

Negated Questions (-mAm-)

© Jochen Danneil. 2013. contact@uyghur-language.net. www.uyghur-language.net

In many ways, negated questions function the same way in Uyghur as in English. See (a) – (f) below. However, some usages of verbs built with the form *-mAm-* (*-mam-* / *-mem-*) are idiomatic and cannot be translated into English directly. The main purpose of this compilation is to present some of those cases. See (g) – (i) below. All examples are taken from works of popular authors. See bibliography.

Functions of Negated Questions

Negated questions serve to express all the following:

a) Sincere question, asked in surprise

Ex. 1. Siler bilmemsiler? (BM 48)

Do you not know?

Ex. 2. Siz doxtur bolghandin kéyin awwal aghriqtin «Neringiz aghriydu?» dep sorimamsiz? (S 14)

Don't you first ask from the patient "Where does it hurt?"

b) Rhetorical question

About a girl playing volleyball outstandingly well:

Ex. 3. ..., oghullarni bésip chüshüwatmamdu? (TG 30)

..., *is she not surpassing the guys (in ability)?*

Ex. 4. Sizning könglingizdikini bilmemdim? (S 15)

Do I not know what's in your heart? / Do you think I couldn't read your mind?

c) Suggestion

Ex. 5. – Qara, adash, бүгүн bazar arilap kishilerning yürüş-turushi, chirayi we rohiy halitini közitip baqayli, xelqning rayinimu bayqap baqmamduq, qandaq dédim? (TG 134)

"Listen, my friend, how about going over the market today to observe some the people's behavior, their faces and their mood, and also to discover the people's desires?"

d) Challenge / ridicule

Ex. 6. ..., – dengge kirip yatsanglar bolmamdu? (TG 88)

Why don't you go and lie down in the inn?

Ex. 7. Bir yil chidighan adem bir kün texir qilalmamsiz? (TG 127)

Being a man who has endured a whole year, can you not wait one more day?

e) Disregard / reproach / complaint

For these utterances, phrases are built after the pattern "conditional verb + negated question verb" (*-sA(-) + -mAm-*).

- Ex. 8. – ... ularni qandaq qilar?
 – Qandaq qilsa qilmamdu, ... (TG 226)
"What will be done with them?"
"Whatever they do, let them do it. [I don't care at all.]"
- Ex. 9. Oghullar Ürümchige béríp oqusa bolidikenu, qizlar béríp oqusa bolmamdiken?
 (TG 61)
When boys go to Urumchi to study, that's okay; when girls go to study, is it not okay?
Free: If it's okay for guys to go to Urumchi to study, then why is it not okay for girls?
- Ex. 10. Weziyet nazukliship ketken peyitte éghizini yighip, tinç yürse bolmamdu?
 (TG 115)
"Circumstances have become so sensitive now, can she not keep her mouth shut and behave quietly?"
- Ex. 11. ... mundaq éghirchiliqlarni tartquche yashap néme qilidu, dunyagha köz achmisila bolmamdu?! (TG 4)
What is the point of living when having to bear such hardship? Would it not be better not to live at all? [Lit.: would it not be better to not open one's eyes to this world?]

f) Strong imperative

- Ex. 12. – Mangamsen, mangmamsen, ya ölgüng keldimu?! – dédi balini silkishlep.
 (TG 136)
"Will you go now, or will you not go? Or do you want me to kill you [Lit.: would you like to die]?" he said, shaking the kid.

We now move on to those negated questions that do not have a direct equivalent in English.

g) With the verb *oxshimmaq (oxshimam-)*

The verb *oxshimmaq* means "to look like / resemble"; it is also used to build the verb forms of the "objective assessment mood".¹ Negated questions with a form of *oxshimam-* are used to **express that the speaker wants to get affirmation for a new realization on his part**. Perhaps these sentences can carry an element of irony or reproach (cf. above d+e). One way of rendering these sentences in English is with **question tags**.

- Ex. 13. – ... Kéchide jésekchilerge uchráp qélishitin éhtiyat qildim ...
 – Jésekchilerdin bek éhtiyat qilidighan oxshimamsiz? – dédi Rizwangül Hakimjanning chirayigha sepsélip qarap. (TG 159)
"... In the evenings I was cautious not to run into the patrolmen ..."
"You're very cautious to stay away from the patrolmen, aren't you?", said Rizwangül, looking at Hakimjan's face, examining him.

