Mexican Spanish (Indo-European)

1) muʃʃatʃo........‘boy’  
7) muʃʃatʃa........‘girl’  
13) ixo...............‘son’

2) tio ..............‘uncle’
8) tia ...............‘aunt’  
14) ixa ..........‘daughter’

3) sobrino .. ‘nephew’
9) sobrina....... ‘niece’  
15) poeta ...........‘poet’

4) madre ......‘mother’
10) padre .......‘father’  
16) ombre.........‘man’

5) muxer ....‘woman’
11) xente........‘people’  
17) amante ....‘lover’

6) muʃʃatʃos ....‘boys’
12) muʃʃatʃas .....‘girls’
18) ixos .....‘offspring’

19) buena xente ‘nice people’  
20) muxeres biexas ‘old women’

21) muʃʃatʃos tʃìkos ‘little boys’  
22) amante guapo ‘handsome lover’

23) padres rìkos ‘rich parents’  
24) amantes guapas ‘pretty lovers’

25) muʃʃatʃas tʃìkas ‘little girls’
26) poetas preferidos ‘favorite poets’

27) tia preferida ‘favorite aunt’
28) ombres brabos ‘brave men’

29) poetas pobres ‘poor poets’  
30) ombres grandes ‘big men’

31) ixo grande ‘big son’
32) muʃʃatʃa pobre ‘poor girl’

Hints for this puzzle.

This puzzle has a lot of information, and no single “solution” like Amharic. But it does have some generalizations you can draw (depending on what questions you’re asking, of course). Here are some possibly useful questions and observations:

1) There are only two genders in Spanish: masculine and feminine. How many different ways of marking them are there? Are they always distinguished?

2) There are two numbers in Spanish: singular and plural. How many different ways of marking them are there? Are they always distinguished? How does number marking interact with gender marking? (Be specific)

3) In Spanish, adjectives must be in agreement with the nouns they modify. How does adjective-noun agreement work? (By the way, no.19 is an idiom; normally the adjective follows the noun it modifies).

4) Is xente plural? How can you tell?

5) What is the gender of xente? Of madre, padre, poeta, and amante? How can you tell?

6) Notice that English uses two words, handsome and pretty, where Spanish uses one word with two suffixes. Spanish uses more inflection than English, because Spanish has more inflection than English. Notice that we use two words, uncle and aunt, where Spanish uses one word with two suffixes. Notice that we use two words, mother and father, where Spanish uses one word with two prefixes.

7) Notice that we use two words, uncle and aunt, where Spanish uses one word with two suffixes. Notice that we use two words, mother and father, where Spanish uses one word with two prefixes.

8) Is (7) above a reasonable hypothesis? Why or why not?

9) How do you decide what’s a part of the root and what’s an affix (i.e, a suffix or a prefix)?