

ئۇيغۇرچە ئوقۇش
Reading Uyghur

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1 Introduction

This booklet is intended as an introduction to the modern Uyghur Arabic script, a.k.a the UEY < Uyghur ئۇيغۇر ئەرەپ يېزىقى *Uyghur Ereṗ Yéziqi* . It is aimed at those with some basic knowledge of common linguistic terminology and a rudimentary familiarity with the history of the Middle East and Central Asia. Those who read this packet carefully and complete the accompanying reading exercises should be prepared to read Uyghur with little additional preparation, and those who complete the writing exercises should be well on their way to writing comfortably in the UEY.

2 The Uyghur Latin Script

Since the majority of our readers will be familiar with the Latin script, before beginning with our primary task of learning the UEY it may help to learn to read Uyghur in the ئۇيغۇر لاتىن يېزىقى *Uyghur Latin Yéziqi* ‘Uyghur Latin Alphabet’, a.k.a. ULY. The ULY has been used in a semi-official capacity in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region alongside the UEY since around the year 2000.

Initially, the purpose of the ULY was to ease the writing of Uyghur on computers not yet equipped to type the UEY easily. Despite the best intentions of its creators, it remains little used among Uyghurs outside academic circles and the diaspora, the majority of Uyghurs either preferring to employ new technologies to write in the UEY electronically, or employing an ad hoc latin orthography which is essentially an approximation of Uyghur phonology using the standard Latin characters available for the Mandarin *pīnyīn* Romanization system.

Despite this, the ULY remains an essential tool for engaging with much Uyghur academic literature and (especially dissident) media online, and it is a useful tool for learners insomuch as it has a basic one-to-one correspondence between letters and phonemes without the positional allographs present in the UEY.

The letters of the ULY can be found in the chart below with the equivalents of each letter in their lone/isolated form in the UEY, and an approximation of their pronunciation in a more-or-less standard dialect using the International Phonetic Alphabet. The ئۇيغۇر كىرىل يېزىقى *Uyghur Kiril Yéziqi* ‘Uyghur Cyrillic Script’ or UKY,¹ still used by some in the former Soviet Union, has also been added for those who are curious about it, though it will not be covered in this booklet. Note that the UKY has three additional letters left over from Russian Cyrillic which are sometimes used in the writing of Uyghur words. These do not have direct single character equivalents in either the ULY or UEY.

You should be aware that there is some optionality in terms of the way in which the /é/ [e] phoneme is written. While the original formulation of the script employed é, this was changed by committee in 2008 to ě with the excuse that it, like the diacritic in the ö and ü graphemes, represented a higher vowel than the unadorned version of the same letter. While this is true, the relationship is not equivalent; according to Uyghur phonology, the /e/ [ɛ/æ] phoneme is already the high version of /a/ [ɑ/v/a], whereas the /é/ phoneme appears either in loanwords, or as an allophone of either /e/ or /a/ resulting from secondary vowel reduction in certain phonotactic environments. The ě variant has in any case not caught on among the media which regularly use the ULY, so in this booklet we have used é throughout.

ULY	UKY	UEY	IPA
a	а	ئا	[ɑ/v/a]
e	э	ئه	[ɛ/æ]
b	б	ب	[b]
p	п	پ	[p]
t	т	ت	[t]
j	ж	ج	[dʒ]
ch	ч	چ	[tʃ]
x	х	خ	[χ]
d	д	د	[d]
r	р	ر	[r/ɾ]
z	з	ز	[z]
zh	ж	ژ	[ʒ]
s	с	س	[s]
sh	ш	ش	[ʃ]
gh	ғ	غ	[ɣ/R]
f	ф	ف	[f]
q	қ	ق	[q]
k	к	ك	[k]
g	г	گ	[g]
ng	н	ڭ	[ŋ]
l	л	ل	[l]
m	м	م	[m]
n	н	ن	[n]
h	h	ه	[h]
o	о	ئو	[o]
u	у	ئۇ	[u]
ö	ө	ئۈ	[ø]
ü	ү	ئۈ	[y]
w	в	ۋ	[w/v]
ë/é	е	ئە	[e]
i	и	ئى	[i/i]
y	й	ي	[j]
(yu)	ю	(يۈ)	[ju]
(ya)	я	(يا)	[ja]
(ya)	ë	(يو)	[jo]

Table 1: a comparison of the basic letter forms for the main Uyghur alphabets used today

¹ This is sometimes called the ئۇيغۇر سىرىل يېزىقى *Uyghur Siril Yéziqi* or USY by younger Uyghurs within Xinjiang especially, who base their pronunciation of the word ‘Cyrillic’ on English rather than Russian. Even more confusingly, some of Uyghurs of a similar demographic refer to the ULY as the ئۇيغۇر كومپيۇتېر يېزىقى *Uyghur Kompyutér Yéziqi* ‘Uyghur Computer Alphabet’, also UKY. In this booklet, we will use UEY for Arabic, ULY for Latin, and UKY for Cyrillic Uyghur Scripts.

3 A brief history of the Uyghur Arabic script

The Uyghur language—or more accurately, the Turkic of Eastern Turkistan—has been written in some variant of the Arabic script since at least the 11th century CE. Prior to and during the early centuries of its use, many speakers of the medieval Turkic varieties which would later evolve into modern Uyghur employed a vertical script developed in the pre-Islamic literary traditions of the language which we now refer to as Old Uyghur.²

Though sporadic use of the Old Uyghur script continued for Turkic in this region until at least the 16th century, with increasing Islamisation more and more Turkic-speaking writers began to use the Arabic script to write their own language. Since Islam came to this region in a largely Persian cultural milieu, the variants of the Arabic script used for Turkic in this region from the 11th century onward were based on the Persian version of the script. They are therefore often referred to as a type of ‘Perso-Arabic’ script.

The use of the Perso-Arabic script for Turkic continued in the region relatively uninterrupted from the beginning of Islamisation until the early/mid 20th century. A notable change in the spelling of vowels in words of Turkic origin increases in popularity towards the 15th century, but beyond this the underlying principles of the script remained as they had for centuries; words borrowed from Arabic and Persian were spelled ‘etymologically’ (i.e. reflecting their original pronunciation in those languages including sounds which did not exist or were different in Turkic) with certain vowels remaining unwritten except in careful texts by additional, optional symbols above or below the main letters. In Turkic words, more of these vowels could be written out explicitly with letters; however, since the inventory of vowels in Turkic is generally much larger than in Arabic, this meant that certain letters would have to be used to represent multiple vowels, leaving the reader to guess their precise pronunciation on the basis of context.

