



DARI is one of the official languages of Afghanistan. Though closely related to the Persian (Farsi) of Iran and the Tajik of Tajikistan, Dari has been separated from both by historical developments and political boundaries. The only two-way Dari-English dictionary available using the Dari writing system, this volume provides an indispensable resource for travelers, business-people, and government and aid workers. This dictionary uses Dari script with phonetic transcriptions to aid the English speaker. Areas of focus include cultural, military, medical, and political terminology. It includes over 30,000 total entries, a pronunciation key, and appendices of geographical, musical, and biological terms.

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**DARI-ENGLISH
ENGLISH-DARI**

Carleton Bulkin

**DARI-ENGLISH
ENGLISH-DARI**
practical
dictionary



Carleton Bulkin

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Dedicated to Carolyn Lee Walker Bulkin,
who never gave up.



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List of Abbreviations

•	(separator bullet)
<	derived from
→, ←	(sub-entry)
=	synonymous with
&	also, and
& pers	also usable as noun referring to a person
adj	adjective
adv	adverb
Afgh	Afghan, Afghanistan
alt	alternatively
anat	anatomical
Ar	Arabic
arch	archaic
archit	architectual
astron	astronomy
aux	auxiliary
bibl	biblical
c	century
callig	calligraphy, calligraphic
cca	circa
cf	compare
coll pl	collective plural
colloq	colloquial
conj	conjunction
ctr	district center
cul	culinary
d.	died
d.o.	direct object
dim	diminutive
dist	district; distance
dual	dual plural
E	east, eastern

e.g.	for example
esp	especially
ethn	ethnic, ethnic group
excl	exclamation
f	feminine, women, woman's
fig	figurative
geog	geographical
gram	grammatical, linguistic
grp	group
hist	historical
i.e.	that is, to wit
irreg	irregular
lang	language
law	legal
lit	literary
m	masculine, men, man's
meas	measurement
med	medical
mvmt	movement
mus instr	musical instrument
neg	negative connotation
n	noun
N	north, northern
NE	northeast
NW	northwest
NWFP	NW Frontier Province (Pakistan)
o.s.	oneself
obs	obscene
P	Pashtun, Pashto
perf	perfect
pers	person
phrs	phrase
pl	plural

pol	political
pres	present
pron	pronoun
prov	proverb; province
r.	reigned
rel	religion, religious
rhet	rhetorical
S	south, southern
sb	somebody, someone
SE	southeast
seat	provincial seat or capital
sg	singular
sth	something
subj	subjunctive
sw	somewhere
SW	southwest
syn	synonym
us	usually
v	verb
vi	intransitive verb
voc	vocative
vt	transitive verb
vulg	vulgar
W	west, western
w/	with
w/o	without
Zor	Zoroastrian

Introduction

As the United States, NATO, the UN, and the European Union work with the people of Afghanistan to bring about stability and development, communication is difficult. Outsiders tend to arrive with scant knowledge of Afghanistan's rich historical, ethnic, sectarian, and linguistic mosaic; and the lack of a commercially available, birectional Dari-English dictionary using Dari script has only widened the cultural gap. This volume attempts to narrow it.

The roughly 30,000 entries and sub-entries in this volume include much basic political, economic, religious, historical, cultural, culinary, medical, and military terminology; and are drawn from published and unpublished reference sources, academic monographs, the contemporary Afghan press, official documents, the Dari blogosphere, and informal suggestions by native speakers. Ethnic and geographical terms are also highlighted. Of particular interest to aid workers will be the appendix with province and district names (the keeper of the official list of Afghan districts is the Independent Directorate for Local Governance in Kabul; local pronunciation and usage may vary).

Formatting Notes

Dari-English entries. Entries have been sorted according to the order of the Dari alphabet, which differs slightly from that of Farsi. Sub-entries are set off by an arrow (←) on separate lines.

Dari headwords that are nouns may be followed by plural suffixes and forms. The usual plural suffix or suffixes for a given noun are preceded by a hyphen and separated by diagonals and may be followed by an Arabic plural. When plural suffixes are not indicated by a noun, animate nouns may take either *-ان* or *-ها*; inanimate nouns take *-ها*. When a singular noun does not take

Dari plural suffixes but is pluralized by an Arabic form, that Arabic plural appears on a separate line as a sub-entry. For example:

اتم *sin n ĩ'-sīm, ĩsm; pl ā-sām/*
اتم ← اتم

Verb entries for non-compound verbs include the infinitive, present-tense stem (in Dari called the *first root*) and past-tense stem (called the *second root*), separated by semicolons. The first-person singular form may be represented between diagonals, e.g.:

-مالنيد ؛ -مال- ؛ مالنيدن
-پالنيد ؛ /ميپالم/ -پال- ؛ پالنيدن

Verb government and prepositions used with other words are indicated between carets, e.g.:

<چيزی/کسی به> ها/ات- , ارتباط

Phonetics. A pronunciation guide for vowels appears in the footer on each page of the Dari-English side. For consonant sounds not appearing in English or pronounced differently than in English (*gh, kh, q, r*), the learner may wish to consult a native speaker.

