

UYGHUR

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Language Name: Uyghur. **Alternates:** *Uigur/Uygur, Eastern Turki*. **Autonym:** *Uyghur* (pronounced "ooy-GUR" [ujǧhúr]).

Location: Spoken in the Xinjiang Autonomous Region (eastern Turkistan) in the People's Republic of China; also spoken in the former Soviet Central Asian Republics, Afghanistan and Mongolia.

Family: The Southeastern, or "Chaghatay" branch of the Turkic language family.

Related Languages: Uyghur is most closely related to **UZBEK**, although the two languages differ somewhat in pronunciation and vocabulary.

Some scholars consider the Turkic languages, including Uyghur, to be part of the larger Altaic family. At present it is unclear whether the three main Altaic language groups—Turkic, Mongolic, and Manchu-Tungusic—are of common origin or merely related by borrowings.

Dialects: Uyghur dialects are nearly identical in terms of syntax but differ in phonology, morphology, and vocabulary. The classification of Uyghur dialects is still under debate, but there are three main groups: (1) Central/Northern dialects, including areas north and east of the Tianshan mountains, as well as the oases immediately south of this range; (2) the Southern or Hotan (Khotan) dialects; and (3) the Lopnur dialect, an eastern Tarim basin isolate (with **KIRGHIZ** and **MONGOLIAN** influence).

The Uyghur spoken in the Uzbek and Kazakh areas to the west is considered to be similar to the Ghulja vernacular, and thus part of the Central dialect. Modern standard Uyghur is a standardization of the dialects of Ghulja and Ürümqi.

Two other Turkic languages spoken within the borders of modern China, Salar and *Sarıg Yuğur* ('Yellow Yuğur'), were formerly considered dialects of Uyghur. Both are independent languages preserving Old Turkic features; Salar stems likely from Western Turkic (Oghuz); *Sarıg Yuğur* may have evolved from a 9th century Old Uyghur dialect. Both are typologically distinct from the Southeastern Turkic now called Modern Uyghur.

Number of Speakers: 7–9 million.

Origin and History

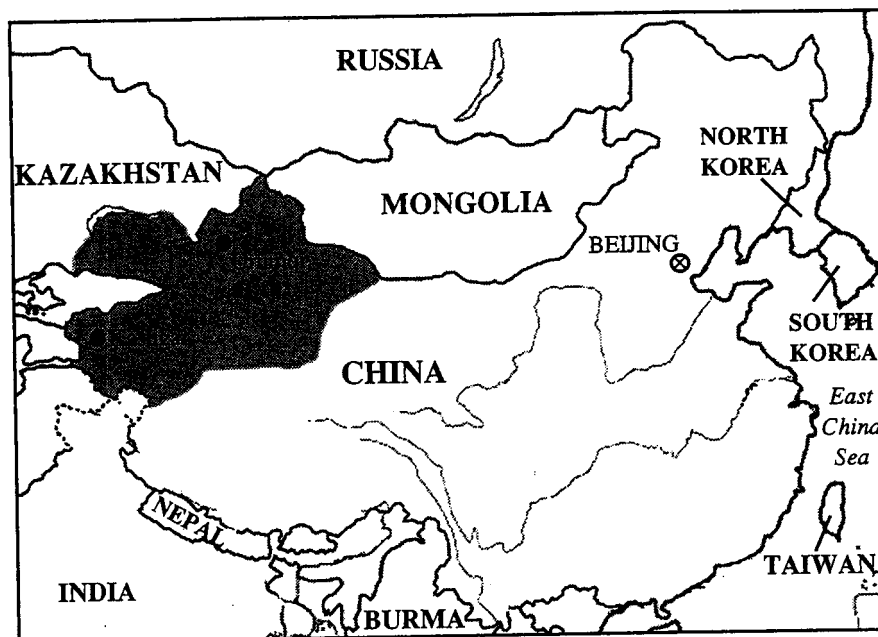
The modern Uyghurs trace their lineage back to the great Uyghur kaghans who ruled south Siberia and inner Asia between A.D. 744–840, and to the subsequent Uyghur states in Eastern Turkestan, especially to the Uyghur kingdom at Turfan (9th–15th centuries). The modern Uyghur language is, however, typologically distinct from the Old Turkic of south Siberia and medieval Eastern Turkestan; this largely reflects centuries of contact with speakers of Indo-European (**SOGDIAN**, **TOCHARIAN**, and Turkicized **IRANIC**), whom the Eastern Turkistani Turks eventually assimilated, as well as contact with other Turkic speakers and Mongols.

The ethnonym "Uyghur", which had fallen out of use by the 16th century, was revived by intellectuals in 1921. From that time, the ethnonym has designated the modern Turkic-speaking oasis agriculturalists of the Tarim basin and the Ili Valley (as well as smaller populations in the Junggarian Basin, in the Ferghana Valley, and eastern Kazakhstan).

The ancient Uyghurs were first mentioned in Chinese records as one of the vassal tribes of the eastern Turkic steppe confederation, living near the Selenga River in what is now Mongolia. Around 744 the Uyghurs created a new political state from Lake Baikal to the Altai Mountains, with their capital at Ordubalig (later Qarabalgasun) on the upper reaches of the

Orxon River. They ruled for a hundred years before being defeated in 840 by the historical Kirghiz tribal confederation. The Uyghurs and many of their Turkic subjects fled southward and settled in three main areas: the Ordos region, the Gansu corridor, and the Tarim basin. Those that fled southeast settled in the Ordos region of northern China and eventually assimilated with the Chinese and Mongols there. Those that fled directly south settled along the 'Gansu' (Héxi) corridor. (In constant contact with Buddhist Tibetans and, later, Mongols, these Uyghurs eventually converted to Lama Buddhism and became known as the *Sarıg Yuğur* or 'Yellow Yuğur', now defined as a distinct minority nationality in China.) By far the largest number of Uyghurs fled to Turfan, their southwesternmost possession. There they established Karakhoja, the capital of a kingdom, which, by the 11th century, extended from Kucha to Beijing to Qumue, the eastern part of modern Xinjiang. These Uyghurs likely absorbed Tocharian and Sogdian groups residing in these areas; portions of the Turpan-area Uyghur elite, in turn, adopted Tocharian Buddhism, the Sogdian's Manichaean religion, and the Sogdian script. It was not until the 14th and 15th centuries that Islam spread to the easternmost parts of the Uyghur region.

These oasis-states of the Tarim basin were drawn into a nearly constant series of hostilities as larger powers vied for political control of the area. Over the centuries, the oases of western



Uyghur is spoken in the Xinjiang Autonomous Region of China and in Eastern Kazakhstan (shaded area).

and eastern areas have been controlled by the Karakitay, the Mongols, the Junggars (Western Mongols), and a series of local rulers. In the last century, the Soviet Union, China, and Britain all vied for pieces of Eastern Turkistan in the "Great Game".

From the 13th to the 20th centuries, the sedentary residents of Eastern Turkistan (Xinjiang) strongly identified with their local oases, referring to themselves not by ethnonym ("Uyghur", "Qaraxanid") but rather by place-name, such as *Qāšqārlik* 'Kashgarian' and *Turfanlıq* 'Turfani'. Until the 20th century, residents of western Xinjiang (Kashgar, Khotan), who had adopted Islam several centuries earlier, had little in common with the Turfan Uyghurs to the east.

Orthography and Basic Phonology

Uyghur is written from right to left with an ARABIC-based script. The Uyghur alphabet contains 32 symbols and, unlike the Arabic alphabet, has 8 unique symbols that designate vowels. It distinguishes front-rounded from back-rounded vowels by means of diacritics except *i/ī*; both written as *ī*. The hamza, denoting a glottal stop, is a mandatory diacritic preceding initial vowels.

In 1957 a Cyrillic script was introduced for five major Xinjiang languages, including Uyghur. By 1958, however, the formerly close relations with the Soviet Union had soured, and LATIN script (known as *yengi yezīq* or 'new script') was introduced. It was based on the Chinese (*pinyin*) transliteration system and was in official use between 1960 and 1983. The Arabic-based orthography was then revived. In Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan, however, Uyghurs still use a Cyrillic standard.

The orthographic conventions are semiphonemic. Some predictable harmonic variations are represented such as the dative *ka/qa/ğa/gä/kä mäktäpka* 'to the school' and *bazarğa* 'to the market'. Others are not; *i* and *ī*, and long and short vowels, for example, are not distinguished orthographically.

The consonants *f* and *ž* (*ž* as in FRENCH 'jour') occur only in non-Turkic vocabulary. *f* merges with *p* in the colloquial language: *Turfan* [turpan]~[turfan], *fikir* [pikir] ~ [fikir] 'idea'. *l*, *x*, and *ğ* have front and back variants depending on the backness of the tautosyllabic syllable. *ğ*, the voiced uvular fricative in "Uyghur", is also realized as a velar fricative in front-vocalic words (*ğām* 'worry'), and as a voiced uvular stop after nonlabial nasals (*bašlanğuč* 'elementary'). *q* and *ğ* are also realized as the voiceless uvular fricative *χ* before nonuvular consonants: *qulaq* 'ear', *qulaχta* 'in/on the ear'; *yağ* 'oil', *yaχsiz* 'without oil'. *h* is realized preconsonantly as *χ*, especially in men's speech (*rāhmāt-rāχmāt* 'thanks').

Table 1: Consonants

	Labial	Apical	Palatal	Velar	Uvular	Glottal
Stops	p	t	č	k	q	ʔ
	b	d	dz	g		
Fricatives	(f)	s	š	x		h
		z	(zh)		ğ	
Nasals	m	n		ŋ		
Lateral		l				
Vibrant		r				
Glides	w		y			

As in TURKISH, Uyghur devoices syllable-final oral stops and affricates: *kitap-tan* 'from the book', but *kitab-i* 'his/her book'. Word-final *r*-devoicing occurs in the Kashgar dialect, for example, *bir* [biR] 'one'.

Uyghur has nine phonemic vowels, which may be grouped according to the features of backness and rounding.

No phonemic long vowels exist in the Turkic vocabulary of

Lans
[u:]

	e	ö		
Low	ä		a	

however, consonant loss words causes compensa-
idim 'I didn't see (it) [im]. The original vowel
loanwords is sometimes
nya [dunja:] 'world'.

als

Back	
round	Round
	u
	o

Uyghur suffixes have a number of harmonic variants: suffix vowels are specified for height and sometimes rounding, and their backness is determined by the preceding element: *orunda* place-LOC 'in place, on the seat', *öy-dä* home-LOC 'at home'. Velar and uvular consonants in suffixes show backness harmony (see Dative -GA in Basic Morphology below).

Rounding harmony in Uyghur is weaker than in many other Turkic languages. It occurs consistently in stems, but many suffixes do not have rounded allophones. The third-person possessive suffix, rounded in many Turkic languages, such as Turkish *göz-ü* 'her/his/its eye', is unrounded in Uyghur: *köz-i*. Rounding harmony occurs consistently in Uyghur suffixes with epenthetic (inserted) vowels, denoted here by °: as in the first-person possessive suffix -*m*: *ata-m* 'my father', *qiz-im* 'my daughter', *dost-um* 'my friend'. Rounding harmony of epenthetic vowels is not reflected in the orthography: *dost+°m* is written as *dostim*. Otherwise, rounding and backness harmony are consistently represented in the orthography.

Uyghur's most unique phonological phenomena are undoubtedly vowel raising and vowel devoicing. In the former, unstressed *a* and *ä* are raised to *i* (or *ï*) in open syllables: *bala* 'child' + *-lar* → *balilar* 'children', *apa* 'mother', + *-(s) i* → *apisi* 'his/her/its mother'; in the latter, short high vowels are devoiced between voiceless consonants, often with spirantization: *it* 'dog'.

Arabic and Persian loanwords with long vowels do not undergo this vowel-raising rule: /*dunya*/ [dunya:] 'world', /*dunya* + *-(s)i*/ [dunya:si] 'his/her world', not **dunyisi*.

Uyghur strongly tends toward a CV(C) syllable structure. If a Uyghur stem has a nonpermissible syllable-final consonant cluster, a high vowel is inserted, which undergoes vowel harmony: *fikr*- 'idea' acc. *fikri*, nom. *fikir*. Certain other clusters in syllable-final position are broken up in speech by epenthesis or deletion: *xalq* 'the people' [xaliq], *dost* 'friend' [dos]. *l* and *r* are commonly deleted before obstruents, even across syllable boundaries (*er.zan* > [e:zan] 'cheap, inexpensive'). In colloquial speech, *r* and consonant clusters, common in loanwords, are disallowed in word-initial position; such segments are preceded by an epenthetic high vowel: (*i*)*radiyo* 'radio', *ayropilan* 'airplane'.

Stress generally falls on the last syllable and usually coincides with high pitch as in *bardi* 's/he went'. Some suffixed morphemes, however, are unstressed. In words containing such morphemes, stress is shifted onto the immediately preceding syllable: *kalmidi* 'did not come'. Borrowings with preserved

long vowels bear primary or secondary stress: *asá:sij* (<Ab. *asāst*) 'fundamental, basic', but *šärqij* (<Ab. *šarqī*) 'east.'

Basic Morphology

Uyghur is an agglutinative language with suffixing morphology. It has one productive prefixing process, however, in which adverbs and adjectives are partially repeated (reduplicated) for an intensive effect: *qizil* 'red', *qip-qizil* 'totally red'. Nouns are not distinguished by grammatical gender, nor are they accompanied by articles. Definiteness is indicated by the suffixation of the accusative -*ni* or by the use of a demonstrative pronoun: *u kitab-ni äwätti* (she/he book-ACC sent) 'she/he sent the book(s)', *u kitab äwätti* 'she/he sent a book(s)'.
Nouns are pluralized with the suffix -*lar/lär* as in *qizlar* 'girls', *közlär* 'eyes', although the plural suffix is never used with numerals: *ikki kitab* 'two books' (not **ikki kitablar*).

The Uyghur case suffixes are as follows, with harmonic variants shown in parentheses:

Nom.	[zero suffix]	Bu yaxši adäm 'This is a good person.'
Gen.	-ning	Bu at meniñg. 'This horse is mine.'
Loc.	-DA(-da/ta/dä/tä)	Kitab ustäldä. 'The book is on the table.'
Acc.	-ni	Kitabni bering! 'Give me the book!'
Dat.('to')	-GA (-ğa/qa/gä/kä)	Män bazarğa bardim. 'I went to the market.'
Abl.('from')	-Din (-din/tin)	Män bazardin keldim. 'I came from the market.'

Other more abstract case functions are expressed by postpositions, such as *keyin* 'after' (... *körgändin keyin*) 'after seeing...'; *toğrisida* 'according to' *uning gepi toğrisida* 'according to his/her words...'.
Personal and possessive pronouns have distinct familiar and polite forms for the second-person singular.

Uyghur verbs consist of a verb stem, a tense/aspect suffix, and person/number marking for the subject (which is derived from the personal pronouns). Uyghur distinguishes only two main tense forms, past and present-future. However, the past tense subdivides into definite and indefinite forms. The definite past form -*di*- corresponds to the ENGLISH simple past: *bar-di* 'he went'. The indefinite (or experiential) past suffix -*GAn*- expresses an action at an unspecified time in the past: *bar-ğan* 'he went (at some time)'.
Most Turkic languages rigorously distinguish between reported information ("I heard that ...") and events witnessed by the speaker. Uyghur uses the copula *ikän* or the compound past suffix -*ptu* for this purpose: *u mu?allim ikän* 'I hear s/he's a teacher'; *u ürümçigä qaytiptu* 'I hear s/he's gone back to Urumchi'. It also has an indefinite past suffix -*GAn*.

In addition, Uyghur has a number of compound tenses, including the past perfect, the pluperfect, the habitual past, and the intentional. Conditional and imperative moods are expressed by means of suffixes; aspect is generally expressed by verb compounding.

Basic Syntax

Uyghur is syntactically very similar to other Turkic languages. It has a head-final constituent order, SOV. Thus the order of elements in a noun phrase is Demonstrative-Numeral-Adjective-Noun, and the head of a relative clause follows the relative: *āwātkān kitab* 'the book that (I) sent'.

Uyghur has a system of some 23 auxiliary verbs that express aspect (the manner in which an action is carried out). These auxiliaries are independent verbs that, when used with a main verb, lose their original meaning and express some aspect of the action. For example, the independent verb *čiq-* 'to emerge' expresses thoroughness when used as an auxiliary. The main verb takes a participial suffix *-^əp* and is followed by a conjugated aspect auxiliary:

u kitab-ni kör-üp čiq-ti
s/he book-ACC read-^əp CHIQ-p.t.
'S/he read the book from cover to cover'; cf.

u kitab-ni kör-di
s/he book-ACC read-p.t.
'S/he read the book.'

The Uyghur aspectual system is less developed than that of other Turkic languages, although grammaticization of aspect auxiliaries is more common in Uyghur than in KAZAKH and UZBEK. In Uyghur, several aspect auxiliaries have been reanalyzed as suffixes for main verbs (original forms shown in parentheses):

-iwat- 'do continuously'
(*< -^əp yat-* 'lie')

-iwät- 'do suddenly'
(*< -^əp ät* 'do')

-iwal- 'do for oneself'
(*< -^əp al-* 'take')

-iwär- 'do as a benefit to others; do without interruption'
(*< -^əp bär* 'give')

In interrogative utterances with question words (*nimä* 'what?' *qačan* 'when?'), the question word is usually sentence-initial (*nimä oquysiz?* 'What are you reading?'). But in copular sentences (see Example Sentence 1), or for emphasis, the question word is sentence final. Yes/no questions (see Example Sentence 3) are formed with the sentence-final particle *mu*. There are three main types of sentential negation. Negative copular sentences are formed with the sentence-final negated copula *ämäs*. Negative existential sentences are formed with the sentence-final word *yoq* (*umit yoq* 'There is no hope'). Verbs are negated morphologically with the suffix *-malmä* (*bar* 'go' + *ma* + PAST *-dl* + pers.suff. *-^əm* > *barmidim* 'I didn't go').

Contact with Other Languages

Since Eastern Turkistan has always been one of the major crossroads of Central Asia, the Uyghurs have had constant intercourse with speakers of other languages. Up to the ninth century, the ancient Uyghurs jostled for territory with other Turkic

speakers and with Mongols. Later, settled firmly in the Tarim basin, the medieval Uyghurs had considerable contact with speakers of the Indo-European languages of the Tarim basin, whom they eventually absorbed. As Persian and Arabic merchants and mullahs traveled along the "Silk Road" through Eastern Turkistan to China, the lexicon of Islam spread eastwards. With the gradual adoption of Islam throughout the region, Persian and Arabic vocabulary enriched the Uyghur language. These loanwords were not confined merely to religious vocabulary, but also included many abstract philosophical terms. Today, approximately 20 percent of the vocabulary is from Persian and Arabic.

As powers great and small vied for control over the region through the centuries, the Uyghurs came into contact with speakers of other Turkic languages such as Kirghiz and Kazakh; traces of this contact can be seen in the phonology and lexicon of the eastern dialects today as in Qomul Uyghur *jigit* 'young guy', cf. Kazakh *jigit*, Standard Uyghur *yigit*. The Chinese presence in the area has waxed and waned with the Chinese dynasties, but the number of Chinese speakers there has increased dramatically since the 1950s. Contact with RUSSIAN speakers began early in this century and peaked in the 1950s with a great influx of Soviet advisors to Xinjiang. Hence, there is a large number of technical and administrative loanwords from Russian.

Since the mid-20th century the most intense and prolonged language contact has been with Chinese. Chinese neologisms have entered the Uyghur language at a great rate, particularly in the 1960s when the Chinese state required Uyghur to use Chinese scientific terminology. Since 1980, however, the Language and Script Committee has abandoned cumbersome Chinese terms in favor of international (via Russian) technical terms, such as *hidrogen* 'hydrogen'. Where possible, Turkic-language equivalents have been introduced, with varying success: Uyghur *temur yol* 'railroad' (cf. Chinese *tié-lù* [iron-road] 'id.') is in widespread use, while many Uyghurs use the Chinese *bīngxiāng* 'refrigerator' more frequently than the Uyghur neologism *tonglatğu* 'id'.

From Persian: *göš* 'meat', *bazar* 'market', *tawuz* 'watermelon'
From Arabic: *kitab* 'book', *siyasi* 'political', *adām* 'person'
From Russian: *poyuz* 'train', *yanwar* 'January', *banka* 'bank'
From Chinese: *baysay* 'cabbage', *tongla-* (Ch. *dōng*) 'to freeze'

Common Words

man:	är	long:	uzun
woman:	ayal	small:	kičik
water:	su	yes:	hä'ä
sun:	kün, quyaš	no:	yaq
three:	üč	good:	yaxši
fish:	beliq	bird:	quš
big:	čong	dog:	it (pronounced <i>išt</i>)
tree:	däräx		

Example Sentences

- (1) Ism-ingiz nimä? — Ism-im Bahargül.
name-2SG.POSS what name-1SG.POSS Bahargül.
'What's your name?' — 'My name's Bahargül.'

- (2) Män apa-m-ğa xät yez-iwat-imän.
I mother-1SG.POSS-DAT letter write-PROG-1SG
'I'm writing my mother a letter.'
- (3) Tursun oquğuchi mu? — Yaq, Tursun oquğuchi ämäs.
Tursun student INTERR — No, Tursun student not.be
'Is Tursun a student?' — 'No, he is not a student.'

Efforts to Preserve, Protect, and Promote the Language

Since 1954 the 'Minority Language and Script Work Committee' (*Til-yeziq xizmiti komiteti*) has been responsible for language standardization and implementation of government orthography policy. The committee has published spelling and pronouncing dictionaries that illustrate standard usage of the Arabic-based script. There are Uyghur-language newspapers, magazines, books, and television and radio shows. Uyghur is the official local language of Xinjiang; as such, government documents are required to be in both Uyghur and Chinese.

Schooling is available in Uyghur from preschool through the university level. Nonetheless, there are fewer Uyghur-lan-

guage schools than Chinese-language schools, and competency in Chinese is required in tertiary institutions.

While institutional encouragement of Uyghur-language maintenance is rather tepid, Uyghur families provide strong and consistent support for language preservation. Most families take particular care to raise their children within the Uyghur language and culture. In Kazakhstan, where the Uyghur population is much smaller, there are, nonetheless, a handful of Uyghur schools; books are published in Uyghur, and a division of the Academy of Science in Almaty is devoted to Uyghur research.

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