



## HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE UZBEK LANGUAGE

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***Abstract-*** *This article explores the historical roots and developmental stages of the Uzbek language — one of the oldest and richest Turkic languages in Central Asia. From its early Turkic origins to its modern literary form, the evolution of Uzbek has gone through significant changes under the influence of history, politics, and culture. The article also highlights the role of major figures in shaping the language and looks at recent reforms in orthography and education that continue to influence its growth.*

***Keywords:*** *Uzbek language, Turkic roots, historical development, language reform, literary tradition, orthography*

### INTRODUCTION

The Uzbek language has a deep and fascinating history that dates back to the early Turkic tribes. Over centuries, it has transformed and adapted through various political systems and cultural exchanges. As the official language of the Republic of Uzbekistan today, Uzbek reflects not only a rich linguistic heritage but also the resilience of a people preserving their identity through language.

#### **Origins of the Uzbek Language**

Uzbek is a member of the southeastern branch of the Turkic language family. It evolved from the Chagatai language, which was widely used in Central Asia during the 15th to 19th centuries. Chagatai itself developed from earlier Turkic dialects spoken by nomadic tribes. During the Timurid period, Chagatai became a



prestigious literary language thanks to writers like Alisher Navoi, who elevated it to the level of classical literature.

### **Transition from Chagatai to Modern Uzbek**

By the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the Chagatai language began to diverge into regional dialects. As Uzbekistan moved toward national identity during the Soviet period, efforts were made to standardize a modern Uzbek language based on one of the main dialects — often the Tashkent variety. Although Chagatai was no longer in everyday use, its influence remained visible in vocabulary and literary style.

### **Soviet Influence and Script Reforms**

One of the biggest shifts in the development of the Uzbek language occurred during the Soviet era. In the 1920s, the Arabic script was replaced with a Latin-based alphabet. However, in 1940, this was changed again to Cyrillic, following Soviet language policy. These changes affected literacy, literature, and education systems. While Cyrillic helped to integrate Uzbek speakers into the Soviet space, it also distanced them from their Islamic and Turkic roots.

### **Independence and the Return to Latin**

After gaining independence in 1991, Uzbekistan started to reform its language policy to restore national identity. One of the most important steps was the re-adoption of the Latin script. Though the transition has been gradual, the Latin alphabet is now widely taught in schools and used in official documents. This shift is seen as a move toward modernity and international openness, especially in digital communication.

### **Dialects and Diversity**

The Uzbek language is spoken by over 30 million people, not only in Uzbekistan but also in neighboring countries such as Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan. The language itself has various dialects, including the Karluk-based dialect (Tashkent, Samarkand) and Kipchak-based dialect (in the



Fergana Valley). Despite these differences, the standardized literary form has helped unite speakers across regions.

### **Challenges and Future Prospects**

Even with strong governmental support, the Uzbek language faces several challenges. The coexistence of Latin and Cyrillic scripts causes confusion in some spheres. Moreover, the dominance of Russian in science and technology fields remains an issue. Nevertheless, increased investment in Uzbek-language education, literature, and media is strengthening its position. As younger generations grow up with better access to native resources, the future of Uzbek looks promising.

### **CONCLUSION**

The history of the Uzbek language is a story of adaptation and resilience. From its early Turkic origins to its place in the digital world today, the Uzbek language continues to grow while holding onto its roots. As a symbol of national identity, it plays a crucial role in preserving culture, educating youth, and connecting generations.

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