The phonetic transcription for a word may differ from the transliteration. The first is a guide to pronouncing the word, while the transliteration is a more practical way of representing the word in an English-language text. For example:

a-lif mad = alef mad
qūr-'ān = Quran, Koran

Variant transliterations often hinge on the problem of representing Dari's short vowels, particularly /ū/, hence *Uruzgan, Urozgan, Oruzgan, or Orozgan*; or *k* versus *q*, thus either *Qur'an* or *Koran*,

Qalat or *Kalat*. Many common transliterations use double vowels for long vowels, such as *tashkeel* and *Nooha* (or, as in the French system, *Nouha*). There is no universal standard for Dari transliteration.

In the phonetic transcriptions, syllables are separated by hyphens. Word cuts are meant to ease pronunciation but not as a guide to underlying morphology. Syllables are divided within a word so that each begins with a consonant or glottal stop. No word cuts are indicated for the most frequent base verbs, such as *kardan*, *shūdan*, *dādan*, etc., when they appear in compound-verb entries. Colloquial variant pronunciations appear in parentheses. For example:

bāl-ki
way-rān (bay-rān)
id, pl. a'-yād
bā-war kardan

Stress. In Dari, stress normally falls on the last syllable of a word. Plural suffixes (-ān, -hā, -in, etc.) assume the stress from their base noun; however, the object marker (-rā) and the *ezafat* connector (-ī or -yī) do not. In phonetic transcriptions in this volume, stress is marked only when it does not fall on the final syllable of the root word – as in many adverbs (e.g., al-bā-ta) and prefixed verbs (e.g., bār ā-ma-dan). The *accent grave* (`) denotes secondary stress and is to be distinguished from the apostrophe ('), which denotes a glottal stop. The phonetic transcription may include related Arabic plural forms, marked by “pl”; or the first-person, present tense form of a non-compound verb when the first and second stems differ, as in *didan*.

English-Dari entries. English headwords may be followed by a clarifying note in parentheses; that note may be a synonym, a direct object, an indirect object, or an elaboration. Lastly, the

English part of speech is indicated. An English headword that is an adjective may be marked “(& pers)” if the Dari gloss may also be used as a noun referring to a person. For example, *feeble* may be rendered by the Dari ضعیف, which may either be *feeble* (adjective) or *a feeble person*.

For verbs, there may also be a note between carets to illustrate verb government, e.g., <to sb>; that construction will also appear in the Dari between carets.

Sub-entries are set off by an arrow (→) on separate lines.

Tips to finding a word

Even among literate native speakers of Dari, multiple spellings of a given word may be common. Spoken Dari may also metathesize consonants, e.g., قفل for قلف.

- /z/ may be written as ذ, ز, ض, or ظ.
- /t/ may be written as ط or ت.
- /s/ may be written as س or ص.
- /h/ may be written as ح or ه.
- /kh/ and /h/ may occur as /q/ in some words.
- A variant spelling may depend on whether a vowel is long or short, especially in the middle of a word; short vowels are usually not written in Dari.
- A spoken word beginning in /a-/ may be written as beginning with ا, ع, or آ.
- A spoken word beginning in /o-/ , /u-/ , or /ü-/ may be written as beginning with او.
- ن before ب is pronounced not as /n/ but as /m/, e.g., تنبل /tam-bal/ “lazy.”
- Some loan words with ژ may occur in forms that substitute ج for ژ.

- The glottal stop, typically represented by ع, may go unpronounced and/or unwritten.
- When looking for a word or phrase that begins with the sound /ba-/, look both under ب plus the first consonant that follows and under به (e.g., بطور and به بطور).
- Other prepositions and prefixes also may or may not be followed by a space: e.g., آمدن بر or برآمدن.
- If a word ends in /-agi/, it has been spelled here as -گی rather than -گی ه, thus حملگی rather than حمله گی.
- Two yaws in succession may be spelled either یی or یی, e.g., روئیدن or روئیدن. Such forms as the latter are alphabetized as spelled, i.e., hamza-yaw.

Dari Pronunciation: Getting Started

Dari has multiple dialects, and native speakers may offer variant pronunciations of a given word in the number of syllables, in whether a vowel is long or short, or by metathesizing consonants. This dictionary attempts a broadly literary standard for Dari pronunciation, with some spoken variations indicated in parentheses. Dari consonants are much the same as in English, except for *gh*, *kh*, *q* and *r*. More challenging are the vowels. Spoken Dari has more vowels than the written language.

Dari has these vowels, plus the glides /w/ and /y/:

Written	Spoken
آ	/ā/
ا	/a/, /ā/, /i/, /ü/
اع-	/ey/, /a'/
و	/o/, /u/, /w/
ی	/i/, /y/
<i>usually not written in word-</i>	/ī/, /ü/

medial position

There are seven basic vowel sounds in Dari: /a/ close to the vowel in *cup*,¹ /ā/ as in *lost*, /i/ as in *feet*, /ī/ as in *bit*, /o/ as in *hope*, /u/ as in *oot*, and /ü/ as in *put*. /e/ as in *bet* occurs almost exclusively in the diphthong *ey*; however, /ī/ may sound similar to /e/. The difference between /ī/ and /e/ never changes the meaning of a word.

