

VERB CLASSIFICATION IN YATZACHI ZAPOTEC

Inez M. Butler

0. For many years we struggled over the classification of the verbs of Yatzachi Zapotec, puzzled by the irregularities in

1. Yatzachi Zapotec is spoken by about 1500 people in the municipality of Yatzachi el Bajo, district of Villa Alta, Oaxaca, México. Field work has been done intermittently since 1952 under the auspices of the Summer Institute of Linguistics. Segmental phonemes in native words include the following: fortis consonants p, t, k, kw, č, s, š, ř, l, n; lenis consonants b, d, g, gw, ž, z, ž, ž, l, n; consonants noncontrastive with regard to fortis-lenis articulation ?, y, R, Rw, ř, m; vowels i, e, a, ě, o.

the conjugations we had charted and unable to find a system of classification which neatly accounted for all the things which were occurring simultaneously. We were faced with an unmanageable set of twenty-some classes with other sub-classes. It was not until we decided to deal with just one factor at a time, ignoring all others, that clear patterns began to emerge. Person markers, then, required only two classes; aspect markers required four classes, third person plural markers, three classes; and stem variants, eight classes. Thus the total number of classes was cut approximately in half.

I have described the classification of Yatzachi Zapotec verbs in much more detail in my practical grammar. The purpose of this paper is to make available to Zapotec colleagues the principles of verb classification used in my grammar and dictionary.

1. Person markers.

There are two conjugations which differ according to the bound person pronouns which they take. The two sets of bound pronouns are shown in table 1.

TABLE 1
SETS OF BOUND PRONOUNS

Conjugation A		Conjugation DA
1 singular	-a?	-da?
2 singular	-o?	-do?
3 respectful	-e?	-ne?
3 familiar	-bo?	-bo?

Table 1 -- Sets of Bound Pronouns -- cont.

Conjugation A		Conjugation DA
3 animal	-ëb	-b
3 inanimate	-ën	-n
1 pl. inclusive	-čó	-čó
1 pl. exclusive	-to?	-to?
2 pl.	-le	-le

The vast majority of the verbs belong to the A conjugation. All verbs with stems ending in a consonant and those ending in a vowel other than -e or -i belong to this conjugation. The DA conjugation is made up of verbs ending in -e or -i. However, stems ending in -e or -i may belong to either conjugation, so the conjugation to which one of these verbs belongs must be specified.

Vowel final verbs of the A conjugation are subject to morpho-phonemic rules as they combine with the pronominal endings:

stem-final vowel	-a?	-o?	-e?	-ëb
a	-a?	-ao?	-e?	-ab
o	-oa?	-o?	-oe?	-ob
ë	-a?	-o?	-e?	?ëb
e	-ia?	-io?	-ie?/-e?	-eb
i	-ia?	-io?	-ie?	-ib

Verbs of the DA conjugation which end in -e drop the -e before the first and second person singular endings -da? and -do?.²

2. The verb č-ake 'think', however, retains the -e before -da? and -do? in the potential aspect. The verbs č-aktole 'be quiet' and č-onlebe 'do likewise' retain the -e before -da? and -do? in all the aspects. The verb č-ene?e 'want' has a stem alternate -e?ene in first and second person singular and then drops the final -e according to the rule.

Examples of the A conjugation:

	Stem final consonant 'read'	Stem final vowel-e 'watch animals'
1 sg.	č-lab-a?	č-y-a?
2 sg.	č-lab-o?	č-y-o?
3 sg.resp.	č-lab-e?	č-y-e?
3 sg.fam.	č-lab-bo?	č-ye-bo?
3 sg.anim.	č-lab-ëb	č-ye-b
3 sg.inan.	č-lab-ën	č-ye-n
1 pl.incl.	č-lab-čo	č-ye-čo
1 pl.excl.	č-lab-to?	č-ye-to?
2 pl.	č-lab-le	č-ye-le

Examples of the DA conjugation:

