

SPOKEN UYGHUR

REINHARD F. HAHN

In Collaboration with
Ablahat Ibrahim

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Contents

Preface	xv
Acknowledgements	xix
Introduction	3
Special Signs and Symbols	11
Abbreviations	12

Part I: Principles of Morphophonology and Orthography

1. Morphological Structure	15
1.1 Types of Agglutinative Elements	15
1.2 Notational Devices	18
2. Syllable Structure	21
2.1 Epenthesis	23
2.1.1 Vocalic Anaptyxis	23
2.1.2 Vocalic Prosthesis	25
2.1.3 Post-Final Vocalic Epenthesis	25
2.1.4 Consonantal Epenthesis	25
2.2 Consonantal Deletion	26
3. Stress and Intonation	27
3.1 Stress	27
3.2 Intonation	29
4. Vowels	33
4.1 Unrounded Vowels	34
4.1.1 /i/, /ɨ/ = i (~ ɨ)	34
4.1.2 /e/ = e (~ è)	37
4.1.3 /ä/ = ä ~ e ~ i	38
4.1.3.1 /ä/ = ä	38
4.1.3.2 /ä/ = e	39
4.1.3.3 /ä/ = i	39
4.1.4 /a/ = a ~ e ~ i	39
4.1.4.1 /a/ = a	39
4.1.4.2 /a/ = e	40
4.1.4.3 /a/ = i	40
4.2 Rounded Vowels	41
4.2.1 /ü/ = ü	41
4.2.2 /u/ = u	42
4.2.3 /ö/ = ö	43
4.2.4 /o/ = o	44
4.3 Vocalic Principles	44
4.3.1 Glottal Stop Prosthesis	44
4.3.2 Devoicing	44
4.3.3 Assimilation	45

4.3.3.1	Palatal-Velar Harmony	46
4.3.3.1.1	Progressive Palatal-Velar Harmony	46
4.3.3.1.2	Regressive Palatal-Velar Harmony	49
4.3.3.2	Labial Harmony	49
4.3.3.3	Umlauting	51
4.3.3.4	Apicalization	52
4.3.4	High Neutralization	52
4.3.5	Raising ("Reduction")	52
4.3.6	Vowel Length	55
4.3.6.1	Vowel Lengthening	55
4.3.6.2	Underlength	56
4.3.7	Devocalization	57
4.3.8	Vowel Deletion	58
5.	Consonants	59
5.1	Stops	60
5.1.1	Labial	60
5.1.1.1	/p/ = p	60
5.1.1.2	/b/ = b ~ w ~ p	61
5.1.1.2.1	/b/ = b	61
5.1.1.2.2	/b/ = b ~ w	61
5.1.1.2.3	/b/ = p	62
5.1.2	Alveo-Dental	62
5.1.2.1	/t/ = t	62
5.1.2.2	/d/ = d ~ t	63
5.1.2.2.1	/d/ = d	63
5.1.2.2.2	/d/ = t	63
5.1.3	Velar	63
5.1.3.1	/k/ = k	63
5.1.3.2	/g/ = g ~ k	65
5.1.3.2.1	/g/ = g	65
5.1.3.2.2	/g/ = k	65
5.1.4	Uvular ("Post-Velar")	66
5.1.4.1	/q/ = q	66
5.1.4.2	/G/ = ğ ~ q	67
5.1.4.2.1	/G/ = ğ	67
5.1.4.2.2	/G/ = q	68
5.1.5	Laryngeal ("Glottal"): /ʔ/ = ' .	69
5.2	Affricates	69
5.2.1	Alveo-Dental: /c/ = c	69
5.2.2	Alveo-Palatal	69
5.2.2.1	/ç/ = č	69
5.2.2.2	/j/ = j	70
5.3	Fricatives	71
5.3.1	Labial	71
5.3.1.1	/f/ = f	71

