HINDI AND UZBEK: WORLDS APART, WORLDS TOGETHER

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Abstract: This article describes a comparison of Hindi and Uzbek as two languages from different families and gives information about their common features and differences. The study focuses on the historical contacts between Central Asia and India, especially the Mughal period, and on the shared Arabic and Persian vocabulary in both languages. *The article highlights the similarity in sentence structure (SOV) and the main differences in grammar, such as grammatical gender and postpositions in Hindi and suffixes in Uzbek, while also acknowledging the difficulties of Devanagari script and pronunciation for Uzbek learners[2.]*. The paper also shows that knowing these similarities and differences helps learners study Hindi more effectively.

Keywords: Hindi, Uzbek, comparative linguistics, language contact, loanwords, grammar, Devanagari script, language learning.

Introduction

Hindi and Uzbek belong to different language families. Hindi is an Indo-Aryan language, a descendant of Sanskrit. Uzbek is a Turkic language of the Karluk branch. Hindi is spoken by hundreds of millions of people, mostly in India, and it is one of the official languages of that country. Uzbek is the state language of Uzbekistan and is spoken by more than 30 million people in Central Asia. At first sight, the two languages look completely unrelated. However, a closer comparison shows interesting similarities, which come from centuries of contact. This article compares Hindi and Uzbek in history, vocabulary, grammar, writing systems, and sounds, and gives some advice for learners.

Historical Connections

The connection between the two regions is old. Trade routes linked Central Asia and the Indian subcontinent for many centuries, and merchants, scholars, and travellers moved in both directions. The most famous link is Zahiruddin Muhammad Babur, who was born in Andijan in the Fergana Valley. In 1526 he founded the Mughal Empire in India. Babur wrote his memoirs, the Baburnama, in Chagatai Turkic, an early ancestor of modern Uzbek. His descendants ruled much of India for more than three centuries, and Persian became the language of the court, administration, and literature. This period shaped the Hindustani language (the basis of modern Hindi and Urdu). The word Urdu itself comes from the Turkic word ordu, meaning "camp" or "army." Other Turkic words entered Hindi too, for example bahadur ("brave"), which is bahodir in Uzbek. In the twentieth century, a new kind of connection appeared: Indian films. Movies such as Awaara and Disco Dancer were extremely popular in the Soviet Union, including Uzbekistan, and many people remember Hindi songs even if they never studied the language.

Shared Vocabulary

The largest group of shared words comes from Arabic and Persian, which influenced both languages. The spelling and pronunciation are slightly different, but the words are easy to recognize.

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UZBEK	HINDI	MEANING
kitob	kitāb	book
bozor	bāzār	market
vaqt	waqt	time
shahar	shehar	city
javob	javāb	answer
do'st	dost	friend
xabar	khabar	news

Not every similar-looking word has the same meaning, so learners should check each word in a dictionary. Still, this common layer helps students build vocabulary faster. Basic words, such as numbers (bir, ikki, uch in Uzbek and ek, do, tīn in Hindi), pronouns, and family words, are completely different, because they come from different language families.

Grammar

Word order. Both languages usually put the verb at the end of the sentence (Subject–Object–Verb).

Uzbek: Men kitob o'qiyman.

Hindi: Main kitāb paṛhtā hūm.

English: "I read a book."

In both sentences the verb comes last, so this part of grammar feels natural for an Uzbek student of Hindi.

Grammatical gender. Hindi has two genders, masculine and feminine. Nouns, adjectives, and verbs change according to gender. For example, a man says main jātā hūm ("I go"), and a woman says main jātī hūm. Uzbek has no grammatical gender at all, and the same pronoun "u" means "he," "she," and "it." This is one of the biggest challenges for Uzbek learners of Hindi.

Suffixes and postpositions. Uzbek is an agglutinative language: it adds suffixes one after another to the word root. For example, uy ("house"), uylar ("houses"), uylarda ("in the houses"). Hindi mostly uses separate words called postpositions, which come after the noun: ghar mem ("in the house"), ghar se ("from the house"). In Uzbek, -da, -dan, and -ga are attached to the word, while in Hindi mem (in), se (from, with), and ko (to) are written separately. Both languages put the helper element after the noun, unlike English, which uses prepositions before it.

Politeness. Both languages have different forms for formal and informal speech. Uzbek distinguishes sen (informal) and siz (polite). Hindi has three levels: tū (very familiar), tum (informal), and āp (respectful). Using the correct form is very important in both cultures.

Verbs. Uzbek verbs add suffixes for tense and person, while Hindi verbs usually combine a main verb

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form with an auxiliary verb such as hai or hūm ("is," "am"). Hindi also has a special pattern in some past tenses, where the subject takes the marker ne, and this has no direct equivalent in Uzbek.

Writing Systems

Hindi is written in the Devanagari script. It is read from left to right, and most letters are joined by a horizontal line at the top. Devanagari is an abugida: each consonant letter carries an inherent vowel, and other vowels are added with special signs. The spelling is quite regular, because letters usually correspond to the same sounds. Uzbek uses the Latin alphabet officially. The country moved from Cyrillic to Latin in the 1990s, but Cyrillic is still visible in older books, signs, and everyday writing. This history is interesting because many Uzbek people already know two scripts. Learning a third script, Devanagari, is not impossible, and most students need a few weeks to read it comfortably.

Sounds

Hindi has a rich consonant system. It distinguishes aspirated and unaspirated consonants: k and kh, p and ph, t and th are different sounds, and they can change the meaning of a word. Hindi also has retroflex consonants, pronounced with the tongue curled back. Uzbek does not use these distinctions, so Uzbek speakers often need extra practice, especially in listening. Vowel length is also important in Hindi: kal and kāl are different words. Uzbek, on the other hand, has sounds that Hindi speakers find difficult, for example o', g', and q. Earlier Turkic languages had strong vowel harmony, but in modern standard Uzbek this system has mostly weakened, so students should not expect it to work as in Turkish.

Advice for Learners

Start with shared Arabic and Persian words to build confidence. Use your knowledge of SOV order: you do not need to relearn sentence structure. Practice gender agreement every day, because it has no equivalent in Uzbek. Train your ear with minimal pairs (for example, aspirated and unaspirated sounds). Learn Devanagari early, instead of relying on Latin transcription. Use Hindi songs and films as listening practice.

Conclusion

Hindi and Uzbek come from different language families, and their grammar works differently in many ways. Nevertheless, they share a similar sentence structure, many Arabic and Persian loanwords, and a long history of cultural contact. These similarities make learning easier, and the differences show how varied human languages are. Comparing the two languages helps learners understand not only Hindi, but also their own mother tongue.

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