There are five diphthongs: /ay/ as in *pie* but less flat, /ey/ as in *obey*, /oy/ as in *toy*, /uy/ as in *buoy*; plus /aw/ as in *now* but less flat. Note that /a/ always stands for the same vowel sound, whether alone or in a diphthong.

As a first principle, long vowels (/ā/, /ī/, /o/, /u/) are usually written, while short vowels (/a/, /i/, /ü/) are generally not. The letter *alef* may be pronounced variously. In written Dari, *alef mad* (ا) at the beginning of a word is pronounced /ā/. At the beginning of a word, *alef* (ا) may be pronounced as /a/ (1), /i/ (2) or /ü/ (3). The beginner must learn the pronunciation of these words individually. In the middle or at the end of a word, ا is sounded as /ā/ (4).

Examples:

(1) جا، چای (4)؛ امور، امید (3)؛ انتخاب، انسان (2)؛ اندازه، انگور

R to L: /aŋgur, andāza, ĩnsān, ĩntikhāb, ũmeyd, ũmur, chāy, jā/

At the beginning of a word, ا¹ may be pronounced either as /ey/ or /a'/. (/a' is found mostly in Arabic plurals; in spoken Dari, initial /a' may sound simply as /a/. In spoken Dari, the glottal stop is more usual when aspiring to a literary standard.)

¹ Phonemically, this sound is equivalent to a short /a/ sound and is transliterated as such, e.g., Afghanistan.

Examples: اعشاريه, اعراب, اعدام, اعلام

R to L: /eylām, eydām, a'rāb, a'shāriya/

The first sound in a word beginning with اى- is generally /i/, which is interchangeable with /ey/ (see ايستاده).

As a vowel, the letter *waw* (و) may represent /u/ (1), /o/ (2) or, less commonly, /ü/ (3). In some words, speakers pronounce the و variously as either /u/ or /o/ (4). When و is followed by the vowel ا, it is always /w/ (5); however, و may also sound as /w/ when followed by a consonant (6).

Examples:

بول (6)؛ جوان (5)؛ بوی (4)؛ بیروبار (3)؛ بگوتا (2)؛ بوره (1)

R to L: /bura, bügotā, birübār, boy/buy, jawān, bayl/

The letter *yaw* (ی) is /i/ between two consonants (1) and /y/ elsewhere (2).

Examples: (1) رادیو, پای (2)؛ بفریح, تقسیم

R to L: /taq̄s̄im, tafrih, paay, rādīyo/

The short vowel sounds /i/ and /ü/ are normally not written, and may be found between two consonants (1), (2). However, /a/ may also occur unwritten and between two consonants (3). The *ezafat* connector sounds as /i/ after a consonant and as /yi/ after a vowel.

Examples:

جریمه, جاکت (3)؛ حرم, جنوب (2)؛ جانب, جالب (1)

R to L: /jālīb, jānīb, jūnub, jūrm, jākat, jarima/

Thanks and a Disclaimer

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Is Dari a Language or a Dialect?

"Dari is one of the official languages spoken in Afghanistan." (*Neghat, Mohammad Nasim, et al. Dari-English Dictionary. Omaha, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1993, pg. i.*)

"The two principal languages of Afghanistan are ... Persian (or Farsi) and Pashto. The 1964 Constitution names both Dari (or Afghan Farsi) and Pashto as official languages. Dari, an old term, literally means 'language of the court.' In reality, Dari (still the court language in Afghanistan as it was in Moghul India) serves as a *lingua franca*...

"Several regional Farsi dialects exist. The Hazara speak Hazaragi; the Aimaq speak Farsi with many Turkic loan words; the Tajik speak Tajiki, a Farsi dialect related to but not identical to the Tajiki spoken in the Tajikistan S.S.R. Afghans often refer to Tajiki by the name of the valley in which it is spoken; e.g., Panjsheri, Andarabi.

Most rural Afghans still refer to the language as Farsi, not Dari. ... The Farsiwan (or Parsiwan) farmers of western Afghanistan speak Iranian Farsi, and Heratis have an urban dialect all their own. So do the Kabulis, who speak the slurred Brooklynese of Farsi dialects." (*Dupree, Louis. Afghanistan. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1973, pp. 68-70.*)

"From the linguistic point of view Dari, Tadjhiki, and Farsi (Persian) are not three different languages. They are three geographical dialects of one classical language with phonological differences and differences in vocabulary, pronunciation, and intonation. They also differ in some syntactic structures, but they should not be referred to as dialects. First of all, a dialect, in its specific sense, is a form of speech different from the standard language. Secondly, each of these serve[s] as the standard and literary languages of three independent countries, while each has geographical and social dialects in its own speech community." (*Neghat, op. cit., pg. xiv.*)

The Last Word...

A shprakh iz a diyalekt mit an armey un a flot.
A language is a dialect with an army and a navy.

Yiddish linguist Max Weinreich (1893-1969), "*Der yivo un di problemen fun undzer tsayt*" (YIVO and the problems of our time), in *Yivo-bleter* 25.1, 1945, pg. 13.

Dari-English