5.3.1.2	/v/ = w (Roman script <i>w</i> ~ <i>v</i>)	71
5.3.2	Alveo-Dental	72
5.3.2.1	/s/ = s	72
5.3.2.2	/z/ = z	72
5.3.3	Alveo-Palatal	72
5.3.3.1	/ʃ/ = ʃ	72
5.3.3.2	/ʒ/ = ʒ	73
5.3.4	Uvular ("Post-Velar"): /x/ = x	73
5.3.5	Laryngeal ("Glottal"): /h/ = h	74
5.4	Nasals	74
5.4.1	Labial: /m/ = m	74
5.4.2	Alveo-Dental: /n/ = n (~ <i>ŋ</i>)	75
5.4.3	Velar: /ŋ/ = <i>ŋ</i>	76
5.5	Liquids	76
5.5.1	Lateral: /l/ = l	76
5.5.2	Non-Lateral: /r/ = r	77
5.6	Glides ("Semi-Vowels")	78
5.6.1	Labial: /w/ = w	78
5.6.2	Palatal: /j/ = y	79
5.7	Consonantal Principles	80
5.7.1	Assimilation	80
5.7.1.1	Harmonic Assimilation	80
5.7.1.2	Progressive Assimilation	82
5.7.1.2.1	Initial Devoicing	82
5.7.1.2.2	Final Devoicing	84
5.7.1.2.3	Fricativization	86
5.7.1.2.4	Vocalic Assimilation	86
5.7.1.3	Regressive Assimilation	87
5.7.1.3.1	Assimilation to /s/	87
5.7.1.3.2	Assimilation to /l/	87
5.7.1.3.3	Labial Assimilation	88
5.7.1.3.4	Back Assimilation	88
5.7.1.3.5	Nasal Assimilation	88
5.7.2	Dissimilation	89
5.7.2.1	Coda Fricativization	89
5.7.3	Aspiration	89
5.7.4	Consonant Deletion	90
5.7.4.1	Deletion in Coda Position	90
5.7.4.2	Glide Deletion	90
6.	Orthography	91
6.1	The Arabic-Script-Based Writing System	93
6.2	The Roman-Script-Based Writing System	98
6.3	The Cyrillic-Script-Based Writing System	102
6.4	Transliteration	105
7.	Irregular Forms	107

Part II: *Dialogue Units*

Unit 1: <i>Tonušturuš</i> (Introducing)	112
1.1 Dialogues	112
1.2 Transliteration	116
1.3 New Elements	118
1.4 Translation	123
1.5 Supplementary Vocabulary	125
1.5.1 Countries, Regions and Their Inhabitants	125
1.5.2 Major Cities and Towns in Xinjiang	128
1.5.3 Cities outside Xinjiang	128
1.6 Notes	130
Unit 2: <i>Körüşüš wä tonušturuš</i> (Meeting and Introducing)	139
2.1 Dialogues	139
2.2 Transliteration	142
2.3 New Elements	144
2.4 Translation	147
2.5 Supplementary Vocabulary	149
2.5.1 The American States	149
2.5.2 Academic Specialists	149
2.6 Notes	151
Unit 3: 1 <i>Mehman kütüš</i> (Entertaining Guests)	
2 <i>Millätlär toğrisida sözliš</i> (Conversing about Ethnic Groups)	153
3.1 Dialogues	153
3.2 Transliteration	156
3.3 New Elements	158
3.4 Translation	164
3.5 Supplementary Vocabulary	166
3.5.1 Drinks	166
3.5.2 Fruits and Nuts	166
3.6 Notes	167
Unit 4: <i>Dost boluš</i> (Making Friends)	171
4.1 Dialogues	171
4.2 Transliteration	174
4.3 New Elements	176
4.4 Translation	179
4.5 Supplementary Vocabulary	181
4.5.1 Academic Disciplines and Specializations	181
4.5.2 Professions, Occupations and Vocations	183
4.5.3 Organizations, Employers and Places of Work	185
4.6 Notes	187
Unit 5: <i>Qoru-jay</i> (House and Home)	189
5.1 Dialogues	189
5.2 Transliteration	192
5.3 New Elements	194
5.4 Translation	198