	Stem final -e 'need'	Stem final -i 'understand'
1 sg.	č-yažR-da?	č-eRni?i-da?
2 sg.	č-yažR-do?	č-eRni?i-do?
3 sg.resp.	č-yažRe-ne?	č-eRni?i-ne?
3 sg.fam.	č-yažRe-bo?	č-eRni?i-bo?
3 sg.anim.	č-yažRe-b	č-eRni?i-b
3 sg.inan.	č-yažRe-n	č-eRni?i-n
1 pl.incl.	č-yažRe-čo	č-eRni?i-čo
1 pl.excl.	č-yažRe-to?	č-eRni?i-to?
2 pl.	č-yažRe-le	č-eRni?i-le

2. Aspects

The four primary aspects are Continuative, Stative, Completive and Potential. There are four potential aspect prefixes which divide the verbs into four aspect conjugations, and there are three completive aspect prefixes which form the subdivisions within the basic aspect conjugations. The completive aspect prefix is important because it serves as the basis for the sets of third person plural prefixes (section 3). The continuative and stative prefixes remain constant. Table 2 displays the sets of aspect prefixes.

TABLE 2
SETS OF ASPECT PREFIXES

	GWp	Gp	Zero-p	Tp
Continuative	č-	č-	č-	č-
Stative	n-	n-	n-	n-
Completive				
Ec	b-	b-	b-	b-
Gwc		gw-	gw-	gw-
Gc		g-		g-
Potential	gw-	g-	zero-	y-

Examples:

	GW- Potential	G- Potential	O- Potential	Y- Potential
B-Completive	'study'	'do, make'	'get toasted'	'descend'
Cont.	č-sed	č-on	č-yeš	č-etk
Stat.	n-sed	n-on	n-yeš	n-etk
Compl.	b-sed	b-en	n-yeš	b-etk
Pot.	gw-sed	g-on	yeš	y-etk
GW-Completive		'buy'	'ask'	'get cooked'
Cont.		č-an	č- <u>n</u> ab	č-eyë?
Stat.		-----	n- <u>n</u> ab	n-eyë?
Compl.		gw-en	gw- <u>n</u> ab	gw-eyë?
Pot.		g-an	<u>n</u> ab	y-eyë?
G-Completive		'bathe'		'want'
Cont.		č-azk		č-e?en-da?
Stat.		n-azk		-----
Compl.		g-ozk		g-o?on-da?
Pot.		g-azk		y-e?en-da?

There are four secondary aspects which combine with the primary aspects to form complex aspects. The secondary aspects are the Going Directional, the Coming Directional, the Frequentative Iterative and the Repetitive Iterative. The secondary aspects do not entail further subclassification of the verbs. The prefixes for the combinations of primary and secondary aspects are displayed in table 3.

TABLE 3
PREFIXES FOR COMBINED PRIMARY AND SECONDARY ASPECTS

	Continuative	Stative	Completive	Potential
Going	č-R-	z-R-	-R-	ž-R-
Coming	č-edě-	z-edě-	b-edě-	y-edě-
Frequentative	č-e		b-e-	y-e-
Repetitive	č-ez		b-ez	y-ez

3. Third Person Plural.

Whereas there are distinct suffixes for first and second person plural subjects, third person plural subjects retain the third person singular suffixes and add a plural prefix to the verb stem. There are three conjugations for third person plural. Bc conjugation verb stems begin with a consonant and have the completive aspect marked by b- in the singular. Gc conjugation verb stems begin with a consonant and have the completive aspect marked by gw- in the singular. Gwc conjugation verb stems begin with a vowel.

TABLE 4
PREFIXES COMBINING PLURAL WITH THE SIMPLE ASPECTS

	Cont.Pl.	Stative Pl.	Compl. Pl.	Poten.Pl.
Conj. Bc	č-ēsě?ě	zRě-n	b-ēsě?ě	y-ēsě?ě
Conj. Gc	č-ēsě?ě	zRě-n	g-osě?ě	y-ēsě?ě
Conj. Gwc	č-sV?-	zRě-n	gw-sV?-	-sV?-

(In the case of verb stems beginning with a vowel cluster or a combination of V'V, no vowel is added in the pluralizer, with only -s- being added preceding the stem and with a glottal inserted between the vowels if not already present.)

4. Stem Variants.

Verb stems fall into two major classes: consonant-initial stems and vowel-initial stems. The continuative aspect of the verb is most diagnostic for the basic form of the stem.

