Uto-Aztecan Languages

Uto-Aztecan (UA) languages are spoken in a nearly contiguous block from Utah to southern Mexico, with outliers in Central America. The name derives from the geographically extreme Utes (whence 'Ute') and Aztecs (language: Nahautl). UA peoples represent an extraordinary range of social formations—farming bands in the Great Basin, Plains warriors, the unique Pueblo agriculturalists, mara-thon-running mountaineers, the centralized Aztec state. The languages are diverse typologically. Verbal morphol-ogy is moderately to highly complex; some languages have elaborate verb forms including pronominal agreement, while others have pronominal ethics or include pronominals in sentence-initial 'auxiliary' complexes. Causal subordinat-ion involves switch-reference interacting with relative-tense and modal categories. Case marking is nominative (unmarked) vs. accusative; subjects of subordinated clauses are often in accusative case. Direct objects of imperatives are sometimes in nominative instead of accusative case. Of special interest is the sharp distinction between possessed and unpossessed (absolute) nouns; the latter have an 'abso-lute' ending (a regrettably persistent misnomer), e.g., Nahautl [-tl] (the 'id' of 'Nahautl' and of many Mexican place names), as well as a distinct accusative suffix.

There are no ancient tests comparable to Mayan stone hieroglyphs. At the time of the Spanish conquest (1521), the Aztecs had a kind of hieroglyphic writing (in addition to a pictographic system), but the manuscripts were of scant date because of a tradition of periodically burning chronicles embarrassing to the current ruler. The Spaniards proceeded to burn most of the remaining manuscripts. A number of 'classical' Nahautl codices from the sixteenth century are preserved, using an alphabetic script devised by the conquistadors, and some lexical and grammatical studies of this period have survived. For most other UA languages, reliable documentation is largely or entirely from twentieth century fieldwork. Linguists are fortunate in that (a) languages from each UA region survived into this period, and (b) the caliber of grammatical description has been excep-tional. Linguists better known for other pursuits who have studied UA languages include Sydney Lamb (strati-fication grammar), Ken Hale (syntax of nonconfigura-tional languages), and Ronald Langacker (cognitive grammar). Benjamin Whorf based his famous linguistic relativity theory largely on comparisons between English and Hopi grammatical categories; of the many commen-tators, few have understood his main point and fewer have recognized the subtlety of his strikingly modern cognitive analysis. Edward Sapir's 1930 grammar of Southern Paiute is perhaps the greatest accomplishment of American descriptive linguists; his exploration of noun morphophonemics in this language stimulated his discovery of the phoneme as a psychological entity and prefigured the underlying representations of generative phonology.

Recognition of lexical correspondences among UA lan-guages goes back to an 1859 work by Johann Buschmann, but it was Sapir who inaugurated systematic UA historical linguistics by a detailed comparison of Southern Paiute with Nahuatl (Sapir 1913-14). Sapir later combined UA with the Tanoan languages of the Pueblos and with Kiowa into an Aztec–Tanoan superfamily, and in 1937 Whorf and Trigger attempted to establish concrete UA/Tanoan corre-spondences. The generic validity of UA is beyond doubt, as is that of Kiowa–Tanoan, but reevaluation of the Aztec–Tanoan hypothesis has been kept on the back burner pending advances in descriptive and historical scholarship on the languages of the reclusive Tanoans. Greenberg's claim of a close relationship between UA (hence Aztec–Tanoan) and Oto–Manguean is not widely accepted.