5.5	Supplementary Vocabulary	200
5.5.1	Kinship Terms: Blood Relations	200
5.5.2	Kinship Terms: Non-Blood Relations	201
5.6	Notes	203
Unit 6:	<i>Yataq binasi</i> (The Dormitory Building)	205
6.1	Dialogues	205
6.2	Transliteration	209
6.3	New Elements	212
6.4	Translation	216
6.5	Supplementary Vocabulary	218
6.5.1	Canadian Provinces, Territories and Major Cities	218
6.5.2	Australian States, Territories and Major Cities	219
6.2	Notes	220
Unit 7:	<i>Kündilik məşğulatlار</i> (Daily Activities)	227
7.1	Dialogues	227
7.2	Transliteration	232
7.3	New Elements	235
7.4	Translation	242
7.5	Supplementary Vocabulary	244
7.5.1	Popular Musical Instruments	244
7.5.2	Uyghur Folk Instruments	244
7.5.2.1	General	244
7.5.2.2	Stringed Instruments (General)	244
7.5.2.3	Stringed Instruments Played with a Bow	245
7.6	Notes	246
Unit 8:	<i>Setiweliş (Birinçi qisim)</i> (Shopping: Part 1)	247
8.1	Dialogues	247
8.2	Transliteration	251
8.3	New Elements	254
8.4	Translation	258
8.5	Supplementary Vocabulary: Clothing, Accessories, Adornments and Related Words	260
8.6	Notes	262
Unit 9:	<i>Setiweliş (İkkinçi qisim)</i> (Shopping: Part 2)	265
9.1	Dialogues	265
9.2	Transliteration	269
9.3	New Elements	272
9.4	Translation	275
9.5	Supplementary Vocabulary	278
9.5.1	Office Supplies	278
9.5.2	Textiles and Textile Products	278
9.5.3	Colors and Patterns	279
9.6	Notes	281
Unit 10:	<i>Telefonda sözliş (Birinçi qisim)</i> (Talking on the Telephone: Part 1)	283
10.1	Dialogues	283

10.2	Transliteration	287
10.3	New Elements	290
10.4	Translation	292
10.5	Supplementary Vocabulary	294
10.5.1	The Months of the Gregorian Calendar	294
10.5.2	The Months of the Islamic Lunar Calendar	294
10.6	Notes	295
Unit 11: <i>Telefonda sözleşiş (İkinçi qisim)</i>		
	(Talking on the Telephone: Part 2)	297
11.1	Dialogues	297
11.2	Transliteration	301
11.3	New Elements	304
11.4	Translation	308
11.5	Supplementary Vocabulary	310
11.5.1	Chinese Municipalities, Provinces and Regions	310
11.5.2	Soviet Republics, Autonomous Soviet Republics and Their Capitals	311
11.6	Notes	314
Unit 12: <i>Počtaxaniğa beriş (Going to the Post-Office)</i>		
12.1	Dialogues	315
12.2	Transliteration	320
12.3	New Elements	324
12.4	Translation	329
12.5	Supplementary Vocabulary: Packing and Unpacking	332
12.6	Notes	333
Unit 13: <i>Ağrip qeliş wä dawalaş (Illness and Treatment)</i>		
13.1	Dialogues	335
13.2	Transliteration	342
13.3	New Elements	346
13.4	Translation	352
13.5	Supplementary Vocabulary: Anatomy and Medicine	355
13.6	Notes	360
Unit 14: <i>Sayahät qiliş (Traveling)</i>		
14.1	Dialogues	361
14.2	Transliteration	368
14.3	New Elements	372
14.4	Translation	378
14.5	Supplementary Vocabulary	381
14.5.1	Climate	381
14.5.2	Landscape	382
14.5.3	Traveling	383
14.6	Notes	386
Unit 15: <i>Uzitiş oluruşi (Farewell Party)</i>		
15.1	Dialogues	389
15.2	Transliteration	396
15.3	New Elements	401