This system did not pose any fundamental problems to literacy. Nevertheless, starting in the late 1920’s its sub-optimal fit to the sound system of the language combined with a greater trend in the region towards vernacularisation prompted a series of reforms aimed at making the language easier to read. As a part of this movement, versions of the Cyrillic and Latin scripts were also introduced for the language now referred to officially as Uyghur. Yet, by the late 1970’s local officials in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region had opted for a return to the Perso-Arabic script, albeit in a heavily modified form which incorporated and codified numerous modifications which had early been employed experimentally by various individuals, schools, or publications. This has resulted in a writing system far enough removed from the ‘traditional’ use of the Perso-Arabic script in the region that this older system is now referred to as the *Kona yéziq* ‘Old writing’.

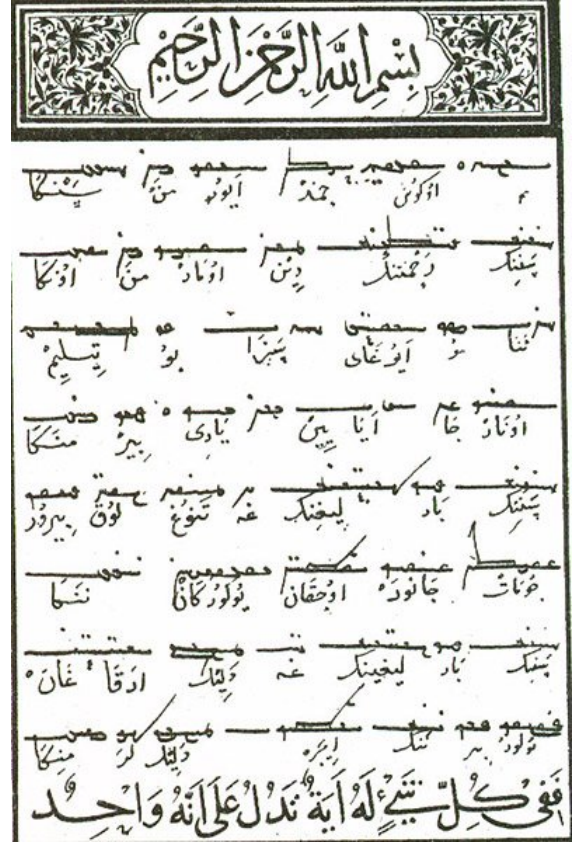


Figure 1: the first page of text from the 14th c. Ayasofya manuscript of the 12th c. moral didactic text *‘Atabatul-Ḥaqāyiq* ‘The Threshold of Truths’ by Adīb Aḥmad Yüknäkī, written in a later version of the Old Uyghur script with a transcription in the Arabic script below it. Scholars argue as to whether the Uyghur script at this point was written/read vertically or horizontally; though traditionally the former, manuscripts written in the Islamic era often follow an Arabic-based layout. While it is not clear where the author’s hometown of Yüknäk was located, the work is written in the contemporary dialect of Kashghar which, because it acted as the capital of the Qarakhanid Empire, was and remained a prestige dialect of Turkic for several centuries.

² Old Uyghur is confusingly not the direct ancestor of modern Uyghur but a separate Turkic language whose more “direct” descendent is spoken by the Western Yugur people of Gansu Hui Autonomous Prefecture in the Peoples’ Republic of China.

Below is a short piece with very simple grammar and vocabulary as it might appear in Turkic in different scripts and eras in Eastern Turkistan. Care has been taken to choose words and grammatical constructions which are at least partially attested throughout all the relevant periods, with only slight variation in phonology or morphology. The text produced is therefore not perfectly idiomatically ‘natural’ for any time period, but is comprehensible in all of them.

(Modern Uyghur, 21st c. — ULY)

Bir kishi bir qoy bilen yolda mangar idi. Bu kishi ach bolup qoygha qarap turdi.
 — “Ey qoyum! Men ach. Buyerde bashqa yémeklik yoq, emdi séni yéyishim kérek.” dédi.
 — “Men dégen yémeklik emes-qu! Men dégen qoy, men dégen jandar.” dep jawap berdi qoy.
Kéyin qoy baqquchi kishi: “Qandaq qilay? Jandar dégen jandar yéyishi kérek, bolmisa ölüp kéter!” dep jawap yandurdi.
 — “Undaq bolsa,” dédi qoy, “men séni yéyishim mumkin emes-mu?”
 — “Qandaq gep bu?!” dep heyran qaldi qoy baqquchi, “Men dégen adem! Adem Xuda balal dep buyurghan hemme jandarlarni yer, héch bir jandar ademni yémes!” dep éytisa chöldin bir shir chiqip ademni yep ketti.

(Modern Uyghur, 21st c. — UEY)

بىر كىشى بىر قوي بىلەن يولدا ماڭار ئىدى. بۇ كىشى ئاچ بولۇپ قويغا قاراپ تۇردى.
 — «ئەي قويۇم! مەن ئاچ. بۇيەردە باشقا يېمەكلىك يوق، ئەمدى سېنى يېيىشىم كېرەك.» دېدى.
 — «مەن دېگەن يېمەكلىك ئەمەسقۇ! مەن دېگەن قوي، مەن دېگەن جاندار.» دەپ جاۋاب بەردى قوي.
 كېيىن قوي باققۇچى كىشى: «قانداق قىلاي؟ جاندار دېگەن جاندار يېيىشى كېرەك، بولمىسا ئۆلۈپ كېتەر!» دەپ جاۋاب ياندۇردى.
 — «ئۇنداق بولسا،» دېدى قوي، «مەن سېنى يېيىشىم مۇمكىن ئەمەسمۇ؟»
 — «قانداق گەپ بۇ؟!» دەپ ھەيران قالدى قوي باققۇچى، «مەن دېگەن ئادەم! ئادەم خۇدا ھالال دەپ بۇيۇرغان ھەممە جاندارلارنى يەر، ھېچ بىر جاندار ئادەمنى يېمەس!» دەپ ئېيتىسا چۆلدىن بىر شىر چىقىپ ئادەمنى يەپ كەتتى.

