

Introduction to Lojban

By La Gleki, 2014

We will construct and explain simple dialogues in Lojban language.



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Select a dialogue.

View them starting from the first one.

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2. [Hello, my name is ...](#)
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1. A dialogue.

mi ca'ò tavla do lo pa skina

I am talking to you about a movie.

i lo se skina cu mutce cinri ui

The plot of the movie is very interesting!

i xu do tugni

Do you agree ?

je'u

Yes.

The structure of our dialogue.

mi	ca'o	tavla	do	lo	pa	skina
I	progressive tense	talk to	you	makes a noun:	one	...is a movie, film

i	lo	se skina	cu	mutce	cinri	ui
sentence separator	makes a noun:	is the plot, action of a movie	main verb follows:	is very	is interesting	Yay! (interjection)

i	xu	do	tugni		je'u
sentence separator	yes/no particle	you	agree		Yes (True)

**Now let's learn
the structure of the dialogue.**

mi	ca'o	tavla	do	lo	pa	skina
I	progressive tense	talk to	you	makes a noun:	one	is a movie

Verb

ca'o tavla = *to be talking*

tavla = ... *talk to ... (someone) about ...*

tavla is a verb. Verbs are basic words in Lojban.

They express relations, actions. Verbs like all words never change their form.

Special particles can be placed before the verb to specify its “contour” or tense.

The particle **ca'o** denotes progressive tense.

tavla = *to talk*

ca'o tavla = *to be talking*

ba tavla = *will talk*

pu tavla = *talked*

Some examples of verbs

rinsa = *to greet ... (someone)*

ciska = *to write or type ... (something)*

tadni = *to study ... (something)*

prami = *to love ... (someone)*

cadzu = *to walk*

Nouns

Nouns are made out of verbs by placing **lo** in front of them:

prami = *to love*

lo prami = *a lover, the lover*

gerku = *is a dog, to be a dog*

lo gerku = *a dog, the dog*

skina = *is a movie, film with plot/theme/action ...*

lo skina = *a movie (film), the movie*

Don't be surprised! In "It is a movie", the part "is a movie" acts like a verb so movies and dogs can be verbs in Lojban!

mi	ca'o	tavla	do	lo	pa	skina
I	progressive tense	talk to	you	makes a noun:	one	is a movie

mi - I

Here are personal pronouns:

mi = *I, me*

do = *you*

mi'o = *we with you*

mi'a = *we without you*

mi	ca'o	tavla	do	lo	pa	skina
I	progressive tense	talk to	you	makes a noun:	one	is a movie

mi - I

Like other words personal pronouns don't change their form.

They can be placed before a verb:

mi prami = *I love.*

After a verb:

prami do = *love you, someone unspecified loves you.*

Combining those two we get:

mi prami do = *I love you.*

After prepositions:

mi catlu fa'a do = *I look towards you.*

mi	ca'o	tavla	do	lo	pa	skina
I	progressive tense	talk to	you	makes a noun:	one	is a movie

Numbers

lo skina can mean either *movie* or *movies*.

The number is usually clear from context but you can specify it if you need it.

lo pa skina = *one movie*

lo za'u skina = *movies*

lo ro skina = *all movies*

ro lo skina = *each movie*

lo so'i skina = *many movies*

Place a number after **lo**:

pa = 1, **re** = 2, **ci** = 3, **vo** = 4, **mu** = 5, **xa** = 6, **ze** = 7, **bi** = 8, **so** = 9

no - 0 (zero). **za'u** - more than one, plural number. **so'i** - many

ro - all, each, every. Notice that to say *each* you put **ro** before **lo**.

mi	ca'o	tavla	do	lo	pa	skina
I	progressive tense	talk to	you	makes a noun:	one	is a movie

Arguments of verbs

Each verb has a sequence of arguments that describe all participants of an action or event.

... **tavla** ... = ... *talks to ... about ...*

You just put a noun onto each “...” mark.

Here we get:

mi tavla do lo skina = *I talk to you about a movie/movies.*

By adding a tense for the verb and a numbers for the last noun we get a richer sentence:

mi ca'o tavla do lo pa skina = *I am talking to you about a movie (one movie).*

**Let's make our first sentence
a bit more interesting.**

ca	lo	prulamdei	mi	tavla	do
during	convert to noun:	...is yesterday	I	talk	you

ca lo prulamdei mi tavla do

Yesterday I was talking to you.