Consonant-initial stems have three conjugations and vowel-initial stems also have three conjugations.

The stem changes take place most commonly in the Potential and Completive aspects and in secondary aspect of Going and Coming, often further distinguished for third person plural.

The first conjugation of consonant stems keeps the same stem throughout the conjugation.

TABLE 5
FIRST CONJUGATION OF CONSONANT STEMS

	Continuative	Stative	Completive	Potential
Simple sg.	C	C	C	C
pl.	C	→		
Motion sg.	C	→		
pl.	C	→		

Example: č-sed 'study'

	Continuative	Stative	Completive	Potential
Simple sg.	č-sed	n-sed	b-sed	gw-sed
pl.	č-ēsě?ě-sed	zRě-n-sed	b-esě?ě-sed	y-esě?ě-sed
Going sg.	č-Rě-sed			
pl.	č-Rě-sě?ě-sed			
Coming sg.	č-edē-sed			
pl.	č-edē-sě?ě-sed			

There are some verbs that belong to the first conjugation of consonant initial verbs but they have a sporadic irregularity. Verbs beginning with b- have a metathesis of the stem initial b- with the gw- of the completive prefix.

	Continuative	Stative	Completive	Potential
'be thirsty'	č-bil(e)-da?	m-bil(e)-da?	b-gwil(e)-da?	∅-čbil(e)-da?
'live'		m-ban	b-gwan	∅-čban
'own (field)'	č-ban(e)-da?	m-ban(e)-da?	b-gwan(e)-da?	∅-čban(e)-da?

One verb beginning with k- changes the k- to kw- only in the completive aspect after the prefix gw-. This change may be attributed to assimilation to the preceding prefix consonant.

'take away'	č-ka?a	n-ka?a	gw-kwa?a	ka?a
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Verbs of the first conjugation represent a variety of stem initial consonants:

b	example,	č-bil(e)-da?	'be thirsty'
k	example,	č-ka?a	'take away'
t	example,	č-ta	'beat'
gw	example,	č-gwakw	'dress somebody'
s	example	č-seyRw	'close'
z	example	č-zene	'tell'
š	example	č-ša?a	'heat up'
ž	example	č-žigwě?ě	'come close'
ṣ̌	example	č-ṣ̌op	'take down'
č̣	example	č-č̣og	'cut'
y	example	č-yeb	'watch animals'
l	example	č-lab	'read'
ḷ	example	č-ḷa?a _l (e)-da?	'cause disgust'
n	example	č-nežRw	'give'
kw	example	č-kwa?an	'leave'

The second conjugation of consonant stems has a change from lenis to fortis consonant in the Potential aspect and the fortis consonant also appears in the singular of the Motion aspects of Going and Coming.

TABLE 6
SECOND CONJUGATION OF CONSONANT STEMS (F)

	Continuative	Stative	Completive	Potential
Simple sg.	C	C	C	F
pl.	C	→		
Motion sg.	F	→		
pl.	C	→		

Example: č-da 'walk'

	Continuative	Stative	Completive	Potential
Simple sg.	č-da	n-da	gw-da	ta
pl.	č-ěsě?ě-da			
Motion sg.	č-edě-ta			
pl.	č-edě-da			

The pairs of lenis and fortis consonants in the verbs of this class are:

z/s	example	č-za?a	'finish'
ž/š	example	č-ža?ado	'run'
ž/š	example	č-žop	'suck'
d/t	example	č-da	'walk'
č/č	example	č-čo?oŋ	'throw'
n/ŋ	example	č-na	'say'
l/ł	example	č-la	'hurt'
y/š	example	č-yeyRw	'close itself'

There are no examples of p/b, k/g, kw/gw.

The third conjugation of consonant stems has the change from lenis to fortis consonant in the Potential aspect, and in addition has a change to a lenis non-grave consonant in the Completive aspect (represented by L in Table 7). Furthermore, it is the initial consonant of the Completive aspect which appears in its fortis counterpart in the singular of the Motion aspects of Going and Coming and appears in its lenis form in the plural of these aspects.