15.4 Translation	409
15.5 Supplementary Vocabulary: Cooking and Dining	413
15.6 Notes	418

Part III: Reference Material

1. Element Index (Uyghur-English)	423
2. English-Uyghur Glossary	507
3. Inflexion (Reference Guide)	589
3.1 Possession Marking	589
3.2 Case Marking	589
3.3 Pronouns	590
3.3.1 Personal Pronouns	590
3.3.2 Demonstrative Pronouns	591
3.3.3 Interrogative Pronouns	592
3.4 Pronominal Tag Enclitics	593
3.5 Numeratives	594
3.6 Conjugation	595
3.6.01 Indefinite Past	595
3.6.02 Pluperfect	596
3.6.03 Perfect Past	597
3.6.04 Suppositional or Narrative (Hearsay) Past	598
3.6.05 Definite Past	599
3.6.06 Continuous or Habitual Past	600
3.6.07 Past Progressive	601
3.6.08 Past Conditional	602
3.6.09 Present-Future	603
3.6.10 Present Progressive	604
3.6.11 Present-Future Conditional	605
3.6.12 Present-Future Obligatory	606
3.6.13 Present-Future Intentional	607
3.6.14 Suppositional Future	608
3.6.15 Imperative	610
3.6.16 Desiderative or Invocatory	611
3.7 Aspectual Verbs	612
3.7.01 <i>al</i> -	612
3.7.02 <i>ät</i> -	612
3.7.03 <i>baq</i> -	613
3.7.04 <i>bar</i> -	613
3.7.05 <i>bär</i> -	613
3.7.06 <i>bol</i> -	613
3.7.07 <i>čiq</i> -	614
3.7.08 <i>käl</i> -	614
3.7.09 <i>kät</i> -	614
3.7.10 <i>kör</i> -	615
3.7.11 <i>oltur</i> -	615

3.7.12	<i>öt</i> -	616
3.7.13	<i>qal</i> -	616
3.7.14	<i>qoy</i> -	616
3.7.15	<i>sal</i> -	616
3.7.16	<i>tašla</i> -	617
3.7.17	<i>tur</i> -	617
3.7.18	<i>yat</i> -	617
3.7.19	<i>yülr</i> -	618
4.	Selected Bibliography	619
5.	Subject Index	625

Preface

The main purpose of the present book is twofold: (1) to provide an international readership with instructional material for colloquial Modern Standard Uyghur, and (2) to present a pre-analyzed and annotated Modern Uyghur language sample to the linguist who has little or no access to relevant publications in Chinese, Russian, and Uyghur. The main focus of this work is the spoken standard language of Xinjiang in China. Lexical entries are accompanied by Soviet Standard Uyghur alternatives. The inclusion of orthographic references and optional reading of the dialogues in the Arabic-script-based orthography used in China are intended to facilitate the user's transition to or from literary Modern Uyghur. Two cumulative glossaries, an inflexional reference guide and a subject index enables the reader to use this work also as reference material.

Modern Uyghur (hereafter referred to mainly as "Uyghur") is a Turkic language (and thus an agglutinative [SUBJECT+OBJECT+VERB]-type language) of the Eastern or Chaghatay branch. As such, it is most closely related to the hitherto somewhat better-known Uzbek language. The number of native Uyghur-speakers is currently estimated at between six and ten million. The vast majority lives in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of northwestern China, where Standard Uyghur also serves as the regionally official lingua franca among the various ethnic groups who do not use Chinese as their first language. Though considerably smaller in size, the Uyghur-speaking community of the Soviet Union has been making its presence felt strongly by participating actively and often prominently in the development of the Central Asian republics it inhabits and by making important contributions to the study, maintenance, development and promotion of Uyghur language and culture as well as to the advancement of Turcology in general.

Despite its interethnic currency throughout a vast region, despite its role as perhaps the most significant minority language in China, despite its immense importance to comparative Turkic linguistics, and despite some great Western pioneer work, particularly in Sweden (RAQUETTE, JARRING), the Modern Uyghur language has been greatly neglected among Turcologists outside China and the Soviet Union. Indicative of this is that Western publications on the subject are very scarce and that at present there is not a single generally accessible