¹ For the use of the form ... *oxshaydu* in various tenses, see Tömür / Lee p. 246, 306, 326ff.

Ex. 14. Shuninggha qarighanda, siz qizlarning qolidin héch ish kelmeydu, deydighan oxshimamsiz? (TG 183)

Judging by that, do you not seem to be saying that from girls' hands comes nothing?

Free: You aren't saying that girls can't do anything, are you?

h) With the verb *démek* (*démem-*)

Sometimes, the negative question form of *démek* ("to say / speak") is a sort of **rhetorical question** that could not be used in the same way in English. In the passages quoted below, the forms with *démem-* serve **as forceful expressions which either appeal to the addressee to pay special attention, or confirm the agreement** of the speaker with his dialog partner.²

In the first example, *démensen* – literally "will you not say?" – comes close to the expression **"Would you believe it?"**:

Ex. 15. Men: «Néme boldi, ...?» dep sorisam, u néme dédi démensen, «...» deydu. (TG 154)

When I asked "What happened, ...", you know what he said? He said: "..."

In the second example, *démensen* works similarly, and points to an experience surpassing the former one. The storyteller describes how, having become drunk the night before, he found himself waking up in his coal cellar. His friend, who had also become drunk, replies:

Ex. 16. Méni demensen? (QI 80)

[Lit.: Are you not speaking / thinking of me?]

*If you ask about me – I've had it even worse! / Now let me tell you what happened to **me!***

The verb *démemdila* in the next example matches the respectful address *sili* and would translate literally into "Would you not say?" It functions similar to the English **"Indeed! Exactly!"**.

Ex. 17. – Shuni démemdila, Dorgham, – dédi Emet Kürük, – héliqi Amanqul dégen haramzadining manga musht tengliginini körsile téxi. (Iz 44)

"What you're saying is absolutely right, Dorgha [an official's title]!", said Emet Kürük, "and can you imagine, that bastard called Amanqul even threatened me with his fist!"

i) The expression *qarimamdighan* etc.

Another way how negated questions are used idiomatically is foremost related to the verb *qarimaq* ("to look at / watch"). The form *qarimamdighan* deserves special attention. Morphologically, one could try and break it down like this: stem *qara-* + question marker *-mu-* + negation marker *-Am* + participle suffix *-Kan[?]*, but this combination is not normal, and mother tongue speakers see no point in trying to analyse it this way. They explain it as an idiomatic form that can only be understood as a whole. An attempt at a literal translation would be: "Has one not looked at it?"

² This usage is close to how the imperatives of *démek* can be used both to acknowledge one's own new insight and to catch someone else's attention (... , *denga!* etc.).

According to UTIL, it expresses **surprise, regret, astonishment, anger etc.**³ Often it is best translated as "**Look at this! / Unbelievable!**" (Cf. above section.) or similarly. Other forms of the negated question can be used as well – see *qarimamsiz* in Ex. 22. These verbs serve as **attention getters or to voice a strong feeling**. The form *qarimamdighan* is impersonal and also occurs when people talk to themselves. The fact which causes the emotional response precedes the verb in the form of an accusative with *-ni* (e.g. *heywetlikini / bolghinini* in Ex. 18, Ex. 19).

Astonishment:

Ex. 18. Munu burutluq qassapning qolidiki pichaqing heywetlikini qarimamdighan, ...(BM 44)
What an impressive knife that is in the hand of this moustache-wearing butcher, ...

Respect:

Ex. 19. Bolupmu hazir nikahni qiliwélip, Jumatayning yili toshquche bölek-bölek turup tursaq dése, derhal maqul bolghinini qarimamdighan! Bashqa bengbash yitigler bolsa, bu shertke unarmidi? (Iz 51)
[Free transl.]: Above all, when the suggestion was made to hold the wedding now, but for us to live separately until the year of mourning for Jumatay [her former fiance] has passed, – it was amazing that he agreed to that immediately ... Other self-willed guys, would they agree to this condition?