(Post-Classical Chaghatay/Eastern Turki, 19th-early 20th c. — Kona yéziq ‘Old writing’)

بىر كىشى بىر قوي بىلەن يولدا مانگار ايدى بو كىشى آچ بولوب قوی غە قاراب توردى
 ای قویوم من آچ بو ییردا باشقا ییماکلیک یوق امدی سینى ییشیم کراک دیدی
 من دیگان ییماکلیک ایماس غو من دیگان قوی من دیگان جاندار دیب جواب بیردی قوی
 کین قوی باققوچی کیشی قانداغ قیلاى جاندار دیگان جاندار ییشی کراک بولماسا اولوب کیتار دیب جواب یاندوردی
 اونداغ بولسا دیدی قوی من سینى ییشیم ممکن ایماس مو
 قانداغ گپ بو دیب حیران قالدی قوی باققوچی من دیگان آدم آدم خدا حلال دیب بیورغان همه جاندارلارنى یر هیچ بیر جاندار
 آدمنى ییماس دیب آیتسا چولدىن بیر شیر چیقیب آدمنى ییب کیتتى

(Medieval Eastern Turkic, circa 1300 – horizontal rendering of the Old Uyghur Script)

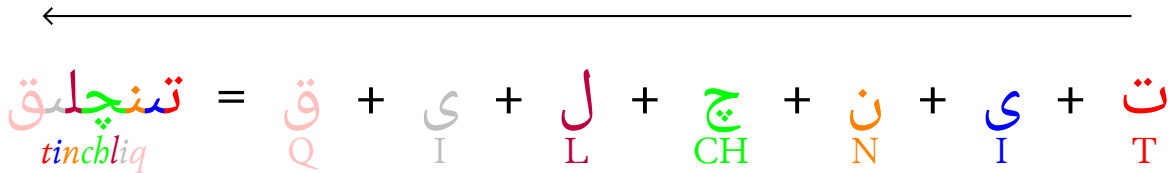
بىر كىشى بىر قوي بىلەن يولدا مانگار ايدى بو كىشى آچ بولوب قوی غە قاراب توردى
 ای قویوم من آچ بو ییردا باشقا ییماکلیک یوق امدی سینى ییشیم کراک دیدی
 من دیگان ییماکلیک ایماس غو من دیگان قوی من دیگان جاندار دیب جواب بیردی قوی
 کین قوی باققوچی کیشی قانداغ قیلاى جاندار دیگان جاندار ییشی کراک بولماسا اولوب کیتار دیب جواب یاندوردی
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 آدمنى ییماس دیب آیتسا چولدىن بیر شیر چیقیب آدمنى ییب کیتتى

4 The Structure of the Uyghur Arabic script

4.1 The Basics

The modern Uyghur Arabic script is composed of 34 letters. Its shape and general structure are based on the Persian variant of the Arabic script; however, unlike the Arabic script the Uyghur alphabet is a **true alphabet**, inasmuch as it represents each of the relevant consonant and vowel sounds in the language with a separate letter. This means that, while in form it resembles the Arabic script, in function it is actually more like the Latin script.

The UEY is written in horizontal lines from **right to left**. It is fundamentally cursive, inasmuch as all letters within a word can connect to the previous letter, and most letters also connect to the next letter. This very much resembles cursive versions of the Latin script with which you may be familiar, the operative difference being that the UEY is **obligatorily cursive**—i.e. certain letters *must* connect within a word on either one or both sides. This will take some getting used to, but since all the variants of each letter resemble one another it is not so difficult as you might think. Words are separated by full spaces, as in the modern Latin alphabet, and as in modern Latin cursive, within most letters connect both to the previous and the following letters. Here we see the separate letters which make up the Uyghur word تىنچلىق *tinchliq* ‘calm’ followed by the word itself as it should be written when those letters are brought together in a single **line segment**.



مەشقلەر Exercises

A. Look at the following short phrases and sentences below. Without needing to read or sound out each letter, how many words can you count in each sentence based on the principles described above?

1. بۇ ئىش ئىككى كىشىنىڭ ئىشى لېكىن بىر كىشى قىلسا يېتىدۇ.
2. قىلىپتىن چىققىنىنى قىلىپتىن چىقمىغىنىغا سېلىڭ.
3. بىر يىغىچى يىغلىمدى.
4. بىز كېتىمىز كېيىن سىز كېتىسىز.
5. مېنىڭ ئىتىمنىڭ كىچىكلىكى، سېنىڭكىنىڭ ئىنچىكلىكى

B. Again, based only on the principles you learned in the preceding sections, tell if each of the following single words is written correctly or not by circling ت *t* for توغرا *toghra* ‘correct’ or خ *x* for خاتا *xata* ‘incorrect, mistake(n)’.

1. بىر / خ
2. كېتىم / خ
3. بېقىپ / ت
4. مەي ھەر / خ
5. بىر / خ

4.2 ‘Fully connecting’ letters

The letters of the UEY which connect both to the preceding and following letters appear in the table below, along with their names in Uyghur, their equivalent in the semi-standard ULY. The four forms of each letter represent the letters as they appear at the beginning, middle, or end of a segment, and how the letter appears when not connected to any other letter.

final	medial	initial	lone	name	latin	sound
ب	ب	ب	ب	bé	b	[b]
پ	پ	پ	پ	pé	p	[p]
ت	ت	ت	ت	té	t	[t]
ج	ج	ج	ج	jé	j	[dʒ]
چ	چ	چ	چ	ché	ch	[tʃ]
خ	خ	خ	خ	xé	x	[χ]
س	س	س	س	sé	s	[s]
ش	ش	ش	ش	shé	sh	[ʃ]
غ	غ	غ	غ	ghé	gh	[ʁ/R]
ف	ف	ف	ف	fé	f	[f]
ق	ق	ق	ق	qé	q	[q]
ك	ك	ك	ك	ké	k	[k]
گ	گ	گ	گ	gé	g	[g]
ڭ	ڭ	ڭ	ڭ	ngé	ng	[ŋ]
ل	ل	ل	ل	lé	l	[l]
م	م	م	م	mé	m	[m]
ن	ن	ن	ن	né	n	[n]
ھ	ھ	ھ	ھ	hé	h	[h]
ي	ي	ي	ي	yé	y	[j]

Table 2: consonant letters which continue the line, i.e. connect to both the preceding and the following letter

مەشقلەر

Exercises

Each of the sentences below contains at least three examples of the letter indicated at the beginning of each line. Circle three examples (or more, if you wish) and write next to each circle whether the letter appears in lone, initial, medial, or final form.

