BEGINNING ZDETL

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THE ZHODANI LANGUAGE & CULTURE INSTITUTE Zhdant

Contents

Introductory Lesson

Zdetl is the official language used throughout the Zhodani Consulate in the age of the Third Imperium. While its precise origins are unknown, it is commonly accepted that it developed in the wake of the Final War when the surviving humans on Zhdant found themselves bereft of their Ancient masters for the first time. Over the millennia, Zdetl evolved gradually into its modern form, which was universally adopted as the official language in the 300th Olympiad, the Imperial year -6055[1].

A distinguishing feature of modern Zdetl is its emphasis on standardization in morphology, grammar, syntax, and structure. Zhodani culture is fundamentally assimilative in nature; in other words, the Consulate is not interested in conquest by force but by acculturation. To this end, the Consular language has been simplified over time to make it easy to teach and learn (or at least less difficult than other languages). This does not mean that Zdetl lacks complexity – like the ancient Terran game of Go, its fundamentals can be learned in minutes, but it can take a lifetime to truly master, and few non-native speakers ever reach that level.

Characteristics of Zdetl

Most languages can be divided into three major parts:

1. Vocabulary, the collection of words that makes up the language
2. Spelling and Pronunciation, the sounds (also known as phonemes) that combine to form syllables, words, and phonological phrases
3. Grammar, Syntax, and Word order

In each of these areas Zdetl displays major simplifications when compared to other modern languages.

Spelling and Pronunciation have been standardized and are phonetic in nature. Each of the major phonemes has a single symbol associated with it, and each letter has one sound. There are no "silent" letters; if a phoneme is unvoiced, it is not written.

Vocabulary has been regularized as much as possible. There are few "loan words" as is common in many Terran languages (and even in Imperial Bilandin); one function of the *Tavrchedl* (the Zhodani "Guardians of Morality" – the so-called "thought police" that monitor Consulate society) is to track linguistic developments and either assimilate or remove them from the social vocabulary as needed. New concepts that may lead to subversive thought are subtly but efficiently erased from the national consciousness.

The new student will observe that Zdetl uses many compound word forms. Most commonly these are nouns modifying nouns; as in Anglic the modifying noun comes first, then the main noun last[2]. Zdetl makes widespread use of *affixatives*, which are usually Locative[3], Lative[4], and Comparative[5] in nature. There are many others; they will be addressed in later lessons.

Grammar and *Word Order* in Zdetl is unusual compared to most Terran languages. In Zdetl, sentences follow the structure *Object – Verb – Subject – Indirect Object(s)[6]*.

Unlike other languages, Zdetl does not have "gendered" nouns or pronouns. There is a single third-person singular pronoun – **se** - that is used regardless of the gender of the individual or creature it refers to. This simplifies interactions with gender-fluid or gender-noncomforming humans and monogendered or multigendered non-human species. Concepts such as "mother" and "father" exist but are not limited linguistically to specific genders; similarly, Zdetl does not differentiate between male and female professionals.

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[1] Zdetl (language) - Traveller (travellerrpg.com)
[2] Zdetl (language) - Traveller (travellerrpg.com) - Morphology
[3] Locative case - Wikipedia
[4] Lative case - Wikipedia
[5] Comparative case - Wikipedia
[6] Zdetl (language) - Traveller (travellerrpg.com) - Syntax

Lesson One
Pronunciation & Spelling

As discussed in the previous section, Zdetl is a highly regularized language with consistent spelling, phonetics, and pronunciation. There are no silent letters and no "irregular" spellings, and all letters have one sound and symbol.

The phonemes (sounds) of Zdetl are differentiated and distinct and follow predictable patterns. Multiple vowels rarely appear together, and syllables consist of Consonant-Vowel (CV), Vowel-Consonant (VC) or Consonant-Vowel-Consonant (CVC) groupings.

Words are accented, but the placement is not always predictable. The accent usually falls on the penultimate syllable, and in the case of longer words there may be a secondary accent on the first syllable.

