



He didn't speak Spanish, now a young Tzeltal Business Tec graduate

“When I arrived at the Tec in Tuxtla (Gutiérrez), I spoke very little Spanish, because I spoke Tzeltal every day. It was difficult for me to explain what I wanted to say.”

That is how **Jerónimo Moreno** remembers when at the age of 18, he began studying **Business Strategy and Transformation** at [Tec de Monterrey's](#) Chiapas campus, without having mastered the **Spanish language**.

The young man spent his entire childhood in the town of Bachajón, where everyone communicated in the **Tzeltal language**, typical of communities in the **mountainous regions** of **Chiapas**.

Thanks to his **academic excellence** from elementary to high school, his participation in **social projects**, and becoming **state chess champion**, Jerónimo received the opportunity to join the **Leaders of Tomorrow** program to **study at the Tec with a 100% scholarship**.

Now, the **recent graduate** from Monterrey campus **has also learned English**, and recounts what it was like to move to a city without having mastered Spanish to **study his degree**, with the hope of **transforming his community**.

“Being a Leader of Tomorrow means having a vote of confidence placed in us by donors, collaborators, and the Tec.”



“I thought they weren’t going to accept me.”

Jerónimo acknowledged that when he joined the Tec, he was **afraid he wouldn’t be accepted**, but he overcame this thanks to people’s kindness and his **effort** to learn Spanish with **courses and daily interactions**.

*“Before arriving at the Chiapas campus, **I didn’t think they were going to accept me. I was afraid (...)** but I was surprised that, **despite the language difference**, people were kind and took the time to **try to understand me**,”* says Jerónimo.

The young man says that although his **mother tongue** is Tzeltal, he could **understand Spanish thanks to his father** and his middle school teachers.

Jerónimo said that when he arrived at the Tec, he practically learned to **master Spanish** thanks to various **remedial courses** designed to **align his level of knowledge** with that of the rest of his classmates.

*“The remedial courses helped me a lot because **I went over all the grammar rules.** Besides, I was already in a context where **I needed to speak Spanish all the time:** lectures, books, participations, transport, everything was in Spanish.”*

What’s more, he had support during his studies at the Tec from the [Leaders of Tomorrow program](#), which supports talented young people with 100% scholarships for **studying at the institution** due to their **talent and social leadership** regardless of their socioeconomic status.



“Don’t be sad. It’s for your own good.”

Jerónimo remembers the words his mother said to him when he had to leave.

*“She said to me: ‘Don’t be sad. It’s for your own good.’ **That was the hardest part, saying goodbye to my family**, especially my mother, because she motivated me to study. Even though she didn’t finish elementary school, **she always told me that education was very important.**”*

As the **seventh of 9 siblings**, **Jerónimo** had never left **his parents’ house** in the municipality of **Chilón**, which is **5 hours** by car **from Tuxtla Gutiérrez**, the state capital.

*“At the end of every semester, I would go back to my town, and **tears would come to my eyes when I had to return**. It was a necessary sacrifice because **my mother wanted to see me get a degree**. She knew that life in the countryside is very difficult.*

“At the end of every semester, I would go back to my town, and tears would come to my eyes when I had to return. It was a necessary sacrifice because my mother wanted to see me get a degree.”

Another challenge he had to face was his **fear of getting lost in the city**.

*“Going to a **city much bigger than my town** filled me with fear, it was mainly the **fear of getting lost**, because I didn’t know the way around, nor did I know how to (speak Spanish). I’d never been to Tuxtla. Fortunately, one of my brothers already lived there and he was the one who helped me.*

*“I did get lost at some point because there was a bus that had the same name but two different routes, and I took the wrong one. I had to get off once I realized and luckily, **I found my way back**,” he remembers with a laugh.*



Graduating with English and fulfilling his sister's dream

The **Leader of Tomorrow** will be part of the **December 2021** generation from the **Tec's Monterrey campus** after 6 semesters, which he started at the Chiapas campus.

The student from Chiapas has now **not only mastered Spanish** but has **also learned to speak English** through courses he was taking at Tec with a view to obtaining a better education.

*“At the Tec, **they taught me Business English**. I began using terms I didn't even know in Spanish, so I had to learn them. I took **online courses** with different universities. Over the summers, they usually invited professors from **British Columbia University**.”*

The young man describes how he first heard about [Tec de Monterrey](#), when **one of his sisters wanted to join the institution**. However, **she was unable to secure a scholarship** and it was difficult for her family to afford her college education.

“I learned about the Tec at the end of elementary school. Once I was older, I kept checking different calls for scholarships, but my family couldn’t cover any of them. They told me to look for other options.

*“A year before leaving high school, I found out about the **Leaders of Tomorrow** scholarship. My math teacher told me. **I was always focused on doing everything in my power to win it, because I wanted to fulfill my sister’s dream through me.**”*



Participating in social projects focused on his community

Jerónimo **actively participated in social programs**, seeking to improve his community. He wants his people to do well.

From a very young age, the Tec student became aware of the **difficulties faced by inhabitants of his native region**: families were large, and the farming work focused on cultivating corn, beans, and bananas barely provided enough to survive.

Jerónimo's father is a retired elementary school teacher, and his mother is a housewife. **His family also works in farming** in his native Bachajón.