Time prepositions

Time prepositions add additional meanings to the phrase:

ca = *during ...*

pu = *before ... (in time)*

ba = *after ... (in time)*

They are followed by a noun.

ca lo prulamdei = *Yesterday, during yesterday*

ca	lo	prulamdei	mi	tavla	do
during	convert to noun:	...is yesterday	I	talk	you

ca lo prulamdei mi tavla do

Yesterday I was talking to you.

Yesterday, today, tomorrow

ca lo prulamdei = *Yesterday, during yesterday*

cabdei = *occur today*

ca lo cabdei = *Today, during this day*

bavlamdei = *occur tomorrow*

ca lo bavlamdei = *Tomorrow, the next day*

ca	lo	prulamdei	mi	tavla	do
during	convert to noun:	...is yesterday	I	talk	you

ca lo prulamdei mi tavla do

Yesterday I talked to you.

Prepositions and tenses

Without a noun after them time prepositions immediately turn into tenses!

ca without a noun denotes present tense.

pu without a noun denotes past tense.

ba without a noun denotes future tense.

mi ca viska do = *I see you.*

mi ba rinsa do = *I will greet you.*

mi pu prami do = *I loved you.*

mi	tavla	do	lo	pa	skina	e	lo	xrula
I	talk	you	noun:	one	movie	and	noun:	flower

mi tavla do lo pa skina e lo xrula

I talk to you about a movie and flowers.

Conjunctions

Conjunctions connect nouns:

e - *and*.

a - *or*.

onai - *either ... or ... (not both)*.

lo skina e lo xrula - *movies and flowers (number not specified)*.

lo pa skina e lo xrula - *a movie and flowers (number of flowers not specified)*.

lo pa skina a lo pa xrula - *a movie or a flower (or both of them)*.

lo pa skina onai lo pa xrula - *either a movie or a flower (but not both of them)*.

i	lo	se skina	cu	mutce	cinri	ui
sentence separator	makes a noun:	is a plot, action of a movie	main verb follows:	is very	is interesting	Yay! (interjection)

i lo se skina cu mutce cinri ui

The plot of the movie is very interesting :-) !

i

i separates sentences so that we know when a new utterance is started.

i	lo	se skina	cu	mutce	cinri	ui
sentence separator	makes a noun:	is a plot, action of a movie	main verb follows:	is very	is interesting	Yay! (interjection)

se skina

se exchanges the order of the first and the second place of **skina**

skina = ... *is movie with work/content* ...

So

se skina = ...*is the work/content of movie* ...

And by prefixing it with **lo** we get a noun:

lo se skina = a plot, action of a movie

Another example of **se**:

mi prami do = *I love you.*

do se prami mi = *You are loved by me.*

i	lo	se skina	cu	mutce	cinri	ui
sentence separator	makes a noun:	is a plot, action of a movie	main verb follows:	is very	is interesting	Yay! (interjection)

Compound verbs

Two or more verbs words one after another compose a compound verb:

cinri = *is interesting*

mutce = *is extreme, of high degree*

mutce cinri = *is very interesting*

Thus the verb word to the left modifies the verb to the right.

lo skina = *a movie*

lo cinri skina = *an interesting movie*

i	lo	se skina	cu	mutce	cinri	ui
sentence separator	makes a noun:	is a plot, action of a movie	main verb follows:	is very	is interesting	Yay! (interjection)

cu separates the following verb

As **se skina** is a verb it could be merged into the following verb **mutce** so we prefix the verb with **cu**:

lo se skina cu mutce cinri

It's no mistake to always put it:

mi cu prami

but pronouns don't merge into verbs so you can omit **cu** there.

i	lo	se skina	cu	mutce	cinri	ui
sentence separator	makes a noun:	is a plot, action of a movie	main verb follows:	is very	is interesting	Yay! (interjection)

ui - interjection

ui is an interjection word.
It denotes happiness and is applied to the word before it.
cinri ui means ... *interesting, yay!*

Interjections modify the whole sentence
when put just after **i** or
in the beginning of a sentence if **i** is omitted:
ui mi prami = *Yay, I love (I'm in love)*

i xu do tugni		je'u
Do you agree ?		Yes.

i	xu	do	tugni		je'u
sentence separator	yes/no particle	you	agree		Yes (True)

i	xu	do	tugni		je'u
sentence separator	yes/no particle	you	agree		Yes (True)

xu - yes/ no question

xu is also an interjection. It asks a yes/no question.
To reply for a question use any interjection appropriate:

je'u - Yes (true).

je'unai - No (wrong, false).

tugni = ... agrees with ... (somebody) about ... (something)

Question, exclamation marks and other punctuation marks are optional in Lojban.