The Zdetl alphabet consists of 42 distinct phonemes: seven vowels and 35 consonants. Eight of the consonants are combinations of the "N" phoneme plus another letter sound; unlike the other letters these do not have their own glyph but are written as a glyph pair.

The vowel sounds are as follows:

A as in "lock" or "father", never as in "pale": *atrint,* **Ah-trint**; *driant***, dri-Ahnt**

E as in "get" or "let", never as in "here": *echtovr,* **EHch-tovr;** *evadutrats,* **EH-va-du-trats**

I as in "kit", never as in "mile": *ivr,* **IHvr;** *izhtak,* **IHzh-tak**

IA as in "*ya*nk": *iavchieql,* **Yav-chiegl;** *iatepcha,* **Ya-tep-cha**

IE as in "la*ye*r": *iebr,* **Ye-br**

O as in "go": *ibro,* **i-brO;** *otre',* **O-tre'**

Ř is a trilled "r" sound similar to the Polish "Przemsyl[7]". This one can be challenging to learn and recognize in Anglicized Zdetl; students should listen to its spoken form in the footnote and practice saying it often. It will be noted in the Anglicized text as "ř" where appropriate.

Don't make the vowel sounds too long. "Atrint" and "driant" in the examples above have short, clear "a" sound; all vowels should be pronounced as clearly and purely as possible.

The consonant sounds are as follows: B, BL, BR, CH, D, DL, DR, F, FL, FR, J, K, KL, KR, L, M, N, NCH, NJ, NS, NSH, NT, NTS, NZ, NZH, P, PL, PR, Q, QL, QR, R, SH, T, TS, TL, V, VL, VR, Z, ZH, ZHD'

They are pronounced like the Anglic phoneme and combinations, except for Q, which is a softer "K" sound like a combination of "K" and the Anglic "G" sound. The closest Terran approximation is the Arabic "Q". The last consonant on the list is a glottal stop or sudden vocal pause. There are no alternate or secondary pronunciations of any letters, as is commonly seen in Terran Anglic.

Pronunciation of the consonant forms is as follows:

B as in Anglic "boy": *baz,* **Baz**

BL as in "blue": *achabl,* **a-chaBL**

BR as in "brood": *dlabre';* **dla-BRe'**

CH as in "child"; never hard as in "kick": *echtovr;* **eCH-tovr**

D as in "dog": *dizh;* **Dizh**

DL as in "paddle": *dlabre';* **DLa-bre'**

DR as in "dry": *driejabr;* **DRie-jabr**

F as in "far"; never a "v" as in "of": *fevranzh;* **Fev-ranzh**

FL as in "fly": *flietavrian;* **FLie-tav-rian**

FR as in "free": *fronzh;* **FRonzh**

J as in "jump": *jiavr;* **Jiavr**

K as in "kite": *kaz;* **Kaz**

KL as in "cling" or wrinkle": *kliazh;* **KLiazh**

KR as in "cry" or "cracker": *kral;* **KRal**

L as in "long": *lienj;* **Lienj**

M as in "many":

N as in "never":

NCH as in "crunch":

NJ as in "banjo":

NS as in "dans macabre":

NSH as in "n + sh":

NT as in "can't":

NTS as in "pants":

NZ as in "cans":

NZH as in "binge" or "fringe":

P as in "cap":

PL as in "play":

PR as in "pray":

Q is like the Terran Arabic Q, which is a glottal hard "G" as in "Qatar": *qiets,* **Gi-ets**

QL as in "glue": *qlome',* **GLo-me'**

QR as in "grown": *tliaqre',* **tli-a-GRe'**

R as in "run": *rans,* **Rans**

S as in "sun": *stial,* **Stial**

SH as in "shut": *shiv;* **Shiv**

SHT as in "Ishtar": *shtefrabr;* **SHTe-frabr**

ST as in "stop": *stebre';* **Ste-bre'**

T as in "tall": *tozjabr;* **Toz-jabr**

TL as in "atlas":

TR as in "train":

TS as in "sets":

V as in "very": *viaj;* **Vyaj**

VL as in "Vland": *vlezhd;* **VLezhd**

VR as in "vroom":

Y as in "yet":

Z as in "zoo":

ZD as in "Thursday":

ZH as in "measure": *Zhodani;* **Zho-da-ni**

ZHD as in "zh + d": *Zhdant;* **ZHDant,** *vlezhd;* **vleZHD**

^ is a glottal stop or a soft pause between syllables.