Proceeding roughly from north to south, the following UA subgroupings are commonly recognized:

1. Namic (Utah and Nevada, eastern California, Comanches now resettled in Oklahoma): Shoshoni, Nor-thern Paiute, Mono, Ute, Southern Paiute, Chemehuevi, Comanche.
2. Tubatulabal (Kern River, California);
3. Hopi (Arizona Pueblos);
4. Take (interior southern California, Gabrieliino in the Los Angeles basin); (a) Serrano, Kitaminak;
(b) Takic: Luiseño, Cupado, Cahuilla, Tataviam;
(c) Gabrieliino;
5. Tepehuan (scattered from Arizona/Sonora border to Durango): Papago = O'odham, Pima, Pima Bajo, Nevome, Northern and Southern Tepehuan, Tepecan;
6. Cahitan (Sonora); Yaqui, Mayo, Ópata;
7. Tarahumara (highlands of Chihuahua): Tarahum-ara = Rarámuri, Guarijío;
8. Corachal (highlands of Nayarit and Jalisco): Cora, Huichol;
9. Nahuahtlan = Aztec (southern Mexico, Pipil in El Salvador); Nahuahtl, Pipil.

Groups 6 and 7 are often combined into 'Tarsahuan'; Tébar (extinct) belongs somewhere in here, perhaps with Cahitan. Groups 2 and 3 are sometimes combined. Larger genetic entities that have been proposed include groups 1–4.
Uruguaian Language Situation

The national language of Uruguay and the language of most of its population (estimated at 3,094,000 in 1990) is Spanish, but a Spanish that when spoken may differ quite widely from the standard Castilian of the Iberian Peninsula. Within Uruguay the Department of Rocha is something of an exception, in that Spanish spoken there is closest to that of the Peninsula, a fact that is accounted for by the Castilian origin of its settlers and its relative isolation from the capital.

The areas in which Uruguayan Spanish differs from standard Castilian include phonology (the pronunciation of -di in the same way as y and syntas (e.g., the use of the noun americano—the widespread use of eso instead of the standard second person singular tii, with a modified set of verb endings). These more salient differences, however, are in lexia. A subcategorization of the vocabulary items involved includes the following (some of which are shared by other Latin American varieties of Spanish):

(a) Amerindian words. Many Guarani Indian words are found in the vocabulary of Uruguay in the lexical fields of local flora and fauna: for example, curucuani 'kind of thistle.'

(b) Archaisms. Some words that are considered archaic in Spain are still current in Uruguay and elsewhere in Latin America: for example, podéra 'skirt.'

(c) Africanisms. These are found in Uruguay Spanish because of the slave trade (the first cargo of black slaves arrived in Montevideo in 1756 and slavery in Uruguay was abolished in 1842) and because of Uruguay's proximity to Brazil. Examples are malambo 'dance,' maris 'big drum.'

(d) Landfardo. Landfardo, which has been compared with Spanish cafó, French aorit, and English aereate 'can,' was originally the coded language of a very clearly defined social class: those few freer-bred individuals of the upper classes, who were at liberty to wear without any restraint the privileges which the more frequent and standard usage of the language has conferred on them. It includes such words as eura 'punishment' and yeve 'bad luck.' Based on Spanish, it drew on the language of the different immigrant groups (Neapolitans, Genoese), the language used by sailors and deckwaters, and the language of criminals. In certain contexts it may be classified as a kind of professional jargon; see, for instance, the number of different landfardo words used by pickpockets: for example, grillo 'side pocket of trousers,' total 'inside pocket of jacket.'

Lanfardo spread throughout society and became part of popular speech, both rural and urban. It is a major element in the lyrics of the immensely popular tango, which has also caused its dissemination.

In the region where Uruguay borders on Brazil the linguistic situation is considerably influenced by the presence of Portuguese. There are different degrees of penetration, ranging from virtual bilingualism in the towns which stand on the frontier, to the existence of several frontier dialects (brasiliero, carimbado, baiano, portuado). These may have a Portuguese or a Spanish base; verbs from one language may be conjugated according to the rules of the other; and words may have a Spanish root and a Portuguese ending, or vice versa. These dialects are sometimes unintelligible to both Uruguays and Brazilians.

In schools in Uruguay the most widely taught foreign language is English, partly because many Uruguays emigrate to English-speaking countries (USA, Australia), but French is also taught. The literacy rate in 1990 for people over 10 years of age was approximately 95 percent.