We can as well write “**xu do tugni ?**” although **xu** already denotes a question.

We've covered this dialogue:

mi ca'ò tavla do lo pa skina

I am talking to you about a movie.

i lo se skina cu mutce cinri ui

The content of the movie is very interesting!

i xu do tugni

Do you agree ?

je'u

Yes.

2. A dialogue.

coi do mi se cmene zo gleki. i do se cmene ma

Hello! My name is Gleki. What is your name?

i mi se cmene zo alis. i mi se pluka lo nu mi penmi do

My name is Alice. It's a pleasure to meet you.

go'i ra'o

Me too.

The structure of our dialogue.

coi	do	mi	se cmene	zo	gleki
Hello	you	I	is named	Quote one word:	Gleki (literally “to be happy”)

i	do	se cmene	ma
sentence separator	you	is named	what?

The structure of our dialogue.

i	mi	se cmene	zo	alis
sentence separator	I	is named	Quote one word:	Alice

i	mi	se pluka	lo	nu	mi	penmi	do
sentence separator	I	...feels pleasure of ... (event)	noun:	phrase starts	I	meet	you

go'i	ra'o
previous phrase	, in which pronouns are applied to the speaker

**Now let's learn
the structure of the dialogue.**

coi	do	mi	se cmene	zo	gleki
Hello	you	I	... is named	Quote one word:	Gleki (literally “to be happy”)

Vocatives

coi do = Hello!

do = you

coi is a vocative particle. Vocative particles require a noun, name or pronoun after them.
In the simplest case you just say **coi do** - “Hello you!”

coi	do	mi	se cmene	zo	gleki
Hello	you	I	is named	Quote one word:	to be happy

Quoting one word

zo quote one next word.

In this case it's a verb

gleki = ...is happy because of ... (event)

Thus

zo gleki = “Happy” (a personal name)

If your name is not a Lojban word it must end in a consonant.

Also use only Lojban letters and Lojban literal pronunciation of letters for your name.

For example,

alis, robin, robert are fine Lojban names.

Mary will become **meris** because this is how it sounds in English.

Plus we added a consonant in the end.

Using names

zo quote one next word.

la marks the next construct as a name.

Compare:

mi penmi la gleki = *“I met Gleki”*

mi tavla la alis = *“I talk to Alice”*

la alis cu tavla la robert = *“Alice talks to Robert”*

but

mi se cmene zo gleki = *“My name is ‘Gleki’ ”*

la gleki is someone or something with the name ‘Gleki’.

zo gleki is just a quoted text.

In defining names with **cmene** we use **zo**.

i	do	se cmene	ma
sentence separator	you	is named	what?

What?

ma asks a question requiring to fill a place of a verb,
in this case the second place of **se cmene**
se cmene ma = is named what?
do se cmene ma = *You are named what?, What is your name?*

i	mi	se pluka	lo	nu	mi	penmi	do
sentence separator	I	...feels pleasure of ... (event)	noun:	phrase starts	I	meet	you

I am pleased.

se pluka = ... *is pleased because of* ...
mi se pluka = *I am pleased.*

i	mi	se pluka	lo	nu	mi	penmi	do
sentence separator	I	...feels pleasure of ... (event)	noun:	phrase starts	I	meet	you

to meet

penmi = ... meets ... (whom or what)
penmi do = ... *meets you, to meet you*

i	mi	se pluka	lo	nu	mi	penmi	do
sentence separator	I	...feels pleasure of ... (event)	noun:	phrase starts	I	meet	you

I am pleased.

se pluka = ... *is pleased because of* ...

mi se pluka = *I am pleased.*

mi penmi do = *I meet you / I met you / I will meet you.*

The second place of **se pluka** requires adding a whole phrase.
Add **lo nu** and then the phrase: the reason why you are pleased.

mi se pluka lo nu mi penmi do = I am pleased that I met you.

i	mi	se pluka	lo	ka	penmi	do
sentence separator	I	...feels pleasure of ... (event)	noun:	infinitive	meet	you

Infinitive

mi se pluka lo ka penmi do = *I am pleased to meet you.*

mi se pluka lo nu mi penmi do = *I am pleased that I meet you.*

Both sentences mean the same.

lo ka states that the place (pronoun, noun, name) on the left does the action on the right.