instructional or reference work for Modern Standard Uyghur in a language other than Uyghur, Chinese, and Russian. Even in China it was only after the 1970s that Uyghur language studies began to venture outside the narrow confines of directly serving centrally directed attempts at streamlining the official standard language. Previously, the only purpose had been facilitating Chinese-Uyghur translation work in an effort to extend the standardization of nationwide communication and education to the ethnically diverse northwestern border regions. Ever since the the scope was broadened, the number of relevant instructional and theoretical works published in China has been increasing steadily, as have been the number of topics and the number of Xinjiang Uyghur publications of virtually every literary genre. Communication and cooperation between Turcologists in China and elsewhere have been making some progress lately. Hopefully, this will lead to a situation in which international Turcological data, linguistic theories, research methodologies and conventions of presentation are fully accessible to relevant circles in China, while non-Chinese Turcologists avail themselves more extensively of up-to-date information about China-specific Turcological data, a vast resource that has hardly begun to be tapped.

As a result of improving access to China, along with growing international awareness of the ethnic diversity, historical significance and politico-economical potential of Central Asia, international attention to northwestern China has been experiencing a degree of increase in recent years. This has been the case not only among Turcologists but lately also among those specializing in various fields of Chinese and Islamic studies. With this has come a growing need for instructional and reference material for Modern Uyghur, the predominant indigenous language of the region.

Until now, those wishing to acquire Modern Standard Uyghur as a foreign language had to rely upon Russian- and Chinese-language publications, or they had to be familiar with one or more of the relatively closely related Turkic languages (e.g., Turkmen, Azerbaijani, or Turkish, if not Uzbek) to acquire literary Modern Uyghur through reading practice. All too often persons interested in studying Modern Uyghur for purposes other than professional research find themselves excluded, unless they happen to possess the various linguistic prerequisites or are willing to go through the demanding process of acquiring them beforehand. Furthermore, the general lack of material on colloquial Uyghur has prevented those wishing to prepare themselves

for frequent visits or extended sojourns in Xinjiang to acquire even basic conversational skills.

Hopefully, the present book (along with at least two other relevant Western publications reportedly in preparation at this time) will facilitate not only this process of language acquisition but also various types of linguistic research. Its primary purpose is to serve those wishing to acquire conversational skills. However, the material is likely to be useful also to those wishing to familiarize themselves with specific Uyghur characteristics as well as to those intending to concentrate on reading practice. No prior familiarity with Turkic structure is assumed on the part of the user, although it is hoped that the material will be of use to the Turcologist as well. The book is suitable for language courses, including self-instruction. Apart from fifteen substantial, extensively annotated dialogue units, it contains an illustrated morphophonological outline, an Uyghur-English morpheme index, an English-Uyghur glossary and a reference guide to inflexional patterns. In an attempt to meet the needs of the largest possible group, the Uyghur language material is presented in Roman-script transliteration throughout, with Arabic-script versions of the dialogues allowing optional reading practice.

The book grew out of a compilation of annotated Uyghur language material intended to serve as a course text at American universities. Having been developed largely from personal notes, this project was necessary because most relevant publications available at the time could not be assigned as mandatory class reading. Furthermore, the hitherto published descriptions of Uyghur structure are at least in part incongruent with the basic theoretical and methodological approaches used at most American and many other Western universities and colleges. For these reasons, as well as in consideration of the various specific problems Turkic structure tends to cause speakers of Indo-European languages, I kept finding myself having to add explanations and reinterpretations. I endeavored to present Uyghur morphophonology in a manner that is instructionally expedient and at the same time is at least acceptable *vis-à-vis* the basic premises of modern, language-universal-based linguistics. For this purpose, I developed a specific system of morpheme-boundary-based underlying representation, which not only provides relatively easily understood information where the standard orthography obscures important morphophonemic distinctions but which also lends itself to reinterpretation within more recent theoretical frameworks, such as that of lexical phonology. In a few instances, this forced me into a position in which—intending no disre-

spect—I found myself implicitly or explicitly contradicting some of those Turcologists and Altaists whose more traditionally based works I use and admire. The theoretical framework of the structural outline and of the morphophonemic representations offered in the present book are based upon my own synchronic and diachronic analyses along with my personal reinterpretations of theoretically incongruent descriptions. Considering this along with the amount of material covered, this work will inevitably turn out to contain a number of errors, for which I take full responsibility, and whose corrections by readers would be greatly appreciated.