish will recognize some borrowed grammatical words in Otomi. For example, the Otomi word for the verb “cook” is /paɾaginione/. “Eat” is /ginione/, and “para” means “for” in Spanish. Hence “cook” is “for eat.” Also, Spanish speakers often use “para” to mean “to,” as in “Voy para allí” for “I’m going there.” “Home” as an adverb is /paɾangu/ in Otomi, with /ngu/ meaning “house.” This preposition must have been borrowed from Spanish into Otomi, and pointing out that relationship would help Spanish speakers remember that aspect of their new language.
Conclusion

Mezquital Otomi is a unique language that has also had much contact with Spanish. Its grammar and phonology thus have much in common with those in Spanish, yet heritage speakers would have many new concepts to learn. I hope that this paper, and the accompanying DVD, bring more pride to the Otomi people. They were oppressed for centuries by the Spanish, and before that, the Aztecs (Hekking and Bakker, 2007). When the Spanish arrived, they asked the Aztecs for an account of the Otomi, and thus concluded that the Otomi were coarse and unskillful (ed. Matras and Sakel, 2007). Today, in Mexico, the Otomi are poor, and live off the land. One of my speakers told me she never went to school growing up—in any language, which would make it very difficult for her to document Mezquital Otomi or elevate the status of the culture.

Children of immigrants who were able to come to the United States have a much higher quality of life than their forebears. My speaker seemed sad and dismissive when she described life in Mexico, but lit up when she made tamales. She said cooking them makes her like Otomi. I hope that heritage learners of Otomi feel that way about the video I made. Additionally, perhaps an academic portrayal of an Otomian language would be a more accurate representation of the Otomi than the pejorative ones from the past. It seems that any interest they have in their ancestors’ language can only be good for their people. I made my video and wrote this paper with a social justice motivation.
Bibliography


Hekking, Ewald and Dik Bakker. “Cambios lingüísticos en el otomí y el español producto del contacto de lenguas en el estado de Querétaro.” In *Universos; revista de lenguas indígenas y universes culturales,* vol. 4, 2007.


Appendix A: Gloss

1. magi njune
   AUX-2S.FUT eat
   “You’re going to eat.”

2. magi nione
   AUX-2S.FUT eat
   “You’re going to eat.”

3. mayIn tsøe
   AUX-2S.FUT eat/drink
   “You’re going to drink.”

4. magI òhò
   AUX-2S.FUT go to bed
   “You’re going to go to bed.”

5. magi nangi
   AUX-2S.FUT get up
   “You’re going to get up.”

6. ŋanù: ma n’ò
   hurt.PRES my head
   “I have a headache.”

7. ŋen’ò ma wa
   hurt.PRES my feet
   “My feet hurt.”

8. ŋen’ò me gu
hurt.PRES my ear
“My ear hurts.”

9. ʃan̕ ō ʃi di ʃiŋ'ō
hurt.PRES your nose
“Our nose hurts.”

10. te magi pefi
what AUX-2S.FUT do
“What are you going to do?”

11. nuga ʃin'uni
1SG eat-1SG
“I eat.”

12. nuga hamagan'uni
1PS eat-1PS.FUT
“I’m going to eat.”

13. nuga dain'ō:ni
1PS eat-1PS.PAST
“I ate.”

14. nu'ī gain'uni
2SG eat-2SG.PAST
“You ate.”

15. nūnī bin'ūnī
3PS eat-3PS.PAST
“He ate.”
16. ja gain'oni
   already eat-2PS.PAST
   “Did she eat?”

17. nuni ja bIn'oni
   3PS already eat-3PS.PAST
   “She ate.”

18. nönë bin'ünî
   3PS eat-3PS.PAST
   “Did he eat?”

19. maga tsihu da ?aro
   AUX-1PP.FUT eat some rice
   “We’re going to eat rice.”

20. maga tsihu da dahe
    AUX-1PP.FUT eat/drink some water
    “We’re going to drink water.”

21. maga tsihu natuki da dehe
    AUX-1PP.FUT eat/drink a little water
    “We’re going to drink a little water.”

