

Verb Forms

How *idi* and *-Atti* are Used for the Irrealis (Hypothetical)

© Jochen Danneil. 2014. contact@uyghur-language.net. www.uyghur-language.net

The copula *idi* is used to build various past tense verb forms. Apart from that, it also serves to express the irrealis mood, i.e. sentences about something that is unreal in one way or another – impossible / theoretically possible, but not true / not possible any more etc. After reviewing the past forms *idi* and *-Atti* (1.-2.), some examples for various kinds of irrealis sentences are listed (3.-7.).

1. Normal past marker *idi*

To start with, we quote a sentence where *idi* has its regular past tense meaning of "to be":

Ex. 1. Bazar bashliqi ezeldin burutqa öch adem idi. (BM 47)
The market manager has always been a man who hates moustaches.

2. Habitual / continuous past tense *-Atti*

The form *-Atti* most likely originates from a combination of *-Ar* + *idi*, as in *yazar* + *idi* > *yazaridi* > *yazatti* "he used to write / he was writing when ...".

Often the form *-Atti* is used as a **habitual**.

Ex. 2. Men köp hallarda derwazining keynige shepisiz kēlip, möküp turup tingshayttim. (E 4)
Many times I sneaked behind the gate and stood there hiding and listened.

It can also express a **continuous**.

Ex. 3. ... hēliqi kishi öymu'öy yürüp ishiklerni qēqip warqiraytti: ... (N 326)
... that man was going from house to house, banging at the doors and shouting: ...

There are two ways to build the corresponding **question forms**: Either by simply attaching the question marker *-mu* at the end, or by inserting that marker in the middle:¹

E.g. *körettingmu?* and (negative) *körmeytingmu?*
versus *köremting?*, and (negative) *körmemting?*

¹ How these two different forms are used needs some further investigation.

3. Normal irrealis

One primary function of irrealis sentences is to state what **would** be true, if a certain condition was fulfilled. *-Atti* occurs in the main clause of such hypothetical sentences, whether they refer to the past, present(!) or future.

Ex. 4. Chaqirghan bolsanglar kēlettim. (T/L 362)
If you had invited me, I would have come.

Ex. 5. Kelse xoshal bolattim. (Friederich 183)
If she came, I would be glad.

4. Unrealizable desires

idi can be attached to the conditional suffixes *-sA* etc. The "A" in *-sA* is then reduced to "i", as in *yazsidi*. This form indicates an unrealistic wish. It has not come true, and is not expected to come true. In English one can use constructions such as "If only ... / I wished ...".

Ex. 6. Rasa bir yamghur yaghsidi. (T/L 313f.)
If only it would really [heavily] rain.

Ex. 7. Shu yighingha bizmu qatnashaqiduq. (T/L 313f.)
We wish we could attend that meeting too.

5. Unrealistic expectation or attitude

Likewise, the *-Atti*-form is used in various kinds of "irrealis" sentences in the wider sense. All examples in this section are rhetorical questions. In English, one will often use the auxiliary verbs "would / could / should".

For instance, one may express something that cannot be counted on. This can occur in situations where someone is disappointed or displeased.

Ex. 8. Qarni yaghma turup tur, biz kömür chüşürüwalayli dēgenge turup turattimu? (TG 3)
Literally: If I told the snow "Don't fall, wait! Let us first bring the coal downstairs[into storage]", would it wait?

Ex. 9. – Sen nēmeni bileting, – Pezliye singlisining ghezeplik chirayini körüp ongaysizlandi, – ... (HQ 18)
What would you know? (said) Pezliye (and), seeing her younger sister's angry face, felt embarrassed.

Pezliye could as well have said: "You don't know anything about this. / There is no way you could understand this."

In the example below, the question form *bilmemdim* points to something unreal: "How can you think I would not know ...? / It is unrealistic to think I would not know!"

Ex. 10. Sizning könglingizdikini bilmemdim? (S 15)
Do I not know what's in your heart? / Do you think I couldn't read your mind?