1. ب: ئاخىرىدا ئامبالغا ئەدەب بېرىمىز!
2. پ: ئۆز پەزىلىتىدىن ئىپتىخار بىلەن سۆزلەپ تۇرىدۇ.
3. ت: خەت يىرتىپ تاشلىماڭ!
4. ج: باج تۆلىگەندە جىم ئولتۇرۇپ خىجىل بولماسلىققا ھەرىكەت قىلىڭلار.
5. چ: كۆزۈمگە قارىسام ئىچىدە چاچ بار ئىكەن.
6. خ: ئۇ بالا شوخ ئەمەس، پۇلنى ئىختىيارسىز خەجلەپتۇ.
7. س: سىزگە ئۇرۇلغىلى تاس قالىدىم لېكىن كۆزەينىكىم بولمىغىنىدىن ئەمەس، بەك تېز يۈگۈرگىنىمدىن بولدى!
8. ش: شۇ كىشىگە ئاش بەرسەك بولمامدۇ؟
9. غ: تىخ تەگمىگەن ئەتلەسنى تۇنچى كۆرگەن چېغىمدا رەڭلىرىنى بەك غەلىتە دەپ ئويلىدىم.
10. ف: فرانسۇزچە پروفېسسورنىڭ يانفونىنى كۆردىڭىزمۇ؟
11. ق: قاق سامسىسىنى تېتىپ بېقىڭ!
12. ك: بۇيەردىن كەتكەن بالىلار بەك چوڭ بولمىغان.
13. گ: دەرەخلەر گۈللىگەندە قاسىم بەگ قايتار.
14. ڭ: رەڭ، چوڭلۇق قاتارلىق نەرسىلەر مۇھىم ئەمەس، پەقەت پىكىرىڭىز مۇھىم.
15. ل: ئايال بولسا قوبۇل كۆرىمىز.
16. م: مەن قانداق يازسام قوبۇل قىلمايسىز!
17. ن: ئەڭ ياخشى كۆرگىنىم گىژدە نان بولسا كېرەك.
18. ھ: ئاھ، ئەھۋالىمغا قاراڭ! بۇندىن قۇتۇلۇشۇم ئېھتىمالدىن يىراق.
19. ي: ئۇيەردىكىلەر جۇڭگو چېيى سېتىپ باي بولغان.

4.3 ‘Left-disjointed’ letters

In addition to the ‘fully connecting’ letters above, there are a number of other letters which break the line segment within a word; that is to say, these letters connect to the previous letter (as all Arabic letters do) but do **not** connect to the following letter. The last of these is actually a digraph, i.e. a combination of two letters which has a special shape in most printing and handwriting.

final/ medial	initial/lone	name	latin	sound
د	د	dé	d	[d]
ر	ر	ré	r	[r/r]
ز	ز	zé	z	[z]
ژ	ژ	zhé	zh	[ʒ]
و	و	wé	w	[w/v]
لا	لا	la	la	[la]

Table 3: consonant letters which break the line, i.e. those which do not connect to the following letter

Since these letters end a line segment, the letter which follows must appear in its initial form.

كېتىش
kétish
‘leaving’

كۈتۈش
kütüsh
‘waiting’

The ‘left-disjointed’ letter and the letter which follows it are separated by a space which, in printing and careful handwriting, is smaller than the full space which appears between words.

بۇيان
bu yan
‘this side’

بۇيان
buyan
‘until now, since’

مەشقلەر

Exercises

A. Look at the following short phrases and sentences below. Without needing to read or sound out each letter, how many words can you count in each sentence based on the principles described above?

1. ئىككىدىن كېيىن كىم دېرىكىنى قىلىدۇ؟
2. ئىنمىنىڭ زىرىسىنى تېتىپ بېقىپ يېمىدى.
3. دىلمىدىكى سىرلارنى ھېچ كىم بىلمىدى.
4. بىر بىرلىرىگە نېمە ئىشتىسە ئېيتىدۇ دېدى.
5. ئىسلام مېنىڭكىدىن ئېگىز بىر ئېغىلغا لايىق.

B. Each of the sentences below contains at least three examples of the letter indicated at the beginning of each line. Circle three examples (or more, if you wish) and write next to each circle whether the letter appears in initial/lone (i.e. totally detached) or final/medial (i.e. right-attached) form.

1. د: دامغا چۈشكەن توشقاننى ئېلىپ ئەسىرلەرنىڭ ئالدىدا يېدۇق.
2. ر: راك كېسەللىكىنىڭ ھۈجەيرىلىرىنىڭ شەكلى ئومۇمەن باشقىچە بولىدۇ.
3. ز: رەزىل خىتاي ساقچىلىرىنىڭ زەررە ۋىجدانى يوق، ئىزدىسەڭمۇ تاپالمايسەن!
4. ز: پارىژدا نەشر قىلىنغان ژورناللارنىڭ ژانىرلىرى خىلمۇخىل.
5. ۋ: قوشنىمىزنىڭ بوۋىسى تۈنۈگۈن ۋاپات بولغان. ئىلتىماس، ۋاراك-چۇرۇڭ چىلماڭلار.
6. لا: ئۆيىڭىزنى لاي بىلەن قىلالايسىز ئەلۋەتتە لېكىن ساغلام بولمايدۇ.

4.4 Vowel letters & the همزه *hemze*

Until now, those familiar with other forms of the Arabic script have not met with anything which is particularly unfamiliar to them. Remember, however, that the primary way in which the UYEH differs from most variants of the Arabic script is in the way it represents vowels. This is the case not only in the sense that all vowels are written out obligatorily with dedicated characters, but also in that some vowels have an additional positional variant. Whereas all letters in more traditional variants of the Arabic script have no more than four forms, vowel letters in Uyghur have two additional forms. One of these appears at the beginning of a word or syllable, i.e. within a word but after a vowel. The other appears unjoined to any other letters; it differs from the lone form inasmuch as it only appears at the end of a word after a letter which does not connect to the next letter.

final	medial	unjoined	segment initial	word/syllable initial	lone	name/latin	sound
ى	ـى	ى	ـ	ئ	ئى	i	[ɪ]
ې	ـې	ې	ـ	ئې	ئې	é	[e]
ا			ا	ئا		a	[ɐ/a]
ە			ە	ئە		e	[æ/ɛ]
و			و	ئو		o	[o]
ۆ			ۆ	ئۆ		ö	[ø]
ۇ			ۇ	ئۇ		u	[u]
ۈ			ۈ	ئۈ		ü	[y]

Table 4: vowel letters

This concept may be somewhat difficult to grasp, but the presence of these other positional variants makes more sense in historical context. The ‘squiggle’ (called a همزه *hemze* in Uyghur) above the single ‘tooth’ which appears in the word/syllable-initial and lone versions was actually once a separate letter, which in Arabic represented the sound of the glottal stop [ʔ]. In classical Arabic phonology, syllables (including at the beginning of a word) cannot begin with a vowel; syllables which are perceived aurally by many non-native speakers as beginning with a vowel begin indeed with this glottal stop. Since the glottal stop is technically only the momentary closing of the glottis during speech, one might conceivably suggest that English words which ‘begin with a vowel’ also actually begin with a glottal stop. In Arabic, however, this sound has phonemic status. As a result, it developed its own special symbol in the writing system: the ء *hamza*.