22. noʔe magi tsinona dehe novua
    2PS AUX-2PS.FUT drink water PROX
    “You’re going to drink this water right here.”

23. noʔe magi tsinona dehe bixa:ni
    2PS AUX-2PS.FUT eat/drink water DIST
“You’re going to drink that water there.”

24. noʔe magi tsinona dehe bihanijabu

2PS AUX-2PS.FUT drink water VERY DIST

“You’re going to drink that water over there.”

25. none la rana ʃangami

3PS the frog be-green-3PS.PRES

“The frog is green.”

26. nuga dra n'onjō

1PS be-1PS.PRES Otomi

“I am Otomi.”

27. noni bin’u kagiga n'onjō

3PS ?? Otomi

She taught me Otomi.

28. noga ʔaʔontwaʔida n'onjō

1PS ?? ?? Otomi

I taught her to speak Otomi.

29. noni vijo nju jak’enja doŋgi

3PS kill-3PS.PAST three snake-PL big-PL

He killed three big snakes.

30. noni vijo na doŋga k’enja

3PS kill-3PS.PAST one big-SG snake

He killed one big snake.

31. noni vijo ra k’enja
3PS kill-3PS.PAST his snake
He killed his snake.

32. noni vijo ma k’enja
3PS kill-3PS.PAST my snake
He killed my snake.

33. noʔora benʔia jabinʔoho
DET.NOM woman sleep-3PS.PRES.PROG
The woman is sleeping.

34. noʔora benʔia obizi ra oni
DET.NOM woman eat-3PS.PAST DET.ACC chicken
The woman ate the chicken.

35. noni vihio noʔo ri k’en’ja
3PS kill-3PS.PAST DET.ACC your-SG snake
He killed your snake.

36. no ore juvua vihio paʔi no ora k’enja
DET.NOM Juan kill-3PS.PAST Miguel DET.ACC snake
Juan killed Miguel’s snake.

37. no ora juvua vihio kagihu mazi k’enjahu
DET.NOM Juan kill-3PS.PAST ? ? ?
Juan killed our snake.

38. noʔora benʔia bizira oni ja binʔoho
DET.NOM woman eat-3PS.PAST chicken now sleep-3PS.PRES.PROG
The woman who ate the chicken is sleeping.
39. noni viho noo jaṭeṇi vihioki noni
   3PS like-3PS.PAST REL tamale-PL make-3PS.PAST 3PS
   He liked the tamales that she made.

40. noni vivi jatedi vihioke noni
   3PS eat-3PS.PAST tamale-PL make-3PS.PAST 3PS
   He ate the tamales that she made.

41. gi tihi du:nti
   2PS run-2PS.PRES a lot.
   You run a lot.

42. noran tsatsi vinio ts jaṭeṇi parangu
   DET.NOM girl ? tamale-PL home
   The girl took the tamales home.

43. noran tsatsi bijandi era metsi
   DET.NOM girl see-3PS.PAST DET.ACC boy
   The girl saw the boy.

44. noran metsi bijandi era tsatsi
   DET.NOM boy see-3PS.PAST DET.ACC girl
   The boy saw the girl.

45. nuraŋ hwa ra döngi
   DET.NOM fish is big-SG
   The fish is big.

46. nuraŋ hwa ra oki
   DET.NOM fish is small-SG
The fish is small.

My dad is very fat.

My dad is not fat.

The fish is not big.

My mom let me eat.

My mom helped me eat.

My mom made me eat.

Don’t eat!
eat-2PS

Eat!

55. pətsi gi nione

OBLG 2PS eat

You have to eat!

56. noga ñihoka jaṭeñi hjasto

1PS make-1PS.PRES tamale-PL daily

I make tamales every day.

57. noga dijoki jaṭeñi nuvia

1PS make-1PS.PRES-PROG tamale-PL right now

I am making tamales right now.

58. noga mavahoki jaṭeñi ʃudi

1PS make-1PS.FUT tamale-PL tomorrow

I’m going to make tamales tomorrow.

59. noga dahoka jaṭeñi mande

1PS make-1PS.PAST tamale-PL yesterday

I made tamales yesterday.