TABLE 7
THIRD CONJUGATION OF CONSONANT STEMS (L)

	Continuative	Stative	Completive	Potential
Simple sg.	C	C	L	F
pl.	C	C	C	C
Motion sg.	<u>L</u>	→		
pl.	L	→		

The sets of consonants in this verb class are:

y/č/d/t	example	č-yišRw	'pay'	(12 verbs, all beginning with yi...)
g/k/d/t	example	č-gan	'touch'	(4 verbs, all beginning with ga...)
b/kw/č/č	example	č-bež	'cry'	(5 verbs, beginning with be-/bi-)
b/kw/ž/š	example	č-bil	'slip, slide'	(1 verb)
g/k/l/l	example	č-goʔo	'put inside'	(4 verbs, three are compounds of the first)
b/kw/l/l	example	č-bek	'set it down'	(5 verbs)

The first conjugation of vowel initial verbs maintain a constant stem in the simple aspects. The initial vowel is replaced by e in the Going aspect and by ye in the Coming aspect.

TABLE 8
FIRST CONJUGATION OF VOWEL STEMS

	Continuative	Stative	Completive	Potential
Simple sg.	V	V	V	V
pl.	V	V	V	V
Going	V	V	V	V
Coming	YV	YV	YV	YV

i example	č-idë	'come'	(3 verbs)
e example	č-etk	'descend'	(5 verbs)
o example	č-ožëʔë	'rot'	(2 verbs)

The second conjugation of vowel initial stems add an initial fortis consonant to the stem in the potential aspect, and this consonant appears in the Going aspect, whereas its lenis counterpart appears in the Coming aspect. This conjugation also inserts a y before the initial vowel in the stative singular and plural and in the completive singular.

TABLE 9
SECOND CONJUGATION OF VOWEL STEMS (Š)

	Continuative	Stative	Completive	Potential
Simple sg.	V	YV	YV	Š (or Č)
pl.	V	YV	V	V
Going	Š (č)	→		
Coming	ž (č)	→		

ø/š/ž example č-ey 'get burned' (11 verbs: i-5, o-4, a-2)

ø/č/č example č-as 'get up, arise' (2 verbs, both with a-)

The third conjugation of vowel stems inserts a consonant d- before the initial vowel in the Completive aspect. The singular motion aspects begin with the fortis t- and the plural motion aspects begin with d-. The Potential aspect inserts a stem-initial g- or š-.

TABLE 10
THIRD CONJUGATION OF VOWEL STEMS (D)

	Continuative	Stative	Completive	Potential
Simple sg.	V	V	DV	GV (or šV)
pl.	V	→		
Motion sg.	TV	→		
pl.	DV	→		

ø/g/d/t example č-ao 'eat' (2 verbs)

ø/š/d/t example č-eb 'swallow' (1 verb)

The fourth conjugation of vowel stems have a vowel substitution in the Completive singular: a and e are replaced by o; o is replaced by e. All verbs change to e in the Going aspect and to ye in the Coming aspect.

TABLE 11
FOURTH CONJUGATION OF VOWEL STEM (E)

	Continuative	Stative	Completive	Potential
Simple sg.	V	V	O/E	V
pl.	V	V	V	V
Going	e	→		
Coming	ye	→		
a/o example	č-azR	'bathe'	(19 verbs)	
e/o example	č-ene?e	'want'	(2 verbs)	
o/e example	č-on	'do, make'	(11 verbs)	

Verbs with the diphthong o...e have the additional feature of dropping the o- in both the Completive singular and the Potential singular (after prefix gw-). Example, č-oeyë?ë 'cook': potential gw-eyë?ë, completive b-eyë?ë, (3 verbs).

The fifth conjugation of vowel stems replaces the stem initial vowel with i in the Completive singular. The Going aspect has the vowel i; the Coming aspect has yi.

TABLE 12
FIFTH CONJUGATION OF VOWEL STEMS (I)

	Continuative	Stative	Completive	Potential
Simple sg.	V	V	i	V
pl.	V	→		
Going	i	→		
Coming	yi	→		
a/i example	č-a?o	'bug'	(2 verbs)	
o/i example	č-osya?a	'show'	(1 verb)	