Turkmen/Lesson One

SIZIŇ ADYŇYZ NÄME?
What is your name?

Salam, or hello, and welcome to your first official class! OK, so I bet that now you really want to learn Turkmen, right? Well then, let's start off with our names!

Throughout this lesson we will be analysing part of a conversation between a Turkmen man called **Murat** and a Turkmen woman called **Bahargül**. Let's begin...

Siziň adyňyz näme?

"*Siziň adyňyz näme?*" or "What is your name?" is, for obvious reasons, a very important phrase to learn. The phrase literally translates word-by-word as *Your name what?*. The word *näme* simply means "what", and like other Turkmen question words, it always goes to the end of the sentence.

Read the conversation between Murat and Bahargül below:

> **Murat:** *Salam!*
> **Bahargül:** *Salam.*
> **Murat:** *Siziň adyňyz näme?*
> **Bahargül:** *Meniň adym Bahargül. Siziň adyňyz näme?*
> **Murat:** *Meniň adym Murat.*

Although there might not be words in there that you understand, it should be pretty obvious what each sentence means, considering that you already know how to say *salam* and *siziň adyňyz näme?*, and that you know their names, too. Before you can read the translation for this conversation, first let's look at some important grammatical points.

Cases

Like Russian or German, Turkic languages have a system of **grammatical cases**. Cases are defined by changes that occur to a word when it is placed in different grammatical context. English has cases for personal pronouns. For example: "I see him", "He sees me". Not "Me sees he", "Him sees I". Turkmen, however, has six cases, and these cases are used for all words, not just personal pronouns. The six Turkmen cases are: the nominative, used for the subject of the sentence; the genitive, similar to English possessives; the dative, used to show directed action; the accusative, which is similar to the English "direct object"; the locative, which shows locality; and the instrumental, which is used to show origin.

While six cases might seem a bit overwhelming at first, it should be noted that the case suffixes simply replace our English prepositions such as "from," "at," "with," "in," "on," and "to". Also, the rules for their use are remarkably simple and inflexible, unlike those of the Russian cases.

In the case of the conversation that we were looking at, cases were used with personal pronouns (e.g. *Siziň*). These follow fairly straightforwardly from the regular case endings. For now, though, we will only be learning the nominative and genitive cases. As you can see, its all fairly straightforward, except for **ol** which changes to

on- in every non-nominative case. To make a pronoun genitive, simply add -**iň** or -**yň**, depending on the pronoun's vowel harmony.

Case	I	you (singular informal)	he/she/it	we	you (plural or formal)	they
Nominative	men	sen	ol	biz	siz	olar
Genitive	meniň *(my)*	seniň *(your)*	onyň *(his/her/it's)*	biziň *(our)*	siziň *(your)*	olaryň *(their)*

That's all fairly easy, but you still can't say *My name is* in Turkmen if you only know how to make a pronoun genitive. Unlike English, the Turkmen language also adds a suffix to the object of possession. This may at times be redundant (**Meniň kakam geldi.** = My father-(my) came.) but often the possessive participle is omitted (**Kakam geldi.** = Father-(my) came.) so the suffix alone shows possession, for example, *adym Murat* alone still means *My name is Murat*, even without using *meniň*.

The suffix added to a noun depends on it's vowel harmony, so using the words *kaka* (father), *eje* (mother), *at* (name) and *it* (dog), let's look at the suffixes which need to be added:

Vowel ending	Consonant ending	Vowel ending	Consonant ending
My **-m** kakam - my father ejem - my mother	My **-ym**, **-im** (**-um**, **-üm**) adym - my name itim - my dog	Our **-myz**, **-miz** kakamyz - our father ejemiz - our mother	Our **-ymyz**, **-imiz** (**-umyz**, **-ümiz**) adymyz - our name itimiz - our dog
Your (sing., informal) **-ň** kakaň - your father ejeň - your mother	Your (sing., informal) **-yň**, **-iň** (**-uň**, **-üň**) adyň - your name itiň - your dog	Your (pl., formal) **-ňyz**, **-ňiz** kakaňyz - your father ejeňiz - your mother	Your (pl., formal) **-yňyz**, **-iňiz** (**-uňyz**, **-üňiz**) adyňyz - your name itiňiz - your dog
His/her/it's **-sy**, **-si** kakasy - his/her/it's father ejesi - his/her/it's mother	His/her/it's **-y**, **-i** ady - his/her/it's name iti - his/her/it's dog	Their **-sy**, **-si** kakasy - their father ejesi - their mother	Their **-y**, **-i** ady - their name iti - their dog

As mentioned already, the noun alone already indicates possession, so pronouns such as *meniň*, *seniň*, etc., don't HAVE to be used. For example, in Turkmen *My name is John* could either be *Meniň adym John* or simply just *Adym John*.

As you can see in the above table, possessive suffixes for nouns are not only about vowel harmony, but also whether the noun, in it's nominative form, ends in a vowel or a consonant.

You've also probably noticed that **at** changes to **ad**- when a suffix is added to it. The word **at** is merely one of the few irregularities of the Turkmen language, and its good that you're getting used to it at an early stage.

Is?

You may be wondering what the word for "is" is in Turkmen. The truth is, there isn't one.

If you tried to translate "he is" by itself into Turkmen, or any Turkic language for that matter, it would be impossible. If you tried to translate "he is good" into Turkmen, it would translate as *ol ýagşy*, which would translate word-by-word back into English as "he good".

It works in the same way in "Siziň adyňyz näme?" and "Meniň adym...", which literally translate word-by-word as "Your name what?" and "My name..." respectively.

Sentence order

Turkmen, like other Turkic languages, follows an **SOV** (Subject Object Verb) sentence order. Don't know what subject, object or verb are? Let's look at a very basic demonstration in English, which uses SVO instead of SOV:

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Bobby kicked the ball.
Subject Verb Object

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In this case, *Bobby* is the subject, because he is the one kicking the ball (i.e. the subject is the word executing or otherwise attributed to the verb); *kicked* is the verb because it is a word of action (i.e. verbs show what is taking/has taken/will take place); and *the ball* is the object because it is being kicked by Bobby (i.e. something happens to the object by the subject by means of the verb).

Now that we've established what the subject, object and verb actually are, you'll be able to understand that in Turkmen, the subject goes first, then the object, and then the verb. This is true in most cases, but in some instances, mostly in sentences without verbs such as *O ýagşy* or *Siziň adyňyz näme?*, the sentence order is just SO. Unlike in English, in which all sentences need to have verbs, in Turkmen certain things such as "he is nice" can be demonstrated, as shown in the Is? section of this page, without the use of a verb.

On the other hand, as a result of pronouns not being needed in Turkmen, sentences can also be verb only, such as "geldi" (he came), although the subject (he) is still technically in the verb, so "geldi" itself is both a subject and a verb. If you look at it in this sense, then you'll find that all Turkmen sentences have at least a subject.

We will look at verbs in more detail at a later stage in this book.

It is certainly worth practising everything you've learned in this lesson with an exercise. Click here to do this lesson's exercise.

It is also worth reading about subject, object and verb on Wikipedia for a better explanation of these things.

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