Students of Zdetl will note that many of the consonants and vowels combine to form *diphthongs* and *triphthongs*, and many consonants combine with 'R' and 'L' sounds as a single letter. This can sometimes cause confusion for students when it comes to written Zdetl.

Practice pronunciation by learning the names of the seasons:

Atrint (*ah-trint*) = "raining," the wet season following the winter thaw
Vrienstial (*vryen-styal*) = "heat," the summer season
Atchafser (*at-chaf-ser*) = "waning," the time of the year when the summer's heat fades
Ataniebl (*a-tan-yebl*) = "harvest," the season on Zhdant to harvest mature crops
Ashtiavl (*ash-tyavl*) = "chill," the freezing winter season
Atpiapr (*at-pyapr*) = "thaw," when the freezing winter wanes and becomes more temperate

For additional practice, learn the numbers as well:

1 = *chial* (chyal)	6 = *kiachti* (kyach-ti)
2 = *omei* (oh-myeh)	7 = *komi* (ko-mi)
3 = *tyeii* (ty-yeh-i)	8 = *koe* (ko-e)
4 = *nachoie* (na-cho-yeh)	9 = *kona* (ko-na)
5 = *machieli* (ma-chyeh-li)	10 = *matlapa* (ma-tla-pa)
100 = *chien* (chyen)	1000 = *matlachien* (ma-tla-chyen)

Higher numbers can be formed from the ones above:

11 = *matlachial*
12 = *matla^omei* (note the ^ between the words)
13 = *matlatyeii*
14 = *matlanachoie*
… and so on. Multiples of ten are formed by prepositioning the appropriate ordinal in front of *matlapa*:
20 = *omeimatlapa*
30 = *tyeiimatlapa*
31 = *tyeiimatlapachial*
Etc.

Practice these by working out any number you choose.

Exercises

1. What is the number of your house? Your street? Your neighbors' houses? Your phone number?
2. Transcribe the following dates into Zdetl:
   a. 300 (the year Zdetl was standardized)
   b. 404 (the year the Consulate was established)
   c. 584 (when the Jump Drive was discovered)
   d. 2978 (founding of the Third Imperium)
   e. 3239 (beginning of the First Frontier War)
   f. 1207 (First Core Expedition)[8]

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[8] From Mongoose Traveller Alien Module 4: Zhodani, p. 74

Lesson Two

Itzi iazh Kenkali
Home and Family

Nouns

Nouns are the words used to name things, either living or inanimate. Nouns can also be used to express abstract concepts as well, like "family" or "household," as we will see in this lesson. In modern Zdetl, many nouns have been standardized to a common ending; this is usually "-i," but that is not always the case. Practice and learn the following words first:

Driefri – boy   **Driefrabr –** brother   **Driefrzin –** son
Choqi – girl   **Choqabr –** sister   **Choqrzin –** daughter
Shtiefri – man   **Shtiefrabr –** father   **Shtiefrnam –** husband
Ziefri – woman   **Ziefrabr –** mother   **Ziefrnam –** wife
-**abr –** "family member"   **-zin –** "child of"   **-nam –** "spouse"
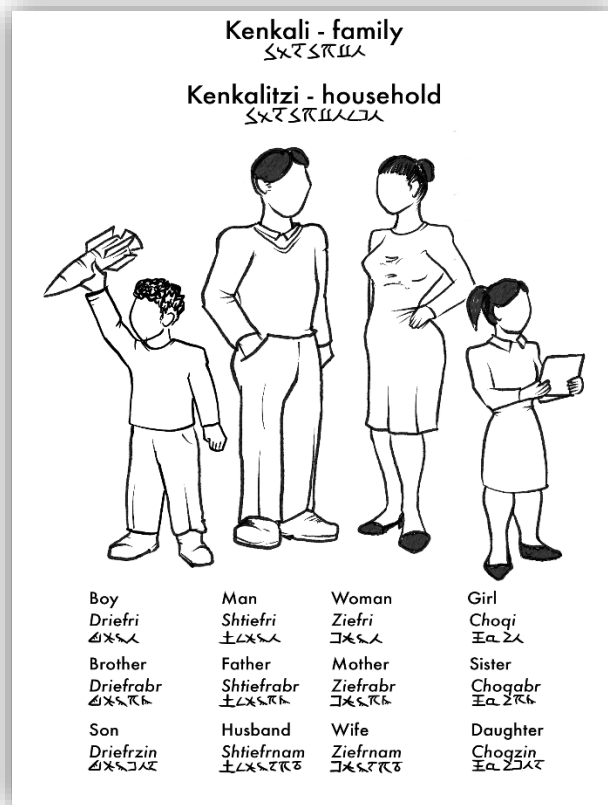
Kenkali Tliaqrnad. Iqeia Ikan Tliaqrnad shtiefrabr. Iqeia Nor Tlieqrnad ziefrabr.

Iqeia Ikan shtiefrnam. Iqeia Nor ziefrnam. Iqeia Ikan iazh Nor chefrnam.

Iqeia Akam driefrzin. Iqeia Kieko choqzin. Iqeia Akam iazh Kieko chefrzin.

Iqeia Mashti Tliaqrnad shtiefrabr. Iqeia Mazi Tliaqrnad ziefrabr.

In Anglic, singular nouns are often indicated by placing the **_indefinite article_** "a" or "an" before them, though it is sometimes omitted. In Zdetl there is no similar word – "a man" and "man" are expressed by simply saying "shtefri".

Plural forms of nouns are expressed by either stating the specific number of the object (or person, place, concept, etc). For non-specific quantities of an object, the prefix **icha-** is added to the word (**shtiefrabr,** father; **ICHAshtiefrabr**, fathers).

_Ma –_ added to _shtiefri_ or _ziefri_ to create the equivalent of _Mr., Mrs, or Miss,_ when needed. If the gender of the person is unknown or non-binary, **Ma** is used without the root word. For same-gender couples, **-o** is added to the end to indicate plurality. When both parents are referred to without regard for gender, **Mao** is used.

Mashti Tliaqrnad – Mr. Miller   **Mazi Tliaqrnad –** Mrs. Miller
Mashtio Tliaqrnad – Mr and Mr Miller   **Mazio Tliaqrnad –** Mrs and Mrs Miller
Mao Tliaqrnad – The Miller family adults

_Ke –_ equivalent of Anglic _the._ This definite article is used when specificity is required:

Ke shtiefrabr – the father   **Ke ziefrnam** – the wife
ke zinzin – the children   **Ke kenkalitzi –** the household

Iazh – equivalent of Anglic _and._ Pronounced "yazh".

Shtiefrabr IAZH driefrzin – father AND son   **Shtiefrabr IAZH ziefrabr –** father AND mother
Ziefrnam IAZH ziefranm – wife AND wife   **Driefrabr IAZH choqrabr –** brother AND sister

A few more Nouns

Tlekoni – animal, beast   **Chikakenmiztli –** a six-legged catlike creature native to Zhdant

Ziatl – table   **Kafi –** coffee
Ibro – egg   **Fevranzh –** book

Verbs – the Present Tense

The words used to name an *action* or a *state of being* are called *verbs*. In Zdetl, most (but not all; these will be highlighted as needed) verbs can be identified by their *infinitive* forms, which usually end in "-e^". The present tense of verbs (actions taking place at the present time, or the current state of an event) is typically denoted by adding the suffix -**IA** to the word:

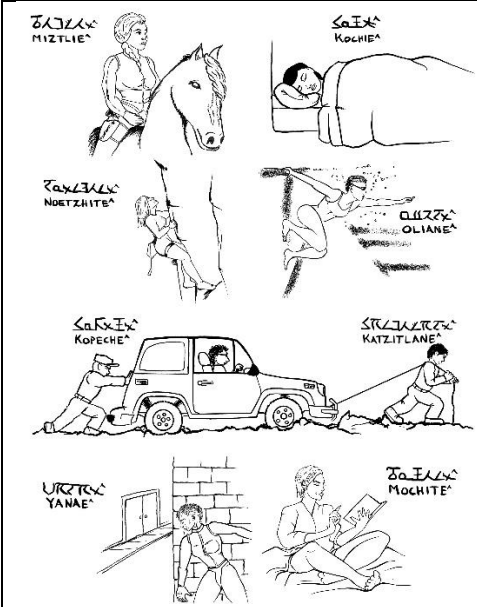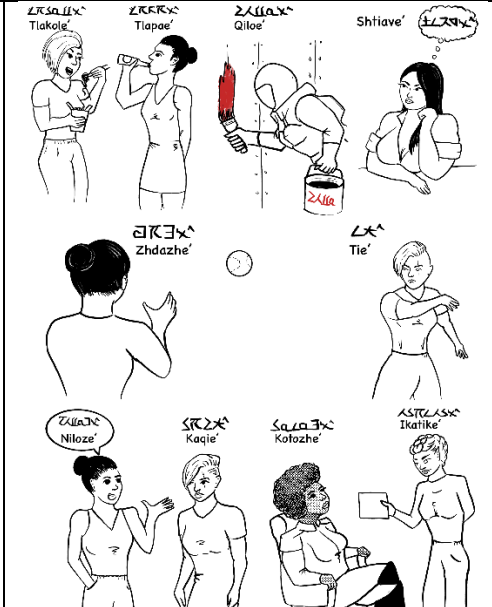|	
IkatikIA ke shtiefrabr.	The father stands/The father is standing.
KrilIA ke driefri.	The boy cries/The boy is crying.
ChoetzhIA ke ziefrnam.	The wife laughs/The wife is laughing.

Word order: Note the appearance of the words in each sentence. Unlike many Terran languages, which are "subject oriented" meaning the subject of the sentence is almost always placed first in word order, Zdetl is "object oriented." In Zdetl, sentences follow the pattern "Object – Verb – Subject – Indirect Object(s)[9]." In the simple sentences above, a direct translation of the words as they appear might be "Stands the father," "Cries the boy," and "laughs the wife." This is likely to be an unusual word pattern to students, particularly those accustomed to the Subject – Verb – Object word order used in most European languages. Practice and patience will help with learning the sentence structure.

<table>
<tr><td colspan="3" align="center">Vocabulary - verbs</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>

miztlie^ - ride
kochie^ - sleep
noetzhite^ - climb
oliane^ - swim
kopeche^ - push
katzitlane^ - pull
yanae^ - hide
mochite^ - read
Iqe^ - to be
Tlakoie^ - eat
Tlapae^ - drink
Qiloe^ - paint
Shtiave^ - think
Zhdazhe^ - catch
Tie^ - throw
Niloze^ - talk
Koqie^ - listen
Kotozhe^ - sit
Ikatike^ - stand

</td><td></td></tr>
</table>

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[9] Zdetl (language) - Traveller (travellerrpg.com)

Correlative Pro-forms

Words which express a relationship between objects, refer to specific objects, are used to inquire as to the status of objects or concepts, are collectively referred to as *correlative pro-forms*[10]. In modern Zdetl these concepts have been simplified to a standardized set of forty constructions. In this lesson we will concentrate on two: **iad** (*which person* or *who*) and **ininad** (*that person* or *them,* used when a person or thing is known by its proper name)[11].

As discussed previously, the verb always comes first in the sentence.

Iqeia iad ke shtiefrabr?	**Iqeia ininad ke shtiefrabr.**
Who is the father? (Is who the father?)	That person is the father. (Is that person the father.)
Nilozhia iad?	**Nilozhia ininad.**
Who is talking?	That person is talking.
Tlakolia iad?	**Tlakolia ininad.**
Who is eating?	That person is eating.
Iqeia iad tlekoni ke chikakenmiztli?	**Iqeia ininad tlekoni ke chikakenmiztli.**
Which animal is the cat (chikakenmiztli)?	That animal is the cat (chikakenmiztli).