There are also cases where someone classifies an attitude as something that should not be true. The speaker, by using *-idi*, places the matter into the realm of the "unmentionable", thus "unreal".

Ex. 11. – Hey chidimas, – warqiridi Perwine qolini shiltip, – utturup qoyghiningni özüngdin körmey, bashqilardin köremting, nēme kökermilik qilisen? (HQ 11)
"Hey you game-cheater", shouted Perwine, swinging her hand, "How can you look [Or: Why would you look] at the fact that you were defeated not (seeing it) as your own fault, but blaming others? What kind of a shamelessness is that?!"

Similarly, the suffix *-Atti* can be used in questions that assume the addressee should know better, and challenge him to think clearer – as in: "Where else ... / Who if not ... / For what other purpose than to ...?" In the example, apart from the one answer given by the speaker himself, any other answer would be beside the point – "unrealistic".

Ex. 12. [Talking to a drunkard:] Qeyer bolatti, özüngning öyüng. (BM 84)
[With change of clause order:] It's your own house; Where else would it be?

6. Late piece of advice

Another form of irrealis are comments on what someone should have done in a certain situation in the past. The earlier behavior cannot be changed. In a way, discussing it is a moot point.

Ex. 13. Heselni këyin ichidighan gepti. (BM 61)
[Liter.: It was a matter of drinking the honey afterwards.]
He should have drunk the honey afterwards.

7. Polite questions and requests

Finally, there is a usage of *idi* that makes the utterance smoother or more polite ("*siliqlashturush*"). This is especially relevant with requests. The strategy is, in fact, similar to what is done in English. Consider the sentence "I had a question." It may refer to the past, but it may also be used in the present. It is then used to say the same as "I have a question", but to do so in a cautious and low-key manner. By setting the request in the past, the speaker removes it, as it were, and takes away any demanding pressure, a bit like adding "If you do not want to answer it, forget about it." In much the same way, in Uyghur the past verb form may be used to refer to the present:

Ex. 14. Mëning bir so'alim bar idi.
I had a question.

Ex. 15. Mundaq bir ish bar idi ...
There was a certain issue. / Or: I had something to discuss with you.

Ex. 16. Kërekmidi? (BM 70)
Is (one) needed?

In the below examples, using *idi* gives the sentences an apologetic tone.

Ex. 17. Ismingiz neme idi?
[*Sorry, I forgot ...*] *What was your name?*

On the mobile telephone:

Ex. 18. Men bir dostumning öyide idim.
I am(!) at a friend's house [and can't talk for long].

The last example is from a context where no request is in view:

Ex. 19. ..., rast shu chaghda dukangha naswal sorap kirgen xëridar shu emesmidi? (S
24)
*Right, the customer who entered the shop and asked for some narcotics at that
time was this very one, wasn't he?*

8. Reference works and Uyghur Literature

Engesaeth, Tarjei; Mahire Yakup and Arienne Dwyer. Teklimakandin Salam: hayzirqi zaman uyghur tili qollanmisi (Greetings from the Teklimakan: a handbook of Modern Uyghur).

Friederich, Michael, in cooperation with Abdurishid Yakup: Uyghurisch Lehrbuch.

Hahn, Reinhard F., in collaboration with Ablahat Ibrahim: Spoken Uyghur.

Hamit Zakir. *Hazirqi zaman uyghur tili*. Introduction to Modern Uighur.

Hazirqi zaman uyghur tili (1 – 3). Arslan Abdulla Tehur et al. (ed.).

Tömür, Hämit and Anne Lee (translator): Modern Uyghur Grammar (Morphology). (= T/L)

Abduraxman Qahar: Emethaji (= E). Tozumas gül (= TG).

Jalaliddin Behram: Hayat qismiti (= HQ).

Memtimin Hoshur: Nozugum (= N). Sarang (= S) / Burut majirasi (= BM) / Qirliq Istakan (= QI).