In other words,
the first place (**mi**) of the main verb (**se pluka**)
is applied to the event to the right of **lo ka**.

Examples of event places

do zukte ma = You are doing what? What are you doing?

The answer might be:

lo ka lumci lo kumfa = cleaning the room

zukte = ... *does ... (event) with goal ...*

The second place of the verb **zukte** requires adding either the questions word **ma**, or

lo ka and then a phrase describing that event.

mi zukte lo ka lumci lo kumfa = I am occupied with cleaning the room.

lumci = ... *cleans ... using ...*

lo kumfa = *a room, the room*

lo ka starts a place with a phrase inside.

lo ka lumci lo kumfa = *cleaning the room*

The second place of **gleki** is similar to **se pluka**:

mi gleki lo nu do klama mi = *I am happy that you come to me.*

(came, will come depending on context)

mi gleki lo ka klama or **mi gleki lo nu mi klama** = *I am happy of coming.*

klama = ... *comes to ...from ...*

3. A dialogue.

vanci coi la alis

Good evening, Alice!

coi la gleki i do klama ma

Hello, Gleki! Where are you going?

i ei mi ca gunka bu'u lo briju

I have to work at the office.

co'o

Good-bye.

co'o

Good-bye.

The structure of our dialogue.

vanci	coi	la	alis	coi	la	gleki
... is an evening	hello	name follows:	Alice	hello	name follows:	... is happy
i	do	klama	ma	i	ei	
sentence separator	you	... goes to ...	what ?	sentence separator	obligation interjection	
mi	ca	gunka	bu'u	lo	briju	co'o
I	present tense	work	at	noun follows:	... is an office	Good-bye

vanci	coi	la	alis
... is an evening	hello	name follows:	Alice

Good evening!

vanci = ... *is an evening*

coi is a vocative. Like interjections

vocatives are attached to the preceding verb words, names and pronouns.

vanci coi means *Good evening!*

Vocatives require a noun, pronoun or name after them.

Names are formed by prefixing them with **la**.

la alis = *Alice*

la gleki = *Gleki* (literally *Happy*)

Compare it with

lo gleki = happy, a happy person (not a name)

coi la alis = *Hello, Alice!*

coi la gleki = *Hello, Gleki!*

i	do	klama	ma
sentence separator	you	... goes to ...	what ?

Where are you going?

klama = ... goes to ... from ...
do klama ma = You go where? Where do you go?

i	ei	mi	ca	gunka	bu'u	lo	briju
sentence separator	obligation interjection	I	present tense	work	at	noun follows:	... is an office

I should ...

ei is an interjection of obligation.
It translates to English as (*I should, one should ...*)

i	ei	mi	ca	gunka	bu'u	lo	briju
sentence separator	obligation interjection	I	present tense	work	at	noun follows:	... is an office

bu'u = at

The preposition **bu'u** = *at, at location of ...*

gunka = *... works on ... (activity)*

lo briju = *an office, the office*

i	ei	mi	ca	gunka	bu'u	lo	briju
sentence separator	obligation interjection	I	present tense	work	at	noun follows:	... is an office

i ei mi ca gunka bu'u lo briju

I should work at the office.

coi

Hello

co'o

Good-bye.

Good-bye!

co'o is a vocative just like **coi**.

coi la alis = Hello, Alice!

co'o la alis = Good-bye, Alice!

Nouns after vocatives can be omitted when vocatives are at the end of phrase.

4. Useful phrases

cerni coi	donri coi	vanci coi	nicte di'ai
Good morning!	Good day!	Good evening!	Good night!

ki'e	je'e
Thank you!	You are welcome!

cerni coi

Good morning!

donri coi

Good day!

vanci coi

Good evening!

nicte di'ai

Good night!

Hello!

coi means *Hello!*, it is a vocative of greeting.

cerni = *...is a morning*

donri = *...is a daylight time*

vanci = *...is an evening*

When putting a vocative after a verb it is applied to that verb.

cerni coi	donri coi	vanci coi	nicte di'ai
Good morning!	Good day!	Good evening!	Good night!

Good night!

Good night! has a different meaning.
Thus a different vocative is used.

di'ai - a vocative of well-wish.
nicte = ...*is a night*

ki'e	je'e
Thank you!	You are welcome!

