

**SIL**

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# **TURKMEN GRAMMAR**

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## A Short Descriptive Grammar of the Turkmen Language

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## 1 Introduction

Turkmen is a Turkic language, part of the South-Western or *Oguz* sub-group which includes Turkish, Azerbaijani, and Gagauz. It is an agglutinative language i.e. it has a highly developed system of noun and verb suffixes that can produce some very long words indeed, e.g. from the word *okuw* which means ‘study’ the following word/sentence can be derived:

*Okuwçylaryňkymyka?* – I wonder if it belongs to the school children?

There are over six million speakers of Turkmen world-wide, most of them located in Turkmenistan, Iran, and Afghanistan. Turkmen society is still fairly tribal, so that the Turkmen language is made up of several dialects. The literary language dates back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, with poets such as Magtymguly writing highly stylised works including many Persian (Farsi) loan-words. Modern literary Turkmen is mainly based on the Teke and Yomut dialects spoken in and around Ashgabat, Merv, Dashoguz (formally Dashhowuz) and Nebitdag. Although Turkmen residents of the larger cities tend to be strongly bilingual in Turkmen and Russian, any attempts to Russify the literary language have been resisted, although many technical words are Russian or have come via Russian. Dialects spoken in Iran tend to be influenced by Farsi and those in Afghanistan by Dari and Uzbek. This grammar concentrates on Turkmen as spoken in Turkmenistan.



### 1.1 Map of Turkmenistan

## 2 Phonology

### 2.1 Phonetics

#### 2.1.1 Consonant Chart

	Labial	Dental	Alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Plosives	p, b	d, t			k, g	
Affricates			tʃ, dʒ			
Fricatives	β (f, v) <sup>1</sup>	θ, ð (s, z) <sup>2</sup>	ʃ, ʒ		x, ɣ	h
Nasals	m	n			ŋ	
Lateral approximants, Flaps & trills		l	r, r			
Central Approximants	w			j		

Aspiration has not been shown. Neither has velarisation or palatalisation of [l].

NB utterance-final consonants are unreleased e.g. *Myrat!* [muɾat̚].

#### 2.1.2 Vowel Chart

	Front		Central		Back	
	UR	R	UR	R	UR	R
Close	i, i:	y, y:			u, u:	u, u:
Close-mid						
Open-mid	ɛ	œ, œ:				ɔ, ɔ:
Open	æ:				ɑ, ɑ:	

See [2.3](#) for a description of vowel harmony.

From this point forward all phonemes will be written as per the orthography, rather than according to the IPA. Please see [2.2 The Turkmen Alphabet](#) for a comparison of the two ways of writing Turkmen phonemes.

<sup>1</sup> Only used when a Russian loan-word is pronounced with a Russian accent.

<sup>2</sup> Most dialects do not use these sounds unless for a Russian loan word pronounced with a Russian accent. The inhabitants of Türkmenabat, however, use them in place of the inter-dental fricatives θ, ð.

## 2.2 The Turkmen Alphabet, with Pronunciation Guide

The Cyrillic alphabet was based on its Russian counterpart. The latest alphabet is based on a Roman script. The following shows the two alphabets, and then the International Phonetic Alphabet symbols used to represent the sounds produced.

<i>Latin</i>	<i>Cyrillic</i>	<i>IPA</i>	<i>Notes</i>
<b>A a</b>	А а	ɑ	As in "catch" (approximately)
<b>B b</b>	Б б	b, β	Becomes a fricative (softens) mid word or phrase
<b>Ç ç</b>	Ч ч	ʧ	"ch" in English as in <i>chart</i> or <i>chin</i>
<b>D d</b>	Д д	d	
<b>E e</b>	Э э, Е е	ɛ	As in "egg". See below for Cyrillic E, e
<b>Ä ä</b>	Ә ә	a:	As in "air" but with hump of tongue further forward
<b>F f</b>	Ф ф	f	
<b>G g</b>	Г г	g, ɣ	Fricative mid-utterance. Front or back velar depending on vowels.
<b>H h</b>	Х х	x, h	Usually a central fricative as in "loch". Uvular - see "g"
<b>I i</b>	И и	i	As in "feet"
<b>J j</b>	Ж ж	ɟʒ	"j" in "joke"
<b>Ž ž</b>	Ж ж	ʒ	Used mostly in loan-words e.g. the Arabic <i>sežd</i> . Pronounced as in "vision".
<b>K k</b>	К к	k <sup>h</sup>	Front or back velar depending on surrounding vowels. See "p" for k vs. k <sup>h</sup> .
<b>L l</b>	Л л	l̪, l̪ʷ	Palatalised with front vowels, velarised with back ones.
<b>M m</b>	М м	m	
<b>N n</b>	Н н	n	
<b>Ň ň</b>	Ң ң	ŋ	"ng" as in "sing"
<b>O o</b>	О о	ɔ	As in "off"
<b>Ö ö</b>	Ө ө	œ	As in the French <i>oeuf</i>
<b>P p</b>	П п	p <sup>h</sup> , p	At the beginning of a word it is "breathy", mid-word not.
<b>R r</b>	Р р	r, r̪	When there are two "r"s the flap becomes a trill e.g. <i>garry</i>
<b>S s</b>	С с, Ц ц	θ, s	Main tribes, Türkmenabat versions respectively
<b>Ş ş</b>	Ш ш	ʃ	"sh" (assimilates to front and back vowels)
<b>T t</b>	Т т	t <sup>h</sup> , t	
<b>U u</b>	У у	u	As in "rule"
<b>Ü ü</b>	Ү ү	y	As in German "über"
<b>W w</b>	В в	w	
<b>Y y</b>	Ы ы	ɯ	Further back than the Russian '61', but closer (tongue to palate)
<b>Ý ý</b>	Й й	j	The first sound in "yacht"
<b>Z z</b>	З з	ʒ, d	Main tribes, Türkmenabat versions respectively
<b>(Ýe, ýe)</b>	Е е	je, ɛ	Can also be [E, e] in Latin – when not word initial or following Ъ. <i>Part of Cyrillic but not Latin alphabet, these characters are</i>
<b>(Ýo, ýo)</b>	Ё ё	jɔ	<i>mostly represented by two letters in the Latin alphabet, and are pronounced differently from the same characters in Russian.</i>
<b>(Ýu, ýu)</b>	Ю ю	ju	
<b>(Ýa, ýa)</b>	Я я	ja	
<b>(Ş ş)</b>	Щ щ	ʃ:	Pronounced (in Russian) like a long, soft ш. Hardly ever [ʃtʃ] any more.
-	Ь ь	j	Soft sign (palatalises previous consonant) e.g. -тъ is pronounced [tʲ]
-	Ъ ъ		Hard sign (treat next vowel separately) e.g. везѣт [wes'jet]

**Notes:** Any of the vowels can be either short or long. This difference usually gives the word a different meaning.

Both "b" and "g" change when in the middle of a word. They are pronounced as "w" and [ɣ] respectively. The latter is one of the sounds of Dutch, or like the "ch" in "loch" only with the voice box vibrating. The former is hardly rounded at all.

A "fricative" is made by forcing air through a restricted opening in the mouth e.g. f, v, s, z in English are all fricatives.

"Back velar" means further back in the throat. "Velar" is where k and g are often pronounced in English (e.g. "sack").

A "back" vowel is one where the hump of the tongue is in the back of the throat e.g. o in English.

A "flap" is one brief movement of the tongue up to the alveolar ridge (above teeth). A "trill" is a rolled r as in Scottish English.

The main tribes use sounds like the English "th" in either "thin" or "this", or a lisped s or z respectively. Other tribes also 'lisp' these sounds, but not as strongly. In Türkmenabat those who live in the city and surrounding villages don't tend to lisp at all due to influence from Uzbek.

## 2.3 Vowel Harmony

Vowel harmony is very important in the Turkmen language. The sixteen vowels can be divided into eight front and eight back vowels, which can be further subdivided into rounded and unrounded vowels. See the chart below:

### Vowel Harmony chart:

Position	Front		Back	
Rounding	UR	R	UR	R
Close	<i>i, iý</i>	<i>ü, üý</i>	<i>y, (y:)</i>	<i>u, (u:)</i>
Open-mid or Open	<i>e, ä</i>	<i>ö, (ö:)</i>	<i>a, (a:)</i>	<i>o, (o:)</i>

*UR = Unrounded, R = Rounded*

'*iý*' is approximately twice as long as 'i', for example

NB length is *not marked* in the Turkmen orthography, except in the case of e and ä, i and iý and ü and üý, which are always short and always long respectively. The alphabet has only nine vowels: i, e, ä, ü, ö, y, a, u, and o. Consonants are affected by their surrounding vowels, so *kaka* is pronounced using back velars, whereas *köke* has front velars.

Most Turkmen words have either only front or only back vowels, and suffixes always have two forms so that they too are in "harmony" with the stem (compare "hammer" and "bird" in the table below). Also any rounding in the stem tends to carry over into the suffixes in most dialects of Turkmen. Therefore there are really four forms of each suffix in spoken Turkmen, and in some cases in written Turkmen. Lack of space precludes the inclusion of rules describing the orthography and corresponding spoken forms, which vary from dialect to dialect<sup>3</sup>. We will largely ignore the rounding/unrounding vowel harmony except when it affects written Turkmen e.g. see the genitive case marker for the word *guş* in section 3.2.

Loan words, such as *kitap* (Arabic), and word combinations do not always follow the vowel harmony rules, but any suffixes following the root follow the form of the last vowel as far as front-back vowel harmony is concerned e.g. *kitabyndan* – from his book. Notice that although *i* is a front vowel all the suffixes follow *a* in having back vowels. Other examples:

Turkmen word	Gloss	Example
magazin	shop	<i>magaziniňden</i> – from your shop
dükan	shop	<i>dükana</i> – to the shop
betbagt	unlucky	<i>betbagtçylyk</i> – disaster
ok-däri	ammunition	<i>olaryň ok-därisi</i> – their ammunition

### Vowel length

Any vowel except e/ä can be pronounced in either its short or long form, and it is important distinguish between them as there are many minimal pairs eg. *ot* [ot] means "grass", but *ot* [o:t] means "fire". A Turkmen mother-tongue speaker usually has little problem in guessing a word according to its context, but the lack of differentiation between long and short vowels in the orthography is very confusing to someone attempting to learn the language. It is vital, therefore, that the language learner find a good language resource person who is able to pronounce the words correctly according to one of the main dialects, and it is equally important that the language learner focus on listening and speaking before reading and writing skills.

<sup>3</sup> For further information see Clark:98:79f who describes how this works out in practice for the largest tribe, the *Teke*.

## 2.4 Stress

Stress is usually on the last syllable of the root, when pronounced in isolation. It is easy for mother-tongue English speakers to confuse stress and length e.g. *bägül* [bä:'göl] – *rose* – has an unstressed lengthened first syllable and a short, but stressed, second syllable. Avoid saying [bä:göl], which might be misunderstood. With the addition of affixes of any kind, the stress is on the last syllable, except in the case of words with the question particle *-mi*, the plural imperative marker *-yň/iň* and one or two other affixes. e.g:

<i>garawul</i>	<i>gara'wul</i>	<i>garawuldan</i>	<i>garawul'dan</i>
<i>garaňky</i>	<i>garaň'ky</i>	<i>garaňkylyk</i>	<i>garaňkylyg'yň</i>
<i>abadanlaşdyrmak</i>	<i>abadanlaşdyr'mak</i>	<i>abadanlaşdyrdyk</i>	<i>abadanlaşdyr'dyk</i>
<i>tamamlamak</i>	<i>tamamla'mak</i>	<i>tamamladyňmy?</i>	<i>tamamla'dyňmy</i>
<i>barmak</i>	<i>bar'mak</i>	<i>baryň!</i>	<i>'baryň</i>

## 3 Grammar - The Noun Phrase

### 3.1 Plurals

These are marked by the suffixes *-lar, -ler* e.g. *kitaplar* – books. See also The Verb Phrase, [Verb paradigms](#).

### 3.2 Noun Declension

	Hammer	Duck [pronuncia- tion]	Bird [pronuncia- tion]	Linguist	Case Marker	Following a vowel
Nominative	<i>çekiç</i>	<i>ördek</i> [ö:rdök]	<i>guş</i> [guş]	<i>dilçi</i>		
Accusative	<i>çekiçi</i>	<i>ördegi</i> [ö:rdögü]	<i>guşy</i> [guşy]	<i>dilçini</i>	<b>-y/-i</b>	<i>-ny/-ni</i>
Genitive	<i>çekiçiň</i>	<i>ördegiň</i> [ö:rdögün]	<i>guşuň</i> [guşuň]	<i>dilçiniň</i>	<b>-yň/-iň</b> <b>-uň/-üň</b>	<i>-nyň/-niň</i> <i>-nuň/-nüň</i>
Dative	<i>çekiçe</i>	<i>ördege</i> [ö:rdögö]	<i>guşa</i> [guşo]	<i>dilçä</i>	<b>-a/-e</b>	<i>-a/-ä</i> (after i) <i>-na/-ne</i> (
Locative/Time	<i>çekiçde</i> [çekişde]	<i>ördekde</i> [ö:rdökdö]	<i>guşda</i> [guşdo]	<i>dilçide</i>	<b>-da/-de</b>	<i>-da/-de</i> <i>-nda/-nde</i> <sup>4</sup>
Ablative (separation <i>fr.</i> )	<i>çekiçden</i> [çekişden]	<i>ördekden</i> [ö:rdökdön]	<i>guşdan</i> [guşdon]	<i>dilçiden</i>	<b>-dan/-den</b>	<i>-dan/-den</i> <i>-ndan/-nden</i> <sup>5</sup>

Note: the accusative suffix after a noun suffix in a vowel is **-ny/-ni** rather than **-y/-i**

e.g. *dilçi + i => dilçini*  
*Men bedreni goýdum* - I put down the bucket

although it is permissible to leave the object unmarked if the *object* would not normally take the *definite* article in English e.g:

*Sen mesge aldyňmy?*

Have you bought some butter?

<sup>4</sup> See the section on [Possession](#)

<sup>5</sup> See the section on [Possession](#)



### 3.3 Question Words

	“who”	“what”	“how much”	“which”	“where”
Nominative	<i>kim</i> – who	<i>näme</i>	<i>näçe</i>	<i>haýsy</i>	<i>nire</i>
Accusative	<i>kimi</i> – who	<i>nämäni</i>	<i>näçeni</i>	<i>haýsyny</i>	<i>nireni</i>
Genitive	<i>kimiň</i> – whose	<i>nämeniň</i>	<i>näçeniň</i>	<i>haýsynyň</i>	<i>niräniň</i>
Dative	<i>kime</i> – to whom	<i>nämä</i>	<i>näçä</i>	<i>haýsyna</i>	<i>nirä</i>
Locative/Time	<i>kimde</i> – who (has)	<i>nämede</i>	<i>näçede</i>	<i>haýsynda</i>	<i>niredede</i>
Ablative	<i>kimden</i> – from whom	<i>nämeden</i>	<i>näçeden</i>	<i>haýsyndan</i>	<i>nireden</i>

Other question words: *haçan* (when). NB none of these words can be used as complementizers (see [4.13 Participles and Gerunds](#)), they are used only as question words.

*Kimiň telpegi geýýärsiň?* – Whose hat are you wearing?

*Nirä barýarsyň?* – Where are you heading?

*Sen nämeni aldyňmy?* - Did you buy that thing (what was it?).

*Sen niredede?* – Where are you?

*Kimde çörek bar?* – Who has some bread?

*Gawunuň kilesi näçeden?* – How much per kilo are melons? *Lit:* Melon’s kilo is from what [price]?

*Sen haçan geljek?* – When will you be here?

For the question particle *–my/mi* see [4.2](#) below.

### 3.4 The Personal Pronouns

	<i>1s</i>	<i>2s</i>	<i>3s</i>	<i>1pl</i>	<i>2pl</i>	<i>3pl</i>
NOM	men	sen	ol	biz	siz	olar
ACC	meni	seni	ony	bizi	sizi	olary
GEN	meniň	seniň	onuň	biziň	siziň	olaryň
DAT	maňa	saňa	oňa	bize	size	olara
LOC/TIM	mende	sende	onda	bizde	sizde	olarda
ABL	menden	senden	ondan	bizden	sizden	olardan

NB In speech when *d* follows *n* it assimilates to *n* e.g. *mende* [menne] i.e. [men:e].

Note the lack of gender marking in the personal pronouns. Neither is there any noun agreement showing gender. The Turkmen language marks gender in other ways.

### 3.5 Possession

One of the hardest things to master is the agreement on nouns when possessed. Compare the following tables:

<i>maşyn</i> - car	<i>s</i>	<i>pl</i>
1	(meniň) maşynym	(biziň) maşynymyz
2	(seniň) maşynyň	(siziň) maşynyňyz
3	(onuň) maşyny	olaryň maşyny

<i>eje</i> - mother	<i>s</i>	<i>pl</i>
1	(meniň) ejäm	(biziň) ejämiz
2	(seniň) ejäň	(siziň) ejäňiz
3	(onuň) ejesi	olaryň ejesi

<i>söz</i> - word	<i>s</i>	<i>pl</i>
1	(meniň) sözüüm	(biziň) sözüümiz
2	(seniň) sözüň	(siziň) sözüňiz

3	(onuň) sözi	olaryň sözi
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*Maşynyň barmy?* - Have you got a car?

The locative and ablative cases take the forms *-nda/-nde*, *-ndan/-nden* following the 3<sup>rd</sup> person possessive:  
*Ejesinde täze köýnek bar* – His mother has a new dress.

*Kitabyndan aldym* – I took it from the book.

*Men Hudaýberdi köçesinde ýaşaýaryn* – I live in Hudaýberdi street.

*Ejesinden aldym* – I got it from his mother.

The genitive personal pronouns *meniň*, *seniň*, etc. (with the exception of *olaryň*) are redundant and therefore optional. When used they emphasise personal possession e.g. *Meniň maşynym uly!* – My car is large!  
 [Whereas yours is small...]

### Predicative Possession [-ky/ki]

e.g. *Şu kitap meniňki* - This book is mine.

*Şu kitap meniňkidi* - This book used to be mine.

*Bu kimiňki, seniňkimi? Howa, meniňki.*

Whose is this, yours? Yes, it's mine.

The possessive pronoun is used in a predicative sense, rather than attributive as in the table above. In English we always have the verb “to be” between the subject and a predicative possessive pronoun (e.g. “The book is mine”). In Turkmen when the possessive pronoun functions as a predicate rather than as a modifier of a noun, it takes the suffix *-ky/-ki*. This can be seen in the examples below.

### 3.6 Going to see someone

Beware of putting a person's name in the dative case when referring to visiting a person; it means something rather different!

Contrast: *Meniň ýanyma gelip biljekmi?* Can you come and see me?

With: *Sen maňa geljekmi?* Will you marry me? (Literally: Will you come to me?)

<i>ýan</i>	side	<i>stem on its own</i>
<i>ýany</i>	his/her/its side	<i>with possessive suffix</i>
<i>ýanyna</i>	to his/her/its side	<i>possessive suffix + dative case</i>

to s.o.'s side	s	pl
1	<i>meniň ýanyma</i>	<i>biziň ýanymyza</i>
2	<i>seniň ýanyňa</i>	<i>siziň ýanyňyza</i>
3	<i>onuň ýanyna</i>	<i>olaryň ýanyna</i>

e.g. *Men Baýramyň ýanyna gitjek* - I'm going to see Bayram

Notice too that Turkmen rarely go and see one person, even if that person is alone in the house:

*Men Orazlara gitjek* - I'm going to Oraz's (including family, friends).

*Men häzir Dawudlarda otyryn* - I'm at David's at the moment

*Myratdägy häzir geler* – Murad and his family will arrive soon

You can also use the predicative possessive suffix:

*Men dostymyňkyda boldym, şonuň üçin giç geldim* - I was at a friend's [place], that's why I arrived late.

### 3.7 Reflexive pronouns

Reflexive pronouns	s	pl
1	(meniň) özüm	(biziň) özümüz
2	(seniň) özüň	(siziň) özüňiz
3	(onuň) özi	(olaryň) özleri

Declension of reflexive pronouns (Three are shown as an example):

	1s	3s	1pl
NOM	özüm	özi	özümiz
ACC	özümi	özüni	özümizi
GEN	özümiň	özüniň	özümiziň
DAT	özüme	özüne	özümize
LOC/TIM	özümde	özünde	özümizde
ABL	özümden	özünden	özümüzden

For the 3<sup>rd</sup> person (s. and pl.) note that ACC, LOC and ABL become *-ni -nde* and *-nden* respectively i.e. following a possessive marker ending in a vowel an n is inserted before the noun declension marker. NB the rounding vowel harmony causes the 3 person possessive *i* to become a *ü* so we have *-üni -ünde* and *-ünden*.

e.g:

*Özüň nähili?* – How are **you**? (When you have already been asked how you are and replied)

*Ol özi aýtdy* – He said so himself.

*Men özüme işleýärin* – I work for myself.

*Öz maşynyň sürýärsiňmi?* – Are you driving your own car? (Or someone else's)

*Ol öz maşyn süreýär* – He drives his car.

### 3.8 Demonstrative Pronouns

There are two forms for each English word “this” and “that”:

“This”

NOM	bu	şu
ACC	muny	şuny
GEN	munuň	şunuň
DAT	muňa	şuňa
LOC/TIM	munda	şunda
ABL	mundan	şundan

“That”

NOM	ol	şol
ACC	ony	şony
GEN	onuň	şonuň
DAT	oňa	şoňa
LOC/TIM	onda	şonda
ABL	ondan	şondan

*Bu gowy komputermi?* – Is this a good computer?

*Seniň jaýyň muňa berjekmi?* – Do you want to give your house to this person?

*Muny aljakmy?* – Do want to buy this one?

*Şonda men öýe gaýtdym* – Then [when that happened] I returned home.

*Onda men gitjek däl* – Then [for that reason] I won't go.

*Şonuň üçin* – therefore.

## 4 Grammar - The Verb Phrase

### 4.1 The infinitive

The infinitive is formed with verb stem followed by the suffix *-mak/-mek*:

<b>almak</b> (to buy/take)	<b>gelmek</b> (to come)
<b>almazlyk</b> (not to buy)	<b>gelmezlik</b> (not to come)

The verb stem is the second person singular form of the imperative (see “Imperative Mood”). The infinitive, however, declines as follows:

NOM	almak (to buy/take)
ACC	almagy
GEN	almagyň
DAT	almaga (in order to buy/take)
LOC/TIM	almakda
ABL	almakdan

Apart from the nominative and dative cases it is almost impossible to translate these without a context, as English simply doesn't have anything remotely like this. The following examples will help a little to illustrate its use:

*Un almak kyn boldy* - it was difficult to get flour  
[U:n almak ky:n boldy]

*Un almagyň kyndygyny sen bileňokmy?* - don't you know how hard it is to buy flour?

*Men un almaga geldim* - I came (in order) to buy flour [purpose: to buy flour]

*Şu gün un almagy ýatdan çykarma* - don't forget to buy flour today!

*Un almakda kynçylyk bar* - [in general] it is difficult to buy flour

*Un almakdan başga işler hem bar* - (I've) got better things to do than buying flour!

The infinitive acts in the same way as an English participle: the last example would be “flour buying-(apart) from other work also exists”.

The infinitive can also be possessed as follows:

my studying etc.	s	pl
1	meniň okamagym	biziň okamagymyz
2	seniň okamagyň	siziň okamagyňyz
3	onuň okamagy	olaryň okamaklary

(notice the *k* in the 3rd person plural)

It seems that whereas in the English language participles can be possessed, in Turkmen only infinitives can, so again a better gloss of a Turkmen infinitive is an English participle.

*Kartoçka (boýunça) berilýän zatlary şu gün seniň almagyň gerek*  
ration-card (by) being-given things this day your buying is-necessary  
you need to buy the food we get on ration cards today

*Seniň okamazlygyň saňa zyýan etdi, sen ekzamenden ikilik aldyň*  
- your lack of study was your downfall, you got two [out of five] in the exam

*Uniwersitetde studentleriň okamaklary üçin şertler döredildi*  
- The University created conditions under which students could study

## 4.2 Question suffix –*my/mi*

This forms part of the conjugated verb or predicate in order to turn a statement into a question:

<i>Bazara gitjekmi?</i>	Do you want to go to the market?
<i>Süýji-püýji ýokmy?</i>	Aren't there any sweets?
<i>Ony tapmadyňmy?</i>	Didn't you find him/her/it?
<i>Dükanda doňdurma barmyka?</i>	I wonder if there is any ice cream in the shop?
<i>Ejeňe hat yazypmysyň?</i>	Did you write a letter to your mother?

## 4.3 The Imperative and Optative Moods (commands and requests)

The imperative, which is used for commands and requests, is simply the root of the verb (or the infinitive minus –*mak/mek*), with the addition of the plural marker –*yň/iň* if addressing more than one person. Here is the paradigm for the verb *garaşmak* – to wait:

<i>person – mood</i>	s	pl
2 – imperative “wait!”	<i>garaş</i>	<i>garaşyň</i>
3 – optative “let him/them wait”	<i>garaşsyn</i>	<i>garaşsynlar</i>

Note that the plural form suffix in –*yň* is used for addressing people of importance such as *ýaşuly* or *başlyk*, whereas for simple polite **requests** the suffix –*ay/-äý* can be added to all these forms.

e.g. *Çörek beräý(iň)* - please pass the bread (*iň* = plural form also used in formal speech to show respect for those older than oneself)

*Alay!* – Help yourself! [Lit: Please take!]

Another commonly used polite form is –*sene/señizläň* (2nd person singular/plural) for polite **commands**

e.g. *Gazly suwdan bir çüýşe bersene* – Would you (please) give me a bottle of carbonated water

*Çay içseñizläň!* - go on, please, have a cup of tea! (Extremely formal, rarely used form)

Occasionally you may here the use of the jussive the emphatic particle –*da/dä* on the verb:

*Ol çay içsin-dä* - go on, let him have a cup of tea (before he goes)!

[ol çay iç'sindä:]

## 4.4 The Voluntative-hortative Mood (let me, shall I)?

The Turkmen language also includes a way of stating that one would like to do something, or asking whether one can do something (asking for permission). Thus it functions as a first person equivalent of the imperative:

“let me/us wait!”	s	pl
1	<i>garaşayyn</i>	<i>garaşaly(ň)</i>

*The suffix –ň is added to the plural form when there are three or more people involved*

eg. *Garaşayynmy?* - Shall I wait?

[garaşayynmy?]

*Häzir, jaň edäýyn* - Just a minute, let me make a telephone call!

*Biz gaýdalyň!* – Please let us go home now!

*Gidelimi?* - Shall we (two) go?

*Ýör, öýde çay içäýeli-dä* - come on, let's (the two of us) go home and have a cup of tea!

*Ýörüň, çayhanada çay içäýeliň-(le)* - come, let's (all) go to the cafe for a cup of tea!

## 4.5 To have

Uses *bar bolmak* – “to exist”, but the *bolmak* usually drops out. Lack of existence is denoted by *ýok*.

e.g. *Mende çörek bar* - I've got some bread (to me bread exists).

*Çaga entek ýok* – (We) haven't yet got any children (children still don't exist).

*Meniň bir gyzym bar* - I've got one daughter (my one daughter-POSS exists).

*Armaň!* – Don't get tired! (Greeting in workplace)

*Bar bol!* – We're fine! (Appropriate reply)

*Un barmy?* – Is there any flour? (i.e. in the shop/house)

*Süýji-püýji ýokmy?* – Aren't there any sweets?

## 4.6 Verb Paradigms

The most useful tenses when first learning to speak Turkmen are the definite past, present, shortened present, indefinite future and definite future. The definite future contains an element of volition, and is more concrete than the indefinite future. The indefinite future is generic, and less concrete. These are shown in the following table:

with <i>negative</i> stem	Definite Past <i>I did, I came, I took...</i>		Present (Literary form) <i>I do, I come, I take...</i>		Shortened Present (spoken form) <sup>6</sup>	
	<i>s</i>	<i>pl</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>pl</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>pl</i>
1 etmek 2 (to do) 3 <i>negative</i>	etdim etdiň etdi <i>etme-</i>	etdik etdiňiz etdi(ler)	edýäriň edýärsiň edýär <i>etme-</i>	edýäris edýärsiňiz edýär(ler)	edýä:n edýä:ň edýä:	edýä:s edýä:ňiz edýä:ler
1 sürmek 2 (to drive) 3	sürdüm sürdüň sürdi <i>sürme-</i>	sürdük sürdüňiz sürdi(ler)	sürýäriň sürýärsiň sürýär <i>sürme-</i>	sürýäris sürýärsiňiz sürýär(ler)	sürýä:n sürýä:ň sürýä:	sürýä:s sürýä:ňiz sürýä:ler
1 almak (to take) 2 3	aldym aldyň aldy <i>alma-</i>	aldymyz aldyňyz aldy(lar)	alýäriň alýärsiň alyar <i>alma-</i>	alýäris alýärsiňiz alýär(ler)	alýä:n alýä:ň alýä:	alýä:s alýä:ňyz alýä:(lar)
1 bolmak (to be) 2 3	boldum bolduň boldy <i>bolma-</i>	bolduk bolduňyz boldy	bolýäriň bolýärsiň bolýär <i>bolma-</i>	bolýäris bolýärsiňiz bolýär(ler)	bolýä:n bolýä:ň bolýä:	bolýä:s bolýä:ňyz bolýä:lar

<sup>6</sup> This is mainly used by the Teke tribe, the two halves of which live in Ahal welayat and the Mary area. Some dialects only use the long form, or a variant of it (such as the Ärsary *edýöriň, bolýöriň* etc.)

(negative)	Present Perfect <i>negative</i> <sup>7</sup> (spoken form) <i>I haven't done...</i>	Indefinite Future <i>NB see note below</i>	Definite Future (does not decline)
	<i>s</i> <i>pl</i>	<i>s</i> <i>pl</i>	
1 etmek 2 (to do) 3		ederin                      ederis edersiň                      edersiňiz eder                      eder(ler)	etjek
<i>neg.</i> 1 2 3	<i>edemo:k</i> <i>edemzo:k</i> <i>edeňo:k</i> <i>edeňzo:k</i> <i>edeno:k</i> <i>edeno:klar</i>	<i>etmerin</i> <i>etmersiň</i> <i>etmersiň</i> <i>etmersiňiz</i> <i>etmez</i> <i>etmez</i>	<i>etjek däl</i>
1 sürmek 2 (drive) 3		sürerin                      süreris sürersiň                      sürersiňiz sürer                      sürer(ler)	sürjek [sür'jök]
<i>neg.</i> 1 2 3	<i>süremo:k</i> <i>süremzo:k</i> <i>süreňo:k</i> <i>süreňzo:k</i> <i>süreno:k</i> <i>süreno:klar</i>	<i>sürmerin...</i>	<i>sürjek däl</i>
1 almak 2 (take) 3		alaryn                      alarys alarsyň                      alarsyňyz alar                      alar(lar)	aljak
<i>neg.</i> 1 2 3	<i>alamo:k</i> <i>alamzo:k</i> <i>alaňo:k</i> <i>alaňzo:k</i> <i>alano:k</i> <i>alano:klar</i>	<i>almaryn</i> <i>almarys</i> <i>almarsyň</i> <i>almarsyňyz</i> <i>almaz</i> <i>almaz</i>	<i>aljak däl</i>
bolmak (to be)	<i>bolamo:k</i> <i>bolamzo:k</i> <i>bolaňo:k</i> <i>bolaňzo:k</i> <i>bolano:k</i> <sup>8</sup> <i>bolano:klar</i>	bolaryn                      bolarys bolarsyň                      bolarsyňyz bolar                      bolar(lar)  <i>bolmaryn...</i>	boljak [bol'jök]  <i>boljak däl</i>

<sup>7</sup> This is actually a shortened form of e.g. *edenim ýok* but is used very frequently in place of the present negative e.g. *men bilamok* – I don't know

<sup>8</sup> In Ärsary these are *sürem ýok*, *bolam ýok* etc.

Personal markers for past tense (Note that some of these are similar to the possessive markers):

<i>-m</i>	<i>-k</i>
<i>-ň</i>	<i>-ňiz</i>
<i>-</i>	<i>-ler</i>

Personal markers for present & future tenses, literary form:

<i>-in</i>	<i>-is</i>
<i>-siň</i>	<i>-siňiz</i>
<i>-</i>	<i>-ler<sup>9</sup></i>

Indefinite future declension following a vowel e.g. for *aýlamak*:

<i>aýlaryn</i>	<i>aýlarys</i>
<i>aýlarsyň</i>	<i>aýlarsyňyz</i>
<i>aýlar</i>	<i>aýlar</i>

The third person future (negative) suffix is not simply a combination of the negative marker *-ma/me* and the future declension *-ar/er*, but has the form *-maz/mez*  
e.g. *ol gitmez* - he won't be going (see large table above)

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<sup>9</sup> Since plurality can be marked in many other ways using, for example, noun declension (see above), the plural marker is often omitted as being redundant e.g. *olar hemmesi gitdi* or *hemmesi gitdi* – they've all left.



## 4.7 Tenses, Aspects, Moods & Evidentiality

Turkmen exhibits a feature known as *evidentiality* – a measure of how definitely the speaker knows that something has taken place. It is used frequently in both oral and literary forms of Turkmen. There are four levels:

1. Direct experience – ‘he fixed the car (and I was there when he did it)’
2. Indirect i.e. using second-hand information – ‘I was told that he fixed the car’
3. Hearsay – ‘I’ve heard that cars sometimes get fixed’
4. Inferred i.e. apparent – ‘it seems that the car is fixed’

ol... (men) 3 <sup>rd</sup> singular (1 <sup>st</sup> singular) <b>Evidentiality<sup>10</sup>:</b> <b>Tenses and moods:</b>	<b>1. Direct (experienced)</b> <i>I was there when...</i>	<b>2. Indirect (unwitnessed)</b> <i>True</i> <i>because I was told it was true...</i>	<b>3. Hearsay (heard that)</b> <i>rumoured that, it is said that, I heard that, etc.</i>	<b>4. Inferred (seems that)</b> <i>it seems that, it turns out that (3<sup>rd</sup> person s.)</i>
<b>Simple Past</b> <i>took</i>	aldy(m)			
<b>Completed Past (Past Perfect)</b> <i>have/had taken</i>	alypdy(m) <i>had taken – past in the past (pluperfect)</i>	alypdyr(yn) <i>he took (unwitnessed)</i>  alandyr(yn) <i>he probably took</i>	alypmyş(ym) <i>people say he took</i>  alanmyş(ym) <i>people say he took</i>	alan eken <i>has taken it seems</i>
<b>Incomplete - pres. take (Imperfective)</b> - past <i>used to take</i>	alýar(yn)  alýardy(m)	alýandyr(yn) <i>he is probably buying, (you know that I am buying)</i>	alýarmyş(ym) <i>it is said that he is taking</i>	alýar eken <i>he is apparently taking</i>
<b>In principle - future will take</b> - past <i>would take, would have taken</i>	alar(yn)  alardy(m)		alarmyş <i>it is said that he used to take (3<sup>rd</sup> person - stories)</i>	alar eken <i>used to take (every day) - story use</i>
<b>Volitional - future will definitely take, want to take</b> - past <i>was going to take</i>	aljak  aljakdy(m)	aljakdyr(yn) <i>he'll probably buy. (let me assure you that I'll buy)</i>	aljakmyş <i>it is said that he'll buy</i>	aljak eken <i>apparently going to take (getting ready to take)</i>
<b>Moods:</b>				
<b>Desire - present intends to t.</b> - past <i>intended to take</i>	almakçy  almakçydy(m)	almakçydyr(yn) <i>he probably intends to buy (let me assure that I intend to buy)</i>	almakçymyş-(ym) <i>it is rumoured that he intends to take</i>	almakçy eken <i>intends to take it seems</i>
<b>Obligation - present have to, should</b> - “past” <i>should have.</i>	almaly <i>he should/ought to take, he needs to take</i>  almalydy(m) <i>he ought to have taken...</i>	almalydyr <i>must definitely take</i>	almalymyş(ym) <i>rumour has it that he has to take</i>	almaly eken(im) <i>should take it seems, he should have taken</i> almalydy(m) eken <i>turns out that he should have taken</i>

NB The *-dyr/dir-* suffix drops out in the second person forms of column 3

eg. *sen bilýäňsiň (bilýärsiň-dir-siň)* - you probably know

*Türkmen dilini öwrenipsiň* – you’ve (already) learnt the Turkmen language

(See below for paradigm)

*Hint: when language learning, learn the first column, then the second, then the fourth, then the third (which is rarely used). Note especially column two, row two -ypdyr is frequently used.*

In folk tales the form *-ar/er eken* is frequently found.

*Ol gider eken* – he would go.

<sup>10</sup> *Evidentiality* is neither a mood nor an aspect. It is similar to the English word ‘apparently’, but is grammatically marked in the verb. There is no grammatically marked equivalent in common European languages. See [4.8](#)

Note that the word *diýip* ‘saying’ is often used in a quotative way, which is a kind of evidential form, contrasted with hearsay i.e. the person actually said it, and I am quoting them.

*'Meniň eziz balam!' diýip enem söýerdi* - My mother used to show her love for me by saying, 'My dear child'.  
*Mallary suwa ýakdym diýip, sen meni aldapsyň* – You deceived me by saying you had watered the animals.

#### 4.8 Subjective past perfect

Since this form is used so frequently, declines so differently, and does not correspond to forms familiar from common European languages, a fuller explanation of its use is now given.

	<i>s</i>		<i>pl</i>	
1	<i>alypdyryn</i>	I must have taken (smth.)	<i>alypdyrys</i>	We must have taken (smth.)
2	<i>alypsyň</i>	You have taken (smth.)	<i>alypsyňyz</i>	You have taken (smth.)
3	<i>alypdyr</i>	He took (smth.)	<i>alypdyr(lar)</i>	They took (smth.)

e.g. *Men uklapdyryn!* I must have fallen asleep!

*Men ters geýinipdirin!* I put my clothes on back-to-front!

*Biz onuň öýüne aýlandyk. Ol işe gidipdir.* We went round to his house but it turned out that he had gone to work.

When is this form used? Whenever the action was unwitnessed by the speaker. For instance if someone is sick, and you haven't yet visited them, you can say *ol kesellepdir* ‘apparently s/he is sick’, but you cannot say *ol keselledi* ‘s/he is sick’. Certain bodily functions are almost always referred to using this form e.g. *ol gaýtarypdyr* – s/he has vomitted. There are some things that it is too polite to mention using witnessed evidentiality!

Another case where this form is used is when a process has reached some stage of completion e.g. learning a language:

*Sen Türkmen dilini öwrenipsiň!* You have learnt Turkmen!

Perhaps only the Turkmen language student's teacher would be qualified to say, “*Sen Türkmen dilini öwrendiň*”, and even then, they might not use it, as they were not there when the student did all his/her homework. The process of language acquisition was mainly unwitnessed, yet it has somehow or other reached a stage of completion.

The negative declines as follows:

	<i>s</i>		<i>pl</i>	
1	<i>almandyryn</i>	<i>It looks as if I didn't take</i>	<i>almandyrys</i>	<i>It looks as if we didn't take</i>
2	<i>almandyrsyň</i>	<i>You haven't taken</i>	<i>almandyrsyňyz</i>	<i>You haven't taken</i>
3	<i>almandyr</i>	<i>He didn't take</i>	<i>almandyr(lar)</i>	<i>They didn't take</i>

e.g. *Ol meni işe almandyr* – He didn't give me a job.

*Siz Türkmen dilini entek öwrenmändirsiniňiz* – You haven't yet learnt Turkmen properly it seems<sup>11</sup>.

*Nahar örän süýji bolupdyr!* – The meal was delicious! (Literally: The food became very sweet)

Questions have another form (notice positioning of the negative particle for 2<sup>nd</sup> person):

	<i>s</i>		<i>pl</i>	
1	<i>alypdyrynmy?</i>	<i>Did it turn out that I took?</i>	<i>alypdyrmysy?</i>	<i>Did it turn out that we took?</i>
2	<i>alypmysyň?</i>	<i>Did you take (in the end)?</i>	<i>alypmysyňyz?</i>	<i>Did you take (in the end)?</i>
3	<i>alypdyrmy?</i>	<i>Did he take (in the end)?</i>	<i>alypdyr(lar)my?</i>	<i>Did they take (in the end)?</i>

e.g. *Otyrmysyňyz?* Are you having a meal? (Literally: Are you sitting?)

*Sag-gurgun otyrmysyňyz?* Are you all well? (Literally: Are you sitting well and healthy?)

Negative questions:

<sup>11</sup> Notice the overlap with the **Objective (apparent)** aspect. Turkmen sometimes use these aspects almost interchangeably.

	<i>s</i>	<i>pl</i>
1	almandyrynmy? <i>Didn't I take (in the end)?</i>	almandyrscopy? <i>Didn't we take (in the end)?</i>
2	almanmysyň? <i>Didn't you take (in the end)?</i>	almanmysyňyz? <i>Didn't you take (in the end)?</i>
3	almandyrmy? <i>Didn't he take (in the end)?</i>	almandyr(lar)my? <i>Didn't they take (in the end)?</i>

e.g. *Yanyňda çörek almanmysyň?* Didn't you bring bread after all?

#### 4.9 Past in the past (pluperfect)

This is formed by taking the gerund form *-yp/ip* and adding the simple past tense suffix *-dy/di*. It is used when referring to something that happened previous to the time frame being talked about e.g. *alypdym* in:

*Men onuň ýanyna aýlandym. Men maşyn alypdym, şonuň üçin men ol ýere çalt baryp ýetdim.*

I went to see him. I had bought a car, so I got there quite quickly.

The negative is formed by taking the negative past participle *-man/män* and adding the simple past tense suffix *-dy/di* e.g.

*Men entek maşyn almandym, şol sebäpli men giç galdym.*

I hadn't yet bought a car, so I was late.

#### 4.10 Modal and Auxiliary Verbs

Some of these decline, some do not. Notice that not all take the infinitive of the main verb.

##### “is necessary, need”:

*Maňa ýaşamaga jay gerek* - I need somewhere to live.

(the verb *gerek* does not decline since it is a modal verb)

##### “very much want, desire”

Format: Verb-*as/es/äs*-possessive + *gelmek* (3s past, present or future)

<i>görmek</i> ‘see’	<i>s</i>	<i>pl</i>
1	<b>göresim</b>	<b>göresimiz</b>
2	<b>göresiň</b>	<b>göresiňiz</b>
3	<b>göresi</b>	<b>göresleri</b>

NB the 3rd plural suffix is not quite the same as normal possessives (it retains [ler])

*(Meniň) Türkmenistany göresim geldi* - I wanted to see Turkmenistan

*(Meniň) turkmen dilini öwrenesim gelýär* - I want to learn Turkmen

*(Seniň) çay içesiň gelýärimi?* - do you want to drink tea?

*(Meniň) Çülä gidesim geler* - I shall want to go to Chulee.

There is another form which has: verb + *-sa/se* (possessive) *-dy/di* (past):

*Türkmen dilini tiz öwrensemdim* (öwren-sem-dim) - I would like to learn Turkmen quickly

And it is also possible to say something like this in an impersonal way:

*Aftobus wagtynda geläýedi* - oh please let the bus come now!

##### “am able to, can”

*Men çörek alyp bilýärim*

Men çörek al -yp bil -ýärim

I bread buy -GER know -IsPst

I am able to buy bread, I can buy bread, I know how to...

##### “may I, is it possible to?”

*(Sizi) surat almak mümkinmi?* - Is it possible to take (your)/a photo?

(the interrogative enclitic *-my/-mi* changes a statement to a question)

“prepare oneself to, just about to”

*Ol suwa bökjek bolyar* - she's just about to jump in the water

“it turns out that, it seems...”

*Ol her guýn süýt alýa:n eken* - it turns out that she buys milk each day

*Sen bilýä:ň eken!* - you know it after all! (to a student who has been tested)

NB *eken* is also used with the present and past participles in the context of stories. Here it simply adds a mythical flavour to the narrative (eg. *Bir bar eken, bir ýo:k eken, gurwaga bar eken* - Once upon a time there was a frog.). The present participle with *eken* denotes a repeated action, the past participle a completed action. The future indefinite participle (eg. *geler*) is also used in stories in this sense (eg. “...” *diýip gezer eken* - saying as he walked). See above table of verb paradigms for other uses.

“I suppose”

Use verb + *öýtmek* ‘think, suppose’

*Ol ma:mladyr öýdýän* - he’s right, I suppose

*Siz uniwersitetde öýlän bolmazsyňyz öýtdym* - You won’t be at the University this afternoon I suppose

“Might be...”

*Onuň geläýmegi mümkin* - he might come

Other ways of saying ‘like’ (without using an auxiliary verb):

“like” type 1:

*Men arak içmegi halamok, men suw içmegi halaýa(ry)n* - I don't like to drink alcohol, I like to drink water.

*Men ol gyz halaýaryn* – I’m in love with that girl.

“like” type 2:

*Men şu köýnegi gowy göreýärim* - I like this dress.

“want to, would like to”

*Men şu kitap aljak* - I want to buy this book.

*Men şol kitap almak isleýärim* - I really want to buy that book.

*Men kitap aljak bolýaryn* - I'm going to buy a book, I want to buy a book.

## 4.11 Mood

### 4.11.1 The Conditional Mood –sa/-se

This is used with *eger* (if), and for some events that are hoped for like the birth of a baby.

al-sa ‘take-COND’	s	pl
1	Alsam ‘if I take’	Alsak ‘if we take’
2	Alsaň ‘if you take’	Alsaňyz ‘if you take’
3	Alsa ‘if he/she/it takes’	Alsalar ‘if they take’

e.g. *Eger sen gitseň, men hem gidärim* - If you go, I will go too.

*Men maşyn alaryn, nesip bolsa* - I’m going to buy a car, God willing (if destined)

Compare the two following examples:

*Ol häzir gelir. Gelse biz bazara gideli.* – He will arrive soon. **When** he gets here let’s go to the market.

*Ol gelse biz belki bazara gideris.* – **If** he comes we might go to the market.

Notice that the word *gelse* can be translated as ‘when he comes’ or ‘if he comes’ depending on the context.

Negative: *almasa(m)*.

### 4.11.2 The Subjunctive Mood

This is formed by the use of the future indefinite tense, and the past tense combined. These are all counterfactual examples.

e.g.

*Sen gideň bolsa gowy **bolardy!*** – It would have been good if you had come too!

*Men maşyn **alardym**, ýöne pulum ýetmedi.* – I would have bought a car, but I didn't have enough money.

*Obada şolaryn öýleriniň töwereginde toýlar bolsa menem hokman giderdim* – At that time if there had been any parties in the area near their house I would definitely have gone.

### 4.11.3 Some Continuous Aspects

Adding *-ber-* after the verb stem and before any suffixes gives the sense of “go on doing”

e.g. *Oturberäý* - please go on sitting!

also the verbs *ýörmek* ‘continue’, *otymak* ‘XXX’, *durmak* ‘stand’, and *ýatmak* ‘lie’ are used to add a continuous aspectual sense. Use them with perfect participles:

e.g. *Olar gezip ýörler* - they're going for a walk.

*Ol ukläp ýatyr* – He is sleeping.

*Myrat dynç alyp ýatyr* – Murad is resting.

*Ýagyş ýagyp dur* – It is raining.

*Biz garaşyp otyrys* – We are waiting.

*Ol heniz hem okap ýör* – He is still studying.

The verbs decline like this:

	s	pl
1	<b>ýörün</b>	<b>ýörüs</b>
2	<b>ýörsüň</b>	<b>ýörsüňiz</b>
3	<b>ýör</b>	<b>ýörler</b>

contrast *işläp ýör* ‘he is still working’, *garaşyp otyr* ‘he is sitting waiting’, *garaşyp dur* ‘he is still waiting’ and *dynç alyp ýatyr* ‘he/she is lying resting’.

## 4.12 Voice

Voice is usually part of the verb formation.

### 4.12.1 Verb formation - Passive

Passive is formed by the addition of the suffix *-yl/-il/-ul/-ül* following a consonant and *-l* following a vowel

e.g.

<i>aýtmak</i>	<i>aýdylmak</i>	(to be said)
<i>okamak</i>	<i>okalmak</i>	(to be read)

### 4.12.2 Verb formation - Middle/Reflexive

The middle voice is formed by the addition of *-an/-en/-un/-ün* following a consonant and *-n* following a vowel e.g.

<i>geýmek</i>	<i>geýinmek</i>	(to get dressed)
<i>görmek</i>	<i>görünmek</i>	(to appear)

Semantically this form can give passive, middle or reflexive senses, though true reflexives would use the reflexive pronoun *öz* e.g. *ol özi geýinip bilýär* – he can get dressed himself

### 4.12.3 Verb formation - Causative

The causative is formed by the addition of suffixes *-dyr/dir*, *-t*, *-yr/ir*, or *-yz/iz* to the verb stem.

e.g.

*okamak* – ‘to study’

*okatmak* – ‘to teach’

*okatdyrmak* – ‘to arrange tuition (for)’, which is a double causative

<i>turmak</i>	to stand up, get up	<i>turuzmak</i>	to get someone up
<i>gorkmak</i>	to be afraid	<i>gorkuzmak</i>	to frighten someone
<i>ýatmak</i>	to lie down	<i>ýatyrmak</i>	to put someone down to sleep
<i>düşünmek</i>	to understand	<i>düşündürmek</i>	to explain
<i>öwrenmek</i>	to learn	<i>öwretmek</i>	to teach

### 4.12.4 Verb formation - Reciprocal/Cooperative

This is formed by the addition of *-yş/iş* to the stem. It denotes some kind of reciprocal action, or something that is gradual.

e.g.

<i>ýetmek</i>	to be enough, sufficient	<i>ýetişmek</i>	to be on time; to succeed
<i>öwrenmek</i>	to learn	<i>öwrenişmek</i>	to get used to
<i>gelmek</i>	to come	<i>gelişmek</i>	to suit someone
<i>almak</i>	to buy	<i>alyşmak</i>	to barter
<i>diýişmek</i>	to discuss (‘talk to each other’)	<i>tanyşmak</i>	to get to know one another

### 4.12.5 Verb formation - Gradual increase (Reciprocal-Causative)

The combination of the reciprocal and the causative suffixes give rise to a new form denoting either a gradual increase in something, a prolonged action, or getting someone to do something with you:

<i>iýmek</i>	to eat	<i>iýişdirmek</i>	to taste (all or a quantity of)
<i>gelmek</i>	to come	<i>gelişdirmek</i>	to attribute beauty to someone
<i>satmak</i>	to sell	<i>satyşdyrmak</i>	to have a sale
-		<i>planlaşdyrmak</i>	to plan, draw up a plan

### 4.12.6 Verb formation - Causative-Passive

Formed by addition of first causative then passive suffixes which combine to form *-dyryl/-diril* or similar (see 4.12.3 and 4.12.1 respectively) e.g. *atlandyrylmak* – to be named; *sadalaşdyrylmak* – to be simplified.

### 4.12.7 Benefactive

This takes the form *-yp/ip* *-aý/äý* e.g.

*Maňa ýazyp beräý-da!* - Please write it down for me!

See 4.13.2 below for a description of the Gerund form *-yp/ip*.

## 4.13 Participles and Gerunds

### 4.13.1 Participles

	Present	“Past”	“Future”
<b>Type 1</b> (negative)	<b>alýa:n</b> <i>taking</i> (almaýan)	<b>alan</b> <i>took, having taken</i> (almadyk)	<b>alar</b> <i>taking (contemp. &amp; story use)</i> (almaz)
<b>Type 2</b>		( <b>aldyk</b> <i>that taking.../my taking</i> )	<b>aljak</b> <i>will be taking</i> (almajak)

Note: the participle *aljak* is used more frequently in contemporary Turkmen. The *aldyk* type of participle is only found in old literary Turkmen, whereas *alan* occurs regularly in both spoken and written Turkmen. The negative suffix *-madyk* is, however, regularly used in spoken Turkmen.

Adjectival Participle (Gerund) suffixes *yp*, *-a*

e.g. *Alyp* taking (negative – *alman* [*alma:n*], *almazdan*)

*Biz Oraz bilen eleşip görüşdik* - Oraz and I greeted each other

*Men şu kitabi bir gi:jede okap çykdy*m - I read the whole book in one night

*Men dura dura ýadadym* - I'm tired of waiting

#### 4.13.2 Gerunds

Gerunds<sup>12</sup>, formed by the verb root plus *-yp/ip*, are often used for the first verbs in a sequence of actions:

*Ol bazara gidip, goýun satyn alypdyr* – He went to the market and bought a sheep.

*Häli aldym-da, şindi aldym bolup barýarkalar, gapdallaryndan bir towşanjyk çykyp*: “*Tilki aga, nebeýle gaty gidýärsiň, örän ylgasyň gelipdir öýdýän?*” - Well they are chasing after him and just on the point of catching him up, when near them a bunny rabbit pops out: “Mr. Fox, what’s the hurry? I suppose you really fancied a run,” he says.

In the second example *bolup barmak* is a compound verb, whereas *çykyp* is a sequential gerund.

#### 4.13.3 Embedding using *-dyk/-dik*

The predicative suffix *-dyk/-dik* is used for embedding (to translate this, you need to insert the verb “to be”, and usually a relative conjunction like “that” in the sentence). This suffix takes the place of a complementizer in the Turkmen language:

eg. *Sen onuň nirede işleýändigini bilýäňmi?*  
 you his where working -PRED-POSS-ACC know -Q?  
*Do you know where he is working? Do you know where he works?*

*Meniň mugallymdigimi bileňokmy?*  
 my teacher -PRED-POSS-ACC don't-you-know- Q?  
*Don't you know that I am a teacher?*

Note: *-digimi* and *-digini* are made up of *-dik-im-i* or *-dik-i-ni* (predicator, possessive suffix, accusative (after a vowel in case of *-ni*)).

the *k* in *-dik* becomes *g* before a vowel

NB see appendix A for a drill on the *-digini* suffix

Use of **üçin** with nouns made from verb stems:

*Üçin* often needs a noun preceding it, so a participle is used with **-lik/-lyk** added to turn it into a noun, then the possessive suffix after that (eg. *ýaşa-ýan-lyk-ym*):

<i>in order to live</i>	<i>s.</i>	<i>pl.</i>
1	<i>ýaşaýanlygym üçin</i>	<i>ýaşaýanlygymyz üçin</i>
2	<i>ýaşaýanlygyň üçin</i>	<i>ýaşaýanlygyňyz üçin</i>
3	<i>ýaşaýanlygy üçin</i>	<i>ýaşaýanlygygy üçin</i>

eg. *Men häzir şu jaýde ýaşaýanlygym üçin pul töleýarin* (I'm paying money for my living in this flat/apartment at the moment i.e. I'm renting this flat/apartment)

but sometimes *üçin* is used with an infinitive as in this example:

*Men pul töläp ýaşamak üçin jaý gözleýarin* (I'm looking for a house to rent)

<sup>12</sup> Verbs used as nouns.

## 5 Other word classes

### 5.1 Postpositions

#### 5.1.1 Introduction

Postpositions are just like prepositions in English, except that they occur after the noun they are related to rather than before it.

e.g. using the postposition *bäri* we have:

*şäheriň bärisinde* – this side of the city

Notice that the noun is in the genitive case, whereas the postposition is both possessed and in the locative case. This same postposition can, however, be used with the nominative case as well:

*Ol ýedi aý bäri Türkmenistanda ýaşaýar eken* – He has been living in Turkmenistan for 7 months.

The postposition *çenli*, on the other hand, takes the dative case on the preceding noun:

*sagat sekizä çenli* – by six o'clock

*Aşgabada çenli* – as far as Ashgabat

#### 5.1.2 Common Postpositions

The following table shows some of the more common postpositions used in Turkmen, and which cases they usually take on the preceding noun:

<i>Postposition</i>	<i>Case on preceding noun</i>	<i>Associated meaning</i>
<i>barada</i>	Nominative	about
<i>bilen</i>		with
<i>sebäpli</i>		because
<i>üçin</i>		for, to, in order to
<i>hökmünde</i>		as
<i>ýaly</i>		like, as if; so that
<i>garşy</i>	Dative	opposed to, against
<i>göra</i>		according to, reason
<i>derek</i>		instead of, in its place
<i>laýyk</i>		similar to, in conformity with
<i>meňzeş</i>		like
<i>çenli</i>		up to, until; by (+ time clause)
<i>ýakyn</i>		close to
<i>aňryk</i>	Ablative	beyond
<i>başga</i>		other than, different
<i>bäri</i>		since, for
<i>daşary</i>		outside of
<i>soň</i>		after



### 5.1.3 Nominal Postpositions

Some postpositions are actually nouns/adjectives in their root form, so they could be called locative nouns e.g. *yz* which means *track* or *ýüz* which means *face*. In fact, most of the postpositions with the suffix *-ynda/-inde/-unda/-ünde* and take the genitive are in this category. These *nominal postpositions*, which are nouns/adjectives in their root form, have been noted in the table below.

<i>Postposition in locative case</i>	<i>Case on preceding noun</i>	<i>Associated meaning as postposition</i>	<i>From noun/adjective</i>	<i>Meaning of root noun/adjective</i>
<i>aňyrsynda</i>	Genitive	behind	<i>aňyr</i>	other
<i>arkasynda</i>		behind	<i>arka</i>	back
<i>başynda</i>		at the start of	<i>baş</i>	head
<i>boýynda</i>		on, along	<i>boýun</i>	neck; shore
<i>gapdalynda</i>		next to, by	<i>gapdal</i>	side
<i>garşysynda</i>		opposite	<i>garşy</i>	against, opposed
<i>içinde</i>		inside	<i>iç</i>	inside
<i>ýüzünde</i>		all over	<i>ýüz</i>	face
<i>ortasynda</i>		in the middle	<i>orta</i>	centre, middle
<i>öňünde</i>		in front of	<i>öň</i>	front
<i>tarapynda</i>		along the side of	<i>tarap</i>	side
<i>ugurynda</i>		along	<i>ugur</i>	side, verge
<i>üstünde</i>		on top of	<i>üst</i>	surface
<i>zynda</i>		behind	<i>yz</i>	track
<i>ýanynda</i>		beside	<i>ýan</i>	side

## 5.2 Adjectives

Adjectives precede the noun they describe e.g.

*adyl sud* – a just judge

*gök önümler* – greens

*uly baýramçylyk* – an important festival

In order to use the adjective as a predicate (in place of a verb), the *-dyr/dir* suffix is often used:

*Aşgabat ulydyr!* – Ashgabat is large!

*Biziň Hudaýymyz beýikdir!* – Our God is great!

Note that there is no equivalent for the verb ‘to be’ in Turkmen. The verb *bolmak* is sometimes translated as a rough equivalent of ‘to be’, but never in the present tense.

*Ol uly adam* – he is an important person

Many nouns can be used as adjectives in Turkmen e.g. *jellat* which means ‘hangman’ or ‘merciless’ according to the context.

## 5.3 Adverbs

Many Turkmen adjectives can be used as adverbs e.g. *ömürboýy* ‘everlasting, eternal’ which can be used with to describe a verb, in which case it means ‘eternally’. There are other adverbs which can only be used adverbally such as *entek*, *häli*, *köplenç*, *käwagt* e.g.

*ol entek gelenok* – she hasn't come yet

*olar köplenç ir gelýär(ler)* – they usually come early

## 5.4 Numerals

### 5.4.1 Cardinal Numbers

One to ten:

1	<i>bir</i>	6	<i>alty</i>
2	<i>iki</i>	7	<i>ýedi</i>
3	<i>üç</i>	8	<i>sekiz</i>
4	<i>dört</i>	9	<i>dokuz</i>
5	<i>bäs [bä:ş]</i>	10	<i>on [o:n]</i>

Eleven onwards:

11	<i>on bir [o:n'bir]</i>
12	<i>on iki</i>
	<i>etc.</i>

Twenty, thirty... ninety

20	<i>ýigrimi</i>	21	<i>ýigrimi bir</i>	22	<i>ýigrimi iki</i>	<i>etc.</i>
30	<i>otuz</i>					
40	<i>kyrk</i>					
50	<i>elli</i>					
60	<i>altmys</i>					
70	<i>ýetmiş</i>					
80	<i>segsen</i>					
90	<i>togsan</i>					

One hundred – nine hundred

100	<i>ýüz</i>
200	<i>iki ýüz</i>
300	<i>üç ýüz</i>
	<i>etc.</i>

One thousand – a million

1000	<i>müň</i>
2000	<i>iki müň</i>
3000	<i>üç müň</i>
	<i>etc.</i>

1000000      *bir million*

One thousand million (US billion) – *milliard*

E.g. 1,352,647      *bir million üç ýüz elli iki müň alty ýüz kyrk ýedi* – one million three hundred and fifty-two thousand six hundred and forty seven.

### 5.4.2 Ordinal Numbers

These are formed by use of the suffix *-ynjy/inji* following a consonant and *-njy/nji* following a vowel e.g.

*sekizinji Mart* – the eighth of March

*ol ikinji gatda ýaşaýar* – he lives on the first [US: second] floor

### 5.4.3 Counting Classifiers

When asking for a number of items counting classifier *sany* is usually used:

*Gazly suwdan iki sany çüýşe bersene* – Please give me two bottles of fizzy water.

## 6 Sentence-level analysis, syntax

### 6.1 Word order

The usual word order is:

	subject	(indirect object)	object	verb phrase (e.g. gerund + main verb.)
1	<i>Sen</i>	<i>çagalara</i>	<i>derman</i>	<i>aldyňmy?</i>
2	<i>Ol</i>	<i>ikinji gatda</i>		<i>ýaşayar</i>
3	<i>Men</i>		<i>pul</i>	<i>töledim</i>
4	<i>Men</i>	<i>ýaşamak üçin</i>	<i>jaý</i>	<i>gözleýärim</i>
5	<i>Ol</i>	<i>Aşgabatdan Moskwa</i>		<i>uçdy</i>
6	<i>Ol</i>	<i>agasyňa</i>	<i>iki goýun</i>	<i>beripdir</i>
7	<i>Köp adam</i>	<i>Aşgabatda</i>		<i>ýaşayar(lar)</i>
8	<i>Ol</i>	<i>jennet barada</i>		<i>arzuw etdi</i>

1 - Have you bought medicine for the children?

2 - He lives on the second floor

3 - I paid money

4 - I'm looking for a house to live in

5 - He flew from Ashgabat to Moscow

6 - He apparently gave his brother two sheep

7 - Many people live in Ashgabat

8 - He dreamed about paradise

### 6.2 Converbs Expressing Simultaneous and sequential actions (“when, after, while”)

#### 6.2.1 Sequential present/future actions (before, until) –ça/çä

The suffixes are added to the present participles like so:

“before I come back”	s	pl
<b>1</b>	men gelyänçäm	biz gelyänçäk
<b>2</b>	sen gelyänçäň	siz gelyänçäňiz
<b>3</b>	ol gelyänçe	olar gelyänçe(ler)

e.g. *Sen şuny ýazýançaň, men daşary çykyp geleýin* - while you're writing this down, let me pop outside briefly. (Literally “until you write this, let me go out and come back”).

*Men daşary çykyp gelyä(ri)ňçäm, sen şuny ýaz* - while I'm outside, you write this down! (lit: I'm going to pop outside, you write this down **before** I get back!)

*Men öýlän bazara gidip gelyänçäm, siz öýde maňa garaşyp oturarsyňyz* - This afternoon you wait at home **until** I get back from the bazaar.

*Ol Moskvadan gelyänçe sen maşyny bejermeli* - You've got to repair the car **before** he gets back from Moscow.

#### 6.2.2 Simultaneous Past actions of long duration (while, during, when) –ka/kä

Formed by adding -kä/-ka to the verb stem, followed by personal suffixes (-m, -ň etc.). It is used when the action occurs over an extended time period i.e. during a continuous event.

e.g. *Men işden öýe gelyärkäm, Çynar magazinine sowuldym* – when (lit: while) I was coming home from work, I stopped off at Chinar magazine.

#### I wonder if... –myka/-mikä

Use the suffixes -myka -mikä -muka -mükä

eg. *Ol işleýärmikä* - I wonder if he's working?

*Magazinde çörek ýokmuka?* – I wonder if there might not be some bread in the shop?

### 6.2.3 Simultaneous Past actions - punctiliar (when) –da/-de

Formed by adding the possessive and locative (in time) suffixes to the past participle (*gelen-imiz-de* for example). It denotes an action of short or definite duration occurring in some kind of context (e.g. winter), whereas *-ka* is a longer action. See table below:

(spoken form in brackets)	s	pl
1	gelenimde (gelemde)	gelenimizde (gelemizde)
2	geleniňde (geleňde)	geleniňizde (geleňizde)
3	geleninde (gelende)	geleninde (gelende)

e.g. *Men Türkmenistana gelenimde, gys aýydy* - when I came to Turkmenistan, it was winter

### 6.2.4 Sequential actions (after, when, before) –dan/-den

Formed by adding *-dan, -den* to the verb stem, followed by *soň* (*soň* means “after” – see section [5.1 Postpositions](#)):

e.g. *Sapak gutarandan soň, men bazara gitjek* - when the lesson's finished, I'm going to the bazaar

For posteriority simply use *öň* instead of *soň*. e.g. *Sapakdan öň* - before the lesson

### Contrast (but...) bolsa, -da/-de

There are many different types of contrast that would be translated “but” in English:

eg.

*Sende gara ruçka bar, mende bolsa gök*  
to you black pen exist, to me if it is (rather) blue  
- you've got a black pen, but I've got a blue one

## 6.3 Sub-clauses and reported speech

Reported speech has the following construction:

$NP_{SU} S_{DO} diýip aytady/sorady$  etc.

Where  $NP_{SU}$  is the subject,  $S_{DO}$  is the reported speech, and *diýip* means “said that” (literally “saying”)

e.g. *Men Myrada “men gitjek däl” diýip aýtym* - I told Murad that I wouldn't be going.

or *Ol “men gitjek” diýdi.* - He said “I'm going.”

*Sen Marala aýdäý, Gözel “oňa ýaglyk aldym” diýdi* – tell Maral that Gozel said that she had bought her a head scarf

For oral story-telling and longer discourses:

*Ol şeýle gürrüň berdi: “men... ”* - he told this tale, “I... ”

Plan-purpose clauses also have the same construction:

$NP_{SU} S_{PURP} diýip VP$

Where in this case the  $S_{PURP}$  is a subclause, VP is the verb phrase, and *diýip* is equivalent to “in order to” in English:

*Men seni göreýin diýip geldim* - I came in order to see you

Indirect speech uses the **-dik** suffix (predicative suffix):

*Ol özüniň gitjekdigini aýtdy* - she said that she was going to leave  
 she her -own going-to-go-PRED-POSS-ACC said

Or it simply has a comma (pause) and uses the 3rd person singular:

*Sen Marala aýdäý, Gözel oňa ýaglyk alypdyr* – tell Maral Gozel has bought her a head scarf).

In literary Turkmen the following construction is often found:

*Ol şeýle diýdi:* “ ” - he said, “ ”

Some more examples of indirect speech:

*Ol Angliýa gitjekdigi barada aýtdy* - he talked about his going to England

*Ol Angliýa gitjegini aýtdy* - he said that he's going to England

*Ol meniň Angliýa gitjegimi aýtdy* - he said that I am going to England

*Ol saňa meniň Angliýa gitjekdigimi barada aýtdymy?* - has he told you that I am going to England?

*Ol saňa meniň Angliýa gitjegimi aýtdymy?* - has he told you that I'm going to England?

## 6.4 Conjunctions and Subordinators

Often sentences that would contain the word “because” in English would be translated as two separate sentences without any conjunction in Turkmen:

*Men gitjek däl. Men ýadadym.*

I'm not going **because** I'm too tired. (Lit. 'I'm not going. I'm too tired.')

There are, however, several words which function as conjunctions or subordinators:

<b>çünki</b>	because	<i>Ol gyşgynç. Çünki ol garrapdyr.</i>	He's miserly. It's because he's grown old.
<b>-da/-de</b>	and, but		
<b>emma</b>	but		
<b>hem</b>	also, and		
(sebäp	reason)	<b>sebäbi</b>	because, for this reason
<b>soň</b>	later		
<b>şoňa görä</b>	seeing that		
<b>şeýlelikde</b>	in this way		
<b>şonuň üçin</b>	therefore		
<b>we</b>	and		
<b>welin</b>	however		
<b>ýöne</b>	but		

## 7 Word Formation

### 7.1 Verbs to Nouns

Formed by adding the suffixes *-ýyş/-ýiş*, *-lyk/-lik* or *-ma/-me* to the verb stem:

<i>Infinitive of Verb</i>	<i>Gloss</i>	<i>Derived Noun</i>	<i>Gloss</i>
okamak	to study	okaýyş	study
ýaşamak	to live	ýaşaýyş	life
geplemek	to speak	gepleýiş	talk/conversation
garamak	to look	garaýyş	opinion (point of view)

These nouns are often possessed as follows:

e.g. *Şu mesele seniň garaýyşyň meni gyzyklandyrýar* - Your **opinion** on this matter interests me.

Notice that the *y* drops out when the possessive suffix is added i.e. *-ýyş* becomes *-ýş* when followed by *-y*.

### 7.2 Adjectives to Nouns and vica versa

Many nouns can simply be used as adjectives, and many adjectives as adverbs, without any changes at all. The suffix *-ly/-li* sometimes changes a noun to an adjective, and suffix *-lyk/-lik* sometimes changes an adjective to a noun:

<i>Original word</i>	<i>Gloss</i>		<i>Generated word</i>	<i>Gloss</i>
azgyn	prostitute	→	azgyn	immoral
batgalyk	bog		batgalyk	boggy
akyl	intellect		akylly	wise
güýç	strength, power		güýçli	strong, powerful
akylly	wise		akyllylyk	wisdom
abat	whole		abatlyk	wholeness

## 8 Bibliography

Frank and Tachmouradova, *Turkmen-English Dictionary*, Dunwoody Press, 1999

## 9 Appendices

### 9.1 Appendix A - A drill to help master the “-digini” suffix

The model sentence uses the verb *bişirmek* – to cook, bake:

*Maral Gözel -iň çörek bişir -en -dik -i -ni bil -ýär*  
 Maral Gözel GEN bread bake PPTC EMB POSS ACC know PRES  
 Maral knows that Gozel has baked bread.

Substitution Item		Participle + suffix	
(Model sentence)	<i>Maral Gözeliň çörek</i>	<i>bişirendigini</i>	<i>bilýär</i>
1. <i>alan</i> ‘having bought/taken’	“	<i>alandygyny</i>	“
2. <i>iýen</i> ‘having eaten’	“	<i>etc.</i>	“
3. <i>satan</i> ‘having sold’	“		“
4. <i>beren</i> ‘having given’	“		“
5. <i>getiren</i> ‘having brought’	“		“
6. <i>soran</i> ‘having asked’	“		“

How to drill:

1. Tape your language resource person going across each row, including the substitution item in the first column.
2. Then tape him/her just saying each sentence, with a pause afterwards long enough for you to mimic the sentence.

The best thing to do is to whisper each sentence after him/her while you are recording. Then you can listen to the first recording until it is familiar, and practice repeating the sentence with the second. If you do the repetition drill with your language resource person, instead of the tape recording, s/he should repeat the sentence after you only if you make a mistake.

## 9.2 Key

ABL	Ablative
ACC	Accusative
DAT	Dative
EMB	Embedded
GEN	Genitive
LOC	Locative
NOM	Nominative
p	Plural
POSS	Possessive
PPTC	Past Participle
PRES	Present tense (unmarked = 3 <sup>rd</sup> person)
s	Singular
S	Sentence
PURP	Purpose

## 9.3 The Case System

English has mostly lost its case system, so we struggle to understand languages with highly-developed systems, as Turkmen has. Here is a brief explanation of each case, with some rough equivalents in English:

<i>Case</i>	<i>Explanation</i>	<i>Rough Equivalent</i>
Nominative	Usually the case the subject is in	-
Accusative	Usually the case the object is in	-
Genitive	Used when two nouns need connecting together	of, 's
Dative	Usually shows motion towards some kind of goal, or can be used to denote purpose, or the recipient of some benefit	to
Locative	It shows where something is at in either space or time	in, on, at
Ablative	Usually shows motion away from a source, but occasionally shows the reason for something, why something is true	from, of

Example in English: I kicked the ball  
I is the subject, ball is the object.