60. noga ndihoga jaṭeñi nujuaheja biθogi

1PS make-1PS.IMPF tamale-PL in past years

I used to make tamales in past years.

61. seria gaθo noʔo jaheja ʃan'epu magahoki jaṭeñi

? ? 1PS years ? make-1PS-PRES-PROG tamale-PL

In years, I will make (be making) tamales every once in a while.
62. noʔe hokika jaṭeɗi hjasto

2PS make-2PS.PRES tamale-PL every day

You make tamales every day.

63. noʔe gihoki jaṭeɗi nuvia

2PS make-2PS.PRES-PROG tamale-PL right now

You are making tamales right now.

64. noʔe maihoka jaṭeɗi ʃodi

2PS make-2PS.PRES-PROG tamale-PL tomorrow

You are going to make tamales tomorrow.

65. noʔe grahoki jaṭeɗi mande

2PS make-2PS.PAST tamale-PL yesterday

You made tamales yesterday.

66. noʔi magisige ihoki bihoka jaṭeɗi nandio

2PS make-2PS.PAST-PROG tamale-PL in past years

You used to make tamales in past years.

67. nuga dahoka jaṭeɗi fono a ra huni dega deθā

1PS make-1PS.PAST tamale-PL ? ?? ?? ?? ?

I made tamales with corn flour.

68. noga ga onbabi jaṭeɗi noɗ no ma haʔi

1PS ? give-1PS.PRES tamale-PL to ? my people

I give tamales to my people.

69. noni larana ʃirangʔami
The frog is green.

The water is cold.

The water is green.

The water is very green.

The water is very cold.

I cooked with chiles and onions.

He killed the snake with a stick.

I made tamales with cheese.
77. noni biunβaβi jañedi nojø jantʃutsi

3PS give-3PS.PAST tamale-PL to girl-PL

She gave tamales to the girls.

78. nuni birakagi du:nti jañedi

3PS give-3PS.PAST me many tamale-PL

He gave me many tamales.

79. nogada βonbaβi jojo jañedi noni hjasto

1PS give-3PS.PAST her tamale-PL 3PS every day

I give her tamales every day.

80. nogada βonbaβi jojo jañedi hjasto noni

1PS give-1PS.PRES her tamale-PL every day 3PS

I give her tamales every day.

81. nogada ðahots’i du:nti jañedi para ma ngu

1PS take-1PS.PAST many tamale-PL to my house

I took the tamales home.

82. nogadatsi ra dehe miha hæ̱a meʃa

1PS drink-1PS.PAST DET.ACC water be-3PS.PAST on table

I drank the water that was on the table.

83. ma ngu ra doŋgi

my house be-3PS.PRES big

My house is big.

84. ran hwa ra doŋgi

DET fish be-3PS.PRES big
The fish is big.

85. nojo jangu ja dongi  
house-PL be-3PP.PRES big

The houses are big.

86. hamō magihoki jaṭeḍi  
when make-2PS.FUT tamale-PL

When are you going to make tamales?

87. hamō none maḍahjoki jaṭeḍi  
when 3PS make-3PS.FUT tamale-PL

When is she going to make tamales?

88. toʔo maḍahjoki jaṭeḍi  
who make-3PS.FUT tamale-PL

Who is going to make tamales?

89. toʔo maḍahjoka jaṭeḍi  
who make-3PS.FUT tamale-PL

Who is going to make tamales?

90. toʔo vihio oʔa k’enja  
who kill-3PS.PAST DET.ACC snake

Who killed the snake?

91. hawo magihjoki jaṭeḍi  
where make-3PS.FUT tamale-PL

Where are you going to make tamales?

92. hawo magihjoka jaṭeḍi
where make-3PS.FUT tamale-PL

Where are you going to make tamales?

93. te magihoki bia paraginione

what make-2PS.FUT ? cook

What are you going to cook?

94. te maðahjoki bia paraginione

what make-3PS.FUT ? cook

What is she going to cook?

95. e-ra ɗame tihi du:nti

DET man run-3PS.PRES a lot

The man runs a lot.

96. none e-ra ɗame fi dihi du:nti e-ra döñgi

3PS the man REL run-3PS.PRES a lot be-3PS.PRES big

The man who runs a lot is big.