Unlike Arabic, Turkic **does** permit vowels at the beginning of a word—e.g. ئاق *aq* ‘white’—however, as an artifact of the Arabic system which originated it, Turkic words beginning with a vowel in Chaghatay were written with a *hamza*, usually (as in Arabic) placed on top of or below a ‘carrier’ letter ا *alif*, yielding ا or | depending on the precise quality of the vowel.

Some time during early 20th century, some speakers of Turkic in Eastern Turkistan began looking to spelling reforms which had been going on in the Ottoman Empire’s version of the Arabic script. One such reform proposed the use of a *hamza* on top of the Arabic letter ى *yā* (i.e. ئ instead of the letter ا *alif* ‘t’ o distinguish front rounded vowels from back rounded vowels at the beginning of some words. This made sense more generally because of the abundance of rounded vowels in Turkic as compared to Arabic, but it was particularly important so as to distinguish two very common but unfortunately homographous minimal pairs in Ottoman, distinguished only by front/back vowel quality: اولدى *oldu* ‘became’ and اولدى *öldü* ‘died’—the latter of which would, under the reformed system, be written ئولدى. As reforms in Eastern Turkistan progressed, it was decided that this single tooth with the *hamza* would replace all instances of the *hamza* which had previously stood atop other carrier letters.

According to the modern system, these appear mostly at the beginnings of words; since Turkic does not permit adjacent vowels in native words, there was no need for a *hamza* (now همزه *hemze*) to indicate syllable-initial vowels within a Turkic-derived word in Chaghatay. There were, however, many words from Arabic which used the *hamza* in between two vowels, and this was preserved in the toothed *hemze* in the modern

UEY. Since Central Asian speakers of Arabic tended to pronounce another Arabic sounds—the ع *ayn* — as a glottal stop as well, words written with that letter in the old spelling were also now written with this toothed *hemze*. Furthermore, in a minority of words *hemze* may also appear not between two vowels, but between a vowel and a consonant or vice-versa, e.g. *enenelen'ene* 'tradition'. This is again a holdover from Arabic, in which the two consonants ع *ayn* and ه *hamza* can be pronounced in many different positions. Finally, words which came in from other languages that permitted two adjacent vowels would also often be spelled with a toothed *hemze* in between them.

Lastly, it is important to note that, while the ه *hemze* is never transcribed in the ULY at the beginning of words (since technically any word that begins with a vowel begins with a ه *hemze*) some people will transcribe it in the middle of a word between two vowels using an apostrophe; thus, the word مؤئمما 'riddle, predicament' can be transcribed as either *muemma* or *mu'emma*.

مهشقلەر

Exercises

A. Each of the sentences below contains at least three examples of the letter indicated at the beginning of each line. Circle three examples (or more, if you wish) and write next to each circle whether the letter appears in initial/alone (i.e. totally detached) or final/medial (i.e. right-attached) form.

1. ئى: ئىلتىماس شۇنى ئالسام بولامدۇ؟
2. ئې: مېنى تونۇغان پۈتۈن دوستلىرىم ئېغىر ئاياق ئىكەنلىكىمنى بىلىدۇ دېدى.
3. ئا: ئەمدى ئايەردە خاتا قىپسىز.
4. ئە: ئۇنداق بىر چاتاق بولغان بولسا ئەلۋەتتە سىلەرگە ئېيتاتتىم!
5. ئو: ئۇنىڭ ئورنىغا يەنە ماروژنى يېسەك قورسىقىڭىز ئاچ بولمايدۇ.
6. ئۆ: ئەخمەتنىڭ دېيىشىچە داشۆ سۆزى ئەسلىدە خىتايچە ئەمەس، لېكىن ئەخمەت بەك دۆت.
7. ئۇ: گۈلنىسا ئەڭ ياخشى مۇئەللىملەردىن بىرى بولسا كېرەك لېكىن ئۇ ئۆزى ئۇنداق دېمەيدۇ.
8. ئۈ: ئۇنىڭ بىلەن تۆت كۈن بويىچە سوقۇشقاندىن كېيىن ئاخىرىدا ئۈد ئۈزدىم.

B. Of each of the following pairs, one is written incorrectly and the other, correctly. Using what you just learned about the way in which vowels in the ULY are written, circle the word which is written correctly. Transcriptions in ULY have been provided to assist you, as well as the meanings of the words for those curious.

	a	b	ULY	meaning
1.	ئىسىم	سىم	<i>isim</i>	'name'
2.	خاتىرە	خاتىرئە	<i>xatire</i>	'memory'
3.	راست	رئاست	<i>rast</i>	'true, real(ly)'
4.	قىزىمئىز	قىزىمىز	<i>qizimiz</i>	'our daughter'
5.	ئۆز	ۆز	<i>öz</i>	'self, own'
6.	مۇئەللىم	مۇئەللىم	<i>müellim/mü'ellim</i>	'teacher'
7.	بۆرە	بئۆرئە	<i>böre</i>	'wolf'
8.	ئۈرۈمچى	ۈرۈمچى	<i>Ürümchi</i>	'Ürümchi (the administrative capital of Xinjiang)'
9.	اغرىق	ئاغرىق	<i>aghriq</i>	'pain, ache, sickness'
10.	تور	ت ئور	<i>tor</i>	'web, net; the Internet'

4.5 Tips & Tricks

You may at first find it daunting that each letter has three to five forms which must be memorised; however, if you look carefully you'll notice that the vast majority of letter forms are indeed a variation on a single shape (usually resembling the medial form) with some final tail or flourish. Below, you can see an example of this with the letter پ *p*. In every position, the operative part of the letter consists of a single 'tooth'-like protrusion from the base line, plus three dots either directly below it or below the center of the full letter form in red. The tail (in blue) appears when this letter is not connected to a following letter, i.e. in lone and final form.

élip

'alif'

(first letter of the Arabic
alphabet)

képil

'guarantor'

pikir

'idea'

p

Further decreasing the number of total forms you must memorise, you'll notice that many letters share the same base form modified only slightly by the addition of dots or other markings either above or below the body of the letter. Sometimes this indicates a relationship in sound—as in the case of the various round vowels and bilabial semivowel, which all use و as their base form—but often times this is simply an artifact of the original Arabic script, which itself evolved from a variant of an Aramaic script which had become so cursive that it developed (over the first few centuries after Islam) a system to distinguish originally distinct letter forms which had merged.³

base form	letters
ب	ت پ ب
ح	خ چ ج
ر	ژ زر
س	ش س
ك	ك ك
ى	ي ي ى
و	ؤ و و و

Table 5: a subset of letters in the UYU organised by their basic shapes, which are modified according to dots and lines to produce different letters

³ In the Uyghur pronunciation of traditional Islamic grammar terms, the letter bodies are called رسم *resim* 'picture' and the modifying dots and shapes نوقتا *noqta* 'dot', though these may not be commonly known among young Uyghurs nowadays.