Zdetl has another correlative form used for inanimate objects. Whereas the suffix -**ad** refers exclusively to a person or animal capable of thought, the suffix -**tetl** refers to objects or organic beings such as plants, not capable of thought or lacking a defined brain that can either learn or be influenced by psionics. Robots and artificial intelligences fall into this latter category. Its usage follows the same pattern:

Iqeia itetl ke iadlajem?	**Iqeia inintetl ke iadlajem.**
Which is the sky car? (Is which thing the skycar)?	That one is the skycar.
Iqeia itetl ke ziatl?	**Iqeia inintetl ke ziatl.**
Which is the table?	That is the table.
Iqeia itetl ke ibro?	**Iqeia inintetl ke ibro.**
Which is the egg?	That one is the egg.

For correlative forms that refer to plural nouns, **-O** is added:

Iqeia iado ke ichashtiefr?	**Iqeia ininado ke ichashtiefr.**
Who are the men?	They are the men.
Nilozhia iado?	**Nilozhia ininado.**
Who is talking?	They are talking.
Tlakolia iado?	**Tlakolia ininado.**
Who is eating?	They are eating.

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[10] Pro-form - Wikipedia

Prefixes and Suffixes

Like many Terran languages, Zdetl makes extensive use of prefixes and suffixes to extend the vocabulary. Zdetl also combines words into compound word forms that carry deeper meaning than the root words. Many of these are easy to spot and apply as needed or desired without sacrificing clarity. In such cases, nouns modify other nouns as in Anglic, with the root or main noun appearing final in the word.

We have already seen a few such prefixes and suffixes in use in this lesson, notably **ICHA-** and **-ABR.** This section will introduce a few more common ones for routine use.

CHE-

The prefix **che-** is used to denote people of both sexes or gender expressions taken together:

Driefrzin – son

Choqzin – daughter

Driefri – boy

Choqi – girl

Shtiefrnam – husband

Ziefrnam – wife

Chezin – children (sons and daughters)

Chefri – boys and girls

Chefrnam – husbands and wives; men and women of the household

Chefri is occasionally used collectively for "ladies and gentlemen," "Mr and Mrs," but in such cases there are more formal modes of address considered appropriate for use.

-NAD

The suffix **-nad** is used when referring to a person who performs a specific function. It modifies a verb[12]:

Qiloe^ - to paint

Tliaqre^ - to grind grain

Zhant'ad – a commoner or Prole

Qilonad – a painter

Tliaqrnad – one who grinds grain, a miller – also a common Zhodani prole surname

-PRIAA

The suffix **-priaa** is used when referring to a place where an activity is done. It also modifies a verb or noun:

Mochite^ - to read

Kotozhe^ - to sit

Kafi – coffee

Iadlajem – sky car; air/raft

Mochtiepriaa – a reading room

Kotozhepriaa – a sitting room

Kafipriaa – a coffee house

Iadlajempriaa – sky car garage; hangar

-TIKI-

The suffix **-tiki-** is a diminutive, often used when referring to infants or young children. Also sometimes used as a term of endearment, like the Japanese "-chan" modifier. It can also refer to objects that are small, or small animals.

Driefri – a boy

Zin – a child

Shtiefrnam – husband
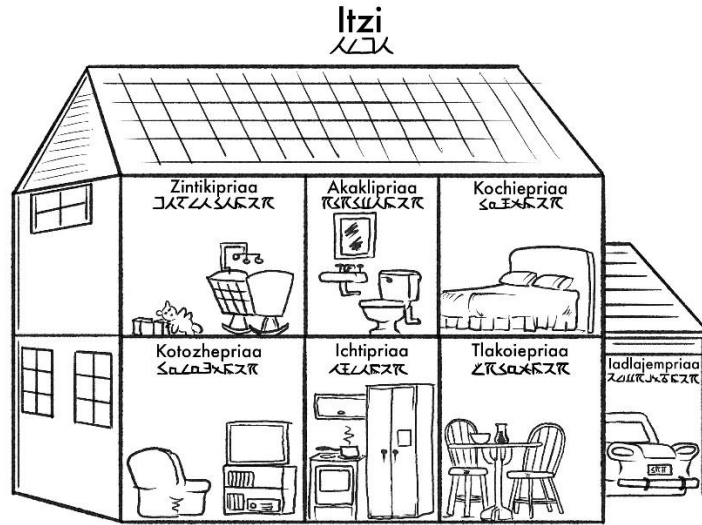
Iadlajem – sky car; air/raft