Frustration:

Ex. 20. «Hey putumning mushundaq jiddiy peyette asqaqlap qalghinini qarimamdighan, emdi qandaq qilarmen? ...» (TG 163)
"Urgh! Too bad, that I have to limp (with my foot) at this critical time, what shall I do now?"

Anger:

Ex. 21. – ... Nediki bir Qazaq qizini oghlumgha layiq körüp, chirayliqche soratsam, dégen gépini qarimamdighan, emdi körgülükini körsun – ... (Iz 45)
"That unworthy (man)! I considered a certain Kazakh girl a suitable match for my son and sent to ask nicely (for her), how dare he answer like this?! Now he will get what he deserves [Lit.: he will see what he has to see]."

Regret:

Ex. 22. Qarimamsiz, héliqi kékech hemmimizni teng parakende qiptu. (BM 46)
You understand, that mutterer confused all of us the same way.

The equivalent form of *körmek* "to see", *körmemdighan*, can be used in the same manner:

Ex. 23. Héliqi küni Niyaz Dorghining elchisige musht tengliginini körmemdighan! (Iz 50)
Just think of it, how on that day he shook his fist in the face of the messenger [coming to ask for her hand in marriage] of Niyaz the Dorgha [official's title]!

³ See UTIL s.v. *qarimaq* #13. Original text: "Shexske qarita éytilip te'ejjüplinish, epsuslinish, heyran qélish we nepretlinish qatarliq menilerni bildüridu: Uning shunchiwala erzan sa'etni almighinini qara! * Yéngi hemrahim yaman néme iken, kélipla ishqqa kiriship ketkinini qarimamsiz?"

The last example below, apart from showing the construction *-mamdighan*, also uses the conditional form *-misa* (Cf. under (e) above). The sentence is part of a complaint about the beginning winter:

- Ex. 24. Qish bolmisa bolmamdighandu, Qeshqer tereplerde anche soghuq bolmaydikenghu? (TG 3)
Is it really not possible for there to be no winter? [Or: Why on earth do we have to have winter?] In the Kashgar area it's not so cold either, is it?

(In this case, the suffix *-du* is added to the verb. Its role is to express how desperate the person is.)

Sample text

Below is a section from *Burut Majirasi*. After the husband has had a nightmare and turns on the light, this dialog follows:

- Ex. 25. Ayallim oyghinip: – Yene néme boldingiz? – dédi.
– Qara bésiptu. Qarimamsen chiliq-chiliq terge chömüp ketkinimni.
– Yene ghelite birnémilerni chühigen oxshimamsiz?
– Ghelite bolghanda qandaq démemsen, chühümde uxlawatqudekmen. (BM 43)
My wife woke up and said: "What's wrong with you again?"
"I had a nightmare. [Lit.: Something black pressed on me.] Look at how I'm bathed in sweat all over!"
"You have dreamt something weird again, haven't you?"
*"You wouldn't believe **how** weird it was: [Or: Talk about weird!] In my dream, I was like sleeping ..." [There follows the retelling of the dream.]*

The suggested translation shows that (1.) the question form is not retained in any of the three cases, and (2.) the functions of these three negated questions in Uyghur are to serve for (a) getting attention, (b) requesting reassurance, and (c) pointing to something extraordinary.

References

Source Texts

- Abduraxman Qahar: Tozumas gül (TG). Shinjang Xelq Neshriyati. 2011.
- Abdurəhim Ötkür: Iz (Iz). Shinjang Xelq Neshriyati. 2000. Printing 2011.
- Memtimin Hoshur: Sarang (S) / Burut Majirasi (BM) / Qirliq Istakan (QI). In: Memtimin Hoshur Eserliridin Tallanma (3): Qirliq Istakan. Shinjang Yashlar-Ösmürler Neshriyati. 2010. Printing 2012.

Grammar and Dictionary

- Hämit Tömür and Anne Lee (translator): Modern Uyghur Grammar (Morphology). Istanbul, Yildiz. 2003.
- Hazırqi Zaman Uyghur Tilining Izahliq Lughiti (Qisqartilmisi) (UTIL). Compiled by Shinjang Uyghur Aptonom Rayonluq Milletler Til-Yéziq Xizmiti Komitéti. Shinjang Xelq Neshriyati. 2. Edition. 2011.