مهشقلهه

Exercises

Match the words in UEY on the left with their correct transcriptions in ULY on the right by drawing a line between the two, paying special attention to letters which share the same basic shape and those whose basic shapes resemble one another.

1. سر	pay
2. پاي	xam
3. چام	razi
4. ئېككن	öt
5. ئوت	bay
6. تېككن	tay
7. زادی	cham
8. باي	ékin
9. ئۆت	tékin
10. جام	ot
11. شر	zadi
12. جاي	jam
13. ئېگن	shir
14. چاي	jay
15. تىككن	chay
16. رازى	tigin
17. ئېگىز	égiz
18. تاي	sir
19. خام	égin
20. ئون	on

مەشقلەر: سۆز ئوقۇش

Exercises: Reading Words

Separate each of the Uyghur words below into separate letters in their lone forms in the first row of boxes beneath that word. Then, transcribe each letter in the second row of boxes. Finally, write the word in the ULY on the line to the right. An example (ex.) has been completed for you. **Note:** The digraph لا *la* here is counted as two separate letters.

كۆڭۈل

ex.

ك	ۆ	ڭ	ۈ	ل
k	ö	ng	ü	l

köngül

'heart, mind'

يوق

1.

'there is/are no'

ئاغرىق

2.

'pain, illness'

دۇخوپكا

3.

'('European' style) oven'

ئۇيغۇرلار

4.

'Uyghurs'

شىنجاڭ

5.

'Xinjiang'

لەڭمەن

6.

'leghmen noodles'

رومال

7.

'headscarf'

ۋەتەن

8.

'homeland'

ئاشخانا

9.

'restaurant'

مەن

10.

'I (1st person singular)'

يىگىرمى

11.

'twenty'

ئاستىدا

12.

‘beneath it/her/him’

قوپال

13.

‘rude, crude’

گەزلىمە

14.

‘textile(s)’

رەخت

15.

‘fabric, cloth’

قاق

16.

‘dried fruit, esp. apricot’

چوكا

17.

‘chopstick(s)’

پۇلىمىز

18.

‘our money’

مەشقلەر: سۆز يېزىش

Exercises: Writing Words

The following exercises are intended for those who wish to practice writing in the UYEH. At the same time, even those who do not intend to write in Uyghur often will benefit from these exercises to strengthen their recognition of letters while reading.

For each of the lines below, copy letters or words to practice the different forms of the letter indicated in different positions. Use the red words as an example of the correct proportions for each letter shape in relation to the guidelines provided. Then, trace the grey examples before trying to replicate the letters/words on your own.

1. ئە 'e'
ئە ئە ئە ئە ئە
2. ئەمگەك *emgek* 'labour, hard work'
ئەمگەك ئەمگەك ئەمگەك ئەمگەك ئەمگەك
3. مۇئەللىم *muellim/mu'ellim* 'teacher, instructor'
مۇئەللىم مۇئەللىم مۇئەللىم مۇئەللىم مۇئەللىم
4. پىچەت *pichet* 'cool!, awesome!'
پىچەت پىچەت پىچەت پىچەت پىچەت
5. تۆۋەن *töwen* 'low, downstairs'
تۆۋەن تۆۋەن تۆۋەن تۆۋەن تۆۋەن
6. ئىگە *ige* 'lord, owner, subject, possessor; possessed of (w/ DAT)'
ئىگە ئىگە ئىگە ئىگە ئىگە
7. كۆرە *köre* 'instead of, rather than' (postposition w/ DAT)
كۆرە كۆرە كۆرە كۆرە كۆرە
8. ئامەت *amet* 'good fortune, success in work'
ئامەت ئامەت ئامەت ئامەت ئامەت
9. تاللىماق *tallimaq* 'to choose'
تاللىماق تاللىماق تاللىماق تاللىماق تاللىماق
10. مۇئەمما *muemma/mu'emma* 'riddle, predicament'
مۇئەمما مۇئەمما مۇئەمما مۇئەمما مۇئەمما
11. ئارام *aram* 'calm, quiet'
ئارام ئارام ئارام ئارام ئارام
12. ب *bé*
ب ب ب ب ب
13. بىب *bbb*
بىب بىب بىب بىب بىب

14. *bar* 'this is/are' > ب ئار
 بار بار بار بار
15. *kibir* 'hubris' > ك ئى ب ئى ر
 كىبىر كىبىر كىبىر كىبىر
16. *kitab* 'book' > ك ئى ت ئاب
 كىتاب كىتاب كىتاب كىتاب
17. *ara* 'interval, space between' > ئارا ئارا
 ئارا ئارا ئارا ئارا
18. *p* 'pé'
 پ پ پ پ
19. *ppp* > پ پ پ
 پىپپ پىپپ پىپپ پىپپ
20. *pikir* 'idea, opinion' > پ ئى ك ئى ر
 پىكىر پىكىر پىكىر پىكىر
21. *iptida* 'beginning' > ئى پ ت ئى د ئا
 ئىپتىدا ئىپتىدا ئىپتىدا ئىپتىدا
22. *qilip* 'having done' (postterminal verbal adverb from *qil* 'do, make') > ق ئى ل ئى پ
 قىلىپ قىلىپ قىلىپ قىلىپ
23. *kamil* 'whole, integral' > ك ئام ئى ل
 كامىل كامىل كامىل كامىل
24. *t* 'té'
 ت ت ت ت
25. *t* > ت ت ت
 تىت تىت تىت تىت
26. *toshqan* 'rabbit' > ت ئوش ق ئان
 توشقان توشقان توشقان توشقان
27. *kétip* 'having gone' (postterminal verbal adverb from *ket* 'go, leave') > ك ئى ت ئى پ
 كىتىپ كىتىپ كىتىپ كىتىپ
28. *it* 'dog' > ئى ت
 ئىت ئىت ئىت ئىت
29. *jé* 'ج'
 ج ج ج ج
30. *jjj* > ج ج ج
 جىج جىج جىج جىج