Drieftiki – a baby boy

Tikizin – an infant

Shtiefrnamtiki – my darling husband

Iadlajemtiki – a compact sky car

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[12] The suffix **-nad** almost exclusively refers to *trades* or *professions* and implies a level of training to do the activity.

Itzi
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Itzi yzqia kenkali Tliaqrnad.

Kłachti priaa choktas itzi: zinkikipriaa, akaklipriaa, kochlepriaa, kotozhepriaa, ichtipriaa, iazh tlakoiepriaa.

Akom tlakolepriaa tlakolia kenkali.

Akom kochiepriaa kochia ke chefrnam.

Akom zintikipriaa kochia ke chefrzin.

Alir itzi iqia iadlajempriaa. Akom iadlajempriaa iqia iadlajem.

Vocabulary from this chapter:

akom	inside, within, in
alir	outside, without, external to
chi-	gender-inclusive/exclusive prefix
chikakenmiztli	cat
chokte'	to contain, to have
choqabr	sister
choqi	girl
choqzin	daughter
driefrabr	brother
driefri	boy
driefrzin	son
driefrtiki	baby boy
fevranzh	book
iadlajem	sky car
iadlajemtiki	compact sky car
iazh	also, too
ibro	egg
ikatike'	to stand
iqe'	to be
itzi	house, home
kafi	coffee

katzitlane'	to pull
ke	definite article "the"
kenkali	family
kenkalitzi	household
klachti	six
kochie'	to sleep
kopeche'	to push
koqie'	to listen
kotozhe'	to sit
miztlie'	to ride
mochite'	to read
nad	person who
nam	spouse of
niloze'	to talk
noetzhite'	to climb
oliane'	to swim
oshie'	to play
priaa	a room
qiloe'	to paint
shtiave'	to think
shtiefrabr	father
shtiefri	man
shtiefrnam	husband
tie'	to throw
tikizin	infant, small child
tlakole'	to eat
tlapae'	to drink
tlekoni	animal
tliaqre'	to grind grain
yanae'	to hide
yzqe'	behold, look at, observe
zhdazhe'	to catch
ziatl	table
ziefrabr	mother
ziefri	woman
ziefrnam	wife
zin	child of

Exercises

Exercise 2a: Zdetl to Anglic

1. Iqia Mashti Tlieqrnad shtiefrabr, iazh iqeia Mazi Tliaqrnad ziefrabr.
2. Iqia Akam iazh Kieko chezin.
3. Iqia iad Mashti Tlieqrnad? Iqeia iad Mazi Tlieqrnad?
4. Iqia iad Akam? Iqeia iad Kieko?
5. Itzi yzqia kenkali Tliaqrnad.
6. Tlakoia akom itetl priaa kenkali Tliaqrnad?
7. Kochia akom itetl priaa Mao Tliaqrnad?
8. Oshia akom itetl priaa ke chezin?
9. Ichtia akom itetl priaa Mao Tliaqrnad?
10. Iqia akom itetl priaa ke iadlajem?
11. Akom iadlajempriaa iqia iadlajem.

Exercise 2b: Anglic to Zdetl

1. Who is Mr. Miller?
2. Who is Mrs. Miller?
3. Who is Akam Miller? Who is Kieko Miller?
4. Observe the Miller residence (house).
5. In which room do Mr and Mrs Miller sleep?
6. In which room do the children play?
7. In which room does the family eat?
8. Where is the sky car?
9. The sky car is in the garage.