97. none e-ra ɗame fi dihi du:nti ra döñgi

3PS the man REL run-3PS.PRES a lot be-3PS.PRES big

The man who runs a lot is big.

98. no’o-ra ʃuvua vinjo ku ra nana

DET.NOM Juan talk-3PS.PAST with his mom

Juan talked with his mom.

99. jantʃutsi jani ku jaku

girl-PL play-3PP.PRES with sibling-PL

The girls play with their sisters.
The girls play with their sisters.

She makes tamales every day.

She is making tamales now.

She is going to make tamales tomorrow.

She made tamales yesterday.

She used to make tamales in the past.

She will make tamales in coming years.

3PS DET.NOM woman give-3PS.PAST to tamale-PL 3PS
The woman gave the tamales to the man who killed the snake.

108. ōhoke jaṭeṭi hjasto
    make-1PP.PRES tamale-PL every day
    We make tamales every day.

109. ōhoke jaṭeṭi nuβia
    make-1PP.PRES.PROG tamale-PL right now
    We are making tamales right now.

110. magahohe jaṭeṭi ᵇuḏi
    make-1PP.FUT tamale-PL tomorrow
    We are going to make tamales tomorrow.

111. dahoho jaṭeṭi mande
    make-1PP.PAST tamale-PL yesterday
    We made tamales yesterday.

112. dihohe jateṭi nuʔujahejabiθogi
    make-1PP.PAST.IMPF tamale-PL in past years
    We used to make tamales in past years.

113. nojo hoka jaṭeṭi hjasto
    3PP make-3PP.PRES tamale-PL every day
    They make tamales every day.

114. nojo vihoki jaṭeṭi nuvia
    3PP make-3PP.PRES.PROG tamale-PL right now
They are making tamales right now.

115. **n̪ujo magahjoka  jətēdi  jodī**

3PP make-3PP.FUT tamale-PL tomorrow

They are going to make tamales tomorrow.

116. **vihjoki  jətēdi  mande**

make-3PP.PAST tamale-PL yesterday

They made tamales yesterday.

117. **mihoka  jətēdi  nuʔujahejabiθgi**

make-3PP.PAST.IMPF tamale-PL in past years

They used to make tamales in past years.

118. **maðahjo  nju  jak’enja**

kill-3PS.PRES.PROG three snake-PL

He is killing three snakes.

119. **nuga hin  dahoka  jətēdi**

1PS NEG make-1PS.PAST tamale-PL

I didn’t make tamales.

120. **nunka ðihoki  jətēdi**

never make-1PS.PRES tamale-PL

I never make tamales.

121. **hin  ga hoka  jətēdi**

NEG you make-2PS.PRES tamale-PL

Didn’t you make tamales?

122. **iŋ  gatsi  jətēdi**
NEG ? tamale-PL

Didn’t you eat tamales?

123. magi hoki tegitsi
    AUX-2PS.FUT make-2PS food for yourself

Are you going to make food for yourself?

124. magi hoka jaṭeḥi
    AUX-2PS.FUT make-2PS tamale-PL

Are you going to make tamales?

125. nuni maḍa hjoki jaṭeḥi
    3PS AUX-3PS.FUT make-3PS.FUT tamale-PL

Is she going to make tamales?

126. nune viʔoho
    3PS sleep-3PS.PRES.PROG

He/she is sleeping.

127. haŋka magi hoki jaṭeḥi
    how AUX-2PS.FUT make-2PS tamale-PL

How are you going to make tamales?

128. haŋka magi hoki jaṭeḥi
    why AUX-2PS.FUT make-2PS tamale-PL

Why are you going to make tamales?

129. no ra dehe miha har meʃa
    DET.NOM water be-3PS.PAST on table

The water was on the table.
130. noɾa dehe χa hara meʃa
DET.NOM water be-3PS.PRES on table
The water is on the table.

131. gaho oɾa dehe
like-3PS.PAST DET.ACC water
He/she liked the water.

132. gaho jaŋeŋi
like-3PS.PAST tamale-PL
He liked the tamales.