31.	جوza 'table' > ج ئوز نا	جوza جوza جوza جوza
32.	xijil 'embarrassed, ashamed' > خ ئى ج ئى ل	خىجىل خىجىل خىجىل خىجىل
33.	xarij 'freed, detached, liberated' > خ ئا ر ئى ج	خارىج خارىج خارىج خارىج
34.	ch 'ché'	چ چ چ چ
35.	chchch > چ چ چ	چچچ چچچ چچچ چچچ
36.	chay 'tea; women's house party' > چ ئاي	چاي چاي چاي چاي
37.	pichaq 'knife' > پ ئى چ ئاق	پىچاق پىچاق پىچاق پىچاق
38.	héch 'ever, at all (+ NEG)' > ھ ئى چ	ھىچ ھىچ ھىچ ھىچ
39.	x 'xé'	خ خ خ خ
40.	xxx > خ خ خ	خخخ خخخ خخخ خخخ
41.	Xitay 'China' > خ ئى ت ئاي	خىتاي خىتاي خىتاي خىتاي
42.	ixtiyar 'willingness' > ئى خ ت ئى ي ئار	ئىختىيار ئىختىيار ئىختىيار ئىختىيار
43.	mix 'nail, screw, tack' > م ئى خ	مىخ مىخ مىخ مىخ
44.	d 'dé'	د د د د
45.	dap 'drum'	داپ داپ داپ داپ
46.	idrak 'reason, intellect, perception' > ئى د ر ئاك	ئىدراك ئىدراك ئىدراك ئىدراك

47. *hid* ‘smell, aroma’ > ھىد
48. *azad* ‘free, unrestrained’ > ئازاد
49. *r* ‘ré’
50. *r* ‘reng’ > رەڭ
51. *érisilmek* ‘to attain, to reach’ > ئېرىشمەك
52. *qar* ‘snow’ > قار
53. *arqa* ‘back’ > ئارقا
54. *z* ‘zé’
55. *ziyan* ‘damage, harm’ > زىيان
56. *izdimək* ‘to search’ > ئىزدىمەك
57. *azar* ‘distress, emotional anguish’ > ئازار
58. *iz* ‘trace, footprint’ > ئىز
59. *zb* ‘zhé’
60. *zburnal* ‘newspaper, journal’ > ژۇرنال
61. *marozhni* ‘ice cream’ > مازوژنى
62. *Parizh* ‘Paris’ > پارىژ

63.	s 'sé'	س
64.	sss 'س س س > س س س	سسس
65.	siz 'you (2nd person singular formal) > س ئى ز	سىز
66.	istiqrar 'stability' > ئى س ت ئى ق ر ئ ا ر	ئىستىقرار
67.	xalis 'altruistic, impartial' > خ ئ ا ل ئى س	خالس
68.	pes 'low, down, downstairs, despicable' > پ ئ ە س	پەس
69.	sb 'shé'	ش
70.	sbsbsb 'ش ش ش > ش ش ش	ششش
71.	shair/sha'ir 'poet' > ش ئ ا ئى ر	شائىر
72.	ish 'work, job, matter' > ئى ش	ئىش
73.	bash 'head, start, top' > ب ئ ا ش	باش
74.	ishtiyaq 'pleasure, enjoyment' > ئى ش ت ئى ي ئ ا ق	ئىشتىياق
75.	gh 'ghé'	غ
76.	ghghgh 'غ غ غ > غ غ غ	غغغ
77.	ghelite 'strange' > غ ئ ە ل ئى ت ئ ە	غەلىتە
78.	mighildimaq 'to wriggle, to move with a wavy motion' > م ئى غ ئى ل د ئى م ئ ا ق	مىغىلدىماق

79.	چاغ <i>chagh</i> 'time, instance, period' > چ ئاغ	چاغ
80.	بالىغ <i>baligh</i> 'mature, adult, of age' > ب ئال ئى غ	بالىغ
81.	f 'fé'	ف
82.	ففف <i>fff</i> > ف ف ف	ففف
83.	فيلم <i>filim</i> 'film, movie' > ف ئى ل ئى م	فيلم
84.	تېلېفون <i>téléfon</i> 'telephone' > ت ئې ل ئې ا ئون	تېلېفون
85.	كالاڭنىكوف <i>kalashnikof</i> 'Kalashnikov (machine gun)' > ك ئال ئاش ن ئى ك ئوف	كالاڭنىكوف
86.	ئېلىيېف <i>Éliyéf</i> 'Éliyéf (last name of the famous Uyghur litteratus, Tèyipjan Éliyéf)' > ئې ل ئى ي ئې ف	ئېلىيېف
87.	q 'qé'	ق
88.	ققق <i>qqq</i> > ق ق ق	ققق
89.	قانۇن <i>qanun</i> 'rule, law' > ق ئان ئون	قانۇن
90.	ئىقتىدار <i>iqtidar</i> 'authority, power' > ئى ق ت ئى د ئار	ئىقتىدار
91.	بېلىق <i>béliq</i> 'fish' > ب ئې ل ئى ق	بېلىق
92.	ئاق <i>aq</i> 'white' > ئاق	ئاق
93.	k 'ké'	ك
94.	ككك <i>kkk</i> > ك ك ك	ككك
95.	كالا <i>kala</i> 'cow' > ك ئال ئا	كالا

96. *pikir* 'idea, opinion' پىكىر > پ ئى ك ئى ر
پىكىر پىكىر پىكىر
97. *kirpik* 'eyelash' كىرپىك > ك ئى ر پ ئى ك
كىرپىك كىرپىك كىرپىك
98. *pak* 'clean, pure, virtuous' پاك > پ ئا ك
پاك پاك پاك
99. *g* 'gé'
گ گ گ گ
100. *ggg* > گ گ گ گ
گگگ گگگ گگگ
101. *ganggirimaq* 'to be confused/astonished' گاڭگىرماق > گ ئا گ ئى ر ئى م ئا ق
گاڭگىرماق گاڭگىرماق گاڭگىرماق
102. *beg* 'lord (generic honorific title for males)' بهگ > ب ئه گ
بهگ بهگ بهگ بهگ
103. *chégra* 'border, frontier' چىگرا > چ ئې گ ر ئا
چىگرا چىگرا چىگرا
104. *ng* 'ngé'
نڭ نڭ نڭ نڭ
105. *ngngng* > نڭ نڭ نڭ نڭ
نڭنڭنڭ نڭنڭنڭ نڭنڭنڭ
106. *yanaq* 'walnut; side of the head/face' ياناق > ي ئا گ ئا ق
ياناق ياناق ياناق
107. *pang* 'deaf' پانڭ > پ ئا نڭ
پانڭ پانڭ پانڭ پانڭ
108. *ling* 'ream, stack (measure word for reams of paper)' لىڭ > ل ئى نڭ
لىڭ لىڭ لىڭ لىڭ
109. *lingshimaq* 'to swing loose, to shake' لىڭشىماق > ل ئى نڭ ش ئى م ئا ق
لىڭشىماق لىڭشىماق لىڭشىماق
110. *l* 'lé'
ل ل ل ل ل
111. *lll* > ل ل ل ل ل
للىل للىل للىل