P. A. Obre de Baubeta

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Uygur

Uygur is the standard language of the Xinjiang-Uygur Autonomous Region of the People's Republic of China, which includes the Tarim Basin, Tienshan Mountains, Dzungaria, and other regions of traditional East Turkistan. Uygur, together with Uzbek, constitutes the southeastels or Karlik branch of the Turkic language family. The dialects of this branch belong to modern descendant of Karlik ethnic groups that settled in and around urban areas of Central Asia beginning in the eighth century.

The 6,200,000 (1984) Uyguurs in the oases-cities of the Tarim Basin and adjoining areas are served by the Uygur literary language written in a reformed Arabic script that distinguishes all phonemes of the sound system and that based on a short-lived reform of 1954. An entire generation of Uyrgurs was educated in the Latin-based pinyin alphabet (1956–1982). A second standard form written in Cyrillic script serves the 260,000 (1989) Uyrgurs who resettled in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and other Central Asian republics. Beginning in the eighteenth century, literate Uygurs wrote in the classical Uyrgur literary language, and from the fifteenth to the middle of the twentieth centuries, in the Chaghatay literary language.

Standard Uyrgur structure differs from standard Uzbek primarily in its vowel system (Fig. 1). Due to the preservations of Turkic back and unrounded vowels, with the exception of "neutral", Uyrgur words undergo both palatal and labial assimilations, or vowel harmony. Unrounded vowels of roots and stem progressively assimilate to i. In vocabulary, Uyrgur maintains a substantial Arabic-Persian lexical component. Uyrgur adopts some Chinese technical and daily vocabulary, whereas Uzbek admits such terms from Russian.

Uyrgur dialects in the western (Kashgar, Aksu) and the northern areas (Ili, Urumchi, Turfan, Khami) are fairly homogeneous, whereas those in the south (Khotan, Yarkand) differ substantively in phonology and lexicon due to an Iranian (Saka) substratum. Some investigators add the dialects formerly spoken at Lelunch Lake as a third group, although these clearly belong with Kirgiz Turkic and reflect considerable Mongol influence. The dialects of twelfth-century "popul" as well as those of the culturally distinct groups known as Dolan and Taglik in southwestern Xinjiang, attest increasing convergence with standard Uyrgur.

Yellow Uyrgur (Sazig Uyrgur), spoken in the Gansu province of China by no more than 5,000 people, represents the language of the original Uyrgurs who founded a steppe empire in the Mongolian plateau (742–840) and then in the Tienshan and Gansu regions (840–1270s), before consolidating in their twentieth-century location. With Tuva and Khabar, it belongs to the Uyrgur branch of the Turkic languages family.

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L. V. Clark

Uzbek

Uzbek refers to the standard language of the Republic of Uzbekistan, which includes the valleys of Fergana and the Zerafshan, Amudarya (Oxus), and Syrdarya (Jaxartes) rivers in Central Asia. Standard Uzbek serves the 16,500,000 Uzbek living in the Republic. Together, Uzbek and Uyrgur constitute the southeastern or Karlik branch of the Turkic language family. These dialects were established in urbanized regions of Central Asia by Karlik ethnic groups that began to settle amidst the Iranians in the eighth century.

From 1529 to 1940, Uzbek was written in the unified Turkic Latin alphabet, but from 1929 to 1934 standard Uzbek was written in the Kipchak dialect of Turkic cursive with a nine-vowel system and vowel harmony, while from 1935 to the 1990s the standard has been based on the nonharmonic dialect of Tashkent of the Karlik group, first with five, later with six vowels. Since 1940, standard Uzbek has been written in a modified Cyrillic script. As in other Turkic languages, the Central Asian Turkius used the Chagatai literary language from the late fourteenth century to the early twentieth century. Some Uzbek intellectuals in the 1990s debate replacing the Cyrillic script with the either Latin or the Arabic alphabets.

Standard Uzbek structure differs from that of Uyrgur.

Language Sample:

Uyrgur Language Sample:

Script

Translation

Shanzhuz was out tending his grandmother’s cattle when he came to the bank of the river. He saw many girls bathing in the river and playfully splashing each other with water.

Commentary


Figure 1.

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