133. biho noʔora dehe miha hara meʃa
like-3PS.PAST DET.ACC water be-3PS.PAST on table
He liked the water that was on the table.

134. noni ra ʃuvua vihio nojo nju jak’enja de mige
3PS DET.NOM Juan kill-3PS.PAST ? three snake-PL of Miguel
me bui haran hw ahì
? ? in the field
Juan killed Miguel’s three big snakes, which were in the field.

135. te gihogi hoki
what ? do
What do you like to do?

136. te ra ve ?a gihoki
what ? ? do-2PS.PRES.PROG
What are you doing?
Appendix B: Lexicon

Adjectives

n'on'io
     Otomi

doŋ-
     big

ɔk-
     small

k’a’mi
     green

tse
     cold

Adverbs

du:nti
     a lot

Affixes

ja-
     plural prefix

-a
     singular suffix on adjectives

-i
     plural suffix on adjectives

Determiners

noʔora
     nominative

nor an
     nominative

nu r an
     nominative

no, noʔo
     nominative

ran
     accusative
(ra   accusative

era   accusative

**Demonstratives**

tsinona  prenominal demonstrative

novua  proximal (postnominal)

bixa:ni  distal (postnominal)

bihanijabu  very distal (postnominal)

**Nouns**

Mexico  monda

Actopan  ma’n’ut’e

Pachuca  n’onte

city  nēine

tamales  țiđi

mother/mom  nana

father/dad  ḍaḍa

water  dehe

rice  aro

frog  rana

snake  k’enja

dog  sad’jo

cat  miʃi
mouse      doŋgu
sheep       ɖe:ti
goat        jo
coyote      mi’ño

calf        terno
horse       φani
rabbit      anχua
snake       k’en’ja
rooster     menχa
chicken/hen  oni
pig         ts’ɣdi
donkey      buro
frog         rana
corn        dɛχa

bean          hγ
seed         semija
animals      bon’e
fly          gin’ue
bird         ts’ɪnts’γ

skirt        gγ ɖe
sandal       z ɛsti
blankets     tsu ʃos
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<td>blanket</td>
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<tr>
<td>shirt</td>
<td>pani</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shirts</td>
<td>pani</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stones</td>
<td>do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bank (of a river)</td>
<td>tunī</td>
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<td>tortillas</td>
<td>mē</td>
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<tr>
<td>bread</td>
<td>tuo mē</td>
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<tr>
<td>pulque/maguey</td>
<td>hoada</td>
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<td>water</td>
<td>dehe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>head</td>
<td>n'i am'i ō</td>
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<td>juga</td>
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<td>gu</td>
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<td>j'in'o</td>
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<td>qα</td>
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<td>hair</td>
<td>stō</td>
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napkins
night
store
table
cheese
Juan
Miguel
boy
girl
fish
people
stick
house
sibling
alcohol
grandmother
grandfather
bicycle
Possessives
my
your
his  
our  
their  

Prepositions

with  
to  
on  

Pronouns

I  
you  
he/she  
we  
they  

Quantifiers

one  
three  
some  
a little  

ra  
mametiho  
nori  
ku  
nujo  
har  
nuga  
no?e  
noni  
noje  
nojo  
na  
nju  
da  
natuki
**Question Words**

what          te
when          ham ō
who           toʔo
where         hawo
how           haŋka
why           haŋka

**Time Adverbs**

every day      hjasto
right now      nuvia
tomorrow       ĵuđi
yesterday      mande
in past years  nujujaheja biθogi
evry once in a while ʔ

**Verb Roots**

eat            -nˈuni
drink          tsi-
kill           vihio, vijo
get up         nangi
make           -hok-
Verb Affixes

hamaga- 1PS future prefix

da- 1PS past prefix

dí-, di- 1PS present prefix

magi-, mavi- 2PS future auxiliary

da-, dai- (#13) 1PS past prefix

ga-, gai- (#14) 2PS past prefix

bi- 3PS past prefix

mada- 3PS future auxiliary

-i progressive suffix

-a suffix for simple aspect

Greetings

good morning ke atʃa ual

good afternoon ki ve

good night tʃue