112.	لەغمەن <i>leghmen</i> ‘Uyghur pulled noodles (often colloquially pronounced لەغمەن <i>leghmen</i>)’	لەغمەن لەغمەن لەغمەن لەغمەن
113.	ئىلگىرى <i>ilgiri</i> ‘forward’	ئىلگىرى ئىلگىرى ئىلگىرى ئىلگىرى
114.	مارال <i>maral</i> ‘doe (female deer)’	مارال مارال مارال مارال
115.	ئېغىل <i>éghil</i> ‘pen, stable, animal enclosure’	ئېغىل ئېغىل ئېغىل ئېغىل
116.	<i>m</i> ‘mé’	م م م م م م م م م م
117.	<i>mmm</i> ‘م م م’	ممم ممم ممم ممم ممم ممم ممم ممم ممم ممم
118.	مۈشۈك <i>müshük</i> ‘cat’	مۈشۈك مۈشۈك مۈشۈك مۈشۈك
119.	ئىملا <i>imla</i> ‘spelling, orthography’	ئىملا ئىملا ئىملا ئىملا
120.	ئارام <i>aram</i> ‘rest, quiet, peace of mind’	ئارام ئارام ئارام ئارام
121.	ئىقلىم <i>iqlim</i> ‘clime, climate (one of seven traditional geographical subdivisions of the world in the Eurasian tradition)’	ئىقلىم ئىقلىم ئىقلىم ئىقلىم
122.	<i>n</i> ‘né’	ن ن ن ن ن ن ن ن ن ن
123.	<i>nnn</i> ‘ن ن ن’	ننن ننن ننن ننن ننن ننن ننن ننن ننن ننن
124.	نان <i>nan</i> ‘bread’	نان نان نان نان نان نان نان نان نان نان
125.	ئىنى <i>ini</i> ‘younger brother’	ئىنى ئىنى ئىنى ئىنى ئىنى ئىنى ئىنى ئىنى ئىنى ئىنى
126.	كېلىن <i>kélin</i> ‘bride, daughter-in-law (woman married into the family)’	كېلىن كېلىن كېلىن كېلىن كېلىن كېلىن كېلىن كېلىن كېلىن كېلىن
127.	<i>h</i> ‘hé’	ھ ھ ھ ھ ھ ھ ھ ھ ھ ھ

128.	هھھ > hbb
	هھھ
129.	ههئە > hee/be'e 'yes'
	ههئە
130.	ئېھتىرام > ebtiram 'respect(ed), honour(ed)'
	ئېھتىرام
131.	پاھ > pah 'wow! (exclamation of surprise and admiration)'
	پاھ
132.	مەسھ > mesih 'anointed, messiah'
	مەسھ
133.	ئو 'o'
	ئو
134.	ئورۇن > orun 'place, position'
	ئورۇن
135.	ھورۇن > horun 'lazy'
	ھورۇن
136.	ئالو > alo 'hello? (used when answering the phone amongst Soviet Uyghurs)'
	ئالو
137.	رومال > romal 'headscarf'
	رومال
138.	ئۇ 'u (the letter); he/she/it/they (3rd person singular pronoun)'
	ئۇ
139.	ئۇكا > uka 'younger brother'
	ئۇكا
140.	ئۇزۇن > uzun 'long (of time or horizontal length)'
	ئۇزۇن
141.	پولو > polu 'pilav (a traditional Central Asian rice dish, often pronounced polo)'
	پولو
142.	ئۇيغۇر > Uyghur 'Uyghur (person, thing)'
	ئۇيغۇر
143.	ئۆ 'ö'
	ئۆ

144. *oy* 'house, home, room' > ئۆي
 ئۆي ئۆي ئۆي
145. *kök* 'green, blue, green-blue' > كۆك
 كۆك كۆك كۆك
146. *dashö* 'university (< Chinese 大學 *dàxué*)' > داشۆ
 داشۆ داشۆ داشۆ
147. *döt* 'stupid' > دۆت
 دۆت دۆت دۆت
148. *ü* 'ü'
 ئۈ ئۈ ئۈ
149. *üst* 'top (part of something), space above (something)' > ئۈست
 ئۈست ئۈست ئۈست
150. *gül* 'flower' > گۈل
 گۈل گۈل گۈل
151. *lū* 'army brigade' > لۈ
 لۈ لۈ لۈ
152. *üzüm* 'grape' > ئۈزۈم
 ئۈزۈم ئۈزۈم ئۈزۈم
153. *w* 'w'
 ۋ ۋ ۋ
154. *waqit* 'time' > ۋاقىت
 ۋاقىت ۋاقىت ۋاقىت
155. *chiwin* 'fly (insect)' > چىۋىن
 چىۋىن چىۋىن چىۋىن
156. *hawa* 'air, weather' > ھاۋا
 ھاۋا ھاۋا ھاۋا
157. *déw* 'giant, demon (archaic; a creature from Persian mythology)' > دېۋ
 دېۋ دېۋ دېۋ
158. *é* 'é'
 ئې ئې ئې
159. *éé* 'éé'
 ئېې ئېې ئېې

160. *éghir* 'heavy' > ئېغىر > ئېغىر
 ئېغىر
161. *wélisipit* 'bicycle' > ۋېلىسىپىت > ۋېلىسىپىت
 ۋېلىسىپىت
162. *hécb* 'ever, never (w/ NEG), at all' > ھېچ > ھېچ
 ھېچ
163. *balét* 'ballet' > بالېت > بالېت
 بالېت
164. *ghé* '(the name of the letter غ ghé spelled out as pronounced)' > غى
 غى
165. *i* 'i' > ئى
 ئى
166. *iii* 'iii' > ئىسى
 ئىسى
167. *it* 'dog' > ئىت > ئىت
 ئىت
168. *temlik* 'tasty, delicious' > تەملىك > تەملىك
 تەملىك
169. *kofi* 'coffee' > كوفى > كوفى
 كوفى
170. *riwayet* 'legend, myth' > رىۋايەت > رىۋايەت
 رىۋايەت
171. *idi* 'was/were (3rd person PAST copula)' > ئىدى
 ئىدى
172. *y* 'y' > ي
 ي
173. *lala* 'lala' > لالا
 لالا
174. *yan* 'side, edge, space next to (something)' > يان > يان
 يان
175. *éyiq* 'bear' > ئېيىق > ئېيىق
 ئېيىق

176.

ay 'moon, month' > ئاي

ئاي ئاي ئاي

177.

ayrim 'separate(ly), apart' > ئايرىم

ئايرىم ئايرىم ئايرىم