For this reason, he focused on developing a project to benefit his community.

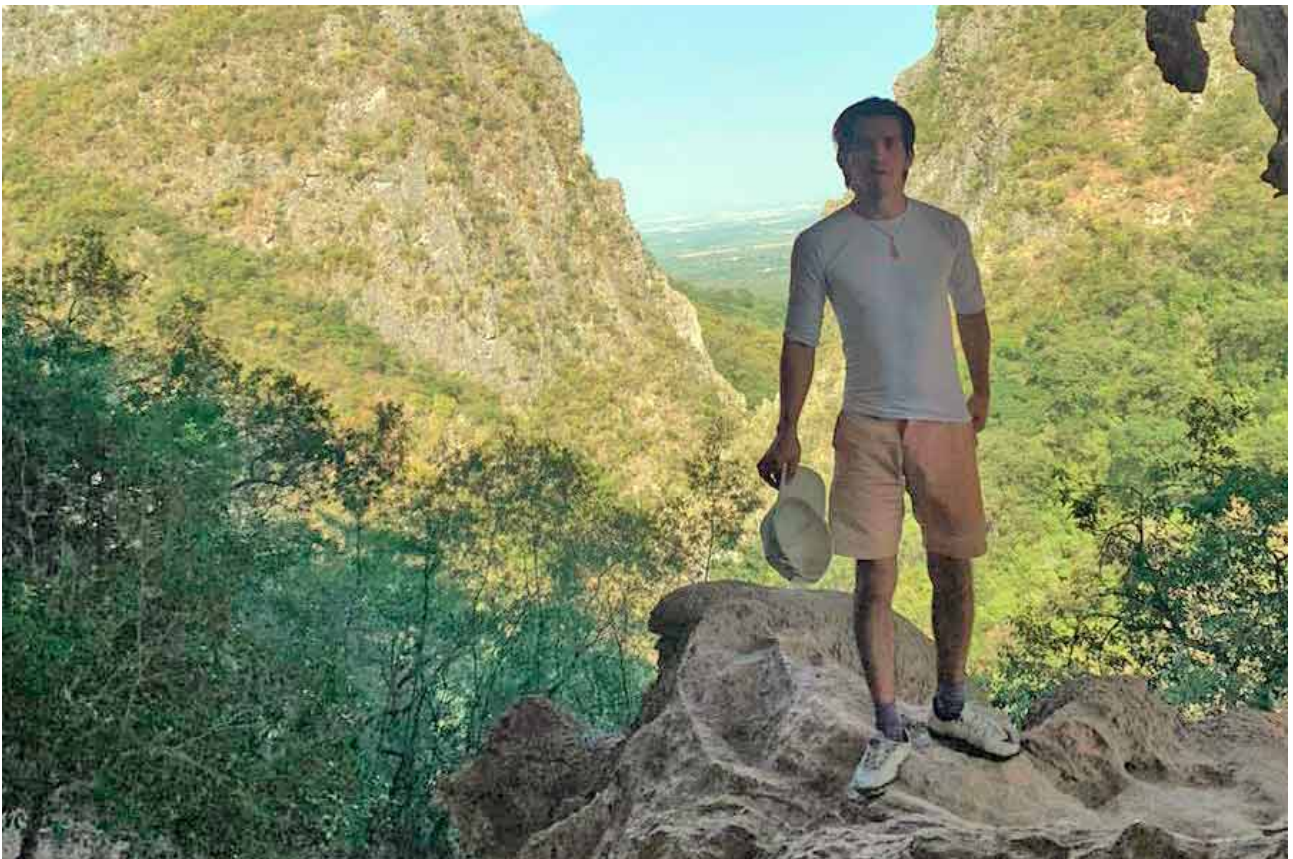
*“Several friends, my father, and I **developed a project called Constrúyete**, which was about growing **backyard vegetables**, i.e. in the family home, so that in addition to beans and corn, they could harvest the vegetables they normally had to buy.*

*“It occurred to us that **we had to produce those products that weren’t produced in the fields**. We managed to harvest products such as tomatoes, coriander, chives, chili, and other things. Around **50 families were able to meet their needs and sell the surplus**,” he said.*

That social conscience, his good grades, and his passion for **chess**, as he was **state champion** and promoted the sport in his town, led Jerónimo to obtaining a 100% scholarship to study at Tec de Monterrey, where he continued supporting social causes.

*“When I told my parents I’d been accepted, they wept with emotion and congratulated me, but my father told me something very important: ‘Son, this fills me with pride, but **remember it’s not only an award, but it’s a commitment, because the Tec is trusting you.**’*

*“My father told me something very important: ‘Son, this fills me with pride, but **remember it’s not only an award, but it’s a commitment, because the Tec is trusting you.**’”*



Seeking to return to improve his community

Jerónimo says his next goal is to find a job opportunity to pursue the career for which he studied.

*“I’d like to work for a few years with the **aim of gaining a lot of experience**. One of my goals is **to return to Chiapas and take technology there**, such as for **sustainable agriculture**, so the land becomes more productive.*

*“Being a Leader of Tomorrow **means having a vote of confidence** placed in us by donors, collaborators, and the Tec. It’s an opportunity to **show we can** do our bit to **transform society**,” he concluded.*

YOU SHOULD ALSO READ: