



<b>Writing system</b>
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<b>ISO 639-3</b>	tgk
<b>Glottolog</b>	taji1245 ( <a href="http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/taji1245">http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/taji1245</a> ) <sup>[2]</sup>
<b>Linguasphere</b>	58-AAC-ci

## Name

Up to and including the nineteenth century, speakers in Afghanistan and Central Asia had no separate name for the language and simply regarded themselves as speaking "Farsi" which is the *endonym* for the Persian language. The term "Tajik", derived from the Persian for "foreigner", was an *exonym* used by Turkic speakers to refer to Persian speakers (the word *Tat* has a similar origin), though since adopted by the speakers themselves.<sup>[13]</sup>

In 1989, with the growth in *Tajik* nationalism, a law was enacted declaring Tajik the state language. In addition, the law officially equated Tajik with *Persian*, placing the word *Farsi* (the endonym for the Persian language) after Tajik. The law also called for a gradual reintroduction of the Perso-Arabic alphabet.<sup>[14][15][16][17][18][19][20][21][22][23][24][25]</sup>

In 1999, the word *Farsi* was removed from the state-language law.<sup>[2]</sup>

## Geographical distribution

The most important cities of Central Asia—*Samarkand* and *Bukhara*—are in present-day *Uzbekistan*, where ethnic Tajiks comprise a majority.<sup>[26][27]</sup> Today, virtually all Tajik speakers in Bukhara are bilingual in Tajik and Uzbek. This Tajik–Uzbek *bilingualism* has had a strong influence on the phonology, morphology, and syntax of Bukharan Tajik.<sup>[28]</sup> Tajiks are also found in large numbers in the *Surxondaryo Region* in the south and along Uzbekistan's eastern border with Tajikistan. Tajik is still widely spoken in *Samarqand* and *Bukhara* today, as Tajiks account for perhaps 70% of the total population of *Samarqand* and have been estimated to make up as much as 90% of *Bukhara*.<sup>[29][30]</sup>

Official statistics in Uzbekistan state that the Tajik community comprises 5% of the nation's total population.<sup>[31]</sup> However, these numbers do not include ethnic Tajiks who, for a variety of reasons, choose to identify themselves as Uzbeks in population census forms.<sup>[32]</sup> During the Soviet "*Uzbekisation*" supervised by *Sharof Rashidov*, the head of the Uzbek Communist Party, Tajiks had to choose either to stay in Uzbekistan and get registered as Uzbek in their passports or leave the republic for the less-developed agricultural and mountainous Tajikistan.<sup>[33]</sup> The "*Uzbekization*" movement ended in 1924.<sup>[34]</sup> Native Tajiks living in the nation of Uzbekistan have reportedly estimated that Tajiks make up 25%-35% of the nation's population.<sup>[29]</sup>

Tajiks constitute 80% of Tajikistan's population, and the language dominates in most parts of the country. Some Tajiks in *Gorno-Badakhshan* in southeastern Tajikistan, where the *Pamir languages* are the native languages of most residents, are bilingual. Tajiks are the dominant ethnic group in Northern Afghanistan as well, and are also the majority group in scattered pockets elsewhere in the country, particularly urban areas such as *Kabul*, *Mazar-i-Sharif*, *Kunduz*, *Ghazni* and *Herat*. Tajiks constitute between 25% and 35% of the total population of the country. In Afghanistan, the dialects spoken by ethnic Tajiks are written using the *Persian alphabet* and referred to as *Dari*, along with the dialects of other groups in Afghanistan such as the *Hazaragi* and *Aimaq dialects*. Approximately 48%-58% of Afghan citizens are native speakers of *Dari*.<sup>[35]</sup> A large Tajik-speaking *diaspora* exists due to the instability that has plagued Central Asia in recent years, with significant numbers of Tajiks found in *Russia*, *Kazakhstan*, and beyond. This Tajik diaspora is also the result of the poor state of the economy of Tajikistan, and each year approximately one million men leave Tajikistan in order to gain employment in *Russia*.<sup>[36]</sup>

## Dialects

Tajik dialects can be approximately split into the following groups:

1. Northern dialects (Northern Tajikistan, Bukhara, Samarkand, Kyrgyzstan, and the Varzob valley region of Dushanbe).<sup>[37]</sup>
2. Central dialects (dialects of the upper Zarafshan Valley)<sup>[37]</sup>
3. Southern dialects (South and East of Dushanbe, Kulob, and the Rasht region of Tajikistan)<sup>[37]</sup>
4. Southeastern dialects (dialects of the Darvoz region and the Amu Darya near Rushon)<sup>[37]</sup>

The dialect used by the Bukharan Jews of Central Asia is known as the Bukhori dialect and belongs to the northern dialect grouping. It is chiefly distinguished by the inclusion of Hebrew terms, principally religious vocabulary, and a historical use of the Hebrew alphabet. Despite these differences, Bukhori is readily intelligible to other Tajik-speakers, particularly speakers of northern dialects.

A very important moment in the development of the contemporary Tajik, especially of the spoken language, is the tendency in changing its dialectal orientation. The dialects of Northern Tajikistan were the foundation of the prevalent standard Tajik, while the Southern dialects did not enjoy either popularity or prestige. Now all politicians and public officials make their speeches in the Kulob dialect, which is also used in broadcasting.<sup>[38]</sup>

## Phonology

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### Vowels

The table below lists the six vowel phonemes in standard, literary Tajik. Letters from the Tajik Cyrillic alphabet are given first, followed by IPA transcription. Local dialects frequently have more than the six seen below.

Tajik vowels <sup>[39]</sup>

	Front	Central	Back
Close	и, ѝ /i/		у /u/
Mid	е /e/	ѣ /ɐ/	о /ɔ/
Open	а /æ/		

In central and southern dialects, /ɐ/ merges with /u/.<sup>[40]</sup>

The open back vowel has varyingly been described as mid-back,<sup>[41][42]</sup> [ɒ],<sup>[43]</sup> [ɔ],<sup>[7]</sup> and [ɔː].<sup>[44]</sup> It is analogous to standard Persian *â* (long *a*).

### Consonants

The Tajik language contains 24 consonants, 16 of which form contrastive pairs by voicing: [б/п] [в/ф] [д/т] [з/с] [ж/ш] [ч/ҷ] [г/к] [ғ/х].<sup>[39]</sup> The table below lists the consonant phonemes in standard, literary Tajik. Letters from the Tajik Cyrillic alphabet are given first, followed by IPA transcription.

	<u>Labial</u>	<u>Dental/Alveolar</u>	<u>Palatal</u>	<u>Velar</u>	<u>Uvular</u>	<u>Glottal</u>
<u>Nasal</u>	М /m/	Н /n/				
<u>Stop</u>	п б /p b/	т д /t d/	ч қ /tʃ dʒ/	к г /k g/	қ /q/	ъ /?/
<u>Fricative</u>	ф в /f v/	с з /s z/	ш ж /ʃ ʒ/		х ғ /χ ʁ/	ҳ /h/
<u>Approximant</u>		л /l/	й /j/			
<u>Trill</u>		р /r/				

## Word stress

Word stress generally falls on the first syllable in finite verb forms and on the last syllable in nouns and noun-like words.<sup>[39]</sup> Examples of where stress does not fall on the last syllable are adverbs like: *бале* (*bale*, meaning "yes") and *зеро* (*zero*, meaning "because"). Stress also does not fall on enclitics, nor on the marker of the direct object.

## Grammar

The word order of Tajiki Persian is subject–object–verb. Tajik Persian grammar is almost identical to the classical Persian grammar (and the grammar of modern varieties such as Iranian Persian), although there are notable differences.<sup>[45]</sup> The most notable difference between classical Persian grammar and Tajik Persian grammar is the construction of the present progressive tense in each language. In Tajik, the present progressive form consists of a present progressive participle, from the verb *истодан* *istodan* 'to stand', and a cliticized form of the verb *-аст* *-ast* 'to be'.<sup>[7]</sup>

Ман мактуб навишта истода-ам  
*man maktub navišta istoda-am*  
 I letter write be  
 'I am writing a letter.'

In Classical Persian, the present progressive form consists of the verb *دار* *dār* 'to have' followed by a conjugated verb in either the simple present tense, the habitual past tense, or the habitual past perfect tense.<sup>[46]</sup>

*man dār-am kār kon-am*  
 I have work do  
 'I am working.'

## Nouns

Nouns are not marked for grammatical gender, although they are marked for number.

Two forms of number exist in Tajik, singular and plural. The plural is marked by either the suffix *-ҳо* *-ho* or *-он* *-on* (with contextual variants *-ён* *-yon* and *-гон* *-gon*), although Arabic loan words may use Arabic forms. There is no definite article, but the indefinite article exists in the form of the number "one" *як* *yak*, and *-е* *-e*, the first positioned before the noun and the second joining the noun as a suffix. When a noun is used as a direct object, it is marked by the suffix *-ро* *-ro*, e.g. *Рустамро задам* (*Rustam-ro zadam*), "I hit Rustam". This direct object suffix is added to the word after any plural suffixes. The form *-ро* can be literary or formal. In older forms of the Persian language, *-ро* could indicate both direct and indirect objects and some phrases used in modern Persian and Tajik have maintained this suffix on indirect objects, as seen in the following example: (*Худоро шукр* *Xudo-ro šukr* - "Thank God"). Modern Persian does not use the direct object marker as a suffix on the noun, but rather, as a stand-alone morpheme.<sup>[39]</sup>

## Prepositions

### Simple prepositions

Tajik	English
аз ( <i>az</i> )	from, through, across
ба ( <i>ba</i> )	to
бар ( <i>bar</i> )	on, upon, onto
бе ( <i>be</i> )	without
бо ( <i>bo</i> )	with
дар ( <i>dar</i> )	at, in
то ( <i>to</i> )	up to, as far as, until
чун ( <i>čun</i> )	like, as

## Vocabulary

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Tajik is conservative in its vocabulary, retaining numerous terms that have long since fallen into disuse in Iran and Afghanistan, such as *арзиз* (*arziz*), meaning "tin", and *фарбеҳ* (*farbeh*), meaning "fat". Most modern loan words in Tajik come from Russian as a result of the position of Tajikistan within the Soviet Union. The vast majority of these Russian loanwords which have entered the Tajik language through the fields of socioeconomics, technology, and government, where most of the concepts and vocabulary of these fields have been borrowed from the Russian language. The introduction of Russian loanwords into the Tajik language was largely justified under the Soviet policy of modernization and the necessary subordination of all languages to Russian for the achievement of a Communist state.<sup>[47]</sup> Vocabulary also comes from the geographically close Uzbek language and, as is usual in Islamic countries, from Arabic. Since the late 1980s, an effort has been made to replace loanwords with native equivalents, using either old terms that had fallen out of use, or coined terminology. Many of the coined terms for modern items such as *гармкунак* (*garmkunak*), meaning 'heater' and *чангкашак* (*čangkašak*), meaning 'vacuum cleaner' differ from their Afghan and Iranian equivalents, adding to the difficulty in intelligibility between Tajik and other forms of Persian.

In the table below, Persian refers to the standard language of Iran, which differs somewhat from the Dari Persian of Afghanistan. Another Iranian language, Pashto, has also been included for comparative purposes.

Tajik	МОҲ (moh)	НАВ (nav)	МОДАР (modar)	ХОҶАР (xohar)	ШАБ (šab)	БИНӢ (binī)	СЕ (se)	СИЁҶ (siyoh)	СУРҶ (surx)	ЗАРД (zard)	САБЗ (sabz)	ГУРГ (gurg)
<b>Other Iranian languages</b>												
<u>Persian</u>	ماه māh	نو nou	مادر mādar	خواهر xāhar	شب šab	بینی bīnī	سه se	سیاه siyāh	سرخ sorx	زرد zard	سبز sabz	گرگ gorg
<u>Pashto</u>	مياشت myāsh̄t	نوی nəwāi	مور mor	خور xor	ښپه shpa	پوزه poza	درې dre	تور tor	سور sur	زیر zyaṛ	شین، زرغون shin, zərghun	لېوه lewə
<u>Kurdish (Kurmanji)</u>	meh	nû	dê	xwîşk	şev	poz	sisê, sê	reş	sor	zer	kesk	gur
<b>Other Indo-European languages</b>												
<u>English</u>	month	new	mother	sister	night	nose	three	black	red	yellow	green	wolf
<u>Armenian</u>	ամիս amis	նոր nor	մայր mayr	քույր k'uyr	գիշեր gišer	քիթ k'it'	երեք yerek'	սև sev	կարմիր karmir	դեղին degin	կանաչ kanač	գայլ gayl
<u>Sanskrit</u>	मास mās	नव nav	मातृ mātar	स्वसृ swasar	नक्त nakt	नास nās	त्रि tri	श्याम šyam	रुधिर rudhir	पीत pīt	हरित harit	वृक vrik
<u>Russian</u>	месяц mesjats	новый novyi	мать mat'	сестра siestra	ночь nočh'	нос nos	три tri	чёрный chiornyi	красный, рыжий krasnyi, ryzhyi	жёлтый zholtyi	зелёный zielionyi	волк volk

## Writing system

In Tajikistan and other countries of the former Soviet Union, Tajik Persian is currently written in Cyrillic script, although it was written in the Latin script beginning in 1928 and the Arabic alphabet prior to 1928. In the Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic, the use of the Latin script was later replaced in 1939 by the Cyrillic script.<sup>[48]</sup> The Tajik alphabet added six additional letters to the Cyrillic script inventory and these additional letters are distinguished in the Tajik orthography by the use of diacritics.<sup>[49]</sup> In an interview to Iranian news media in 2008, Tajikistan's deputy culture minister said Tajikistan would study the issue of switching its Tajik alphabet from Cyrillic to Perso-Arabic script used in Iran and Afghanistan when the government feels that "the Tajik people become familiar with the Persian alphabet".<sup>[50]</sup>

## History

According to many scholars, the New Persian language (which subsequently evolved into the Persian forms spoken in Iran, Afghanistan and Tajikistan) developed in Transoxiana and Khorasan, in what are today parts of Afghanistan, Iran, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. While the New Persian language was descended primarily from Middle Persian, it also incorporated substantial elements of other Iranian languages of ancient Central Asia, such as Sogdian.

Following the Arab conquest of Iran and most of Central Asia in the 8th century AD, Arabic for a time became the court language, and Persian and other Iranian languages were relegated to the private sphere. In the 9th century AD, following the rise of the Samanids, whose state was centered around the cities of Bukhoro (Buxoro), Samarqand and Herat, and covered much of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan and northeastern Iran, New Persian emerged as the court language and swiftly displaced Arabic. Arabic influence continued to show itself in the form of the Perso-Arabic script used to write the language (replaced in Tajik by Latin and then Cyrillic in the 20th century) and a large number of Arabic loanwords.

New Persian became the lingua franca of Central Asia for centuries, although it eventually lost ground to the Chaghatai language in much of its former domains as a growing number of Turkic tribes moved into the region from the east. Since the 16th century AD, Tajik has come under increasing pressure from neighboring Turkic languages. Once spoken in areas of



Tajik Republic's 1929 coat of arms with Tajik language in Perso-Arabic script  
جمهوریت شوروی مختارتا جیلمستان

Turkmenistan, such as Merv, Tajik is today virtually non-existent in that country. Uzbek has also largely replaced Tajik in most areas of modern Uzbekistan. Nevertheless, Tajik persisted in pockets, notably in Samarqand, Bukhoro and Surxondaryo Province, as well as in much of what is today Tajikistan.

The Russian Empire in Russian Turkestan implemented Turkification upon the Ferghana and Sarmakand Tajiks replacing the Tajik language with Uzbek resulting in an Uzbek dominant speaking Samarkand whereas decades before Tajik was the dominant language in Samarkand.<sup>[51]</sup>

The creation of the Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic within the Soviet Union in 1929 helped to safeguard the future of Tajik, as it became an official language of the republic alongside Russian. Still, substantial numbers of Tajik-speakers remained outside the borders of the republic, mostly in the neighboring Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic, which created a source of tension between Tajiks and Uzbeks. Neither Samarqand nor Bukhoro was included in the nascent Tajik S.S.R., despite their immense historical importance in Tajik history. After the creation of the Tajik S.S.R., a large number of ethnic Tajiks from the Uzbek S.S.R. migrated there, particularly to the region of the capital, Dushanbe, exercising a substantial influence in the republic's political, cultural and economic life. The influence of this influx of ethnic Tajik immigrants from the Uzbek S.S.R. is most prominently manifested in the fact that literary Tajik is based on their northwestern dialects of the language, rather than the central dialects that are spoken by the natives in the Dushanbe region and adjacent areas.

After the fall of the Soviet Union and Tajikistan's independence in 1991, the government of Tajikistan has made substantial efforts to promote the use of Tajik in all spheres of public and private life. Tajik is gaining ground among the once-Russified upper classes, and continues its role as the vernacular of the majority of the country's population. There has been a rise in the number of Tajik publications. Increasing contact with media from Iran and Afghanistan, after decades of isolation under the Soviets, is also having an effect on the development of the language.

## See also

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- Academy of Persian Language and Literature
- Bukhori
- Iranian people
- Iranian Studies
- List of Persian poets and authors
- List of Tajik singers
- Tajik alphabet
- Tajik Wikipedia

## Notes

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## Further reading

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## External links

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- [Tajiki Cyrillic to Persian alphabet converter](https://web.archive.org/web/20180823074936/http://persian-tajik.ir/Default.aspx) (<https://web.archive.org/web/20180823074936/http://persian-tajik.ir/Default.aspx>)
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- [BBC news in Tajik](http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/tajikistan/) (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/tajikistan/>)
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- [намоишгоҳи "Китоби Душанбе"](https://www.ozodi.org/a/29550914.html) (<https://www.ozodi.org/a/29550914.html>). A news clip about a Dushanbe book exhibition, with examples of various members of the public speaking Tajiki.

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