Thank you!

ki'e is a vocative that means *Thanks!*

ki'e do = Thank you!

The usual reply is:

je'e. It is a vocative that means *You are welcome!*

5. Your city and job.

do xabju ma poi tcadu		la losanjeles
What city do you live in?		Los-Angeles

do se jibri lo ka mo		sanga
What is your job?		I am a singer.

tigni	sampla	dansu	na'i
I am an actor.	I am a programmer.	I am a dancer.	nothing (I don't have a job).

The structure of our dialogue.

do	xabju	ma	poi	tcadu		la	losanjeles
you	... inhabits	what?	that	... is a city		name follows:	Los-Angeles

do	se jibri	lo	ka	mo		sanga
you	... is employed in...	a noun follows	infinitive	... what (a question verb)		... sings

tigni	sampla	dansu		na'i
... plays (about an actor)	... programs	... dances		The question can't be answered.

do	xabju	ma	poi	tcadu		la	losanjeles
you	... inhabits	what?	that	... is a city		name follows:	Los-Angeles

That which

poi means “that” in the sense
the one that is something or does something. For example:
lo prenu poi melbi = *the person who is beautiful*

do xabju ma poi tcadu literally means *You live in what that is a city?*
 thus restricting the answer with cities only.
tcadu = *... is a city*

do	se jibri	lo	ka	mo		sanga
you	... is employed in...	a noun follows	infinitive	... what (a question verb)		... sings

Job

se jibri = ... *is employed in ... (job as an action follows)*

Job in Lojban is described as an action of what you are doing on that job.

mo is a question verb.

The listener is supposed to answer with a verb, for example:

sanga = ... *sings*

6. Seasons and taking rest

ca ma do surla

When do you take rest?

lo crisa

In summer.

lo citsi zo'u mi traji nelci lo vensa e lo crisa

As for seasons, I like spring and summer most.

mi nelci lo ka litru lo ropno tumla

I like travelling to Europe.

mi ji'a nelci

I like it too.

The structure of our dialogue

ca	ma	do	surla		lo	crisa
During	what?	you	... takes rest		noun follows:	... is a summer

lo	citsi	zo'u	mi	traji	nelci
noun follows:	... is a season	separates topic	I	... is an extreme	... likes

lo	vensa	e	lo	crisa
noun follows:	... is a spring	and (connects nouns)	noun follows:	... is a summer

ca ma do surla

When do you take rest?

lo crisa

In summer.

When?

ca before a verb denotes present tense.

Before a noun it means *during...*, *at the same time as ...*

ma is a question particle asking for a noun (pronoun, name).

ca ma = *When? (during what?)*

surla = *... rests, relaxes by doing ... (action)*

ca ma do surla = *When do you relax, take rest?*

The listener substitutes this **ma** with an appropriate noun.

lo crisa = *a summer*

ca lo crisa mi surla lo ka litru = *In summer I relax by travelling.*

lo	citsi	zo'u	mi	traji	nelci
noun follows:	... is a season	separated topic	I	... is an extreme	... likes

Topic and comment

“As for ...” is used in English to denote the topic of a sentence.
 In Lojban we separate the topic from the rest of the sentence using **zo'u**.

traji = ... is an extreme
traji nelci = ... likes ... most

lo citsi zo'u mi traji nelci lo vensa e lo crisa

As for seasons, I like spring and summer most.

Seasons

mi traji nelci lo vensa e lo crisa = I like spring and summer most.

vensa = ... *is a spring*

crisa = ... *is a summer*

critu = ... *is an autumn*

dunra = ... *is a winter*

Surprise!

A bonus

More pronouns: this, that

ti = *here: this one near me or this place near me*

ta = *there: that one near you or that place near you*

tu = *over there: that one over there or the place over there*

ti gerku = *This is a dog.*

ta verba = *That is a child near you.*

tu cmana = *That is a mountain.*

verba = *... is a child*

cmana = *... is a mountain*

More pronouns: he, she, it

ra = *he/she/it*

lo gerku pei = *Dog?*

ra zvati ti = *It is here.*

zvati = ... *is present/located at ...*

zvati ti = ... *is present here*

More pronouns: they, oneself

le za'umei = *they/them*

mi viska le za'umei = *I see them.*

viska = ... sees ... (*something or someone*)

lo nei = *oneself*

do lumci do or **do lumci lo nei** = *You wash yourself.*

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