

# **AN OUTLINE OF UYGHUR GRAMMAR**

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translated from Russian by  
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## INTRODUCTION

The Uyghur<sup>1</sup> language is a member of the group of Turkic languages. It is spoken by the Uyghurs of the USSR who live in the Uzbek SSR, the Kazak SSR (Jarkent district) and the Kyrgyz SSR (Osh and Aravan districts), and by the Uyghurs of Xinjiang (Western China). The appellations “Uyghur” and “Uyghur language” were adopted in 1921 at a conference of Uyghurs of the council of Turkestan in Tashkent. Until the Great October Revolution Uyghurs had diverse names: Kashkarliks, Yarkenliks, Turfanliks and so on, essentially according to their own place of residence or birth (from this or that locality or town); military exiles in the Ili river valley received the appellation “Taranchi”. The Uyghur language has many dialects: Kashkar-Yarkend, Ili, Aky,<sup>2</sup> Hotan, Turfan, Lopnur and so on. However, the majority of these dialects combine common characteristic features which distinguish Uyghur from the other languages of the Turkic system.

The vocabulary of Uyghur has been influenced considerably by Arabic, Persian, Chinese and also Mongolian.

A significant stage in the history of the language of the Uyghurs of the Soviet Union, living as they are in the conditions of a socialist state, has been the formation and development of literary Uyghur, which is being enriched year by year with thousands of new Russian and international words and terms through links with the publication of newspapers and social-political, educational and artistic literature.

The whole system of word-formation and inflection in Uyghur is realised by the joining of special affixes, each having its own derived semantical relationships, fixings, links, senses and so on.

Sharply distinguishing Uyghur from other Turkic languages are some peculiarities in its phonetical structure and mainly in its vowel system.

Finally, it is necessary to note the presence of discrepancies between the literary written language of Xinjiang which tends towards the norm of the feudal Chaghatai language, and the literary language of the Uyghurs of the Soviet Union which reflects the living, spoken language of the vast masses.

In the compiling of the dictionary and also of this grammatical outline the literary language of the Uyghurs of the Soviet Union was taken as the basis, but, in view of the need for a text for the study of the language of the Uyghurs of Xinjiang, the characteristics of the latter have also been included.

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<sup>1</sup> The modern Uyghur language should not be confused with ancient Uyghur.

<sup>2</sup> (translator) Aksu?

## THE ALPHABET

1. The Uyghurs in the USSR and Uyghurs living in Xinjiang, China use different alphabets. The former use a latinised alphabet consisting of 32 letters: **a, b, c, ç, d, e, ə, f, g, ğ, h, i, j, k, l, m, n, ŋ, o, ɵ, p, q, r, s, ş, t, u, v, x, y, z, z;** [Henceforth the following alternative latinised orthography which follows the order of the modern Uyghur alphabet will be used: **a, e, b, p, t, j, ch, x, d, r, z, j, s, sh, gh, f, q, k, g, ng, l, m, n, h, o, u, ö, ü, w, é, i, y**] The latter use an old Arabic alphabet consisting of 32 characters. The significance of each character and its correspondence with the letters of the latinised alphabet is presented in the following table:

	Arabic alphabet				Name of Arabic letter	Latinised alphabet		Pronounced as in Russian
	Initial	Medial	Final	Isolated		Upper case	Lower case	
1					elip	A	a	a
2					be	B	b	б
3					pe	P	p	п
4					te	T	t	т
5					sa	-	-	See point 2
6					jim	J	j	See point 2
7					chim	Ch	ch	ч
8					ha	-	-	See point 2
9					xe	X	x	х
10					dal	D	d	д
11					zal	-	-	See point 2
12					ré	R	r	р
13					zé	Z	z	з
14					zhe	Zh	zh	ж
15					sin	S	s	с
16					shin	Sh	sh	ш
17					sad	-	-	See point 2
18					dad, zad	-	-	See point 2
19					ta, itqi	-	-	See point 2
20					za, izqi	-	-	See point 2
21					'ayn	-	-	See point 2
22					ghayn	Gh	gh	See point 2
23					fe	F	f	ф
24					qaf	Q	q	See point 2
25					kef	K	k	к
26					ga	G	g	г
27					lem	L	l	л
28					mim	M	m	м
29					nun	N	n	н
	-				seghir nun	Ng	ng	See point 2

30					waw	W	w	See point 2
						O	o	o
						Ö	ö	See point 2
						U	u	y
						Ü	ü	See point 2
31					he	H	h	See point 2
						E	e	See point 2
32					ya	É	é	e
						I	i	и
						Y	y	й

2. Characters of the Arabic alphabet for which corresponding equivalents in the latinised Uyghur alphabet are not given in the above table are used by Xinjiang Uyghurs in traditional writings, mainly in borrowed Arabic and Persian words. In pronunciation they correspond with other letters of the alphabet as follows:

،	=	s	Russian с
، ،	=	z	Russian з
،	=	t	Russian т

is pronounced as a vowel, most often as **e**, **i**, or **u**.

Note: The Arabic character ، corresponding with the Latin letter **f**, is pronounced like the Russian **ф** only in words assimilated by Uyghurs after the Great October Socialist revolution, for example, **fakt**, **fërma** and others. In Arabic words and also in native Uyghur words it is pronounced as **p** , that is, like the Russian **п**.

**j** is pronounced like the merged and somewhat soft combination **дж**.

**h** is pronounced like the German **h** in the words *haben*, *heben*.

Note: The Arabic letter ه is used exclusively in Arabic words.

**gh** a velar **g** pronounced like the southern Russian **г** in the word *богатый*.

**q** a dull velar sound close to the Russian sound **к** in the words *кол*, *колода* but with greater velar articulation.

**ng** is a velar nasal **н** pronounced like the merged combination **нг** but in articulation like **q** or **gh**.

**w** a labio-dental **в**.

**ö** a soft front **o**, close to the sound **ö** in the International Phonetic Transcription.

**ü** a soft front **u**, close to the sound **ü** in the International Phonetic Transcription.

**e** a soft **a**, close to the sound **ä** in the International Phonetic Transcription.

The Arabic alphabet presents a particular problem for the designation of vowel sounds in the Uyghur language. In the alphabet table above only the basic corresponding sounds are given with the characters which denote them: , , , . These letters are pronounced variously and sometimes even dropped in accordance with phonetical rules and accepted orthographic traditions. In the table below the equivalent vowel sounds for these characters are given, with the more rare meanings appearing in brackets.

<i>At the beginning of words</i>	<i>In the middle and at the end of words</i>
a, e, é, [i, u] =	a, e, é =
o, ö, u, ü =	o, ö, u, ü =
i, é, [e] =	i, é, [e] =
e, i, [u, a], h =	e, i, [a] =
	e, a =

Note: Besides the above, the characters are used in writing to signify consonants:

w	=
h	=
y	=

3. Apart from the basic characters of the Arabic alphabet, Uyghurs in Xinjiang also make use of loaned auxiliary marks from the Arabic script:

<b>medd</b>	above <b>elip</b>	=	long <b>a</b>
<b>teshdid</b>		=	double consonant
<b>jezm</b>		=	absence of vowel
<b>hemze</b>	above <b>elip</b>	=	<b>i, é</b> at the beginning of a word
<b>zeber</b>		=	<b>e, a</b>
<b>zér</b>		=	<b>é, i</b>
<b>pésh</b>		=	<b>u, o, ü, ö</b>
<b>tenwin</b>		=	<b>n</b> at the end of Arabic words, mainly after <b>elip</b> .

or \* appears at the end of Arabic words of feminine gender in the plural.

Of the conventional markings it is necessary also to point out the graphical combination of aleph with , that is or **la, le**.

4. Numerical values of the letters of the Arabic alphabet.

*thousands*      *hundreds*      *tens*      *units*

1.9.8.7.6.5. 4.3.2.1.9.8.7.6. 5.4.3.2. 1.9.8.7.6.5. 4.3.2.1.

Examples:	=	1358	=	۱۳۵۸
	=	1939	=	۱۹۳۹
	=	25,000	=	۲۵۰۰۰
	=	305	=	۳۰۵.

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\* The sign ð (t marbuta) in the dictionary is in all cases replaced by ت.